

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH

quantitative research - uses numerical data (e.g., surveys)

qualitative research - narrative and descriptive data

survey - method in which people respond to questions - most widely used research method for sociologists - ideal for studying large numbers of people

population - a group of people with certain specified characteristics (e.g., all high school seniors in the U.S.)

sample - group of people who represent a larger population

representative sample - a sample that accurately reflects the characteristics of a population as a whole

- if a sample is not representative of the population from which it was drawn, the survey findings cannot be used to make generalizations about the entire population (e.g., conduct a survey using ten AP Physics students, sample wouldn't be representative of the whole school)

surveys - info. obtained through a questionnaire or interview, closed-ended or open-ended questions

secondary analysis - using pre-collected info. for data collection and research purposes (govt. reports, company records, voting lists, prison records, reports of research done by other social scientists)

- U.S. Census Bureau - important source of pre-collected data

field research - takes place in a natural (non-laboratory) setting

case study - intensive study of a single group, incident, or community - findings in one case can be generalized to similar situations - however, researchers must point out unique factors in study that wouldn't apply to other situations

participant observation - case study where the researcher becomes a member of the group being studied

causation - belief that events occur in predictable ways and that one event leads to another

multiple causation - an event occurs as a result of several factors working in combination

variable - characteristic that is subject to change (age, education, occupation)

types of variables: quantitative - measured numerically (family income, nations' literacy rates)

qualitative - defined by presence or absence in a category (gender, marital status, group membership)

independent - characteristic that causes something to occur (time spent studying)

dependent - reflects a change (grade change)

intervening - changes relationship between ind. & dep. variable

correlation - measure of the relationship between two variables

standards for showing causation: 1. two variables must be correlated

2. all other possible factors must be considered

correlation does not always equal causation

spurious correlation - relationship between two variables that is actually caused by a third factor (e.g., less church attendance is **not** the cause for more delinquency -

increased age is correlated with less church attendance, more delinquency)

standards for showing causation: 3. a change in the ind. variable **must** occur **before** a change in the dep. variable can occur

steps in the research process:

1. identify the problem - researcher chooses an object or topic for study
2. review the literature - researcher must find out all that he or she can about any earlier research
3. formulate hypotheses - hypothesis = a testable statement of relationships among well-defined variables (e.g., longer a couple is married, less likely marriage will end in divorce - ind. var. = length of marriage, dep. var. = divorce)
4. develop a research design - Survey? Case study?
5. collect data - asking people questions, observing behavior, analyzing existing materials and records
6. analyzing data - researcher must determine whether the hypotheses are supported
7. state findings and conclusions - methods are described (survey, case study), hypotheses are accepted/rejected/modified

sociology's code of ethics - researcher shows objectivity, uses superior research standards, reports findings and methods truthfully, protects the rights and privacy of research subjects



