

# Two Research Methods

## Quantitative & Qualitative

- Data (numerical & non-numerical)
- Sampling (random & purposive)
- Theoretical tradition (Durkheim & Weber)
- Logics (Deductive & Inductive)
- Research questions (Causal effects & processes/meanings)

# Methods of qualitative data collection

- Participant observation
  - As researcher or as member
- Unstructured (intensive) interviews
- Focus groups

# What is field research?

- Definition: Research in which researcher “directly” observes subject of research, typically in a “natural” setting. In most cases, the researcher is interested in developing a deep understanding of the meanings of what is going on.
- Example: “Office Ladies” in large Japanese companies.
  - Weakness as a source of power.

# Writing Fieldnotes – Field Researchers' Data

- Careful notetaking is key to successful field research
  - Method – handwritten, tape, video
  - Need for discretion?
- Requires disciplined transcription, review of fieldnotes – memory is faulty
- Fieldnotes are the researcher's interpretation of what's going on. Also, guide to the next day of observation.
- Similar to photographs for professional photographer – take lots, use few

# Analyzing qualitative data

- Initial coding
- Focused coding
- Memoing
- Many computer programs for this
- Can also do quantitative analysis of qualitative data.

# Issues in field research

- The difficulty of “getting in”
- Ethical issues
  - Method of “getting in” may create problems later
- The role of the researcher

# Strengths of Field Research

- Measurement validity
  - e.g., importance of employment to OLs
- No pre-judgment
- Flexibility
- Scope and depth
- Can be low cost (e.g., focus groups)

# Weaknesses of Field Research

- Validity (external vs. internal)
- Reliability
  - Flexibility as a liability
  - Results are researcher-specific
- Generalizability
- Skills required
  - Question wording and ability to control flow of conversation
  - Perception

# Fundamental flaw?

- The argument: Interviews are inherently biased methods of data collection b/c of the interview effect.
- Why?
  - Conversation involves social interaction between two or more people. It is governed by unwritten social rules.
- Need for researcher to interpret data in context of his/her own relation to the respondents, his/her own background/attitudes/prejudices.

# Relationship between Qualitative and Quantitative research

- Qualitative research as a guide to quantitative research
  - Ex. Shopping in Romania
- Qualitative research can clarify findings of quantitative studies
- Qualitative research particularly useful in modifying/improving social theory