

### 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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Not published yet.

Last updated 18th May, 2023.

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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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