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α (alpha)

See *Alpha level, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, Statistical significance, Type 1 and Type 2 errors.*

A&HCI (Arts & Humanities Citation Index)

See *Citation indices.*

A,B,C1,C2,D,E

See *Market research categorisations.*

Abduction/Abductive reasoning

(1) The kind of reasoning which finds the best explanation for a set of given facts, much as with the denouement in detective fiction; may involve sequences of *deductive reasoning*, *inductive reasoning* and *analytic induction*. Also referred to as 'inference to the best explanation'. Very similar to **Heuristic Thinking** (Arnold 2006) – see also *Reasoning*. (2) Used interchangeably with **retroductive reasoning/ retroduction** and **hypothesis method** to refer to the development of theory through the generation and testing of hypotheses, hence similar in meaning to *hypothetico-deductive method*, but more likely to be used by writers espousing *realism* (Suarez 2005). (3) As above but with abduction reserved for qualitative research – hence similar in meaning to *analytic induction* and *constant comparison*, with **retroductive** reserved for quantitative research (Blaikie 1993). (4) The revision of existing beliefs in the light of additional evidence, as with *Bayesian inference*.

Arnold, T. (2006) 'Heuristic Thinking', *Hyponoetics Philosophical Essays*. www.hyponoesis.org/download/Heuristic_Thinking.pdf

Blaikie, N. (1993) *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Suarez, M. (2005) 'Experimental Realism Defended: How inference to the most likely cause might be sound'. <http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/archive/00002252/>

2 Key Concepts in Social Research Methods

ABER

See *Arts based inquiry*.

ABI

See *Effect size (ES) measures, Risk, relative and absolute*.

Absissa

See *X-axis*.

Absolute harm increase / decrease

See *Effect size (ES) measures, Risk, relative and absolute*.

Absolute poverty

See *Poverty, absolute*.

Absolute risk, Absolute risk increase / reduction

see *Effect size (ES) measures, Risk, relative and absolute*.

Absolute value

The value of a number ignoring whether it is plus or minus, usually indicated by being enclosed within two vertical bars; $|x|$.

Abstract empiricism

See *Theory*.

A/B Testing

Market research. Procedure for testing the effectiveness of advertisements and public service information. Responses to one advert (A) compared to responses to another (B).

Webmaster Tutorials (n.d.) 'A/B testing' www.sitetoolcenter.com/google-adsense-optimization/ab-testing.php

ACASI (Audio Computer Assisted Self-Administered Interview)

See *Questionnaire administration*.

Access

Refers to procedures necessary to contact and work with the subjects of research. See *Criminal records*, *Ethics committee*, *Gate-keepers*, *Key informant*.

Account

(1) Description or explanation of an event or process. (2) In social science specifically, refers to utterances that serve to justify or excuse something which might otherwise be regarded as discrediting. For example, 'It's not usually such a mess, but we've got the builders in' is an account which issues an instruction: 'don't judge us on immediate appearances' (Scott and Lyman 1968). Accounts are of research interest in themselves as an everyday feature of social life, but also as likely to appear as misleading responses to *questionnaires* and *interviews* – see also *Bias*, *self-serving*.

Buttney, R. (1993) *Social Accountability in Communication*, London: Sage

Scott, M. and Lyman, S. (1968) 'Accounts', *American Sociological Review* (33): 46–62

ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods)

Categorisation of neighbourhoods on basis of house size and type, ownership and renting, family size, age profile, ethnicity, car and consumer durable ownership and much else, resulting in 17 basic categories and around 56 different neighbourhood types, with titles such as 'Flourishing Families', 'Aspiring Singles', 'Settled Suburbia' and 'Inner City Adversity'. Profiles available for most postcodes in the UK, via the CACI website www.caci.co.uk/acorn/ or the Up-My-Street website www.upmystreet.com. and see:

Businessballs (2007) *Demographics classification*, <http://www.businessballs.com/demographicsclassifications.htm>

For the alternative system used by the UK Office for National Statistics see *Area classification of output areas*.

Acquiescence bias/set

See *Bias*, *acquiescence*.

Actant

See *Actor network theory*.

Action

Activity explicable in terms of the interpretations of those who perform it, sometimes contrasted with 'behaviour' where that implies reactions

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beyond someone's control. For some writers a 'social action approach' is roughly synonymous to an *interpretative approach*. However, the term 'social action approach' is also widely used in macro-sociological writing such as American functionalism of the 1930s to 1960s. Different from the 'action' in *action research*. See also *Actor, Behaviourism, Intentionalism, Interpretivism*.

