Research Methodology

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❖ **What is social research?**

❑ Research is not only a set of skills, but also a way of thinking.
❑ Within this framework of thinking, you usually question what you observe, make an attempt to further explore, understand and explain your observations, and draw conclusions and inferences to enhance your practice skills and their knowledge base.
❑ It is looking at your practice or work situation inquisitively, critically and analytically to gain an in-depth knowledge of its rationale, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.
❑ You develop an attitude that encourages you to challenge different aspects of your work situation, to question their purpose, relevance and validity, to find their strengths and weaknesses, and to investigate the possibilities and ways for further improvements and refinements.

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➔ The word research is composed of two syllables, re and search.

➔ The dictionary defines the former as a prefix meaning again, anew or over again and the latter as a verb meaning to examine closely and Carefully, to test and try, or to probe.

➔ Together they form a noun describing a careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles. (Grinnell 1993: 4)

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Some Dialectics of Social Research

Looking for Reality

Reality is a tricky business. You've probably long suspected that some of the things you "know" may not be true, but how can you actually know what's real? People have grappled with this question for thousands of years.

- ❏ **agreement reality** Those things we "know" as part and parcel of the culture we share with those around us.
- ❏ **epistemology** The science of knowing; systems of knowledge.
- ❏ **methodology** The science of finding out; procedures for scientific investigation.

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Theory

A systematic explanation for the observations that relate to a particular aspect of life: juvenile delinquency, for example, or perhaps social stratification or political revolution.

Concepts

A general idea or notion that corresponds to some class of entities and that consists of the characteristic or essential features.

Variables

Variables, on the other hand, are logical sets of attributes. The variable occupation is composed of attributes such as farmer, professor, and truck driver. Social class is a variable composed of a set of attributes such as upper class, middle class, and lower class.

Attributes

Attributes, or values, are characteristics or qualities that describe an object—in this case, a person. Examples include female, Asian, alienated, conservative, dishonest, intelligent, and farmer. Anything you might say to describe yourself or someone else involves an attribute.

Independent variable

A variable with values that are not problematical in an analysis but are taken as simply given. An independent variable is presumed to cause or determine a dependent variable. If we discover that religiosity is partly a function of sex—women are more religious than are men—sex is the independent variable and religiosity is the dependent variable. Note that any given variable might be treated as independent in one part of an analysis and as dependent in another part of it. Religiosity might become an independent variable in an explanation of crime rates.
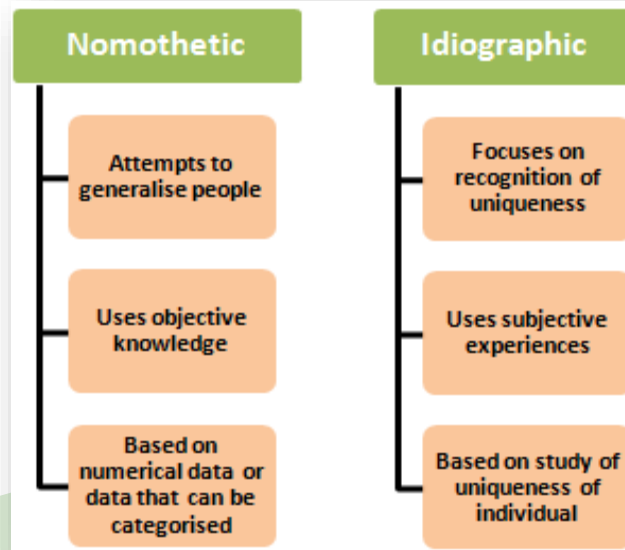
Dependent variable

A variable assumed to depend on or be caused by another (independent variable). If you find that income is partly a function of amount of formal education, income is being treated as a dependent variable.

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Ideographic

❖ It is based on a tendency to specify, and is typical for the humanities, as these disciplines deal with human being who have consciousness

❖ This approach describes the effort to understand the meaning of contingent, unique, and often subjective phenomena.

❖ Idiographic explanation, *Idio* in this context means unique, separate, peculiar, or distinct, as in the word idiosyncrasy. When we have completed an idiographic explanation, we feel that we fully understand the causes of what happened in this particular instance.

❖ At the same time, the scope of our explanation is limited to the case at hand.

❖ Although parts of the idiographic explanation might apply to other situations, our intention is to explain one case fully.

❖ Ideographic method focuses on individual cases and events.

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Nomothetic

- ❖ It seeks to explain a class of situations or events rather than a single one.
- ❖ the nomothetic approach involves establishing laws or generalizations that apply to all people

Nomothetic	Idiographic
Attempts to generalise people	Focuses on recognition of uniqueness
Uses objective knowledge	Uses subjective experiences
Based on numerical data or data that can be categorised	Based on study of uniqueness of individual

Inductive Approach

❑ Inductive reasoning moves from the particular to the general, from a set of specific observations to the discovery of a pattern that represents some degree of order among all the given events.

❑ Notice, incidentally, that your discovery doesn't necessarily tell you why the pattern exists—just that it does.

❑ The logical model in which general principles are developed from specific observations.

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Deductive Approach

❏ The logical model in which specific expectations of hypotheses are developed on the basis of general principles.

❏ Starting from the general principle that all deans are meanies, you might anticipate that this one won't let you change courses.

❏ This anticipation would be the result of deduction.

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning is the act of making generalized conclusions based off of specific scenarios.

Examples:

- Determining when you should leave for work based on traffic patterns
- Rolling out a new accounting process based on the way users interact with the software
- Deciding on incentive plans based on an employee survey
- Changing a meeting time or format based on participant energy levels

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Deductive Reasoning

Deductive reasoning is the act of backing up a generalized statement with specific scenarios.

Examples:

- Developing a marketing plan that will be effective for a specific audience
- Designing the floor plan and layout of a shop to maximize sales
- Determining the most efficient ways to communicate with clients
- Planning out a budget to get the highest output from your investments

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Thank You!