

UiO : **Department of Media and Communication**
University of Oslo

Introduction and key concepts

MEVIT4800 Perspectives and methods in Media Research
22/08/2011

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Lectures and seminars autumn 2011

Online information updates:

<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h11/>

Online teaching plan:

<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h11/undervisningsplan.xml>

Online reading list:

<http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4800/h11/pensumliste.xml>

What is research?

Why do we need research methods?

What is research?

Everyday research may be

- asking people
- googling the Internet
- collecting any available information
- private
- selective (often)
- relying on tradition, intuition, authority, common sense

Scientific research should be

- systematic
- cumulative
- objective
- public
- empirical
- falsifiable
- concerned with correctness and truthfulness

Berger 2011, and Davies, M.M & Mosdell, N. (2006): *Practical research methods for media and cultural studies. Making people count*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press.

Research methods 1

Qualitative

- Questions asked:
 - "of what kind" – e.g. what qualities do texts, film, TV-series, websites etc have?
- Type of knowledge produced:
 - descriptions
 - aesthetics
 - interpretations

Quantitative studies

- Questions asked:
 - "how many, how much" – e.g. how many Norwegians read online newspapers every day?
- Type of knowledge produced:
 - descriptions/overviews
 - predictions
 - correlations
 - explications/explanation

Research methods 2

- Are qualitative and quantitative methods mutually exclusive?
- What decides which methods and approaches we apply to our studies?

Alghasi , Sharam (2011): "Narration of Lives and Nations. National Stereotypes in the Coverage of World Cup Football in the Norwegian Channel TV2." *Nordicom Review* 32, 1: pp. 75-91.
http://www.nordicom.gu.se/common/publ_pdf/337_alghasi.pdf

Research questions

- what do you want to know?

”- the research question make up the difference between what you know already and that which you want to know.”

RQs and selection of methods

Type of questions	Approaches	Methods
How? Why?	Interpretation Exploration Explanation	Historical analysis Case study Experiments Narrative/text/ discourse analysis Frame analysis Grounded theory Participant observation etc
Who, what, where, how many , how much?	Description	Surveys Content analysis Document analysis Case study Historical analysis etc

Formulation of RQs

Question:

Does playing online games improve children's learning of English?

Hypothesis:

H1: Playing online games improves children's skills in English.

H0 : Playing online games has no effect on children's English skills.

- An open question often signals an explorative, descriptive approach to the study, whereas a hypothesis signals explication and explanation of the relationship.

*NB! Formulating a hypothesis will spur seeking to explain the relationship between the **variables**.*

Description, interpretation or explanation?

How many play? What social background do children who play online games have?

- statistics, find empirical facts

What stories do the games relate and what do the games mean to children?

