

# Field Research

# Quantitative vs. Qualitative Approaches

	<u>Quantitative Research</u>	<u>Qualitative Research</u>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Test hypotheses</li> <li>•Formulate general laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Immerse self in data</li> <li>•Capture meaning</li> </ul>
<b>Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Formulate distinct variables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Themes, motifs, generalizations, taxonomies</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Created <i>before</i> data collection</li> <li>•Systematic, standardized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Created <i>during</i> data collection</li> <li>•Ad hoc, specific to setting or researcher</li> </ul>
<b>Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Numerical</li> <li>•Precisely measured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Words, images</li> <li>•From documents, observations, transcripts</li> </ul>
<b>Theory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Usually causal</li> <li>•Deductive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Causal or non-causal</li> <li>•Inductive</li> </ul>
<b>Procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Standard to facilitate replication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Particular to setting and researcher, rarely replicated</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Statistics, tables, charts</li> <li>•Related to hypotheses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Themes, generalizations</li> <li>•Organizes data to present a coherent and consistent picture</li> </ul>

# Qualitative Data

Expressed as *words, text, pictures, images, objects* or other *symbolic representations*.

The job of the researcher is to identify important representations to a group, then discern the meaning that group members attach to these representations.

# Field Research

## Topics Appropriate for Field Research:

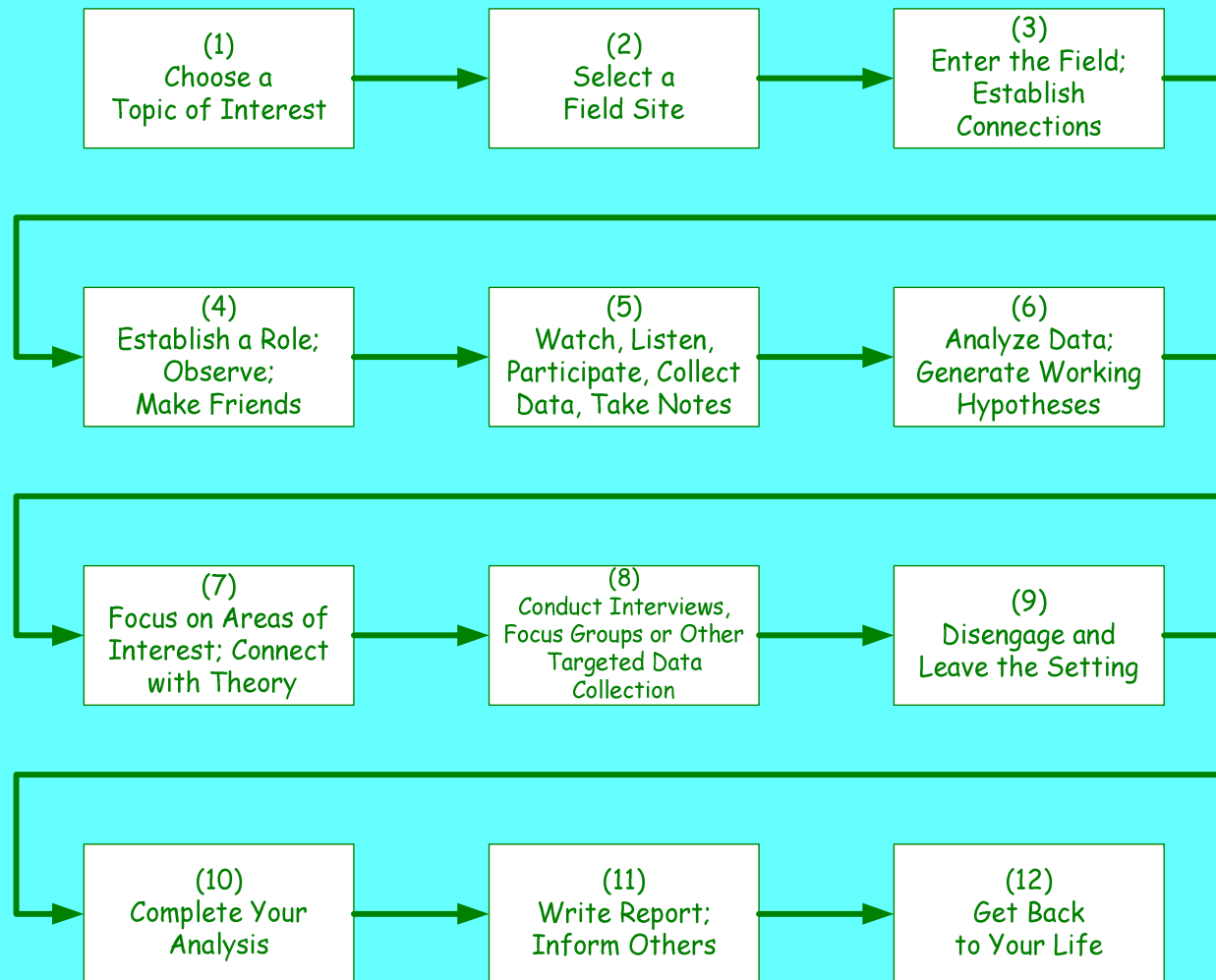
- (1) The micro-processes through which social situations and structures are constructed
- (2) Rules and processes of social interaction
- (3) The social reality of a particular group

