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## Methodology of Social Science Research: the Case of the Sociology of Action in Relation to Values

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### Abstract

Social science research continues to grow in the academic world, especially for master's students and doctoral students who are called upon to produce dissertations and theses that meet the methodological requirement. The purpose of this article is to shed light on social science research methodology and on research in the sociology of action as a psychosociological approach and the obstacles that hinder its use, especially when it is about values. To this end, a detailed explanation of the stages of research in the social sciences as well as the difficulties related to the nature of the sociological disciplinary field are put forward, in order to define the objective posture that the researcher must adopt. Distancing from the subjects of study is therefore required especially when it comes to values.

### Key words

Methodology, social Sciences, sociology of action, values.

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# Metodología de la investigación en ciencias sociales: la sociología de la acción en relación con los valores

## Resumen

La investigación en las ciencias sociales sigue creciendo en el mundo académico, especialmente por parte de los estudiantes de Master y Doctorado a quienes se les pide redactar monografías y tesis que deban cumplir con los requisitos metodológicos. El propósito de este artículo es arrojar luz sobre la metodología de investigación en ciencias sociales, poner de relieve la investigación en sociología de la acción desde un enfoque psicosociológico y resaltar los obstáculos que dificultan su uso, especialmente cuando se trata de valores. Por ello, se propone una explicación detallada de las etapas de investigación en las ciencias sociales, así como las dificultades relacionadas con la naturaleza del campo disciplinario sociológico para definir la posición objetiva que debe adoptar el investigador. Por lo tanto, se requiere distanciarse de los temas de estudio, especialmente cuando se trata de valores.

## Palabras clave

Metodología, Ciencias Sociales, sociología de la acción, valores.

## Introduction

Social action is a psychosociological approach that revolves around the question of motivations, influences, cultural and cult conditions and difficulties or expectations relating to the coordination of individuals and the mobilization of their resources. It is about finding ways for an individual or a structure to break out of the grip of society and passive registration to act: by readjusting behaviours, banning them or proposing new ones.

To this end, let us recall some of the key names in the sociology of action that have developed key concepts and even theories on the subject, such as François Bourricaud (Bourricaud; Boudon, 1982), known for his rejection of sociologism in favour of a moral and political philosophy that advocates collective action, as well as Michel Crozier (Crozier; Friedberg, 1977) who is also one of the sociologists to consult in this sense, known by his theory of the development of the sociology of organizations, and last but not least Paul Lazarsfeld (Lécuyer; Lautman, 1998) whose work consists of applying psychology to economic and social problems.

Indeed, the sociology of action implies any collective action in a given society, is a "sociology of minorities, social movements and organizations, all forms of actions organized and undertaken by a set of individuals in order to achieve common objectives and share the benefits" (Letonturier, 2018), his main concern is "social activity" directed towards understanding society in order to provide appropriate responses, at the suitable moment, to various current societal phenomena. It is an action marked by understanding as opposed to Durkheim's vision of the "social fact" that takes the explanation of social facts. Far from the Durkheimian objectification, society is first and foremost a human product dependent on the intelligence, the era and the environment in which the human being evolves. It is therefore a matter of accepting it as such and making the effort to understand

it. In terms of resource mobilization, Lazarsfeld's "empirical analysis of action" is one of the methodologies behind social science analytical techniques and methods (Lazarsfeld; Berelson; Gaudet, 1944). In fact, the various studies of this Viennese doctor in applied mathematics propose the elaboration of explanatory diagrams of decision making and/or action. As for the process of mobilizing society for a particular phenomenon, American psychosociologists such as Olson Mancur have moved from studying the "why" to How social action is done, hence the concept of "resource mobilization" (Mancur, 1965).

In view of the foregoing, one has to wonder what is the social science research methodology? In what theoretical framework is the research in sociology of action, knowing that it is a current field of study highly valued by social science researchers? What posture should the researcher in sociology of action adopt when it comes to values?

