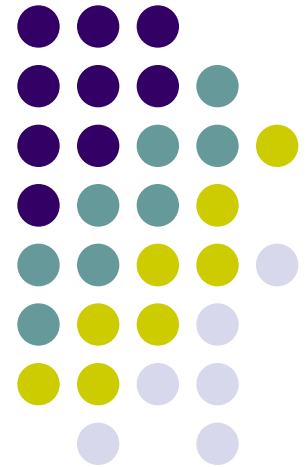
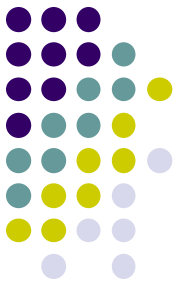


Selecting the question/s you need

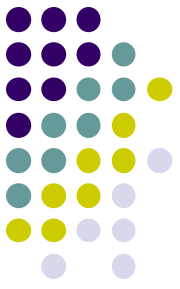


Selecting a research question



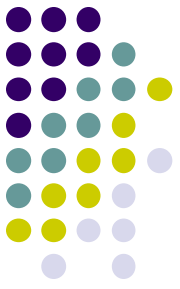
- A question about social world that you try to answer by use of empirical data
- One over-arching question
 - Some sub-questions
- Two fundamental criteria:
 - 1) interest
 - 2) researchability

Questions that can be researched



- A successful research project depends on how researcher develops the research question.
- Forms the foundation of your study.
- Must be specified before you begin your study/data gathering/analysis.
- A well-formulated research question requires specificity and preciseness.
- A research question guides and centers your research.
- It should be clear and focused.
- It should synthesize multiple sources of information and present your argument as a researcher.

Characteristics of good RQs

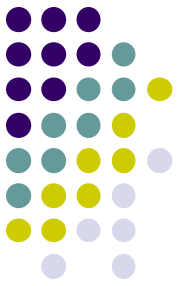


- ❖ Clear
- ❖ Relevant
- ❖ Manageable
- ❖ Original, substantial
- ❖ Empirically focused
- ❖ Significant
- ❖ Awareness of assumptions
- ❖ Accessible evidence
- ❖ Related to previous research
- ❖ Ethical
- ❖ Interesting to you

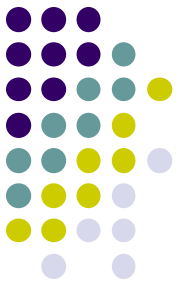
Source: recommended by Ingrid Lunt (Oxford university)

Clarity

- It should be answerable!
- It should be understandable!
- It should make an original contribution to knowledge in some way!

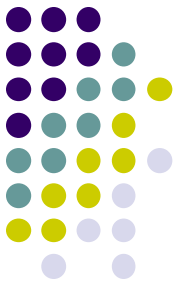


Relevant



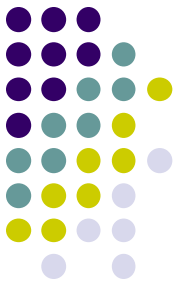
- The question should be of intellectual interest to people in the field you have chosen to study.
- The question arises from issues raised in the literature or in practice.
- You should be able to establish a clear purpose for your research in relation to the chosen field.

Manageable



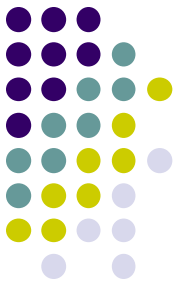
- You should be realistic about the aim and scale of your project.
- The question must be within your ability to tackle.
- Sometimes a RQ appears feasible, but when you start fieldwork or library study, it proves it isn't.

Substantial, original



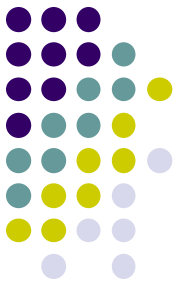
- RQ is not a simply *copy/paste proces* for questions asked in other researchers unless it is planned to be conducted on a different sample or in a comparable way.
- It shows imagination and ability to construct and develop research issues.

