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*Just Telling It Like It Is – 2.00: Descriptive Research Workshop*

**Friday, October 28th - Saturday, October 29th, 2022**

Memo

**At the Basic Level:**

The use and intention of description in social science cover quantitative and qualitative methodology by identifying what it conveys and determining if such correlation and/or cause and effect are present. In most social science studies, the researcher pursues questions that recognize some existing or new problem. This is where the “what is” of descriptive studies is concerned because it guides the researcher to tap unexplored research territory or to expand current research territory. While descriptive studies are limited in establishing causality, they can help generate a series of hypotheses. Descriptive studies can be helpful; for example, when the researcher seeks to understand a population for the purposes—say, their attitudes towards specific values and norms—that allow them to correctly target and gauge this population for whatever outcomes they are seeking.

It may also be helpful in a longitudinal design, where the researcher may investigate specific data points tracked and collected over time and how they change over time. Descriptive studies may certainly not just attribute to quantitative and qualitative studies only. In some settings,

researchers can apply this to case studies in isolation from a research design. At the most basic level<sup>1</sup>, descriptive studies can be viewed through the lens of observational research.

### **(Some) Data & Methodology:**

Data collection in the social sciences and beyond ranges from surveys, interviews, portfolios, and so forth. These can be used to answer specific questions involved in descriptive research. In quantitative analysis, the researcher utilizes descriptive statistics and some of its most common measures. However, it should be emphasized that researchers should use caution when attempting some phenomena where the measurement should be as precise as possible. In quantitative research, the researcher collects quantifiable information for their analysis from the population sample. The researcher may then move forward to analyze, for example, the frequency of an event in which it occurs and then proceeds to categorize such information.

Examining data analyses from correlations among variables can be generated from descriptive studies and can help develop hypotheses, as mentioned above, mainly when there is no evidence of causality. Therefore, descriptive research allows the researcher to identify untapped areas where more research may need to be required and the relationship between these variables. Conversely, it may enable the researcher to validate existing knowledge in their field.

### **Advantages:**

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, “basic level” can be quite objective here!

At its core, descriptive research in research design assists the researcher in various ways to explore the background of whatever research problem or phenomenon is being investigated. In turn, this information enables the researcher to apply it to current or further research. Some advantages include the following:

1. Validation: This allows the researcher to explore underlying patterns and/or trends of the research matter.
2. Measurement: Measuring trends over time is most commonly used as a technique in statistical analysis.
3. Demographic comparisons: How do different demographics respond to variables, such as a person's age, during election time? A researcher may study how different individuals—such as adults of different ages—may respond to a young candidate running for election. Are younger or older individuals willing to vote for a young candidate?
4. Datasets: They may be generated depending on the data collection methods, whether new or extended from a previous one.

### **Conclusion:**

The how, what, and when as opposed to the *why*, is where descriptive research emphasizes the most. Before diving into the actual investigation and analysis, it is pertinent that the researcher truly understands what they are researching initially. After a fundamental understanding of the how, what, when, and (where), they can then proceed to the *why*. From this point, the researcher then moves forward with whichever data analysis and gathering method they choose,<sup>2</sup> and the *why* is answered. Descriptive research should be supported in the social sciences as it serves as

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, there are more steps to be taken.

the bedrock for excellent and rigorous research that can genuinely assist the researcher in developing or expanding their research.