

Draft of your proposal: Research Design Section

Research Design and Methods (2-3 pages)

Your research design, or methodology, is your "action plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions" (Yin 1994:19). List your questions and the methods ("ways of finding out") you'll use to answer them.

Question	Methods (ways of finding out)
1.	
2.	
3.	

In class, following Marshall and Rossma (1995:41), we outlined six ways of finding out about behavior: (1) ASK, (2) READ, (3) OBSERVE, (4) INFER, (5) EXPERIMENT, and (6) IMAGINE.

See: http://reserves.ucsd.edu/eres/docs/31970/marshall_rossman_ps.pdf

Use this list to help you fill out the table above:

1. You can ask people--about their own and others' behavior

- surveys
- formal interviews with random samples
- semi-structured, unstructured and in-depth interviewing
- key informant testimonies

2. You can read--examine written records

- reviews of published literature, books, journals, etc.
- historical document and archive searching (archives: running public/ episodic private)
- analysis of personal and institutional documents
- examination of official statistics

3. You can observe others as well as your own behavior

- participant and non-participant observation

4. You can infer behavior from other information or observations

- detectives clues, physical traces (erosion/accretion)
- content analysis
- statistical analysis
- historical-comparative analysis

5. You can imagine behavior and explore its possibilities

- novels, drama

6. You can experiment

- classical, natural

EXCERPT from:

Danermark, B., M. Ekstrom, et al. (2002). Explaining society : critical realism in the social sciences. London ; New York, Routledge. p. 88

“What is common to the objects of social science is that we can describe them as both individual phenomena, and as manifestations of - or parts of - general structures. This is true about social activities as well as the products of these activities, such as texts, pictures, buildings, situations where people meet, etc. Many of the concepts we use allegedly identify those general structures. Table 2 gives examples of what we mean by this distinction between individual concrete phenomena and general structures.

The difference between what is described in the left and the right columns, respectively, is a difference between on the one hand observable events, and on the other, structures not directly observable. Knowledge of the latter requires concepts and theories. But there is also a difference in generality. In the left column it is a matter of individual phenomena, which can look rather different from time to time. In the right column there is a description of the more general, universal, but not unchangeable dimensions of social reality.

How do we actually make the assumption that individual events may be part of a general, more universal context or structure? What makes us see universal structures in individual events? What is it in, for example, a particular funeral.”

Table 2 Individual events and general structures

<u>Individual events/phenomena</u>	<u>General structures</u>
Men and women who communicate at a place of work, in the home or at a political meeting	Gender structures, internal relationships described in terms of gender theories
Pupils and teachers meeting in a classroom institution	Norms and rules making school a specific
The manifest content of a text	Implicit ideological meanings of the text
A building as a physical object	The power structures that certain buildings can be regarded as embodying
A funeral, people greeting each other, or a morning meeting in a newsroom	Rituals creating social cohesion by means internal relations and mechanisms

Source: Danermark, B., M. Ekstrom, et al. (2002). Explaining society : critical realism in the social sciences. London ; New York, Routledge. p. 88

Identifying structures: What are the “structures” key to your research?

List them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