Action research (AR)

Making some real world intervention and studying the results of this. For example, making an organisational change or pursuing a political campaign. At the most rigorous level, action research is modelled on experimental method, with *pre and post measurements*, controls and other devices to avoid *confounding* (see *Control, direct and statistical, Design experiments*). More usually AR researchers are more interested in the practical success of the action than in creating high quality general knowledge. AR is then often indistinguishable from organisational development, political activism, social work, community work or other practical activities. In **educational action research**, the primary objective is usually for the researcher and collaborating subjects to develop skills or have experiences. Then AR is almost indistinguishable from 'practice learning', or 'personal and professional development' and 'organisational development' (McNiff 2002). Action research is commonly associated with *participative* and *emancipatory research*. *Practitioner research* also usually takes an AR form. See also *Consciousness raising, Rapid appraisal, Rapid institutional appraisal*.

McNiff, J. (2002) *Action research for professional development: Concise advice for new action researchers*. www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html#2

The *Reconnect Action Research Kit* from the Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2003) provides an example of action research procedures. www.facs.gov.au/

Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds) (2001) *Handbook of Action Research*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Actor

(1) One of the many terms referring to the human subjects of social and psychological research. Implies an interest in what actions mean to those who perform them. See *Action, Agency, Intentionalism, Interpretivism, Subject*. (2) In *Actor network theory* may refer to instruments, documents, committees and so on, as well as to human actors. The term *actant* may be used here instead. See also *Agency*.

Actor network theory (ANT)

A major theory in social studies of science and technology which conceptualises the development of scientific ideas and techniques in terms of networks which involve conjunctions of people, techniques, instruments, buildings and forms of social organisation – so-called **material-semiotic networks**. Thus a laboratory is, at one and the same time, a building furnished with material objects, a social organisation and a site within which meanings are created, and for some purposes can be thought of as ‘an actor’ (**actant**) with *agency*.

Law, J. (1992) *Notes on the theory of actor networks*, <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/research/resalph.htm>

Actor perspectives/ideologies/social theories

Three of a very large number of terms all denoting the ways of understanding characteristic of particular groups of social actors. It is a common aim in social research to discover what these are, to describe them, to explain why they are as they are and to explain what happens in terms of people acting according to the way they make sense of the world. Alternative terms include, *attribution sets*, cognitive maps, connectionist networks, *discourses*, folk-taxonomies, folk-theories, *gaze*, *interpretive repertoires*, knowledge structures, life-worlds, mazes, mental scripts, prototypes, schemata, schemes of relevance, scripts, sub-cultural ideas, typification schemes, world views, and more. All express the same basic idea that consciousness has a structure, but these terms have different backgrounds and there are some, albeit sometimes subtle, differences between them. See also *Emic and Etic*.

Actuarial

(1) *Demography, epidemiology* and life assurance: pertaining to the calculation of life expectancy. (2) As opposed to **Contractual**: in *ethnomethodology* (Garfinkel 1967) the equivalent to the distinction between *factual* and *normative*, where actuarial means a description which is factually accurate, and contractual means a description which shows (accurately or otherwise) that a state of affairs was as it should have been, or a process was carried out as it should have been carried out (metaphorically ‘as per contract’). ‘Contractual’ does not necessarily mean untrue, merely that the description is framed prospectively to provide evidence to rebut later claims of malpractice, should they arise.

Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall

Ad hocing

Making decisions as and when a decision seems required, in the way that seems appropriate at the time. When applied to those being studied, draws attention to the way in which the meaning of words and the likelihood of actions depend greatly on the immediate context. When applied to a researcher this implies haphazard and unprincipled practice. However, in some kinds of research, particularly *ethnographic* or *action research*, or even experimental research in clinical or social work practice, the researcher may have little choice but to ad hoc. The remedy, if there is one, is to recognise ad hoc decisions, record them and theorise their consequences and why they were made as they were. See also *Contingency*, *Bricolage*, *Reflexivity*.

Ad hoc sample

See *Sample*, *convenience*.

Ad hominem argument

Short for **argumentum ad hominem** 'argument against the man': attacking the character of the person making a claim, rather than the claim itself. See also *Genetic fallacy*.

Adjacency pairs

In *pragmatic linguistics* and *conversation analysis*, pairs or suites of kinds of utterances that usually go together. If a first is a greeting, the second will usually be a greeting; a question is usually followed by an answer (or an explanation or apology for failing to answer). If one of an adjacency pair is not followed by another this is usually 'a noticeable absence', something for comment, complaint, apology and such like. See also *Sequential Analysis*.

A

Administrative data (bureaucratic data, official statistics)

Data collected to aid the operation of services and organisations and/or to monitor the implementation of policies or compliance with the law, for example the sickness absence records of a company, or the number of suicide verdicts reached in a coroner's jurisdiction. Much used in research although they are rarely collected in formats and via processes ideal for research usage (Gomm 2008). **Ethnostatistics** is the study of how such data are collected and analysed, though it covers also the collection of data by researchers and is a variety of *social constructionism*.

There has been considerable effort in the last decade to improve the statistics produced by central government. Data quality assurance initiatives may be seen for crime recording in the activities of the Police Standards Unit (PSU) (<http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/police-crime-standards/>), for NHS data (www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk) and generally on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website (www.statistics.gov.uk/), for example ONS (2007) *Guidelines for measuring statistical quality*. In 2008 the *UK Statistics Authority* was established as an independent regulator of the quality of central government statistics.

