



checklist

- Ensure that you elucidate the role that theories, concepts and frameworks play in your conceptualisation of the social world (and therefore your research). They will have played a part – whether acknowledged or not – and hopefully will have been part of the initial inspiration for the inquiry.
- Remember that the social world includes you as researcher and that an adequate conceptualisation has to include the activity of researching it.



projects

One of the central claims of this chapter is that theoretical and conceptual frameworks can inspire fresh ways of looking at the social world, and suggest new angles of approach or lines of inquiry. We will explore this a little further with the example of 'sleep/sleeping':

- Sociologists have grown increasingly interested in sleep. Venn et al. (2008), for example, studied the ways in which couples negotiate who cares for children at night. Williams et al. (2008) looked at the ways in which insomnia and snoring are portrayed in the media. Make a list of some sociological aspects of sleep/sleeping. One way to apply the sociological imagination here is to think about how things currently are (including variations), how things used to be and how things could be in the future.
- Now consider the work of Norbert Elias. Elias (1998: 163) tells us that in medieval society it was common for many people to sleep in one room and that sleep was a relatively 'public' matter. Nowadays – by contrast – the nuclear family 'remains the only legitimate, socially sanctioned enclave for this and many other functions. Its visible and invisible walls withdrew the most "private", "intimate", irrepressibly "animal" aspects of human existence from the sight of others. For Elias, this change was bound up within a process which saw people become more and more dependent on each other: behaviour became more predictable and refined, and body self-monitoring and control increased (Shilling, 2012).
- Now go back to your list. What aspects would Elias be interested in? Does the brief paragraph above inspire new questions/issues? Think, for example, about the words 'legitimate' and 'socially sanctioned', which imply that there are normative conventions surrounding sleep. What are these conventions? What might the sanctions be if they are breached? How might we study this?