The present article will attempt to expose, at first, the major steps of the social science research methodology, to explain the techniques and methods to be used in sociology of action research and to define, in fine, the researcher's posture regarding the treatment of values.

## **2. Social science research methodology, definition trial**

### **2.1. What are the social sciences?**

By social sciences, we mean the sense given to them by Loubet Del Bayle "*a branch of the human sciences, i.e. sciences whose object of study is man (...) [they] study a particular category of human phenomena: social phenomena, social facts (...) facts relating to man living in society*" (Del Bayle, 1991). They are therefore sciences dedicated to the study of man in his interaction with other humans, in a given environment. Gabriel de Tarde (1843-1904) already spoke, evoking sociology, of "interpsychology", a concept that would be taken up by the Anglo-Saxons via the "relationist" school in Chicago, which reduced the environment in which man evolves to a system of relations between individuals. Since then, with Jaccard, the social science sections have begun to reveal their outlines. The social sciences are thus called "social psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology, language sciences, economics, political science, history, human geography, demography, law and institutional sciences". (Jaccard, 1971)

It is therefore autonomous sciences of the natural sciences which are inspired, however, by experimental scientific analysis as it was built by Claude Bernard in his book "Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale" (Bernard, 1966) and which can be summarized in 5 major stages: observation, hypothesis, experiments, conclusion, law.

However, the various thinkers, philosophers and social scientists from Montesquieu, Durkheim, Marx and Auguste Comte in Bourdieu, Cuvillier, Weber, Worms and many others have been working on the systematization of each stage of experimental analysis by explaining the research techniques, tools or processes to be used to study a social phenomenon.

Notwithstanding this, there remains a fundamental distinction between the stages of social science research and those of the experimental cycle in the sense that the first are simultaneous and closely intertwined while the latter are successive.

### **2.2. The posture of the social sciences researcher**

To counter the various traps set for social scientists by sociology in its simplistic sense and to disillusion neophytes in this field, research methodology remains the optimal key to objectifying the researcher's work and anticipating a good number of obstacles likely to

harm the quality of his research, such as the normative trend: judging societal phenomena instead of explaining them, moving from a scientific attitude to one of reform or morality. Max Weber specifies in this sense that the social scientist must take into account that he is dealing with "an empirical science (which) cannot teach anyone what he must do but only what he can and - if necessary - what he wants to do" (Weber, 1965).

Since knowledge is by definition partial, it is a matter for the social science researcher to identify the social conditioning in which humans evolve without confining them totally or reducing them to it on the pretext of using an exhaustive scientific approach. For Philippe Van Parijs, the scientific approach in empirical sciences has three "moments" (Van Parijs, 1981), which are fundamental: verification, explanation and intervention, unlike formal sciences such as mathematics where we do not need observation or verification, mathematical statements are true or false by definition. It should be noted that the empirical sciences are in turn divided into the natural sciences (biology, geology, etc.) and the thinking "human" sciences (sociology, anthropology, philosophy, economics, politics, etc.). Each of these sciences focuses on a particular aspect of human behaviour without there being rigid boundaries between these different disciplines.

### 2.3. The stages of social science research methodology

To make a mapping of the different objects of social science study is almost an impossible task when we know that everything concerning the behaviour of man alone or in community is likely to be the subject of a social science study. This area is quite complex. It is therefore necessary to have a research methodology in place. The social sciences study different aspects of human behaviour, of man as a thinking being. As a result, providing a methodology for several disciplines such as economics, politics, anthropology... seems at first sight impractical.

Indeed, all social sciences are based in their research methodology on data collection (with its different forms) as a basic technique. The aim is to make an objective reading of the said data, to understand them (man studying human behaviour) and to explain them above all, hence the notion of "explanatory method" (Durkheim, 1895) and to arrive at conclusions intended to improve man's experience.