Gomm, R. (2008) 'Using Administrative Data in Research', Chapter 9 in *Social Research Methodology: a critical introduction*, 2nd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Affinity diagramming/mapping/sorting

Qualitative techniques of sorting large numbers of items of data or concepts into logical groups, similar in intention to quantitative techniques such as *factor analysis* or *Q methodology*. (1) To facilitate consensus in a *citizen jury* or *nominal group* (Usabilitynet 2006). (2) As an investigative technique to create representations of cognitive or cultural patterns – see *Card sorting*, *Cognitive anthropology*, *Concept mapping*, *Personal constructs*. (3) As mode of qualitative data analysis with or without the assistance of computer software – see *Computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA)*. (4) Incorporated into some *data mining* software.

Usabilitynet (2006) *Affinity diagramming*, www.hostserver150.com/usabilit/tools/affinity.htm

AFPD

See *Output areas*.

Age, period and cohort effects

For example, if the current older generation is more likely to vote for right wing parties than the current middle-aged generation, is this due to attitudes moving to the right as people age – an **age effect**? Or is it due to differences in the circumstances during which the older people in the past and the younger people more recently formed their political attitudes – a **cohort effect**? Or is it due to something about the circumstances affecting both older and younger people now or in the past – a **period effect**? Sometimes period effects are treated as if they were cohort effects. Analysis to distinguish between the three is termed **Age, period, cohort effect modelling** (APC modelling). See also Flynn effect in *Standardisation*.

Glenn, N. D. (2004) *Cohort Analysis*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA

Age standardised morbidity/mortality ratios

See *Standardised morbidity/mortality ratios*, *Standardisation*.

Agency: agentic action

Implies that someone is the origin of his or her own actions because he or she is able to make genuine choices. The attribution of agency to human beings is sometimes given as reason why social and human behavioural sciences must differ from the natural sciences which deal with entities that lack agency – see *Intentionalism*. The issue of agency is the social and behavioural science version of the philosophical debate about free will versus *determinism*. In psychology the issue arises also in the contrast between *behaviourism* and more interpretative kinds of psychology and in considerations about the relative importance of sentient action as against biologically determined and conditioned behaviour. In sociology and anthropology the equivalent contrast is between agency and structure – see *Action, Structure*. Here the issue is the extent to which people's actions, including the choices they seem to make, are actually determined by social structures, social forces or cultural conditioning, a debate most recently associated with Anthony Giddens (Miller 2007). In *Actor network theory*, complexes of people, objects, buildings and practices are treated as actors (actants) with agency, over and beyond (or despite) the agentic capacity of individuals.

The idea that people have agency is the bedrock of morality (in Western societies at least) because it allows for people to be held responsible for their actions. In psychology in particular, whether or not people see themselves as agentic, and in what respects, may be regarded as an important dimension of personality and, in extreme cases, of psychosis where people believe they are non-agentic and that their actions are determined by someone, or something else. See also *Attribution theory*, *Action, Agent, Epiphenomenalism, Intentionalism, Motive attribution*.

Emirbayer, M. and Mische, A. (1998) 'What is Agency?', *American Journal of Sociology* **104**: 962–1023

Miller, S. (2007) *Social Institutions* (especially section 3: 'Agency and Structure') *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Agent

(1) General usage: someone whose actions are determined by someone or something other than him/herself, as in 'I'm only acting as (another's) agent'. (2) In social and behavioural science: someone whose actions are determined by him or herself: 's/he has agency'. See also *Agency*.

- (3) In *computer simulations*: programmable objects able to respond to their electronic environment and learn from experience. For example, in a simulation of belief diffusion, an agent programmed to 'believe' something if two or more of its neighbours in a matrix also 'believe' this.
- (4) See *Actor network theory*.

Algorithm

Step by step procedures, particularly those implemented in computer programs.

Alpha

See *Cronbach's coefficient alpha*.

Alpha level (confidence level, significance level)

A test for *statistical significance* will be said to show a statistically significant result if what actually happened was unlikely to have happened by chance. But how unlikely? For most purposes a result will be regarded as statistically significant if the odds of a difference as great or greater than that observed, happening by chance, are less than 5 times in 100 ($p < 0.05$). This is a 0.05 level or 5% level, **alpha level** or **significance level**. The **confidence level** is 1 minus the alpha level (or $1 - p$). Hence the 5% or 0.05 level is equivalent to the 95% confidence level and the 99% confidence level is equivalent to the 1% or 0.01 alpha level.

For a researcher to specify an alpha level of (say) 0.05 for a *null hypothesis* is to say that s/he is willing, five times out of a hundred, to reject the hypothesis when it should actually be accepted; that is willing to risk an **alpha error**/ type 1 error – see *Type 1 and Type 2 errors*.

