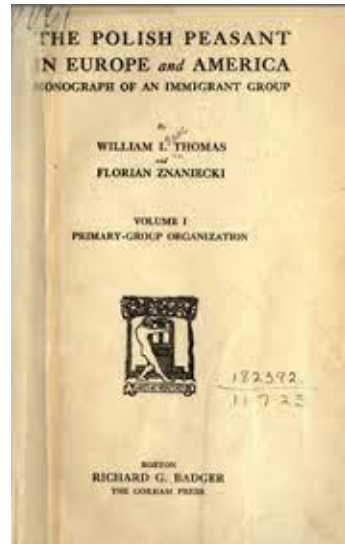
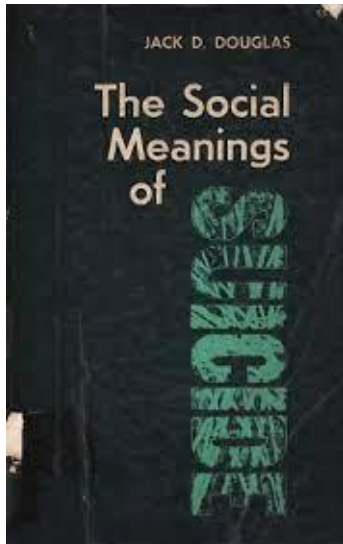


Personal documents are a secondary source of **qualitative data** that includes personal journals, diaries, letters, photographs and latterly digital accounts such as blog and vlog post

Their aim is to give an insight into the lives of others – particularly looking at the meanings and motivations of individuals and how they make sense of society.



Strengths

Give a valuable insight from those that cannot be researched in other ways

Provides qualitative data preferred by interpretivists

Allows researchers to obtain **verstehen**

Limitations

Do not have high reliability as often one of a kind and unable to replicate

Difficult to generalise to population, can be problematic to access from family members and may need translation. Need to consider authenticity of the document and if view were representative of others at the time.

Two examples of the use of personal documents in sociological research are Douglas' ***Social Meanings of Suicide*** which amongst other methods examined suicide notes – and Thomas and Znaniecki who examined letter sent home by Polish migrants in the USA

Sociological Research Methods