In this sense, we will present the constituent stages of the research methodology, stages commonly accepted in the social sciences, because we consider them necessary for any research work, whether it is a case study, thesis, thesis or expertise. We will follow the order of its steps from Quivy and Campenhoudt (Campenhoudt, Quivy, 2006). And for didactic purposes, we will give examples of "the discrimination of women in the Moroccan couple" to illustrate our point.

#### 2.3.1. The first step

The first step in any research in this area is the question of departure. It is a question of making a summary of a particular social fact in 2 to 3 lines then to ask the question in a precise and realistic way. In other words: why does this fact exist? The qualities of clarity, feasibility and relevance are required in the formulation of the question. The latter being the first thread of all research. It is therefore appropriate to proceed as follows:

- **Observation or social fact:** There is gender discrimination in Morocco which creates tension in the relation between men and women in the majority of couples.

- **Hypothesis:** Discrimination has always existed; Moroccan traditions and religion impose the submission of the woman to her husband.
- **Formulation of the question of departure:** Are traditions and religion responsible for the discrimination of women in Morocco?

### 2.3.2. The second step is the exploration of the subject

It concerns the collection of data around a given subject because any research work is part of a continuum. The social scientist is not supposed to invent new theories, he only situates himself and interact with previous or contemporary schools of thought. To do this, the researcher can opt for different techniques:

- Selective reading and writing of documents (books, journals, digital documents ...) related to the question of departure and then establish a grid of reading to study the books in question so as to highlight its articulations (in the form of a table of two columns one devoted to the main ideas and the other to the structure of the text). The reading grid is a preliminary exercise of the summary. The quality of the latter depends on the relevance of the first. Finally, it will be a question of comparing the summaries of the various selected documents to find possible research tracks and to take stock of the conceptual framework of the research.
- The exploratory interview is a complement to reading. This is a way to test the question of departure on a human sample (researchers, witnesses but also the general public) and this, to refine the research problem and give it a practical aspect. Carl Rogers' studies in psychotherapy are to be invested in this direction. He is at the origin of the theory of "non-directivity" (Rogers, 1942), which proposes to the patient-client to learn to analyse his own difficulties in an autonomous and mature way. The task of the therapist is thus reduced to a simple caregiver or therapeutic session leader. Similarly, the social scientist can conduct interviews, for example, where he will simply restart the discussion, ask a minimum of questions and not to get personally involved. The various exploratory interviews will be re-listened and analysed at rest by the researcher to be exploited as much as the summaries of the selected documents to constitute the base of the research. Content Analysis (Unrug, 1975) proposes operational methods for dissecting non-directive interviews and structuring the results of work.
- Taking notes of one's own observation of a phenomenon being studied can be a complementary method in this second stage.

Finally, at the end of this second stage, the social scientist may be forced to revisit his original question, rephrase it or reframe it in the light of the lessons learned from the different work done so far.

### 2.3.3. The third step is the conception of the problem

The researcher elaborates his problematic by reformulating his question of departure. The problem is the effective question of research relating to the approach to adopt to analyse a given social fact. To do this, the researcher will have to resort to the theoretical arsenal studied in class or to the reading of theoretical works, if necessary. It will be for him to mobilize the theory to question a phenomenon in its context. It is not a question of describing the social fact but rather of relating it to other phenomena in order to make it intelligible, hence the notion of "schemas of intelligibility" (Berthelot, 1990). Ladrière, for

his part, thinks that we should "get out [the phenomenon] of its immediacy and the isolation that it implies" (Ladriere, 1994) by establishing a causal relation between the phenomenon and its causes or relation of the phenomenon in question to a structure, a semantic field, a network or a system (relation of interactionism, functionality, control, analogy). In short, the problem must be realistic, use reasoned arguments and invest general or applied theories.

