



What Data Shall we Gather and How Will we Obtain it and process it?

**Key Considerations for
Beginning Researchers**

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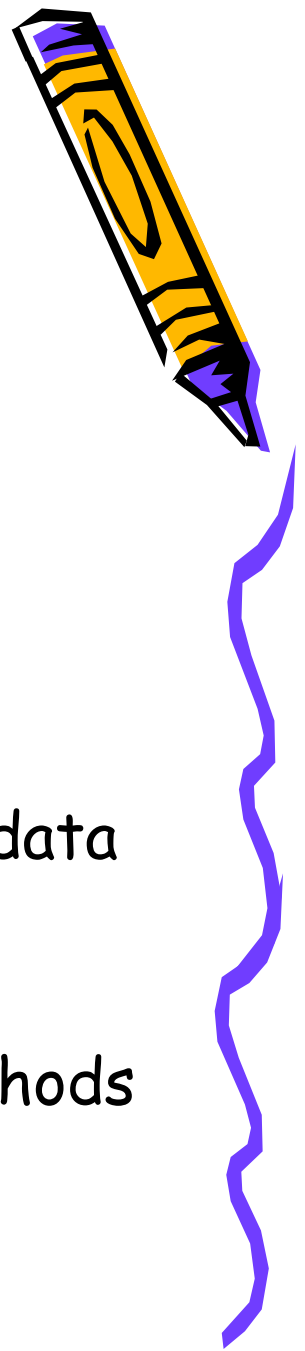
How will we know about which data to seek?

- Your research will certainly be theory based:
 - It may seek to confirm theory
 - It may seek to challenge theory
 - It may seek to modify theory
- It will, therefore, engage with theory.



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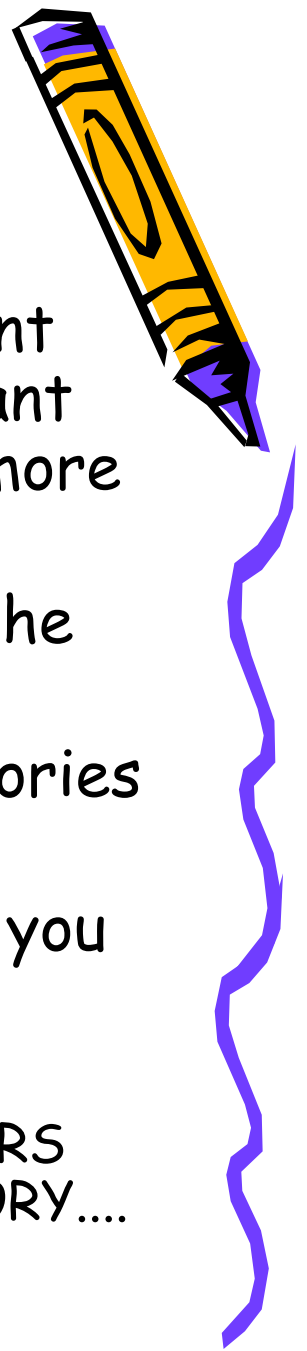
- Your theory base will almost certainly generate
 - Research goals and/or
 - Hypotheses and/or
 - Questions
- These may be variously framed but will almost certainly inform you about which data to seek and the nature of the data to be sought will tell you how best to gather it.
- Once your objectives are clear, your methods should become apparent.



Plan Down From Where You Want to End Up

- Decide now what sort of answers you want and, therefore, what sort of data you want to end up with. You may want to gather more than one form of data....
- Decide how you will most likely process the data that you intend to gather.
- Decide upon the kinds of questions or stories that you will seek answers for.
- Decide upon who you should ask and how you will approach them.

TRY REARRANGING THE SEQUENCE OF ANSWERS YOU GENERATED SO THAT THEY TELL A STORY....



And all of this **BEFORE** you begin to seek data

- Consider also factors that constrain data gathering and factors that bolster data gathering
 - What factors such as time, money, distance, etc. may constrain your data gathering activities?
 - What factors such as time, money, proximity, etc. may bolster your capacity to collect data?



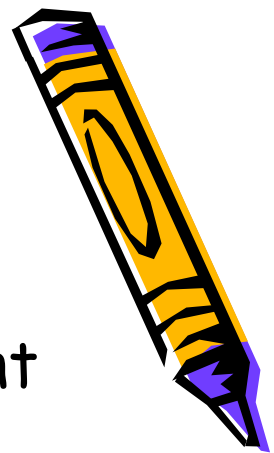
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- Remember that determining precisely what you are going to do with the data before you design any data gathering tools, is crucial.
- I call this **DATA BEFORE DESIGN** and it is a factor that is often overlooked by researchers!!!!
- Bear ethical considerations in mind as you design.



So what approach to gathering data will you use?

- In social science research the three most common data gathering tools and attendant methods are:
 - Surveys, which may gather quantitative data too.
 - Interviews - these can be face-to-face or asynchronous or can be one-to-one or one-to-many - and are used to gather words.
 - Observations, which can take many different forms, and are typically used to gather empirical data about observable behaviours.
- Whatever approach you use, time factors will inevitably tend to overwhelm you rather than underwhelming you.



Working in small groups and as a plenary session



- You will work in groups according to the nature of the data you've gathered;
- You will have a "gossip monitor" who will arrest any gossip (seriously)!
- You will consider how to deal with the data generated by each person in your group for their particular project;
- Then, any issues you can't deal with, or about which you feel unsure, will become addressed as a plenary workshop;
- Then we'll go home.