For some purposes researchers choose a more stringent alpha level. For example, a 1% ($p < 0.01$) level is often chosen in research where the results might have life and death consequences, as in medical research. The more tests the same data are subjected to, the more likely it is that one or more of the tests will give what looks like a statistically significant result just by chance. Where such a *family-wise error* is likely, researchers usually select a more stringent alpha level such as the 1% ($p < 0.01$) level or the 1/1000 ($p < 0/001$) level.

See also *Beta error, p values, Statistical power*.

ALSPAC

See *Birth cohort studies*.

Alternate/ive (parallel) forms test

Test for the *reliability* of an *instrument* or process composed of pairs of items, developed so that each of them (reliably) produces similar responses from the same subjects. One of each pair then appears in one of a pair of tests. One set can then be used as a *pre-test* or base-line measure, and the other as a *post-test* or outcome measure without fears that memory of earlier responses will confound the results, thus avoiding some forms of *pre-test and post-test sensitivity*. There will inevitably be some differences between the results of the two instruments which can be attributed to the tests themselves, but these can be controlled by

- randomising the subjects – some get one of the alternate forms as a pre-test and some as a post-test, or
- randomising the items – each subject gets a different combination of pairs before and after.

Where an alternate forms test gives similar results on both occasions, the instrument is said to have ‘alternate form (or parallel form) reliability’. In test development the degree of similarity is likely to be measured by *correlation*.

Alternative hypothesis

See *Null and alternative hypothesis*.

Analysis

Properly, the breaking down of something into its components, as opposed to synthesis; the drawing together of elements, for example, into an explanation. But often used loosely to refer to everything that happens in research after data collection in order to reach a conclusion, ignoring the fact that the design and execution of research also involves a considerable degree of analysis. See also *Synthesis*.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA and MANCOVA)

Read the entry for *Analysis of variance* first. The Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) is a parametric procedure which controls for the effects of the *covariance* in which the researchers are not interested, and shows the *covariance* in which the researchers are interested – see *Statistics, parametric and non-parametric*. For example, a researcher is interested in what causes differences in aptitude apart from age. The analysis of covariance calculates the covariance of age and aptitude and uses this to reset the values for aptitude as if all athletes were of the same

chronological age. This is a form of *standardisation*. Then the relationship between aptitude and other variables can be calculated net of any differences due to age, that is, controlling for age differences. The latter operation is identical to the *analysis of variance* (ANOVA and MANOVA).

MANCOVA, the **Multivariate Analysis of Covariance** is essentially the same as ANCOVA but extended to deal with more than one dependent variable.

ANCOVA/MANCOVA can only be used where groups are being compared with regard to a variable at the interval level, taking values on a continuous scale and where the *variances* are similar – see *Cochran's C test*. Where the comparison is for a *nominal* variable, such as 'yes' or 'no', *logistic regression* may be used instead – see *Data, levels of, Statistics software*.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA and MANOVA)

The *variance* is a measure of the dispersion of scores in a data set. If all the scores were the same, each score would be the same as the *mean* score and the *variance* would be zero.

Suppose three groups of pupils are each taught in different ways, and the aim of the research is to judge which is the most effective way of teaching by comparing their results in the same examination. There will be three kinds of variance in the examination scores. *Total variance* is the variance between all the pupils in their examination scores above and below the *mean* for all pupils. *Between-group variance* (sometimes called 'the main effect') is the variance between the average or *mean* for each group and the *mean* for all pupils. *Within-group variance* (sometimes called 'the error' or 'the *residual*') is the variance of the pupils within each group in relation to the *mean* for that group only. In this example, it would be tempting to assume that the group with the highest average score is the group that has received the most effective tuition. But an alternative interpretation is possible. That is that the pupils are very diverse in their ability, different methods of teaching had a negligible effect and that the group with the highest average score just happens to be the group which by chance was composed of the pupils who were most able at the outset.

ANOVA or the analysis of variance is a parametric procedure – see *Statistics, parametric and non-parametric*. It asks the question: 'Is most of the total variance between the groups?', in which case it is possible that different average examination scores for the groups were due to different methods of teaching. Or 'Is most of the total variance within the groups?', in which case the differences in examination scores between the groups are most likely to be due to the chancy way in which a diverse group of pupils were sorted into different teaching groups at the outset.

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An ANOVA calculation results in a figure which expresses the difference between the *between-group variance* and the *within-group variance* as a ratio: the *F-ratio*. A high figure for *F* means that there is more variance between the groups than within the groups. Whether the figure for *F* is *statistically significant* is determined by consulting a table for *critical values* for *F*. In this example, a statistically significant figure for *F* would suggest that different methods of teaching (the *main effect*) did have different effects; that the results were not simply due to chance operating when pupils were divided into groups.

ANOVA calculations are used when there are at least three groups to be compared and the variance of the groups are similar – see *Cochran's C test*. If there are only two groups a *t-test* is more usual.

