**Types of Research**

**Basic Research**

It is also called academic research or pure research. Basic research advances fundamental knowledge about the social world. It is the source of most new scientific ideas and ways to think about social events. The scientific community is its primary audience. Researchers use basic research to support or refute theories about how the social world operates and changes, what makes things happen, and why social relations or events are in a certain way.

**Applied Research**

When we do applied research we address a specific concern. We may offer solutions to a question raised by an employer, a local community, or a social cause (Mostly private research). Only rarely in applied research do we try to build, test, or make connections to theory. Most applied research studies are short term and small scale. They offer practical results that we can use within a year or less.

While much research is conducted in professional or industry settings, a great deal of mass media research is conducted at colleges and universities. There are several differences between research in the academic and the private sectors (applied), including, but not limited to:

* Academic research tends to be more theoretical in nature; private-sector research is generally more applied.
* The data used in academic research are public, whereas much industry research is based on proprietary data.
* Top management often determines private-sector research topics; academic researchers have more freedom in their choice of topics.
* Projects in private-sector research usually cost more to conduct than do academic investigations.

The two research settings also have some common features:

* Many research techniques and approaches used in the private sector emerged from academic research.
* Industry and academic researchers use the same basic research methodologies and approaches.
* The goal of research is often the same in both settings—to explain and predict audience and consumer behavior.

**Exploratory Research**

We use exploratory research when the subject is very new, we know little or nothing about it, and no one has yet explored it. Our goal with it is to formulate more precise questions that we can address in future research. As a first stage of inquiry, we want to know enough after the exploratory study so we can design and execute a second, more systematic and extensive study. Exploratory research rarely yields definitive answers. It addresses the “what” question: What is this social activity really about?

**Descriptive Research**

You may have a well-developed idea about a social phenomenon and want to describe it. Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship. Much of the social research found in scholarly journals or used for making policy decisions is descriptive. Descriptive and exploratory research blur together in practice. A descriptive research study starts with a well-defined issue or question and tries to describe it accurately. The study’s outcome is a detailed picture of the issue or answer to the research question.

**Explanatory Research**

When encountering an issue that is known and with a description of it, we might wonder why things are the way they are. Addressing the “why” is the purpose of explanatory research. It builds on exploratory and descriptive research and goes on to identify the reason something occurs. Going beyond providing a picture of the issue, an explanatory study looks for causes and reasons.

**Historical Research**

The systematic collection and evaluation of data to describe, explain, and understand actions or events that occurred sometime in the past. There is no manipulation or control of variables as in experimental research.

An attempt is made to reconstruct what happened during a certain period of time as completely and accurately as possible.

Purpose of historical research is to make people aware of what has happened in the past in order to learn from past failures and successes, Apply them to present-day problems, make predictions, test hypotheses concerning relationships or trends and understand present educational practices and policies more fully. The resources of historical research include: documents, numerical records, oral statements and relics (any objects whose physical or visual characteristics can provide some information about the past).

**Correlational Research**

A correlational study determines whether or not two variables are correlated. This means to study whether an increase or decrease in one variable corresponds to an increase or decrease in the other variable.

There are three types of correlations that are identified:

1. Positive correlation: Positive correlation between two variables is when an increase in one variable leads to an increase in the other and a decrease in one leads to a decrease in the other. For example, the amount of money that a person possesses might correlate positively with the number of cars he owns.
2. Negative correlation: Negative correlation is when an increase in one variable leads to a decrease in another and vice versa. For example, the level of education might correlate negatively with crime. This means if by some way the education level is improved in a country, it can lead to lower crime. Note that this doesn't mean that a lack of education causes crime. It could be, for example, that both lack of education and crime have a common reason: poverty.
3. No correlation: Two variables are uncorrelated when a change in one doesn't lead to a change in the other and vice versa. For example, among millionaires, happiness is found to be uncorrelated to money. This means an increase in money doesn't lead to happiness.

A correlation coefficient is usually used during a [correlational study](http://psychology.about.com/od/researchmethods/a/correlational.htm). It varies between +1 and -1. A value close to +1 indicates a strong positive correlation while a value close to -1 indicates strong negative correlation. A value near zero shows that the variables are uncorrelated.

**Experimental Research**

Experiment is perhaps the best research method for determining a cause and effect relationship between variables. And yet, experimental research is relatively rare in mass communication studies, especially compared to other quantitative methods such as surveys and content analyses. It is a systematic and [scientific approach](https://explorable.com/what-is-the-scientific-method) to research in which the researcher manipulates one or more variables, and controls and measures any change in other variables.

Experiments are conducted to be able to predict phenomenon. Typically, an experiment is constructed to be able to explain some kind of [causation](https://explorable.com/cause-and-effect).

A researcher can use experimental research to test a specific hypothesis by measuring and manipulating variables. By creating a controlled environment, researchers can test the effects of an independent variable on a dependent variable or variables.

For example, a researcher may be interested in the impact of video game violence on children’s aggression. The researcher randomly assigns some children to play a violent video game for 1 hour and other children to play a non-violent video game for 1 hour. Then the he/she observes the children socialize afterwards to determine if the children in the “violent video game” condition behave more aggressively than the children in the “non-violent video game” condition. In this example, the independent variable is video game group. Our independent variable has two levels: violent video games and non-violent video games. The dependent variable is the thing that we want to measure—in this case, aggressive behavior.

**Independent and Dependent Variables**

In an experimental study, the independent variable is the factor that the experimenter controls and manipulates. This variable is hypothesized to be the cause of a particular outcome of interest. The dependent variable, on the other hand, depends on the independent variable, and will change (or not) because of the independent variable. The dependent variable is the variable that we want to measure (as opposed to manipulate).

Purposes of Research Types

EXPLORATORY: Becomes familiar with the basic facts, setting, and concerns. Creatse a general mental picture of conditions. Formulates and focus questions for future research Generates new ideas, conjectures, or hypotheses. Determines the feasibility of conducting research. Develops techniques for measuring and locating future data.

DESCRIPTIVE: Provides a detailed, highly accurate picture. Locates new data that contradict past data. Creates a set of categories or classifies types. Clarifies a sequence of steps or stages. Document a causal process or mechanism. Reports on the background or context of a situation.

EXPLANATORY: Tesst a theory’s predictions or principle. Elaborates and enriches a theory’s explanation. Extends a theory to new issues or topics. Supports or refutes an explanation or prediction. Links issues or topics to a general principle. Determines which of several explanations is best.