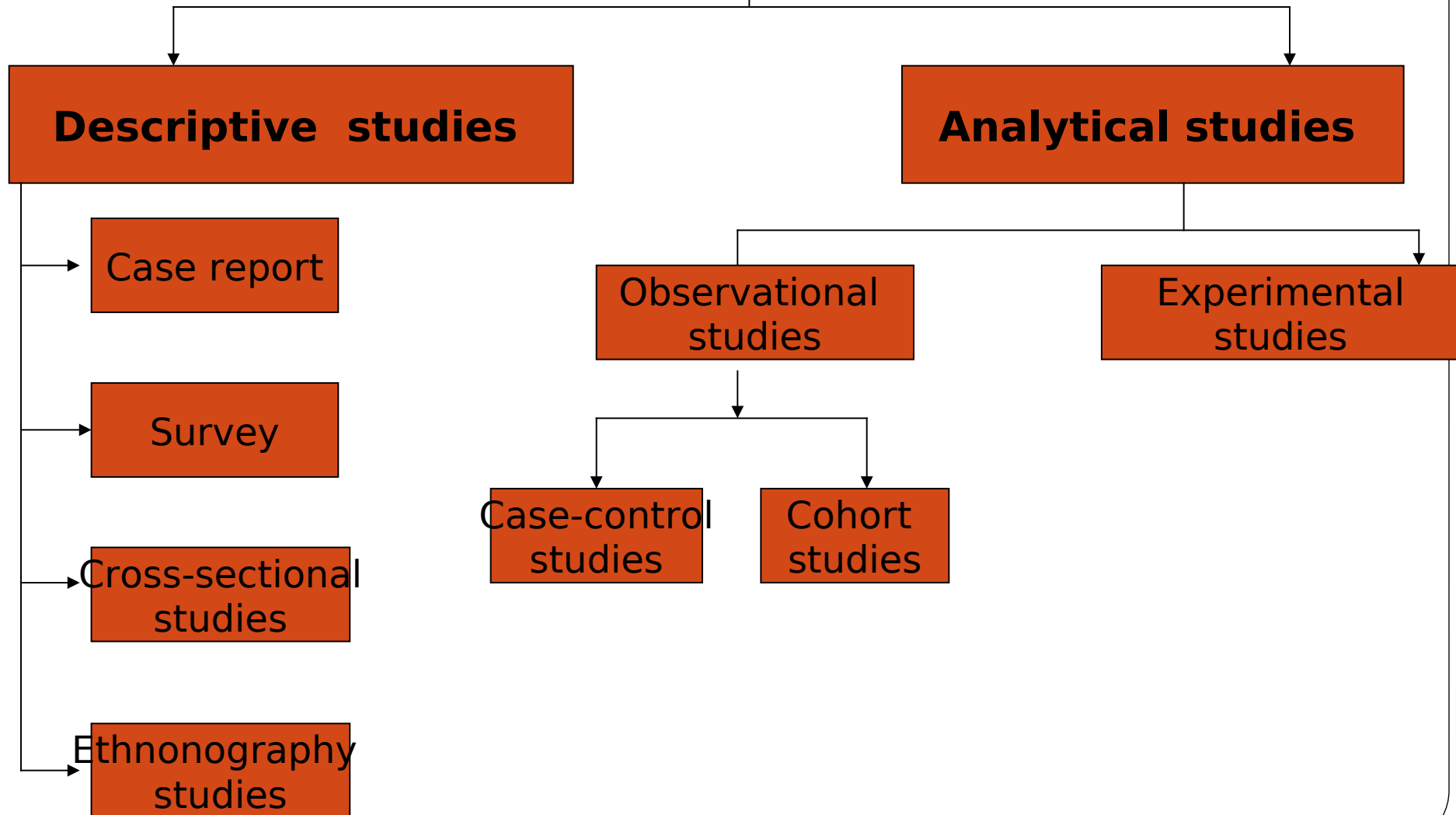


Selection of Research tools

Tool would depend on Nature of study



How could we select the best tools for a Study ?