Empirical focus



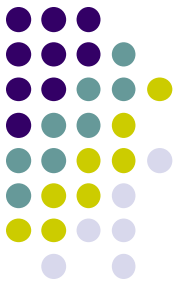
- Generate data to answer question.
- Determine methods of enquiry and data collection.
- Different types of questions will lead to different approaches to research and methods of data collection.

Significant



- Is there a clear rationale for the question?
- Does this question matter?
- Why is it of interest? To whom is of interest?

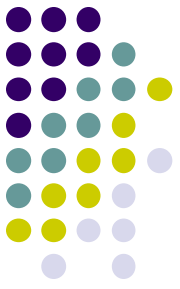
Awareness of assumptions



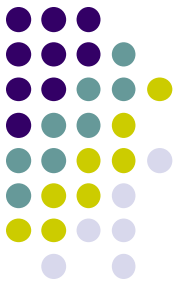
- It should allow your aim to satisfy the outcomes of the study.

Example: a theoretical approach

How do you formulate a good RQ?



- Choose a general topic of interest, and conduct preliminary research!
- ↓
- Determine what kinds of questions the topic generates!
 - Who is the audience?
 - “How?” “What?” and Why?” questions!
 - Try to evaluate possible responses to those questions.



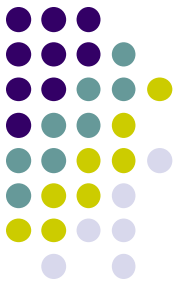
Examples of RQs – WHY?

Good RQs

Why do students enrolled in Seminar on Research Methods classes perform significantly differently on writing a research proposal than students who do not participate in that seminar?

Why some people tend to be more prone to drug consumption than others?

How to formulate sociological RQ?

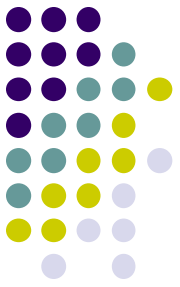


- RQs examine the social meaning or patterns of a phenomenon.
- Key element – social

Example: *Which of the following RQs is sociological?*

- 1) Does having an abortion increase the chances a woman will be depressed?
- 2) Does having an abortion vary by social class and ethnicity?

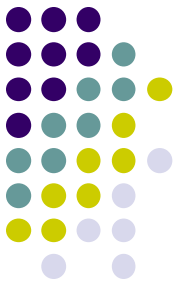
How to revise RQ to make it more interesting?



Two situations:

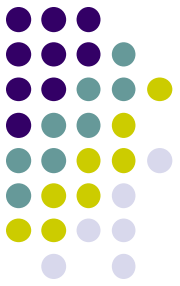
- RQs are not relevant for social science or concern just a small population
- RQ is not interesting because the results are already known

1st situation



- You should enlarge RQ – generalize the question
- However, irrelevance is a matter of degree.
- Try to link RQ to theories and other empirical work!

2nd situation

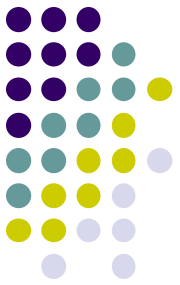


- Make sure that the method is not - to some degree - pre-ordaining the results!

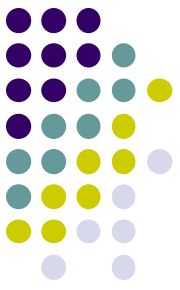
Example: the effect of marital satisfaction on the overall life satisfaction

- Find independent measures of the two concepts – they might not lead to positive relationship between the two variables.

2nd situation

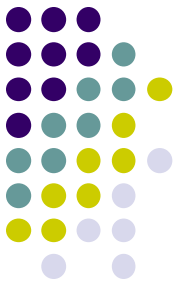


- Existence of many researches does not necessarily mean that scholars have reached a consensus \Rightarrow a research that finds definitive conclusions and make a significant contribution
- When you find prior well-established findings, \Rightarrow try to work on a new direction or challenge the existing findings



- **Example:** prior research have demonstrated that married people are happier than unmarried.
 - 1. Challenge prior research:** maybe the key-concepts are not well measured, statistical methods are not good enough, problems with sample, data.
 - 2. Clarify concepts in prior research:** eliminating fuzziness in concepts – not new results, but new understanding of the meanings