#### 2.3.4. The fourth step is the construction of the analysis model

After an exploratory work, the researcher having taken knowledge of the perspectives of analysis available to him and after having elaborated his problematic, he is led to trace the fundamental characteristics of his model of analysis thanks to a system of concepts and 'hypotheses. For example:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Gross Social Inequalities = Social Discrimination of Women
- **Hypothesis 2:** Islamism / imposed religion = Religious discrimination of women
- **Hypothesis 3:** Intellectual / Modern Society = Personal Discrimination

**Result:** Gender discrimination

After having established these three hypotheses, the researcher can proceed to a survey of opinions by constituting a questionnaire then, to distribute it to a sample of the society likely to be concerned. To succeed in this stage, it is best to define a model of the couple where the woman is discriminated against, a couple that represents the basic characteristics of gender discrimination, to serve as a barometer to compare the results collected. Boudon thinks that when we are dealing with "a set of propositions from which it is possible to deduce mechanically a set of consequences directly related to the phenomenon studied, we will say that we are dealing with a model of the phenomenon" (Boudon, Bourricaud, 1990). It should be noted that the slightest change in the parameters of the choice of the model implies of course the change in the results obtained.

The opinion survey is one way, among other things, of collecting data. It "can provide representative national samples, which is extremely useful if we want to know what is happening within a society as a whole or if we want to analyse the phenomena in a perspective of international comparison" (Inglehart, 1977). It allows to know at first the individual values within the couple (the respect, the acceptance of the other, the difference, the freedom of opinion, the respect of the traditions, the role of the religion in the management the Moroccan couple ...). Secondly, it helps the researcher to have a macrostructural idea of the society on a given social fact, the case of the female discrimination in the couple (the evolution of the intellectual level of the man / the dialogue of the two sexes in social networks / appliances as task facilitators / core family ...).

Maslow's pyramid (Maslow, 1970) is a key, among other things, to explain the changing priorities of man and his needs. The American psycho-sociologist operates, in fact, a hierarchy of human needs and divides them into two categories: material needs (subsistence and security) and non-material needs (group affiliation). Having said that, knowing that the working hypothesis is the hinge between theoretical reflection and empirical work, the analysis model can be constructed following research hypotheses as it can emanate from the accumulated notes during the exploratory stage which are "The rough draft" I was going to say some key founding concepts of the analysis model. For the concept of "discrimination", there may be several dimensions as we have seen above (social / religious / individual) and one or more indicators for each dimension. For the "individual" for example, we can find as indicators (wealth / culture / heredity ...). For the "social" dimension, there are indicators such as (power / tradition) whereas for the

"religious" dimension, it remains difficult to find indicators. A research of Y. Glock exposed in *The Vocabulary of the Social Sciences* shows that the results of research on "religion" as concept or dimension are contradictory because subjective. When it comes to religion, it's hard to find evidence. Glock speaks of it in terms of IOC (isolated operational concept) and gives it four dimensions (experiential / ideological / ritualistic and consequential) by giving some examples of indicators for each of the above-mentioned dimensions. For example, for the "ritualist" dimension, he proposes the following indicators: prayer, mass, sacraments, pilgrimage. In sum, the IOC seeks analytical and inductive rigor that objectively objectifies the measure of religiosity.

If the IOC operates by experiments, the "systemic concept", it prefers the reasoning and privileges the paradigms "it is the case of the concepts of structure, function, system, field, network and interaction ( ... ) is also the case of the concept of social actor (... ) which is part of the paradigm of the sociology of action "which seems to us the most appropriate way to break with prejudices. The hypothetical-deductive model is to be preached in a sociological research of action since it generates hypotheses, concepts and indicators to which it is sufficient to find correspondents in reality.

### 2.3.5. The fifth step

The fifth stage of the social science research methodology is that of scientific "observation" which is a rather complex operation as Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) already pointed out when he stated that the scientific fact is not fair. "Found" but is "conquered and built". It is the same in the social sciences, the researcher is called, as Durkheim recommends, "to treat the social facts as things," not to judge or interpret with the standards of the social group of membership.