One-way ANOVA compares groups differentiated by one factor only: for example different groups of pupils receiving different styles of teaching. **Two-way, three-way ANOVA** and so on **Multi-factor ANOVA** compare groups within groups (within groups). For example, for a three-way ANOVA, teaching groups might be compared, and within and between these, girls might be compared with boys, and within the gender groups, minority ethnic pupils compared with ethnic majority pupils. In this case the total variance will be calculated within and between three teaching groups, six gender sub-groups, and twelve ethnic sub-sub-groups. 'Three-way' actually means 21 different comparisons. This would only be sensible with a large data set.

ANOVA only determines if there are *statistically significant* differences between groups, and not the groups which are significantly different from each other. For this *post-hoc* tests are necessary. MANOVA often produces *interaction effects* which can be difficult to interpret.

ANOVA can only be used where groups are being compared with regard to a variable at the interval level that takes values on a continuous scale. Where the comparison is for a *nominal* variable, such as 'yes' or 'no', *logistic regression* may be used instead – see *Data, levels of*. See also *Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA and MANCOVA)*, *Central tendency and dispersion*, *Statistics software*.

MANOVA (Multi-variate Analysis of Variance) is a similar form of analysis but where several dependent *variables* are analysed: in the example above perhaps, the students' learning and their attitudes to learning might be analysed as outcomes separately and in relation to each other and for boys, girls and teaching methods.

McCreery, C. (2007) 'First year statistics for psychology students through worked examples: 3 Analysis of Variance', *Oxford Forum: Psychology Paper 2007:3* www.celiagreen.com/charlesmccreery/statistics/anova.pdf

Musalia, J. (2008) *Chapter 14 The Analysis of Variance*, University of West Kentucky www.wku.edu/~john.musalia/soc300

Analytic generalisation

See *Generalisation, theoretical*.

Analytic induction

Systematically examining similarities and differences between cases to develop concepts and theories which can be tested by further examination of the same kind. The procedure is as follows:

- (1) Produce an initial provisional definition of the phenomenon to be explained.
- (2) Find cases of this phenomenon and investigate them, noting down provisional ideas about explanations.
- (3) Formulate an hypothetical explanation, which seems to account for common factors found in all cases studied so far.
- (4) Investigate further cases.
- (5) If the hypothesis does not fit the facts about the new cases, either refine the hypothesis, or redefine the phenomenon, to produce a new hypothetical explanation which is consistent with the common factors in all cases so far.
- (6) Repeat the procedure until no known cases of the phenomenon (as now defined) have characteristics which are inconsistent with the *hypothesis*.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: principles and practice*, London: Routledge: 186–88

The procedure is very close to what is often called *constant comparison*.

The term ‘analytic induction’ is used mainly in the context of *qualitative research* in the social sciences. But as Znaniecki (1934), the originator of the term, points out, this method, while unnamed as such, is widely used in the natural sciences. Indeed it doesn’t look too different from a rather informal version of the *hypothetico-deductive method* (or ‘scientific method’). Thus it can be doubted whether the term is actually needed, and whether ‘induction’ alone would not suffice – see *Abductive reasoning, Inductive reasoning, Falsificationism*.

Ratcliff, D (n.d) *Analytic Induction as a Qualitative Research Method of Analysis*, www.vanguard.edu/uploadedFiles/faculty/dratcliff/analytic.html
 Znaniecki, F. (1934) *The Method of Sociology*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart

Analytic statements

See *Logical positivism*.

ANCOVA

See *Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA and MANCOVA)*.

Anonymisation

To avoid breaching the *privacy and confidentiality* of subjects (or legal proceedings for defamation) it is typical to protect the identity of individual research subjects on publication, and preferably previously. In quantitative research individual returns, if they are identifiable, must be kept securely (see *Pseudo-anonymisation*) but individual contributions usually disappear into statistical aggregations on publication. However, in government statistics, particularly where small numbers are concerned, anonymisation may be accomplished by aggregating categories or time periods, by **suppression** (not publishing the figures) or by various techniques of *perturbation*. In qualitative research, where the views or actions of individuals may be of interest, code numbers or pseudonyms may be used. It is good practice to do this in field notes and other working documents lest they fall into the wrong hands, and to avoid being legally liable under the *Data Protection Act 1998*. It is doubtful, however, whether *audio or video recordings* can be regarded as anonymous except through using expensive masking and audio distortion techniques (Crow and Wiles 2008). Anonymisation may extend to anonymising the institutions and geographical areas where the research was conducted, including blanking out or pseudo-anonymising any local references in extracts from interview transcripts which are archived or published. In this regard, decisions about whether to represent local dialects in interview transcripts are difficult ones – see *Transcription*. The decision not to anonymise may be taken where the identity of the individuals or the institution studied are themselves of interest, and usually where disclosure is agreed with the research subjects. Anonymising institutions and locations may prevent a researcher from making references to documents and news stories which might serve as evidence, but if referenced would identify the objects of study, and of forestalling other researchers from replicating the research with the same subjects or institutions.

