

		Description	Example study	Strengths	Weaknesses
Comparative methods	Quantitative	<p>Comparative method – this technique involves making comparisons. These comparisons can be between individuals, groups or societies and across and through time. The data used mainly comes from official statistics.</p>	<p>British Crime Survey. (2000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The British crime survey is a structured interview that investigates reported and unreported crime. The statistics are compared year on year, in terms of their gender, age, the area in which they live, ethnicity, class and so on. <p>Durkheim - Suicide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It enables the similarities and differences between groups to be revealed. (theoretical) If the data sets are large information is usually reliable. (theoretical) Useful for making predictions and creating laws of human behaviour (e.g. Durkheim suicide). (theoretical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to make comparisons between countries as data is often collected in different ways (e.g. suicide statistics). (practical) Statistical data used is socially constructed. (theoretical) Any statistical data used does not look into feelings, emotions and motivations. (theoretical)
Lab experiments	Quantitative	<p>Laboratory experiment – this is a research technique where the researcher manipulates an independent variable and measures a dependent variable in a carefully controlled environment.</p>	<p>Milgram (1974)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milgram's experiment was to investigate how far people would obey an authority figure. Pps were told it was a study of punishment related to learning. Each pps arrived and drew lots to see who was the learner and who was the teacher. The confederate was always the learner so they could be shocked. Naïve pps had to shock the pps every time they got a word wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An experimental method allows for greater control over possible 'confounding variables'. It enables the researcher to get rid of all influences and in this sense the results are highly reliable. (theoretical) The researcher does not have to wait for the events to occur naturally but can produce the situation they wish to study in the laboratory. (Practical) High reliability because the method is easy to repeat and retest. (theoretical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This research technique can be low in validity. In other words the results of research in the laboratory may not what actually happens in real life. Also the researched may be aware that they are part of an experiment and so may not act naturally. (Theoretical) There are often very real ethical problems associated with this technique. Particularly regarding deception. (Ethical) Often the subject matter of sociology does not lend itself to study in the laboratory and so the technique is of no use. I.e. you can not study the consequences of divorce in the laboratory. (Practical)
Field experiments	Quantitative	<p>Field experiment – A field experiment is a study in which researchers manipulate an independent variable and measure a dependent variable in the natural environment.</p>	<p>Hofling (1966)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hofling's experiment was to investigate how far people would obey an authority figure in the real world. A nurse received a phone call from a doctor unknown to the nurse (confederate) Doctor asked nurse to administer 20mg of a drug called "Astroten" immediately to one of the patients. 95% of the nurses complied with the doctors orders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More validity than lab experiments. This is because the experiment is done in the real world and so in this sense is not 'false'. (theoretical) The behaviour should be more natural, as the researched do not know they are being researched. (Practical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One disadvantage is that the researcher has less control over the variables in the field. This could affect results, especially in terms of reliability. (Practical) There are ethical problems because it is usually not possible to gain informed consent or to de brief pps. (ethical)