The observation stage involves subjecting the analysis model to the facts. It is a question of fieldwork in search of a concrete material, information on a given reality to validate its research hypothesis, to qualify it or abandon it outright. The spirit of the empirical is to go towards the discovery of the unexpected, the theoretical framework is not a straitjacket for the researcher but rather a springboard that must be used with great flexibility. Indicators of a concept or hypothesis are the guardians of all observations in the social sciences. It is about collecting relevant data for the subject and the relevance is proportional to the quality of the researcher's thinking and the clarity of his analysis model.

To do this, it is called to circumscribe its field of observation both at the spatial level and at the temporal level. With regard to the observed social sample called "population", the researcher generally opts for his own environment and favours one of the three sampling techniques available to him: to observe the entire population of the circumscribed field, to be content with some representative elements of this same population or choose to work on one or a few characteristic components of this population, making sure to vary the observed profiles.

The observation can be direct, made by the researcher himself. He can visit families around him at different times of the day and observe for himself the behaviour of men in a family with women from the same family and get an idea of gender discrimination within the family at Moroccan homes. The observation can be also indirect via a questionnaire or an interview, that is to say by using an observation instrument. In this case, care should be taken to ask questions related to the indicators of the component studied and according to a previously chosen and undisclosed progression. The most important step is to pre-test the instrument of observation before making it public. The goal is to gather clear and precise information that fits all the objectives of the research device. The researcher must never

lose sight of the overall vision of his research project and from there, he will have to think about the subsequent implications of the next step: the choice of questions determines the type of information to be analysed, the two elements are interdependent.

The researcher has several ways to collect data such as the questionnaire survey (Javeau, 1992), the interview (Blanchet et al., 1985) in all its forms semi-directed, semi-directed, centred, etc., direct observation (Arborio, Fournier, 2005), which makes it possible to see events or behaviours in their authenticity, however, it is not very useful in the case of action research. Finally, the collection of existing data (Lévy, Ewencyk, Jammes, 1981) macrosocial and collected by official bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Planning in Morocco or international organizations such as the World Bank, the UN, the UNESCO ... which provide researchers with important data that they cannot obtain on their own: this is a very interesting data collection method for a study on the value system or culture for example.

### 2.3.6. The sixth step

The sixth step of the social science research methodology is "information analysis". It includes three major operations. It is, in short, to analyse the data collected and then compare them with the results predicted by hypothesis. Indeed, the researcher proceeds to group the information collected (during the previous step) in subcategories. It then gives them a new name in the form of new relevant or "variable" data, for example: "discrimination" is a variable; "Feminine and masculine" are states of this variable.

The next step is to analyse the relations between the different variables selected. The criterion for maintaining a variable is its degree of correspondence under the main hypothesis or assumptions. From this comparison of the variables, the researcher will reach the first conclusions. In the event of obvious discrepancies between the results observed and those expected, the researcher could review his hypotheses, review his analyses or complete his observation.

The last operation of this sixth step is the choice of the proper method of analysis. Depending on the information collected, the researcher may advocate the statistical analysis of data (Rouanet, Le Roux, 1993) especially that the computer tool can facilitate his task in terms of graphic, statistical or mathematical techniques. This method of analysis is most appropriate for studies in which a causal relation is found between elements, behaviours or phenomena, but the data in question must be measurable quantitatively.