Extend prior research



- Focus on a key-subpopulation
- Use a new population
- Use a different time period
- Use new subpopulation or population to test a specific hypothesis
- Refine or extend the causal explanations

Refine or extend the causal explanations



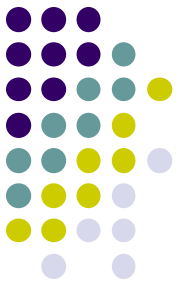
1) Mediating variable:

Gender → ??? → earnings

Causal direction is not obvious! – marriage and happiness???

2) Non-mediating variables

Mediators

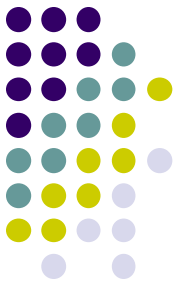


- A mediator variable explains the relationship between a predictor and an outcome

Example:

We are interested in whether or not males and females have differing unemployment period because of differing levels of social support

Moderators

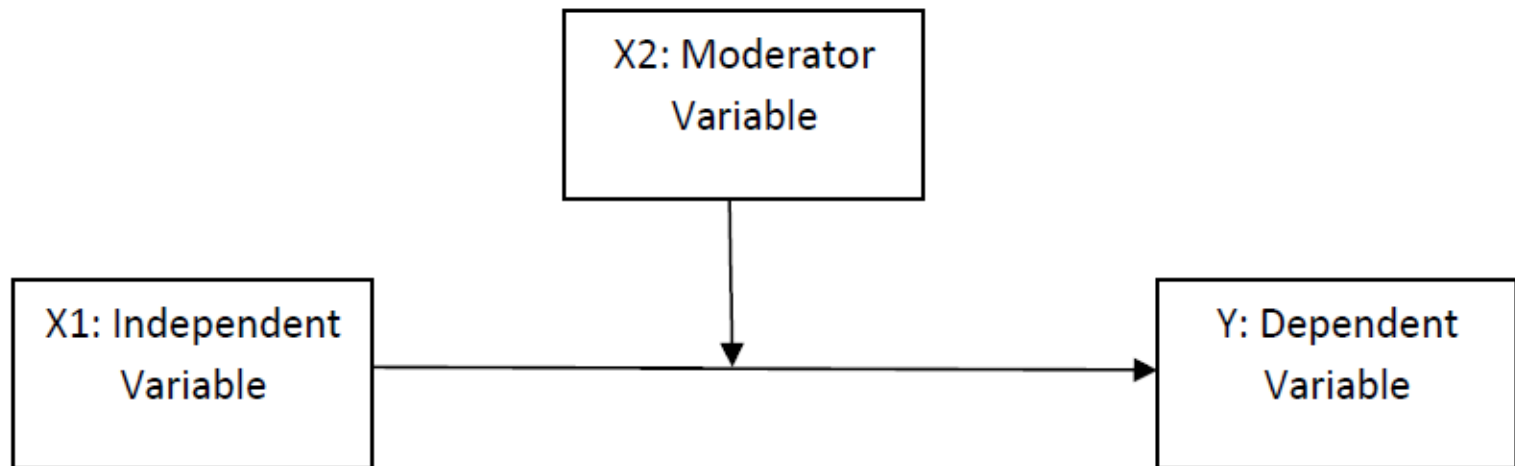
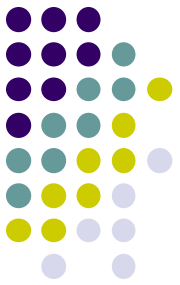


- A moderator is a variable that alters the direction or strength of the relationship between a predictor and an outcome
- It is just an interaction – the effect of one variable depends on the level of another

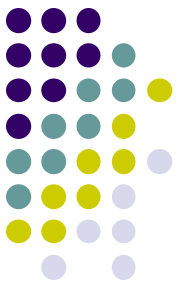
Example:

We are interested not only in the effect of social support on return to labour market, but whether this differs if the person is male or female

