

Chapter 2 Methods for Studying Relationships

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 discusses the inherent difficulties in empirically studying intimate relationships, a topic often marked by subjectivity. The very essence of this empirical endeavor begins with careful consideration and precision of operationally defining such intricate variables. This chapter examines, in depth, the various available methodologies including archival research, systematic observation, the dyadic interaction paradigm, interviews, surveys, cross-sectional designs, longitudinal designs, and experiments. The strengths and weaknesses of each approach to research are discussed. The special considerations inherent in studying couples (dyads) are introduced along with novel ways of collecting data for ongoing interactions. Speed dating, web based data collection techniques, and meta-analysis are included in this discussion.

Key Terms

hypothesis: theory-based prediction about the relationship between two or more variables.

operational definition: specify how a content would be measured, and the process through which it will be measured.

archival research: makes use of data collected for purposes other than that of the archival researcher.

correlation: the degree to which two variables are associated.

longitudinal research: designs are those that follow the same participants over a period of time.

inter-rater reliability: the degree to which different raters' findings agree with one another.

internal validity: represents the certainty with which the changes in the dependent variable can be attributed to the manipulation of the independent variable(s) in an experiment.

random assignment: a method of assigning participants in an experiment to ensure that every participant has an equal chance of being in any of the conditions of the experiment.

mundane realism: the extent to which the experiment resembles the real world.

experimental realism: the extent to which participants are fully involved and absorbed by the experiment, and interpret the manipulations in the way the researcher intended.

meta-analysis: a technique that statistically analyzes and summarizes results from many individual studies.

Suggestions for Instructors

1. Divide the students into groups of 4 or 5 and give all groups the same list of possible variables related to the study of intimate relationships. Some possible variables are love, jealousy, attraction, physiological arousal, and equity, etc. Ask the students to devise clear operational definitions for each variable. Have each group present their definitions to the class. This highlights the difficulty in operationally defining such variables and also why the same variables are defined differently across studies.
2. Have students identify various sources of interpersonal communication that they currently use that may one day become an archive source. These may include letters, diaries, saved emails and text messages, web pages, etc.
3. As a writing assignment for this chapter, have students choose an original research article that includes a true experiment. Have the students include in their write-up, a summation of what was already known on the topic, what the authors hoped to add via the current study, hypotheses, independent and dependent variables and operational definitions thereof, significant results, and the author's interpretation of those results.
4. Introduce the students to Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). As an individual or group project have the students create a short survey on a topic covered in Chapters 1 or 2. This will introduce them to survey methodologies and the intricacies thereof.

Test Bank Questions

Multiple Choice Questions

Number 1 **Page Reference: 15**

What politician criticized the National Science Foundation for funding a research project on passionate love and sexual desire?

- a. Bill Clinton
- b. Ted Kennedy
- c. William Proxmire
- d. Arlen Specter

Answer: C

Number 2 **Page Reference: 15**

Which of the following is not an assumption or goal that underlies the conduction of scientific research?

- a. empiricism
- b. existentialism
- c. determinism
- d. testability
- e. parsimony

Answer: B

Number 3 **Page Reference: 15**

What goal sets the scientific pursuit of knowledge apart from the general public's astute observations of human behavior?

- a. objectivity
- b. parsimony
- c. subjectivity
- d. mundane realism

Answer: A

Number 4 **Page Reference: 16**

A theory based prediction about the relationship between two or more variables is a/an:

- a. correlation
- b. operational definition
- c. observation
- d. hypothesis

Answer: D

Number 5 **Page Reference: 16**

Fred recently read in one of his textbooks that direct eye contact can be interpreted differently across cultures. Fred starts observing people around him and now believes that couples in love spend more time looking into each others' eyes. Fred has come up with a/an _____ about the relationship between gazing and love.

- a. theory
- b. hypothesis
- c. uninformed decision
- d. error

Answer: B

Number 6 **Page Reference: 16**

A/an _____ specifies, in concrete, measurable terms, our variable of interest.

