

# **OVERVIEW OF METHODS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH**

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# Consider the following questions:

- What does a “typical” *Lisu/ Thai Hill/ Dayak/ Rai/ Gurung/ Naga* man and woman wear on a daily basis?
- When a wedding ritual is performed, do most people sit alone or in groups? Of those sitting in groups in a wedding ritual, are the groups mostly composed of people of the same gender? Or are they mostly mixed-gender groups?

# Two ways of knowing

- answer the question based on your recollection of prior personal inquiry; or
- collect data by carefully making observations that you think are appropriate.

# “Fit for purpose”

- There is no “one right” direction to take;
- But there are some strategies which are better suited than others for tackling specific issues;
- Strategies are selected because they are *appropriate* for specific kinds of problems.

# RESEARCH DESIGNS

- It specifies
  - the number of cases to be studied;
  - the number of times data will be collected;
  - the number of samples that will be used; and
  - whether or not the researcher will try to control or manipulate the independent variable in some way.

# Cross-sectional Study

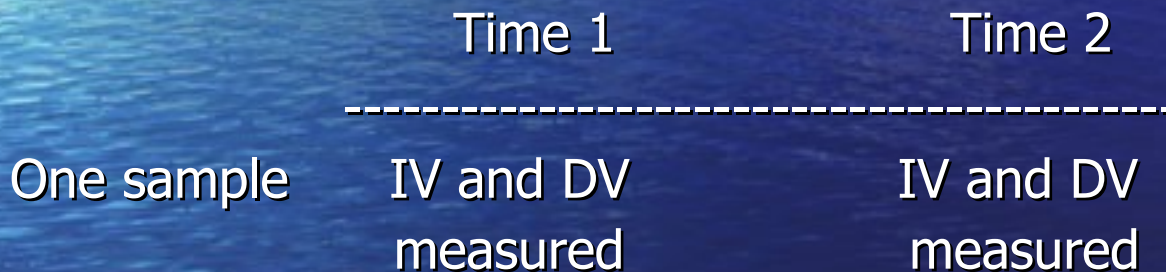
- Data - one or more variables for one sample at one point in time
- Represented by social survey
- Sometimes used for testing causal relationships
- Critique: There is no control of when the independent variable occurs; only *association* between variables is possible *not causality*.

# **Longitudinal Study**

- **Intended to track changes over time;**
- **Samples are obtained from the same population in two or more time frames.**

# Panel Study or Panel survey –

- the same sample is used each time the survey is conducted;
- the independent variable is not controlled by the researcher.

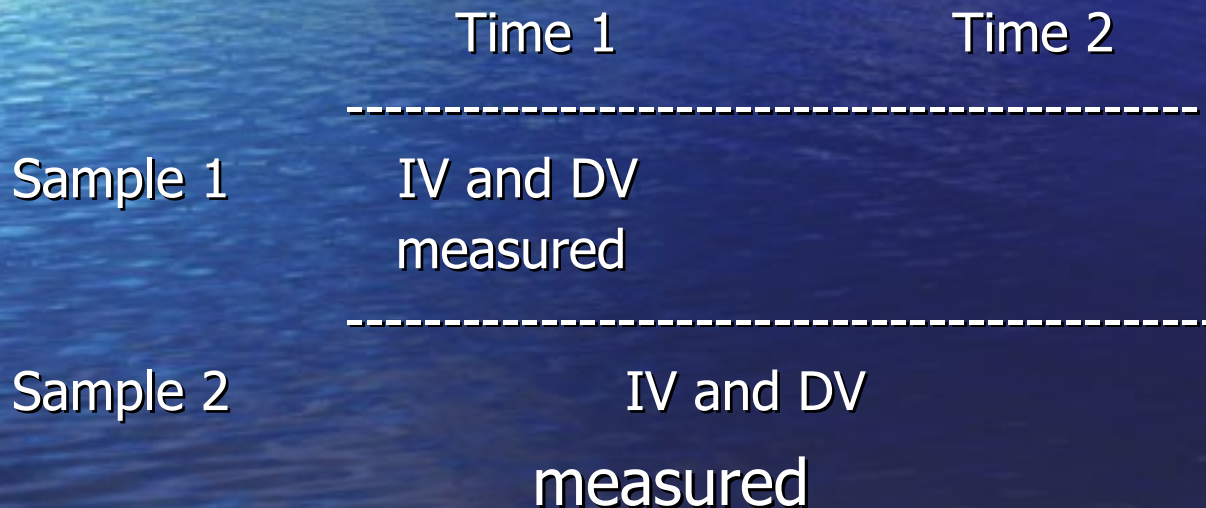


Critique: Drop out; or it could be difficult to track down the same respondents.



# Trend Study

- Different random samples from the *same* population for at least two different times of data collection;
- Addresses the problem of drop-out cited in panel study.



# Cohort Study

- a special kind of trend study;
- The population of the study is a “cohort”— e.g., a group of people born within a given period, or experienced a given life event at the same time

# Case Study

- A research strategy that focus on one case (an individual, a group, an organization, and so on) within its social context at one point in time.
- It typically relies on several data sources; conducted in great detail, and results in an in-depth, multi-faceted investigation of a single social phenomenon that it is associated with so-called “qualitative methods.”

# Experimental Design

- Control or manipulation of the independent variable;
- Especially helpful in determining the time order of IVs and DVs;
- Considered a “design” – one of the issues of “research designs” is whether the researcher has control over the independent variables.

# METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

## Experiments

- A method that is especially useful for research with an *explanatory purpose*—i.e., research that seeks to explain WHY cases vary on one or more variables.