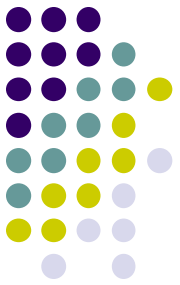
Moderator model



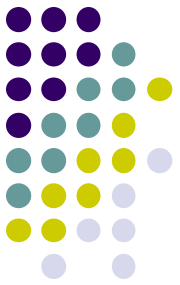
How to structure quantitative RQs - some steps



- 1) choose the type of quantitative RQ - descriptive, comparative or relationship-based;
- 2) come up with different types of variables to be measured, manipulated and/or controlled, as well as any groups of interest;
- 3) choose an appropriate structure for the chosen type of quantitative research question;
- 4) write down issues you are trying to address in the form of a complete research question



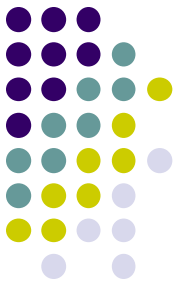
Questionnaire



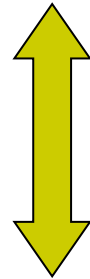
What is it?

A set of questions designed to generate the data necessary for accomplishing a research project's goals!

Impact on data accuracy

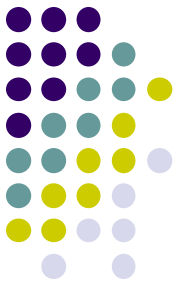


- It must communicate to the respondent what the researcher is asking



- It must communicate to the researcher what the respondent has said

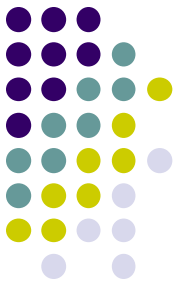
Sample size – quantitative approach



- Your survey results are representative \Leftrightarrow a large number of randomly-selected participants in each group you survey
- What exactly is "a large number?"

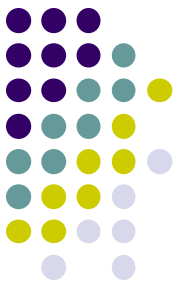
Sample Size (N)	Margin of Error (percentage)
10	31.6
20	22.4
50	14.1
100	10.0
200	7.1
500	4.5
1000	3.2
2000	2.2
5000	1.4
10000	1.0

Sample Size Calculator



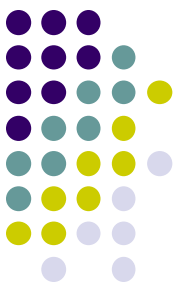
- You can use online sample size calculators to determine the number of people you need to interview for a given precision in your results.
- <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>
- <http://www.custominsight.com/articles/random-sample-calculator.asp>

How many respondents do you need for a pilot study?



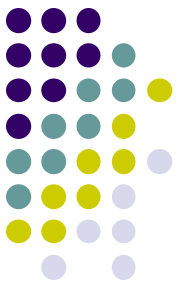
- Connelly (2008) \Rightarrow 10% of the sample projected for the larger parent study.
- But, Hertzog (2008) \Rightarrow it is not a simple or straight forward issue to resolve because these types of studies are influenced by many factors.
- **Possible:** 10 would be a minimum, and 30 maximum when you operate with a sample size of 300.

Sample size – qualitative approach



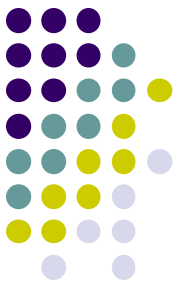
- The answer is that there is no rule of thumb!!!
- There are some types of research where:
 - 1) larger numbers of subjects may be easier to get,
 - 2) more advisable to obtain,
 - 3) more commonly sought.
- A qualitative sample must be big enough to assure that we are likely to hear most or all of the perceptions that might be important.

Common sense advice for qualitative approach



- No reasonable answer, no magic number
- The only possible answer \Rightarrow to have enough interviews to say what you think is true and not to say things you don't have that number for.
- Number of interviews you need will change from day to day as you learn more and revise your ideas.
- To stop will be somewhat arbitrary (saturation, maybe running out of time or money ...).