Commitments to anonymise may be made as part of the contract between a researcher and the research subjects, and or be a condition laid down by an *ethics committee* or *Caldicott guardians*. The practice of archiving data complicates the issue – see *Data archives*.

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S. and Charles, V. (2006) *Anonymity and Confidentiality*, NCRM

Clark, A. (2006) *Anonymising Research Data*, NCRM

Crow, A. and Wiles, R. (2008) *Managing anonymity and confidentiality in social research: the case of visual data*, NCRM

All from [http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/outputs/publications/ESDS \(2006\) Identifiers and Anonymisation Guidelines](http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/outputs/publications/ESDS%20(2006)%20Identifiers%20and%20Anonymisation%20Guidelines), www.esds.ac.uk/aandp/create/identifiers.asp 02/06 (Guidelines on anonymising data related to archiving data)

ANOVA

See *Analysis of variance (ANOVA and MANOVA)*.

ANT

See *Actor Network Theory*.

Antecedent variable

See *Variable*.

Anthropologically strange

In *Ethnomethodology*, to attempt not to take for granted that which is culturally familiar. See also *Bracketing*.

Anti-naturalism

See *Naturalistic research*.

Anti-racist research

See *Partisan research*.

Anti-realism

See *Realism*.

APC

See *Age, period and cohort effects*.

Applied social research

See *Social research, pure and applied*.

Archive/Archiving

See *Data archives*. The web site www.a2a.org.uk gives access to the catalogues of the majority of British local authority, museum and university archives containing historical records. See also *Mass observation*.

Area-based inequality measures

See *Deprivation indices*, *Segregation indices*.

Area classification of output areas

Scheme of classification used by the Office for National Statistics to characterise different areas of the country according to the clustering of 41 *demographic* and socio-economic characteristics – see *Cluster analysis*. There are 7 ‘super-groups’, 21 ‘groups’ –and 52 sub-groups (Rees and Vickers 2006). Supergroups include 1: Blue Collar Communities’, ‘2. City Living’ and ‘4 Prospering Suburbs’. Groups within 1 include ‘1a Terraced Blue Collar’, ‘1b Younger Blue Collar’, ‘1c Older Blue Collar’. The names are chosen because they are more memorable than numbers, and for each category there are more precise definitions. The units being characterised are the Super Output Areas in terms of which *Census* data are reported: see *Output Areas*.

The main competitor to this system of classification is the CACI *ACORN Classification*, mainly used in market research.

Rees, P. and Vickers, D. (2006) ‘Introducing the Area Classification of Output Areas’, *Population Trends* **125** (15–24). <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/caci/articlesearch.asp>

ARI

See *Effect size (ES) measures*, *Risk, relative and absolute*.

Arithmetic and log scales

On logarithmic scales (Log10), any pair of numbers different by a factor of 10 is separated by the same distance as any other such pair. Thus the distance between 0 and 10 is the same as the distance between 10 and 100.

Semi log scales (often just called log scales) use a log scale for the vertical and an arithmetic scale for the horizontal. Log scales are used to foreshorten scales to save space on a page and to display greater detail among lower values, but risk giving a misleading impression as to the difference between the lowest and highest values; for example between the richest and the poorest. In Figures 1 and 2 the same data are shown first on an arithmetic scaled graph and second on a semi-log scale. In **log-log scales** both scales are log scales. These are used mainly with *power law distributions*. On a log-log scale the data shown here would form a straight line. Log scaling is not to be confused with *data transformation* by conversion into logarithms or *log normal distributions*.

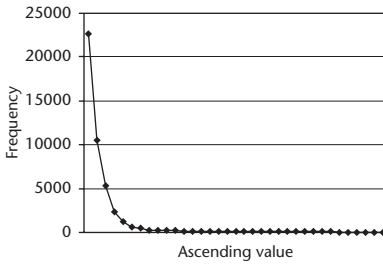


Figure 1 Data shown on arithmetic scale

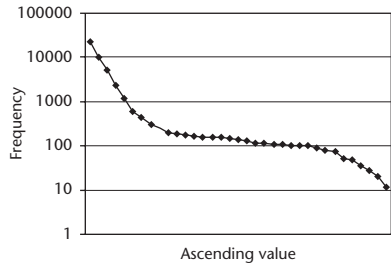


Figure 2 Data shown on semi-log scale

Arm

Of an experiment. One of two or more different treatments or conditions. Synonym for 'condition'. See also *Comparison groups*.

ARR

See *Effect size (ES) measures, Risk, relative and absolute*.

Artefact/Artifact

See *Research artefact*.

Arts-based inquiry (Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER))

One response to the rejection of natural sciences as a model for the social sciences is to base inquiry on artistic pursuits with quality criteria drawn from aesthetics and entertainment. See also *Performance ethnography*.

Von Emmel, T. (2005) '*Methodological approaches; Arts-based research*', <http://dreamfish.com/old/vonemmel.ch%204.arts-based%20research.dissertation.pdf>

Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI)

See *Citation indices*.