- find meaning, narrativity

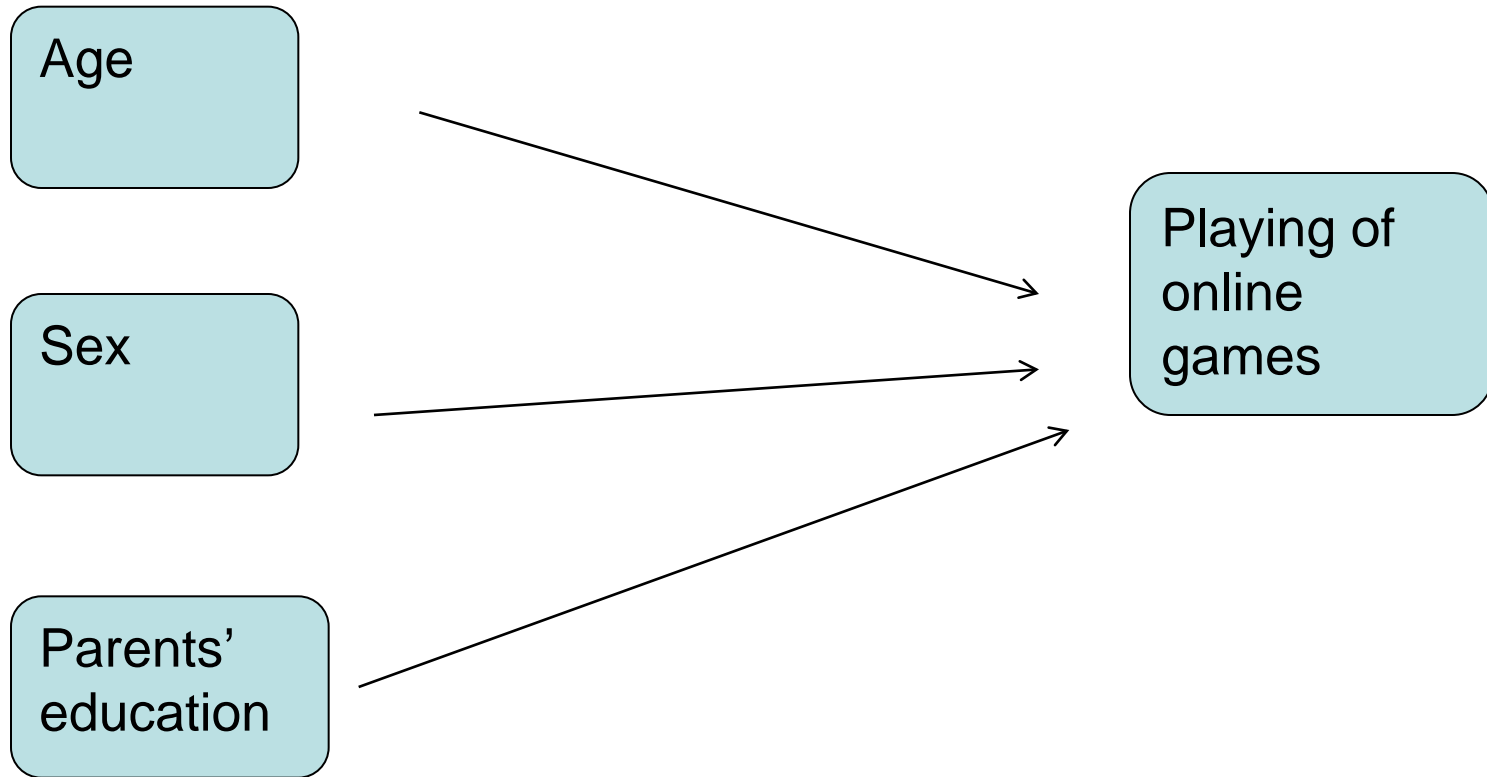
Why do children play online games?

- find causality, reasons

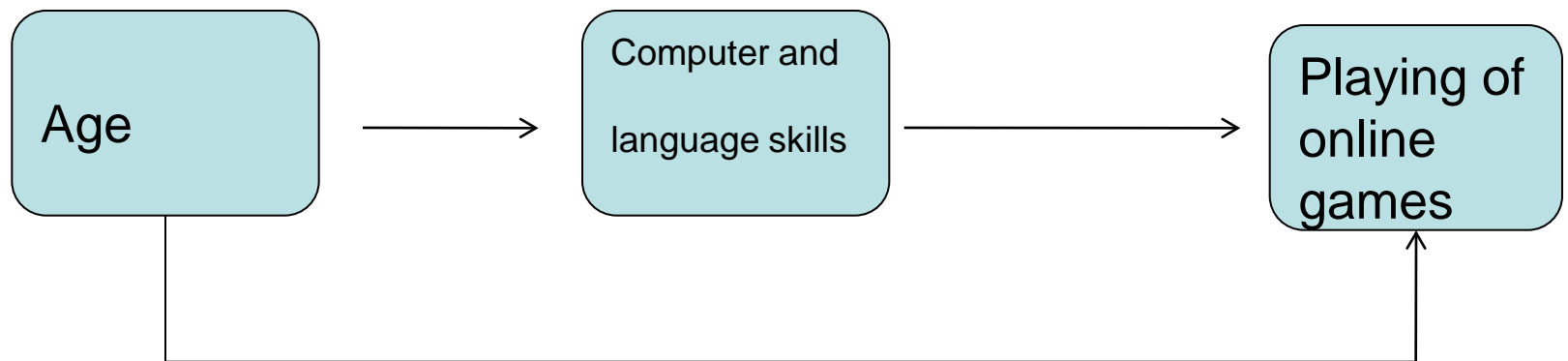
Operationalization

- 'children': define the *units* of the study,
 - e.g. age span
- 'play': what is 'playing'? How often? How long to be included in the study?
- 'online games': definition? Do we include or exclude types of games?