Moreover, the researcher can take the method of content analysis (Ghiglione, Beauvois, Chabrol, Trognon, 1980) if he has to study communications (audio-visual media, non-verbal messages, literary texts ...) or to analyse value systems, mentalities, artistic productions ... In this movement, it is necessary to remind the researcher of the difference between the analysis of quantitative data and that concerning qualitative data:

- The quantitative analysis (Lebaron, 2006) is encrypted, it is based on the sum of the votes for each entry. Example in the official poll: the number of votes allocated to one political party will be minted in parliamentary seats and then in majority or minority parliamentary team. It is an analysis that is done by counting the positive or negative responses of a large human sample, questions closed most of the time in a questionnaire. It is about a work of prevalence.
- Qualitative analysis, on the other hand, is based on the power of interpretation from a point of view such as in an interview with a politician or a scientist. It will be a question of understanding his speech and then establishing a roadmap based on the various arguments he has put forward. Qualitative analysis can also involve



several points of view on a given subject. A micro-trottoir relating to the consumption of a particular food ingredient during the month of Ramadan in Moroccan society may reveal, in addition to the results provided by quantitative analysis (30 out of 50 people drink milk), customs from different regions (hot or cold milk/ natural or sweetened/ alone or with coffee/ consumed during the break of fasting or during another time of the evening/ by the whole family or, there are abstentionists ...) then convert these results into a sociological study of the consumption of milk during the month of Ramadan by the Moroccan. Even if it is a work based on the census, it cannot be translated into figures seen that many citizens can express several simultaneous choices that depend on their mood of the day or on the planned culinary recipes that may or may not require the use of milk, temporary indigestion...). The prevalence percentages would not be very reliable in this case and therefore the interest of this type of analysis lies in the information deduced from the interview because it is freely expressed by the citizen (habits, customs, contexts, recipes, types of allergies, cooking methods, etc.).

That being said, the hazard factor is always omnipresent in social science research unless the individual researcher or research organization has the possibility of intervening in the research through experience (choosing people and putting them in a similar context in order to limit the randomness) for a survey on "the correlation of teenage student violence in schools with social background". In this case, in order to have concrete answers on the link between social level and violence, it is primordial to carefully select the persons under study and to ensure that the variables that could hinder the survey are kept to a minimum (students from divorced parents / drugged / abused students ...) to be sure of the results: the correlation between lack of money and violence / violence due to other criteria: divorce, drugs, sexual abuse ... Still need to find volunteers to this type of experiments?

Ultimately, the experiment helps the researcher manipulate analytical methods. The latter is called upon to show rigour and flexibility in its approach. The field researcher (who carries out his research in the field) can combine a plurality of methods according to the evolution of his research. He must adapt each time, negotiate his entry into the field and recompose his attitude if necessary because his choices have an impact on the progress of his research.

#### **2.3.7. The seventh step**

The seventh and final step is the conclusion. This is the most important step and usually the most consulted for potential readers. The social scientist designs his conclusion by adopting a tripartite plan. He first recalls the main lines of his approach: his initial question, his analysis model, his research hypotheses, his field of observation, his methods of analysis and his comparison of the variables with his interpretation. Secondly, he summarizes the contribution of his research in relation to the object of analysis. His work can support the conclusions of previous research, rectify them or even challenge them. This is to highlight "the most" brought by the researcher on the object of analysis and the degree of operationalisation of his work. In the final part of his conclusion, the researcher presents the perspectives offered by his research at a practical level.

### **3. Methodology of research in the sociology of action, the question of values**

#### **3.1. The sociology of action**

An approach that consists of "addressing social phenomena in terms of culture, social representations or symbolism (...) giving weight to this dimension of social meaning and seeking to "understand" the way in which actors cognitively and emotionally their experiences and the institutions that structure them "(Quivy, Van Campenhoudt, 2006).

### **3.2. The theoretical framework of research in the sociology of action**

To study values in intercultural management, educational psychology or sociology of action or any other discipline or current that solicits work on values, the researcher finds it difficult to draw on the appropriate theoretical framework. On the one hand, social reality differs from physical reality, which is managed by a number of fixed rules. The social is almost indomitable and it depends on several variables. That said, the theoretical framework is largely based on scientific reasoning (in the sense of the natural sciences) by borrowing certain notions such as observation, hypothesis, verification.