ASAQ (Audio Self-Administered Questionnaire)

See *Questionnaire administration*.

Ascertainment bias

See *Bias, ascertainment*.

Association

A 'going-together' relationship between two variables in a data set, such that one varies with another. Thus being taller is associated with being heavier in any large group of people. Association includes:

- Correlation measures – see *Correlation*, *Correlation coefficients*, *Partial correlation*, *Path analysis*.
- Covariance analysis – see *Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA/MANCOVA)*
- *Proportional reduction of error* measures (Lambda and Gamma)
- *Regression analysis* see *Discriminant function analysis*, *Logistic regression*, *Multi-level models*, *Scattergram*.
- *Elasticity* and *inelasticity*

Asymmetrical and symmetrical

(1) Asymmetrical measures differ according to the order in which data are entered into a formula. *Odds ratios*, *risk ratios*, *Lambda* and *Gamma* (see *Proportional reduction of error*) are asymmetrical. Symmetrical measures are the same irrespective of the order in which data are entered. (2) In **symmetrical distributions** of data the shape of the half of the distribution below the *mean*, *median* or *mode* on a graph, approximately matches the half above.

Asymptotic curve/asymptote

A straight line which approaches a curve but never meets it. In *linearisation* may be used instead of the curve produced by the data.

Atkinson index

See *Indices of inequality*.

Atlas.ti

See *Computer assisted qualitative data analysis*.

Attitude

Psychological predisposition favouring or disfavouring something, which is assumed to underlie behaviour from which the attitude can be inferred. Usually investigated by *questionnaires* in which the responses are scaled, for example, from strongly positive to strongly negative. Attitudes are often conceptualised as components of *values* which are

more general pre-dispositions; for example a pro-marriage attitude might be seen as a pro-family value, see also *Guttman scale*, *Likert scale*, *Semantic differential*, *Test theory*, *Thurstone scale*.

Attractor

In *complexity theory*, a graphical representation of the limits within which some variable of a complex phenomenon fluctuates.

Lucas. C (2004) 'Attractors everywhere – order from chaos', *Complexity: Artificial Life Concept for Self-Organising Systems (CALResCo)* : www.calresco.org/attract.htm

Attributable risk

See *Risk*, *attributable*.

Attribution sets

One of many terms referring to the structure of consciousness or to habitual interpretative processes. Here the focus is on the way in which people attribute motives and personal characteristics to themselves and others, and in doing this, find explanations for their experience of social life and a basis for their own actions. See also *Actor perspective*, *Bias*, *attribution*, *Motive attribution*.

Attrition (drop out, subject loss)

The number/percentage of subjects initially selected thereafter lost to research, because:

- they cannot be contacted,
- refuse to participate,
- drop out during the research for whatever reason.

(Durnville *et al.*, 2006).

Attrition undermines the effects of the *random allocation* of subjects to *arms* of a *controlled experiment*, the *representativeness* of a probability sample or the comprehensiveness of a purposive sample – see *Sample*, *probability*, *Sample*, *purposive*. In survey research attrition has the same implications as non-response – see *Response rate*. Attrition is a particular problem with long running *longitudinal research* including *cohort studies* (Nathan 1999). See also *Intention to treat*.

Durnville, J.,Torgerson, D. and Hewitt, C. (2006) 'Reporting attrition in randomised controlled trials', *British Medical Journal* **332**: 969–971 www.bmj.com

Nathan, G. (1999) 'A review of sample attrition and representativeness in three longitudinal surveys', *GSS Methodology Series No. 13, Government Statistical Survey*. www.statistics.gov.uk search on 'GSS Methodology'



Audience effect research

Study of the effects of some mass communication on some audience; by *experiment*, by survey or by other techniques.

Mytton, G. (1999) *Handbook on Radio and Television Audience Research*, Rome:UNESCO/UNICEF www.cba.org.uk/audience_research/index.php – a how-to-do-it handbook
Glasgow Media Group: www.gla.ac.uk/centres/mediagroup/

Audience research

Collection, usually by *survey*, and analysis of data on numbers and types of people listening or watching some medium of communication (where printed – **readership research**) The National Readership Survey outlines techniques and definitions for printed media: <http://www.nmauk.co.uk/nma/do/live/factsAndFiguresNRSFAQ#m5>

The following provide audience/readership figures for the UK. Only some information is available without subscription:

(TV) Broadcast Audience Research Board www.barb.co.uk/
Radio Joint Audience Research www.rajar.co.uk
[local and regional papers] Newspaper Society www.newspapersoc.org.uk and JICREG
Joint Industry Committee for Regional Press Research www.jicreg.co.uk
[Mainly national publications] National Readership Survey www.nrs.co.uk
Mytton, G. (1999) *Handbook on Radio and Television Audience Research*, Rome:UNESCO/UNICEF www.cba.org.uk/audience_research/index.php- a how-to-do-it handbook.