*Theory: Reading books with characters that have a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds INCREASES children's knowledge of the cultures of those racial and ethnic groups.*

*Hypothesis: The use of literature-based curriculum that shows the value of cooperation of people with a variety of ethnic, religious, and cultural background **INCREASES** children's tolerance of the cultures of those groups.*

Random A    Essay1    (selected literature)    Essay 2

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Random B    Essay 1    same literature    Essay 2

# Experimental Designs

- **Pretest-posttest Control group Experiment**

**R      O1      X      O2**

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**R      O1                      O2**

# Experimental Designs

- **Posttest Only Control Group Experiment**
  - Has no pretest because it is not possible to do so, or because doing so would sensitize the experimental group to the stimulus;
  - has the same design elements as other experiments
    - (1) control or manipulation of the stimulus; and
    - (2) two or more groups using random selection or assignment.

<b>R</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>O</b>
<b>R</b>		<b>O</b>



# Experimental Designs

## Extended Experiment (Solomon Four-group Experiment)

R 01 X 02

R 01 02

R X 02

R 02

# Quasi-Experimental Designs

- used when it is not ethical or practical to do a true controlled experiment;
- when there is no control over the scheduling of the experimental stimuli (timing), the selection of subjects, or the ability to randomize

# Experimental Setting—natural setting or laboratory?

## Field Experiment

- Refers to experiment that are conducted where people congregate naturally
- Natural “real life” setting
- but the researcher still can select participants, have some control over the setting, and can decide which subjects constitute the experimental and control groups;
- Allows for better “generalizability” because of the “realness” of the experiment.

# Laboratory Experiment

- Allows for more control over the setting and the random assignment of subjects;
- But the participants' attitudes and behaviors may be affected by the setting's artificiality;
- There may be issues regarding the generalizability of findings beyond the laboratory.

# Survey Research

- Appropriate if the aim of the study is to determine the prevalence of some phenomenon within a population over a specified time frame;
- data about many variables are collected at one time from one sample (usually individuals, but possibly other units of analysis)

# Tools most commonly used in survey data collection

- **Questionnaire**—RESPONDENTS READ and ANSWER questions in a written format; could be mailed, group administered, individually administered, or internet-based.
- **Structured interview**—INTERVIEWER READS a standardized interview schedule (the set of questions read) to the respondent and then RECORDS the respondent's answers; could be face to face, or by telephone.

# Qualitative Research Methods

- Also called “observational techniques” and “field research”;
- A defining characteristic of observational techniques is their relative unobtrusiveness;
- Employs a variety of tools and techniques

# Observation or observational techniques –

- **Complete participant** – being or pretending to be a genuine participant in a situation one observes;
- **Participant as observer** – being primarily a participant, while admitting an observer status;
- **Observer as participant** – being a primarily a self-professed observer, while occasionally participating in the situation;
- **Complete observer role** – being an observer of a situation without becoming part of it.



# **ethnographic fieldwork –**

## **Ethnography**

- **Includes observation and interviewing;**
- **Requires a researcher to spend a large amount of time observing a particular group of people by sharing their way of life, their day to day activities.**
- **Ethnographers normally write up their observations as field notes at the end of each day; they use these notes to produce a more developed analysis after they leave the field.**

## **Fieldwork / Field Research**

# **ethnographic fieldwork –**

## **Fieldwork / Field Research**

- **Like “qualitative methods” it connotes additional methods such as qualitative interviewing and using available data**

# Qualitative Interviewing –

- **interview guide** (list of topics to be covered),
- **semi-structured or unstructured interview** (interview using open-ended questions based on interview guide, and creates follow up questions as the interaction proceeds).
- **Focus Group Discussion or Interviews** – a more common technique in qualitative interviewing; participants converse and interact with each other to obtain data

# Discourse Analysis

- A method that pays close attention to how we communicate through language.
- The general name for approaches concerned with language is 'discourse analysis.'
- To use this technique, you need to become sensitive to the use of language in conversations.
- If you want to conduct this type of analysis, you will need to **tape record some activity**, and use the tape recording as your principal source of data.

# Textual Analysis

- **Also called document study**
- **cultural studies**—the study of all kinds of textual and multi-media products, ranging from television programs to websites on the internet. Textual analysis might involve trying to obtain copies certain files and document. Textual analysis is also called
- **content analysis**—a method of data collection in which some form of communication (speeches, TV programs, newspaper articles, films, advertisements, even children's books) is studied systematically. *Content analysis is one form of available (or secondary) data analysis.*

# **APPLIED RESEARCH AND THE USE OF METHODOLOGICAL COMPLEMENTARITIES**

- **Evaluation (or evaluative) research**
  - An example of applied research
  - Assesses the effectiveness of programs intended to alleviate social health, or interpersonal problems.
  - Ideally based on experimental designs, but also sometimes use quasi-experimental and strictly multi-variate statistical analysis.

# APPLIED RESEARCH AND THE USE OF METHODOLOGICAL COMPLEMENTARITIES

- **Participatory Action Research**

- Research done by community members and researchers working as co-participants, most typically within a social justice framework to empower people and improve their lives.
- Expresses an explicit politics.
- It is not simply about change, but about change of a particular kind such as aspirations like communitarian and egalitarian politics.

# SUMMARY

- things do not fall neatly into the two categories of 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' research
- Reasons:
  - In practice, the approaches, tools, and techniques are not mutually exclusive.
  - In theory, the distinction is too simplistic.
  - relates to the treatment of data, rather than the research methods as such.



# SUMMARY

- In practice, the social researcher is faced with a variety of options and alternatives and has to make strategic decisions about which to choose.
- Each choice brings with it a set of assumptions about the social world it investigates;
- Each choice brings with it a set of advantages and disadvantages and the social researcher has to live with this.



**THANK YOU**