

methods/modes of observation

- experiments
- survey research
- qualitative field research
- unobtrusive research
- evaluation research

experiments

are more often used for natural science, psychology and medical sciences rather than social science + it is often explanatory research

method:

- select individuals
- do something to them
- observe the effect of what was done

subjects used:

- small numbers
- probability and non-probability sampling
- groups are often randomly selected or have matching/similar conditions/characteristics

results if experiments are shown is *statistics*

pros:

- validity (external); anything other than experimental stimulus affect dependent variable (lack of threat)
- reliability: possible to replicate, though not practical

cons:

- validity (external); generalizability experimental finding to 'real' -> experiments are *artificial* they take place in laboratory, rather than natural settings)
- reactivity: respondents react to fact of being studied

survey research

is both descriptive as well as explanatory research

questions are often closed-ended:

- single answer possible
- multiple answer possible
- statements to items of a scale

subjects used:

- large numbers: samples of a population
- requires probability sampling
- approach: email, letter or phone

the results of survey research are often displayed in statistics

types:

1. face-to-face interview (capi*)
2. telephone interview (cati)
3. self-administrated paper
4. self-administrated online

*Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing

Pros:

- describe social attitudes and practices of a large population in a representative way
- reliability: standardized question and answer possibilities

cons: Validity

- standardized questions and answer possibilities might not fit
- context is absent
- inflexible
- artificial

unobtrusive research

studies social behaviour without affecting it

types:

- Content analysis: recorded human communications (social artifacts)

Output: both text and statistics

- Analyzing existing statistics: registration data

Output: statistics

unobtrusive research (cont)

- Comparative and historical research: developmental processes across cultures (seeking common patterns)
Output: both text and statistics

qualitative field research

tries to probe social life in its natural environment, through direct observation of communications and events

is more often explanatory and descriptive, than just explanatory research

= inductive; uses generates a theory rather than a hypotheses

subjects used

- small numbers
- probability and non-probability sampling

results are presented in text; notes and recordings

types:

- Participant observation (aware or unaware)
- Interview: face-to-face or telephone and single or focus group

Pros: validity

- Study subtle nuances and in-depth understanding of concepts and relations (explanatory)

- Flexible

Cons:

- Reliability: not appropriate to describe large populations
- Challenge researcher: objective (sort out own biases) and not guiding without being too passive
- Reactivity: respondents react to fact of being studied



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Page 1 of 2.

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evaluation research

is a research purpose rather than a method
→ purpose: evaluate impact social interventions; applied research rather than purely scientific

aims of determinations:

- Needs assessment: existence and extent of problems

- Monitoring: developments

- Cost-benefit: results intervention justified by expense

- Program or outcome assessment: interventions produces intended results

types:

- Experimental design: stimulus for experimental but not for control group with pre and post-test

- Quasi-experimental design: experiment without control group (time-series) or not randomly assigned control group

- Qualitative evaluations: interview and ask after success of an intervention



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