- Purpose of the study
- State of existing knowledge (in relation to study question)
- Characteristics of the study variables
 - Feasibility
 - The availability of information
 - The type of data
 - The resources available
 - The characteristic of the tool

Selection of tools also depends on

- Time
- Manpower
- Equipment
- Money

Research tools

- Some of the tools:
 - Using available information (records)
 - Observation (checklist)
 - Self-administered questionnaire
 - Interviewing (individual/group)
 - Measuring (all tests and other investigations)

Data Collection Methods:

1. Participant Observation (Ethnography)

- Intensive, usually long term, examination of a social group, an organization, etc.
- Researcher becomes a participant in the lives of group members
 - Observes their behaviour and learns meaning systems (which are tied to language)
- Now done in a variety of disciplines

Steps Involved in Participant Observation Research

- A. Gaining entry into the group
- B. Developing and maintaining rapport
- C. Developing a method for taking field notes
- D. Integrating data collection and data analysis

Steps in Participant Observation:

A. Gaining Entry into the Group

- Take into consideration the type of group
 - formal organizations require formal entry; involves letter writing, permission requests, etc.
 - Informal groups – different strategy needed
- Access may be gained through a *gatekeeper* (an individual with special status)
- involve *key informants* (those who are most knowledgeable about the group)

Steps in Participant Observation:

B. Developing/Maintaining Rapport

- Researcher must work hard to develop and maintain good relationships in the field
 - E.g., be sure not to become associated with one faction in a group or organization
- Researcher could be blamed for problems that arise in the setting

Steps in Participant Observation:

C. Strategies for Taking Field Notes

Field notes – integral to participant observation

- Include descriptions and interpretations of individuals, interactions, and events
 - Distinguish descriptions from interpretations
- Record time and location of observations, as well as key information (weather, events happening and their significance)
- Keep *theoretical memos* – which are the tentative interpretations emerging and being assessed through further data collection

Field Notes (cont'd)

- May not be possible or advisable to take notes while in the field
 - Important that they be done as soon after field observation as possible
- Note-taking is time-consuming because it is integral to guiding the data collection and continuing the analysis

Steps in Participant Observation:

D. Integrating Data Collection and Analysis

- Organizing field notes into different types of files facilitates data analysis
- *Master field file* – complete journal of field notes; number pages and include entry dates
- Background, history file – subfile organizing background material
- Key character files – subfiles on key players in the group or organization
- Analytic files – subfiles for different types of observations or relationships

Data Collection Methods:

2. In-depth Interviews

- Some studies cannot employ the participant observation method
- In-depth interviews allow participants to describe their experiences and the meaning of events taking place in their lives
- Interviews are flexible and allow for probing
 - Interview method is quite diverse, adaptive

2. In-depth Interviews (cont'd)

- key elements for the interview method to be successful
 1. *Explicit purpose* – researcher and informant are aware that the discussion has a purpose
 2. *Ethnographic explanations* – researcher tries out *explanations* on the participants to see if they make sense
 - Encourage the informants to use colloquial language, and teach the researcher its meaning

2. In-depth Interviews (cont'd)

3. *Ethnographic questions* include:
 - i. Descriptive questions – ask participants to describe their experiences (e.g., their ideas, circumstances, viewpoints, dilemmas, etc)
 - ii. Structural questions – ask participants how they organize their world (e.g., activities)
 - iii. Contrast questions – ask participants what is meant by specific terminology
- Prus & Grills stress the *value* of the interview method in a multi-method approach

Data Collection Methods: Focus Group Interviews

- Interview format, but in a group setting
 - 6-12 participants with common experience
- Dates back to the 1940s - used to assess effectiveness of morale-boosting radio shows
 - 1970s onward - used by market researchers
 - 1980s onward - used by academics
- Transcript of discussion is the data
 - Plus accompanying notes
 - Use content analysis or grounded theory approach to analyze the data

3. Focus Group Interviews (cont'd)

- Strengths:
 - Open-ended question
 - Spontaneously deal with issues as they arise
 - Cost-effective method of collecting data
 - Less time-consuming
- Weaknesses:
 - One or two participants may dominate
 - Not done in a natural setting, so little “observation” to help understand the experience of the participants

Choosing the Format of Your questionnaire Questions

- Fixed alternative
 - Yes/No
 - Reliable
 - Not powerful
- Open-ended
 - May not be properly answered
 - May be difficult to score

Choosing the Format of Your Interview

- **Unstructured**
 - Interviewer bias is a serious problem
 - Data may not be hard to analyze
- **Semi-structured**
 - Follow-up questions allowed
 - Probably best for pilot studies
- **Structured**
 - Standardized, reducing interviewer bias

Formulating Questions: Mistakes to Avoid

1. Avoid leading questions
2. Avoid questions that invite the social desirability bias
3. Avoid double-barreled questions
4. Avoid long questions
5. Avoid negations
6. Avoid irrelevant questions
7. Avoid poorly worded response options
8. Avoid big words
9. Avoid ambiguous words &

Points to be considered while Administering the tools

- Informed consent
- Clear instructions
- Debriefing
- Confidentiality