Audio and video recording

Important methods of collecting data particularly in qualitative research. See also *Anonymisation, Transcription*.

Stockdale, A. (2002) 'Tools for digital audio recording in qualitative research', *Social Research Update* Issue 38 <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/>
Shrum, W. (2005) 'Digital video as research practice: methodology for the millennium', *Journal of Research Practice* 1(1). <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp>
Ratcliff, D. (2004) *Video and Audio Methods in Qualitative Research*. <http://qualitative.research.ratcliffs.net/video.htm>

Audit trail

A recent adoption into the vocabulary of research from business, referring to making a careful and accurate record of how the research was conducted to give the research procedural objectivity and *replicability* – see *Objectivity, procedural*. See also *Context of discovery and context of justification, Diaries, Memos, Reflexivity*.

Auditability

See *Audit trail, Objectivity, procedural.*

Authenticity

(1) Used by some qualitative researchers as alternative to internal validity, which in that context is very close to the idea of naturalistic or ecological validity, referring to the extent to which a piece of research successfully captures the experience of those who are studied where that experience is not distorted by the process of the research. It is not at all clear how the authenticity of a piece of research can be judged, but reference is often made to *Fallibility testing*, or, where the research is *participatory*, personal testimonies and autobiographies of research subjects may be featured – see *Validity, internal, Validity, naturalistic.*
(2) The genuineness of claims of provenance (source) with regard to documents, archaeological and historical artefacts and other kinds of evidence – see *Textual criticism.*

Authorial presence

See *Autoethnography, Reflexivity.*

Autobiography

Facilitating research subjects in writing their autobiographies is sometimes an approach used in *Life history* and *Oral history research.*

See also *Autoethnography* and *Reflexivity.*

Autocorrelation

In *time series analysis* the measurement of the extent to which value of a variable at one point in time is correlated with the value of the same variable at (an) earlier point(s) in time. For example, in pursuing the question of whether having a lot of money at one time increased the chances of having a lot at a later date.

Autoethnography

Once meaning an *ethnographic* study of one's own culture, and still sometimes used to refer to the practice of assisting research subjects themselves to write about their own culture. But now more usually an *ethnographic research* report where the author displays his or her own

activities, thoughts and (especially) feelings in the field, as well as those of the research subjects (Tenni *et al.* 2003). Such reports are said to show **authorial presence**. Pre-dating the term, such autoethnography has a long history in journalism (for example, Dickens 1995) and travel and memoir writing (for example, Burton 1964), but in social science until recently the researcher's personal engagement in the research, if recorded at all, was presented separately from research findings, as research *diaries* (for example, Malinowski 1989) or 'methodological appendices' (for example, Foote Whyte 1993), or even anonymously and lightly fictionalised as in Laura Bohannan's writing about ethnographic research among the Tiv of Nigeria (Smith Bowen 1988). Thus was the (apparent) objectivity of research reports, rhetorically separated from the subjectivity of the researcher. Autoethnography makes no such separation: see also *Introspectionism, Objectivity, Reflexivity, Rhetorical analysis, Subjectivity*.

- Burton, R. (2006) *Personal narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Mecca*, (Vol 1), Whitefish MT:Kessinger Publications, and many other editions: originally 1853
- Dickens, C. (1995) *Sketches by Boz*, (Edited Walder, D.) *Penguin Modern Classics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, and many other editions: originally 1836
- Whyte, W. F. (1993) *Street Corner Society: the social structure of an Italian slum*, Chicago: U of Chicago Press, and other editions: originally 1943
- Malinowski, B. (1989) *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, Berkeley CA: Stanford University Press (based on unpublished diaries and fieldnotes 1915–1918)
- Smith Bowen, E. (Laura Bohannan), (1988) *Return to Laughter: an anthropological novel*, Colchester: Anchor Press, and other editions: originally 1954
- Tenni, C. Smyth, A. and Boucher C., (2003) 'The researcher as autobiographer: analyzing data written about oneself', *The Qualitative Report*, **8**(1): 1–12. www.nova.edu/ssss/QR

Autopoietic system

See *Complex adaptive system*.

Availability bias

See *Bias, availability*.

Average

See *Central tendency and dispersion, Mean Median, Mode*.

Average, moving

See *Smoothing*.

Average, weighted

See *Weighted average*.

Axial coding

See *Coding, open axial and selective*.

Axiom

A proposition whose truth is taken for granted to serve as the starting point or *premise* of a deductive argument. Most frequently used in mathematics for propositions such as $2 + 2 = 4$. Sometimes used wrongly to suggest that some proposal is beyond all reasonable doubt, as in claims starting: 'It is axiomatic that...'. Axioms are more properly regarded as propositions accepted 'for the sake of argument'. See *Axiomatic system, Deductive reasoning*.

Axiomatic system

System of thought where meanings are determined entirely by its own internal rules, as in mathematics and formal logic. When such systems are used to represent phenomena external to them – such as relationships between social or psychological variables, they are termed **interpreted axiomatic systems**.

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