How should you administer the questionnaire?



- Self administered questionnaires (post, email, or online).
- Interview administered questionnaires (telephone or face to face).

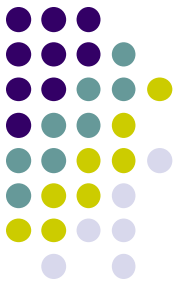
Advantages of self administered questionnaires include:

- 1) Cheap and easy to administer.
- 2) Preserve confidentiality.
- 3) Can be completed at respondent's convenience.

Advantages of interview administered questionnaires include:

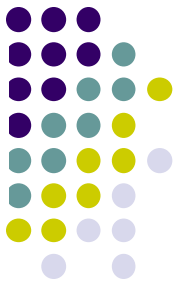
- 1) Allow participation by illiterate people.
 - 2) Allow clarification of ambiguity.
 - 3) Targeting individuals who provide specific information.
 - 4) Greater guarantee of a response.
- The exact method of administration also depends on who the respondents are.

Questionnaire Construction



- Avoiding sensitive issues
- Types of responses to questions
- Demographic questions

Introduction in the questionnaire



- Identification of the survey or respondent
- Purpose of survey
- Explanation of respondent selection
- Request for participation/provide incentive
- Screening of respondent

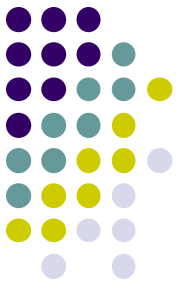
Sensitive issues



- We **cannot** ask questions regarding a person's preferences, desires, and interests on sensitive or private matters

Any examples? – *How many glasses of wine do you drink every evening?*

- We **can** ask them what they think in a more general way

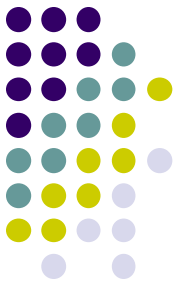


Question form

- Nonstructured questions
 - Open-ended

- Structured questions
 - Fixed-response

Types of responses



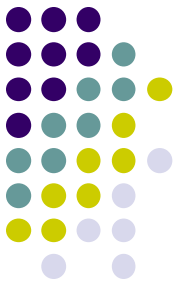
Easy Analysis

- Radio Buttons
Exactly one response
- Check Boxes
Many responses (none to all)

Hard Analysis

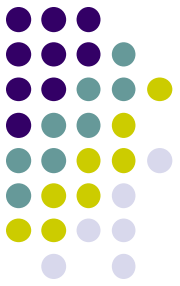
- Text Boxes
Small areas form response
- Text Areas
Large areas form response

Types of responses



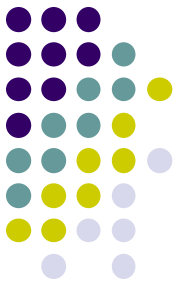
- Radio responses
 - Recommended to have most of the questions with this type of response
 - Select exactly one of two or more choices
 - Example:
 - Yes | No
 - Female | Male
 - Primary education | Lower secondary education | Upper secondary education | Tertiary education
 - Scaled: Totally agree | Agree | Disagree | Totally disagree

Types of Responses



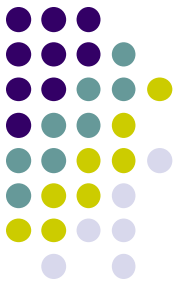
- Check box responses
 - Some of these
 - Choose none or more from a list
 - May include **others** options.
 - Examples:
 - List of books
 - List of food products
 - Include **others** so the respondent can fill in what we forgot

Types of Responses



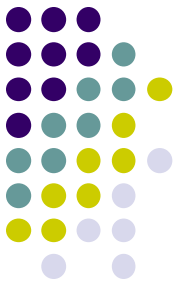
- Free form responses
 - Text box
 - Space for a word or phrase
 - Text area
 - Space for an extended response
- Keep these types of responses to a minimum
WHY?
 - Hard to quantify

Demographic Questions



- Questions that quantify your population
- Demographics provide a standard for measuring other responses
- Use radio responses
 - Gender
 - Class
 - Education
 - Marital status
 - Occupation
- Choose those that are appropriate for your questionnaire

Response category content



Response choices should be:

- Collectively exhaustive
 - taken together
- Mutually exclusive
 - not overlap



Response category

The response choices are collectively exhaustive but not mutually exclusive!!!