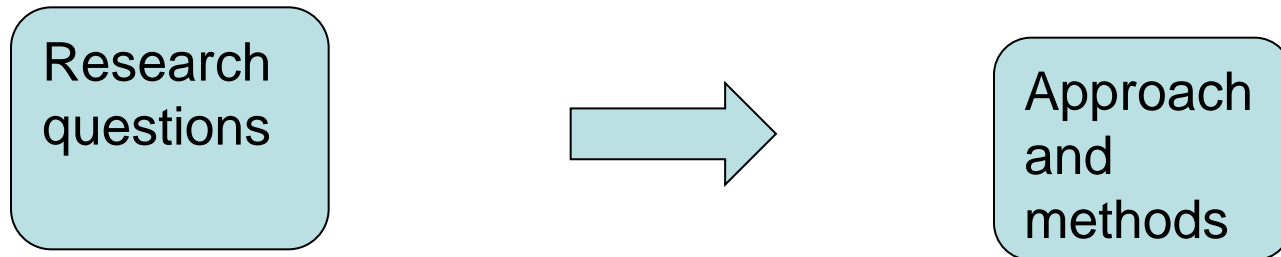
Causal model 1



Causal model 2: Multivariate



Selection of methods



Methods and research designs in media research

	Institutional (policy) studies	Textual studies	Audience / user studies
Applicable methods	Case study Document analysis Interviews Statistics Historical analysis Participant observation Grounded theory	Genre studies Rhetorical analysis Semiotics Discourse analysis Frame analysis Content analysis	Surveys Focus groups Qualitative interviews Experiments Participant observation Grounded theory
Comparison	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no
Combination of methods / triangulation	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no

Historical analysis - types

Biographical studies: lives of persons, e.g. biography of the first female director of the NRK 😊.

Movement or ideas studies: trace development of ideas or movements, e.g. the idea of *public service*.

Regional studies: focusing on geographical regions, e.g. the history of the press in Scandinavia.

Institutional studies: focusing on specific organizations, e.g. the history of VG.

Case histories: focusing on the social settings of an event, e.g. the break of the broadcasting monopoly in Norway.

Data: primary and secondary sources

Primary sources	Secondary sources
Newspaper articles	Articles by other historians
Records from archives, diaries etc	Articles and books by scholars
Speeches	Editorials
Interviews	Commentaries
Autobiographies	Biographies
Documents, letters	Articles and books

Berger 2011: ch 8 (adapted)

How to do historical analysis

Perspective, approach and RQs

-what are your theoretical assumptions?

Are your sources, primary and secondary,
reliable? Do they tell the truth?

Agree/disagree?

Are your sources valid, relevant and adequate?

Do they tell the story, the whole story and
nothing but the story?

Participant observation

”provides the opportunity to study people in
real-life situations”

Berger 2011

Recommendations – how to do participant observation

- ✓ The setting: where, when, what impact does the setting have?
- ✓ The participants: Who, how many, relations between them, function in the group?
- ✓ The nature of the group: What is it for, how long, membership inclusive or exclusive?

Recommendations, continued

- ✓ The behaviour of people in the group: what, how, when, and after which rules and patterns do people communicate act and interact.
- ✓ The frequencies and durations of behaviour: typical or unique? When? For what reasons?
- ✓ Record what you see.
- ✓ Self photographs and videos by group members.

Problems in participant observation

- ✓ Focus
 - You cannot observe everything. When to keep or shift focus?
What are the most interesting processes?
- ✓ Unrecognized selectivity
- ✓ "Mind reading"
 - ✓ interpreting and possibly twisting participants actions and utterances
- ✓ Validity
 - ✓ are your observations representative and relevant for your RQ?

Summing up

- Formulate your RQs as precisely as possible.
- Select approach and methods according to the RQ.
- Pay close attention to *reliability*, *validity*, *relevance* and *ethics* when designing and conducting your study.

Next lecture:

Thursday 25 August 10.15-12.00

Room 205

Theme:

Case studies

Comparative Research