- a. operational definition
- b. correlation
- c. theory
- d. experiment

Answer: A

Number 7 **Page Reference: 16**

Some researchers believe that is best to use multiple operational definitions to define complex concepts related to intimate relationships, because:

- a. it enhances statistical power.
- b. single operational definitions tap into a limited set of features.
- c. quantity is always better than quality.
- d. the more operational definitions used, the more likely the researcher will find significant differences even if they are not central to the study.

Answer: B

Number 8 **Page Reference: 16**

The methodology that uses existing data that have often been collected for other purposes, is:

- a. correlational techniques
- b. experimental designs
- c. case studies
- d. archival research

Answer: D

Number 9 **Page Reference: 16**

Which of the following would **not** be considered a source of archival data?

- a. letters
- b. diaries
- c. introspective thoughts
- d. census data

Answer: C

Number 10 **Page Reference: 17**

Coding archival data into measurable units of analysis is called:

- a. content analysis
- b. meta-analysis
- c. orthogonal analysis
- d. factor analysis

Answer: A

Number 11 **Page Reference: 17**

Content analysis allows the researcher to:

- a. determine statistical significance
- b. summarize archival data
- c. determine content validity
- d. decipher letters and diaries that were written in a coded language

Answer: B

Number 12 **Page Reference: 17**

Using two or more coders or observers to look at data in order to determine if they reach a consensus regarding whatever they are observing is called:

- a. the false consensus effect
- b. archival research
- c. statistical significance
- d. inter-rater reliability

Answer: D

Number 13 **Page Reference: 17**

A major disadvantage of archival research is:

- a. the researcher does not have control of the accuracy of the data
- b. archival research is usually not economical
- c. data from large geographical regions cannot be collected
- d. naturally occurring phenomena cannot be studied

Answer: A

Number 14 **Page Reference: 17**

Middlemist, Knowles, & Mather (1977) used systematic observation to study:

- a. children imitating an aggressive adult model
- b. personal space violations in public restrooms
- c. college students trying to suppress thoughts of white bears
- d. consumer behavior in response to a product endorsed by Sarah Palin

Answer: B

Number 15 **Page Reference: 18**

Naturalness of behavior and naturalness of the setting are advantages of what type of research design?

- a. the experiment
- b. the case study
- c. systematic observation
- d. archival studies

Answer: C

Number 16 **Page Reference: 18**

The dyadic intervention paradigm, a technique for observing couples in the laboratory, was developed by:

- a. John Gottman
- b. Sigmund Freud
- c. William Ickes
- d. John Watson

Answer: C

Number 17 **Page Reference: 19**

One of the most costly and time-consuming forms of data collection, is:

- a. interviews
- b. case studies
- c. experiments
- d. archival research

Answer: A

Number 18 **Page Reference: 19**

In order to obtain the best and most honest responses to interviews, it is extremely important that:

- a. as little money as possible is spent on the process
- b. the interviewer establishes a good rapport with the interviewee
- c. the interviewer avoids sensitive topics
- d. the interviewee gives yes and no answers only

Answer: B

Number 19 **Page Reference: 19**

There is a web-based survey administrative device known as:

- a. the survey poodle
- b. the survey tiger
- c. the survey monkey
- d. the survey giraffe

Answer: C

Number 20

Page Reference: 20

A challenge inherent in collecting survey data is the possibility of ordering effects. This refers to a bias in:

- a. instructions that demand that all questions are answered even if the participant has no opinion regarding one or more of the items.
- b. directives that suggest that the participant not share their answers with others.
- c. the total number of items included on the survey instrument.
- d. the sequence in which questions or items are placed on the survey.

Answer: D

Number 21

Page Reference: 21

A research technique that allows the researcher to see the extent to which two or more variables are related is:

- a. a correlation
- b. an experiment
- c. a case study
- d. a survey

Answer: A

Number 22

Page Reference: 21

Which of the following is **not** a type of correlation?

