



HOW TO CHOOSE A RESEARCH METHOD

(a quick and dirty guide)

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3 questions to answer:

- 1) Am I looking for something general, or for something particular?
- 2) Am I looking for something observable, or not?
- 3) What kind of thing am I looking for? (action, belief, "trait")

THE RESEARCH OBJECT: THE KIND OF THING ONE SEEKS

TECHNIQUES FOR SEEKING

	acts	reports of acts	personal opinions (shallow)	personal opinions (deep)	cultural knowledge	Expert knowledge	personal feelings	intra- psychic "traits"	self- identity	experience as it appears in consciousness	hidden social patterns
detached observation	X										X
participant observation (ethnography)	X	X	X	(X)	X	X			(X)		X
in-depth interview		X	X	X	X	X	X	(X)	X	(X)	(X)
questionnaire		X	X		X						
ethnoscience					X	X					
phenomenology		X								X	
ethnomethodology		X			X	X					X
critical incident interviews		X	X	X	X		(X)				
focus groups			X		X	X					
psychological tests								X	X		
content analysis					X			(X)	(X)		(X)
narrative/discourse analysis		X			X				X		X
grounded theory											X

"X" = standard method for this object;
 "(X)" = possible method, but requires extra depth &/or interpretation to get results