The social fact, the basis of all research in the sociology of action, is a fact constructed by definition of several parameters (history, economy, politics, religion ...) and therefore it is different from the scientific fact, which is natural. It is therefore easier to measure the length, height, mass, heartbeat, blood pressure, presence of blood glucose in humans than to measure ignorance, sins, materialism, faith ..., hence the need to establish certain criteria that will become, after verification of the research hypothesis, operational indicators.

### **3.3. The relation to values, a hindrance to research in the sociology of action**

One of the main difficulties in social action is its relation to values. The scientific approach requires "axiological neutrality" a form of objectivity that Max Weber explains as the ideal posture of the researcher. It's about being neutral when it comes to values. In other words, one should not allow value judgments to influence scientific analysis for both an experienced researcher and a student. Distancing from study subjects of any kind is strongly recommended or even required.

To recognize a "social fact" by a researcher according to Durkheim lies in knowing how to detect "ways of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual and who are endowed with a power of coercion by virtue of which they are 'impose on him' (Durkheim 1895). The researcher in the social sciences is confronted in his research into social action with problems of ethics and deontology that push him to invest himself psychologically or at least to consider the phenomenon studied with his own convictions and orientations.

In Morocco, for example, some subjects of study, such as social phenomena, are always studied with great sensitivity and delicacy, such as hijab, sexual orientation, cohabitation, relationship with the Moroccan Jewish community, etc., whereas they should be considered as "social facts". These are all subjects that are studied by foreign experts. Without having any preconceptions about the latter, the subject can only be duly analysed in full knowledge of the facts: the cultural frame of reference can only be properly assimilated by those who have the same framework.

### **3.4. Some examples of research in social action where values are discussed**

The case of the clothing aspect of Moroccan women: Studying this social fact, however controversial it might be, by a sociologist, anthropologist or historian does not imply the emission of an ameliorative or derogatory point of view on the part of the researcher. Moreover, analysing society's point of view on the wearing of European clothing by the current Moroccan woman and the various aggressive reactions that some of them undergo in the kingdom's small towns may also constitute a social fact to be studied according to the methodology in force in the social sciences and this, Max Weber attests in this

movement that "when a normatively valid thing becomes the object of empirical research, it loses its character as a norm by becoming such an object: it is then treated as "being" and no longer as "valid".

The example of gender equality in Moroccan society: Similarly, the sociology or other researcher can tackle social facts of any kind. The issue of gender equality in Morocco is a priority demand of several civil society actors. The researcher is not supposed to defend the value of equality even if it is a laudable act. For him, it is necessary to highlight the areas in which equality has been achieved in Morocco (the right to schooling for women/ their access to positions of responsibility/ marriage without a guardian when they reach the age of majority...) and other areas where gender discrimination is still an issue (household chores/ time spent on leisure/ caring for children...). The researcher can also proceed by historical approach and study the question through history by delimiting the relevant time period "from the reign of Moulay Ismaël to the end of the reign of Hassan II". The psychology researcher, for his part, can study the profiles of men who are willing to live with gender equality. All these facets give rise to so many social facts to study while maintaining the required axiological neutrality.

The "determinism" of the environment in educational success: The acquisition and mastery of the mother tongue in disadvantaged environments according to cultural heritage theories shows that values and skills are much less assimilated than in affluent environments and for good reason: the use of slang as a spoken language instead of the normative dialect, the lack of parental education influences children's behaviour (family members do not greet each other when they wake up or before sleep/ lack of hygiene (no ritual cleansing) / no book culture (not all family members read newspapers, magazines or books...)). Children from disadvantaged backgrounds therefore reach school age, in most cases, with almost zero basic skills. This has a negative impact on the continuation of their academic career. Moreover, this pronounced lack of skills deprives them of any ambition for success. They dream of getting small jobs and their conception of success is often quite modest. They believe that one becomes rich by birth, by alliance, by chance and not by merit. A child from a marginal neighbourhood or a slum does not aspire to academic success like a child from a residential one, whose parents are both intellectual and have succeeded through education. This world view implies that the two children do not have the same conception of the success model. The child from the poor neighbourhood does not believe in success through the school environment because he does not have sufficient models to confirm this option, starting with his immediate entourage. His models will be athletes, singers, actors for the most ambitious of them otherwise it will be the butcher of the district, the grocer, the mechanic and for the less wise, the dealer who can afford a motorcycle, the thief of mobile phones... for the others.

