Chapter 2 – Research Methods

- Factual Questions (empirical investigations – basic facts)
- Developmental Questions (compare society past and present)
- Theoretical Questions (attempt to interpret what data means)

Basic Kinds of Research
1. Participant Observation (ethnographic)
2. Survey
3. Case History
4. Correlational Study
5. The True Experiment

Issues:
- sampling
- bias

Other types of research

- Life history
- Comparative Research
- Historical Analysis/Oral History

Statistics:
- Measures of central tendency
  - Mean
  - Median
  - Mode

- Measures of variations
  - Range
  - Standard deviation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factual question</th>
<th>What happened?</th>
<th>During the 1980s, there was an increase in the proportion of women in their thirties bearing children for the first time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparative question</td>
<td>Did this happen everywhere?</td>
<td>Was this a global phenomenon, or did it occur just in the United States, or only in a certain region of the United States?</td>
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<td>Developmental question</td>
<td>Has this happened over time?</td>
<td>What have been the patterns of childbearing over time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical question</td>
<td>What underlies this phenomenon?</td>
<td>Why are more women now waiting until their thirties to bear children? What factors would we look at to explain this change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 2.1 Steps in the Research Process

DEFINAE THE PROBLEM
Select a topic for research.

REVIEW THE LITERATURE
Familiarize yourself with existing research on the topic.

FORMULATE A HYPOTHESIS
What do you intend to test? What is the relationship between the variables?

SELECT A RESEARCH DESIGN
Choose one or more research methods: experiment, survey, observation, use of existing sources.

CARRY OUT THE RESEARCH
Collect your data, record information.

INTERPRET YOUR RESULTS
Work out the implications of the data you collect.

REPORT THE RESEARCH FINDINGS
What is their significance? How do they relate to previous findings?

Your findings are registered and discussed in the wider academic community—leading perhaps to the initiation of further research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH METHOD</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>LIMITATIONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Usually generates richer and more in-depth information than other methods. Ethnography can provide a broader understanding of social processes.</td>
<td>Can only be used to study relatively small groups or communities. Findings might only apply to groups or communities studied; not easy to generalize on the basis of a single fieldwork study.</td>
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<td>Surveys</td>
<td>Make possible the efficient collection of data on large numbers of individuals. Allow for precise comparisons to be made between the answers of respondents.</td>
<td>Material gathered may be superficial; if questionnaire is highly standardized, important differences between respondents' viewpoints may be glossed over. Responses may be what people profess to believe rather than what they actually believe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiments</td>
<td>Influence of specific variables can be controlled by the investigator. Are usually easier for subsequent researchers to repeat.</td>
<td>Many aspects of social life cannot be brought into the laboratory. Responses of those studied may be affected by their experimental situation.</td>
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</tbody>
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