- a. a negative correlation
- b. a zero correlation
- c. a positive correlation
- d. a complex correlation

Answer: D

Number 23 **Page Reference: 21**

When the increase in one variable is related to an increase in another variable, this is called:

- a. a zero, or no correlation
- b. a positive correlation
- c. an absolute correlation
- d. a negative correlation

Answer: B

Number 24 **Page Reference: 21**

An example of a negative correlation would be:

- a. as the hours a student studies increases, his/her grades go up
- b. as the amount of coffee consumed increases, pulse rate increases
- c. as the similarity between two people increases, attraction between them decreases
- d. as the amount of television viewing increases, grade point average increases

Answer: C

Number 25 **Page Reference: 21**

Which of the following is **not** true regarding correlational analysis?

- a. it allows the researcher to examine variables that usually cannot be manipulated.
- b. it is relatively fast and convenient
- c. it allows the researcher to determine which of the variables caused a change in another.
- d. examines the relationship between two or more variables

Answer: C

Number 26 **Page Reference: 22**

Which of the following research designs follows the same group of people over an extended period of time?

- a. cross-sectional design
- b. longitudinal design
- c. case study
- d. correlational design

Answer: B

Number 27 **Page Reference: 22**

Which of the following designs are able to track the impact of maturation and life experiences on the researcher's variables of interest?

- a. cross-sectional designs
- b. longitudinal designs
- c. case studies
- d. correlational designs

Answer: B

Number 28 **Page Reference: 23**

Which of the following is **not** a key feature of experimentation?

- a. control
- b. random assignment
- c. correlation
- d. comparison

Answer: C

Number 29 **Page Reference: 23**

The extent to which changes in the dependent variable can be attributed to the manipulation of the independent variable(s) is:

- a. internal validity
- b. external validity
- c. face validity
- d. content validity

Answer: A

Number 30 **Page Reference: 23**

The variable that is manipulated by the researcher is called:

- a. the control variable
- b. the extraneous variable
- c. the dependent variable
- d. the independent variable

Answer: D

Number 31 **Page Reference: 23**

Ensuring that each participant has an equal chance of being in any of the experiment's conditions is usually achieved by:

- a. ordering effects
- b. random assignment
- c. experimental realism
- d. mundane realism

Answer: B

Number 32 **Page Reference: 23**

Which of the following is **not** a technique used to ensure random assignment?

- a. flipping a coin
- b. using a random number generator
- c. participant choice
- d. drawing numbers out of a hat

Answer: C

Number 33 **Page Reference: 24**

Which of the following is **not** true of experiments?

- a. provide control over the lab or field environment
- b. are high in real world realism
- c. provide control over unwanted variables
- d. test the causal nature of relationships among variables

Answer: B

Number 34 **Page Reference: 24**

If experiment participants are fully involved and absorbed by the experiment, this is called:

- a. parsimony
- b. mundane realism
- c. experimental control
- d. experimental realism

Answer: D

Number 35 **Page Reference: 25**

If an experiment resembles the real-world, this is referred to as:

- a. experimental realism
- b. mundane realism
- c. controlled realism
- d. preferred realism

Answer: B

Discussion Questions

1. What is an operational definition? Provide plausible operational definitions of love, attraction, and jealousy.
2. What are some of the ways in which you communicate with others (friends, family, partners)? Compare these communications with sources of existing archives. How might more modern forms of communications one day serve as sources of archival research?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of systematic observation?
4. What is meant by ordering effects? How might ordering effects strengthen or weaken an interview?
5. Give examples of positive, negative, and zero correlations. Provide clear examples of variables that would probably correlate in each of these ways.
6. What are the three key elements of a successful experiment? Discuss each one in detail.
7. What is the difference between experimental realism and mundane realism?
8. Studying couples, or dyads, is often more complicated than studying the individual. Discuss dyadic effects and include the concepts of within-dyad interdependence and between-dyad interdependence.
9. With regard to using techniques of collecting data of ongoing interactions, discuss the techniques of interval-contingent recordings, signal-contingent recordings, and event-contingent recordings.
10. What is a meta-analysis? Discuss the strengths of the meta-analysis.