# Field Research

Source of Data for Field Research:

- (1) Observation
- (2) Documents
- (3) Interviews

# Steps in Field Research



Adapted from W. Lawrence Neuman (2003) *Social Research Methods*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.

SSC 470/570: *Methods of Social Research*

# Steps in Field Research

## (1) Choose a topic of interest

- Field Researchers use the literature to focus in on a particular issue or topic they want to study and understand
- They start with a general, unfocused topic, and apply a "learning" perspective throughout data collection

# Steps in Field Research

## (2) Select a Field Site

- Field Researcher must carefully select a site that allows them to study their topic of interest
- They generally collaborate with local organizations or key informants



# Steps in Field Research

## (3) Enter the Field and Establish Connections with Subjects

- Field Researchers spend a lot of time with their collaborators and get to know people
- They review documents to learn about the history and structure of their organization and community
- They may use a variety of organizations as secondary sources

# Steps in Field Research

## (4) Establish a Role, Observe, Make Friends

- Field Researchers must establish an identity in the organization or community
- They spend a lot of time talking to people, telling them what they are doing, and asking questions

# Steps in Field Research

## (5) Watch, Listen, Collect Data, Take Notes

- Field Researchers observe activities, events, ordinary interactions
- They keep detailed notes of everything they observe and their reactions
- Their notes are their data; they need to review them periodically

# Steps in Field Research

## (6) Analyze Data and Generate Working Hypotheses

- Analysis of field data is an on-going process that involves establishing patterns in the data
- As field researchers progress, they generate working hypotheses that tie their case to a particular theoretical perspective

# Steps in Field Research

## (7) Focus on Aspects of Interest, Connect with Theory

- Using working hypotheses, Field Researchers focus their activities on specific events that address the hypotheses
- They think in terms of grouping or organizing information into theoretical *categories*

# Steps in Field Research

## (8) Conduct Interviews, Focus Groups, or Other Targeted Data Collection Techniques

- Field Researchers frequently use open-ended questions to understand their subjects and subject matter
- They administer the questions to selected subjects or focus groups, chosen subjects purposefully, using "snowball" sampling or advice from a key informant
- They usually record the interviews

# Steps in Field Research

## (9) Disengage and Leave the Setting

- Field Research involves building relationships over time, and once the project is complete, field researchers must reorient the relationships with their subjects
- Subjects contribute a lot to the research, and field researchers must treat them with respect and dignity

# Steps in Field Research

## (10) Complete the Analysis and Write the Report

- Once Field Researchers return from the field, they finalize their typology or theory, and prepare their results
- Many then verify their results with their subjects
- They then present their results to colleagues