The child in the rich neighbourhoods has a different conception of success that is at odds with the vision of the first child. It can be assumed that the social environment predetermines the child's academic path by motivating or demotivating him or her to pursue further education and shapes the typical profile of the social success model for each child.

For the social science researcher and especially in the field of social action engineering, within the framework of a specialized master's degree for example, several studies remain to be done to mitigate the trend and give hope to young children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods by presenting them with new models and arguments to convince them of the possibility that they have to save their future from socio-economic predestination.

### 3.5. Emergence, contingency and disruption

While the natural sciences have the ability to manipulate the variable they are studying, the social sciences cannot compare different situations of these variables. Knowing that the rules, if we can talk about rules, that govern human behaviour obey the vagaries, the social and political structure of the country, research in this field promises to be difficult and from there, a question arises: how to measure human behaviour: its decisions, reactions, qualities, defects, values... Example: how to predict the bankruptcy of certain brands well rooted in Moroccan society when they are quoted in the stock market and installed since several decades in Morocco? The boycott of certain foods (during Ramadan 2018 in Morocco) being unpredictable, its disastrous consequences were even less so, as was the case with the reactions of parliamentarians and ministers: "medawikh", "qatiâ"... in the latter case, we will speak of an emergence phenomenon in the sense that the intentions of the above-mentioned personalities were to dissuade Moroccans from continuing their boycott when the result of their interventions produced the opposite effect. The phenomenon of emergence in the social sciences "can be understood as a break in continuity between the individual and the collective: this does not mean, of course, that the collective would be something other than all individual interactions, but that the collective cannot necessarily be predicted on the basis of individuals' knowledge. The gap is between everyone's intentions and the result obtained". Moreover, the boycott is also a contingent phenomenon because no one can predict its exact consequences in the future. Thus, finding a unit to measure behaviour cannot be a practical way to apprehend or prevent certain behaviours, and even if it can be approximated, it will not succeed because the subject of study in the social sciences is inherently reflexive. In other words, this unit of measurement will quickly be integrated into human daily life and will once again be a social fact to be studied.

## 4. Conclusion

Ultimately, this article is intended to provide an introduction to social science research methodology, an area that is experiencing a growing resurgence of interest in the academic community. It was a question for us of shedding light on the essential stages of the research: from the question from the beginning to the conclusion, via exploration, the problem, the construction of the analysis model, the observation and analysis of information. We then explained the potential interest of the psychosociological approach to social action, a field of current research that is in turn experiencing intense interest. However, there are still challenges related to the nature of the sociological disciplinary field: social reality differs from physical reality managed by a number of fixed rules, the social being indomitable and dependent on several variables. Distance from the subjects of study is therefore required, especially when it comes to values.

Human behaviour, whether individual or in groups, and social phenomena should constitute "social facts" for the social action researcher that could constitute a potential object of research. The researcher is called upon not to position himself in relation to values, to refrain from making laudatory or pejorative assessments and to adopt the posture of axiological neutrality dear to Max Weber, especially for those who seek to find an instrument to measure values in a society, the object of social science research being by definition reflective.

## Notes

1- Literally: people afraid of heights. In the context: people who no longer have their cognitive abilities.

2- Literally: Cattle herd. In the context: passive people.

3-Marc Jacquemain, "Apprehending social reality", p. 23 in <http://hdl.handle.net/2268/172036>

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