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