- On the average, how many glasses of wine (100 ml) do you drink per week?

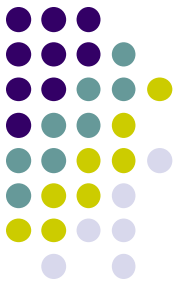
_____ 0 to 3 glasses

_____ 3 to 6 glasses

_____ More than 6 glasses

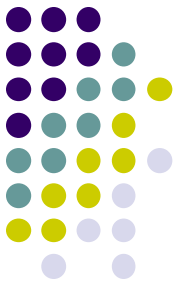
Changing the 3 in the second category to a 4 will make the response choices mutually exclusive!

Pretesting the questionnaire



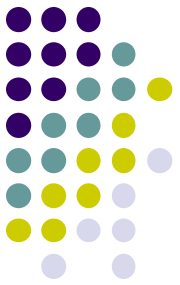
- Pretest the entire survey process, including the questionnaire: sampling frame, sample draw, data gathering (mail, phone, online, etc.), editing, coding, file building, data entry, and preliminary analysis
- Questionnaire pretest: 20-40 questionnaires; “10 percent change pretest rule”
 - Changes: add Qs, delete Qs, modify Qs, change order of Qs
 - Less than 10 percent change no new pretest, 10 percent or more, pretest again

Writing a questionnaire for international use



- Caution
 - Use of the same word can have different meanings in different cultures

- Word Equivalence



- Don't be surprised by your research findings!
- Small effects or no effects – also a finding
- Sometimes more interesting than large effects!

Non-effect ≠ non-finding

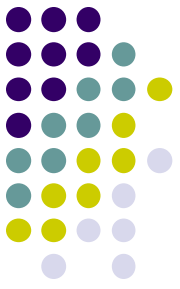
Preparation of qualitative research – the role of the interviewer



Role ⇒ complex and multifaceted

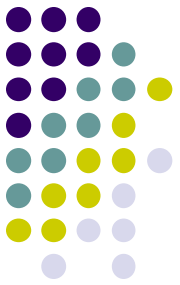
- Locate respondents and ask for their agreement to take part in the study
- Motivate respondents to do good job
- Clarify any confusion/concerns
- Observe the quality of responses
- Conduct a good interview

Training the interviewers – when researcher \neq interviewer



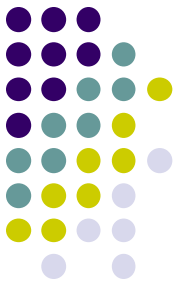
- Describe the entire study
- State who is funding/paying for the research
- Offer enough information about survey research
- Explain the sampling logic and process
- Explain interviewer bias
- Go through the interview
- Explain respondent selection procedures
- Rehearse interview
- Explain supervision
- Explain scheduling

Interview



- **Opening remarks:**

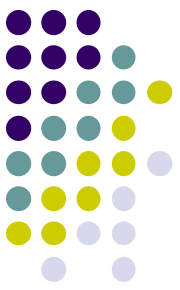
“Hello. My name is _____ and I am student at _____. I’m working on a research project looking at _____ (title of your research project) for a course called ‘....’ or my BA/MA/PhD thesis. The aim of my research is _____.
Your answers are anonymous and will help me to understand....”



Asking the questions

- Use questionnaire carefully, but informally
- Ask questions exactly as written
- Follow the order given, if there is a continuity between questions (do not jump to another topic)
- Ask every question
- Don't finish sentences

Obtaining proper responses when answer is brief – use of probe



- Silent probe
- Encouragement
- Elaboration - "Would you like to elaborate on that?" or "Is there anything else you would like to add?"
- Ask for clarification - „Before, you were talking about ... Could you tell me more about that?"
- Repetition