

**The most human thing  
we can do is comfort the  
afflicted and afflict the  
comfortable**

*Clarence Darrow*

**THE NATURE OF CASE STUDY  
RESEARCH  
PUB 3115**

October 25-28, 2015

# NEXT ASSIGNMENT

## **Review/summary of:**

Vedung, Evert. 2010. "Policy Instruments: Typologies and Theories" in *Carrots, Sticks & Sermons: Policy Instruments and their Evaluation*, edited by M-L. Bemelmans-Videc, R. C. Rist and E. Vedung. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. pp. 21-58.

(4 pages in length)

# Collecting data through participant-observations

- What to think of
  - Decide on what roles to assume (special mode of direct observations)
- Why use participant-observation
  - Gives access to events and data otherwise inaccessible
  - Reality is perceived from within
  - Gives the observer ability to manipulate minor events

# Collecting data from physical artifacts

- Examples
  - Technological devices, tools or instruments, works of art
- What to think of
  - Collected or observed as part of an (direct/participant/historical) observation
  - Plan the collection of data from physical artifacts
    - What is really useful?
- Why use physical artifacts
  - May include data not found in other ways

# Conducting Case Studies: Collecting the evidence

## Three Principles of Data Collection

# Principle 1: Use Multiple Sources of Evidence

- Single source only provides data on one specific source
  - Generally applicable results are hard to derive
  - Trustworthiness
  - Accuracy
  - **NOT** recommended for case studies
- Weaknesses of data sources in case studies
  - Bias
  - Correctness

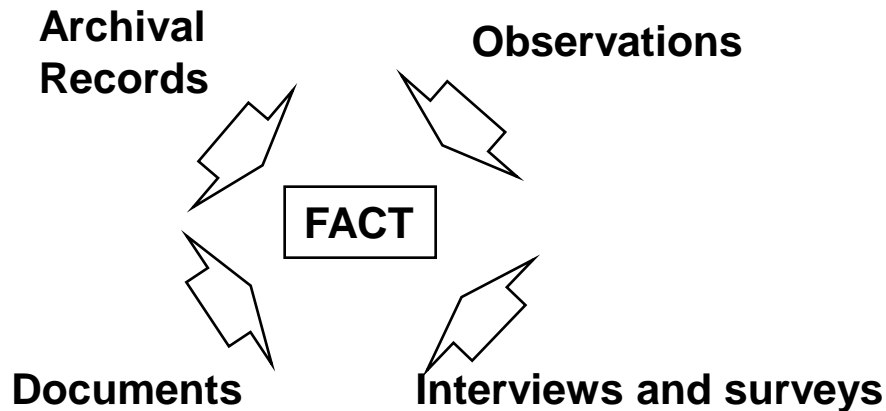
# Principle 1: Use Multiple Sources of Evidence cont'd

- Triangulation: Rationale for using multiple sources of evidence
  - Triangulate data from multiple sources
  - Develop *converging lines of inquiry*
  - Findings/conclusions are likely to be more *convincing* and *accurate*
  - Possible to address broader array of issues
  - Case studies using multiple sources often are considered to have higher overall quality

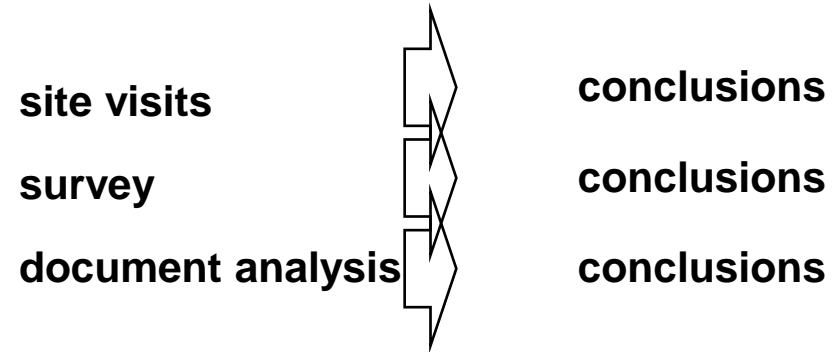


# Principle 1: Use Multiple Sources of Evidence cont'd 2

## Convergence of Evidence



## Non-Convergence of Evidence



- Prerequisites for using multiple sources
  - More time-consuming

# Principle 2: Create a Case Study Database

Why create case study database?

- Weakness in many case studies:
  - No separation between *collected evidence* and *final report*
  - Readers of the report have no way of finding out basis for conclusions
  - Not using a database is a major drawback...
- Using a database
  - Increases *reliability* of the entire case study

# Principle 2: Create a Case Study Database cont'd

- Contents of database
  - Case study notes
    - Notes from e.g. interviews, observations, document analysis
    - Handwritten, typed, computer files, audiotapes
    - Case study documents
    - Can require large physical space (for printed material)
    - Beneficial to have an annotated bibliography
  - Tabular materials
    - Surveys and other quantitative data
  - Narratives
    - E.g. open-ended answers to questions in the case study protocol

# Principle 3: Maintain a Chain of Evidence

Why maintain chain of evidence?

- To increase *reliability* of the information in the case study
- To allow an *external observer* to follow the *derivation* of any evidence
- To trace the steps in either direction
- Prove that
  - Case study report contains the same evidence as was collected
  - No evidence have been lost via bias
- Case study report should hold in "court"!!

## Principle 3: Maintain a Chain of Evidence cont'd

- Case study report should cite case study database
- Database should reveal how and when evidence was collected and surrounding circumstances
- Case study protocol should be linked to initial case study questions

EXAMPLE

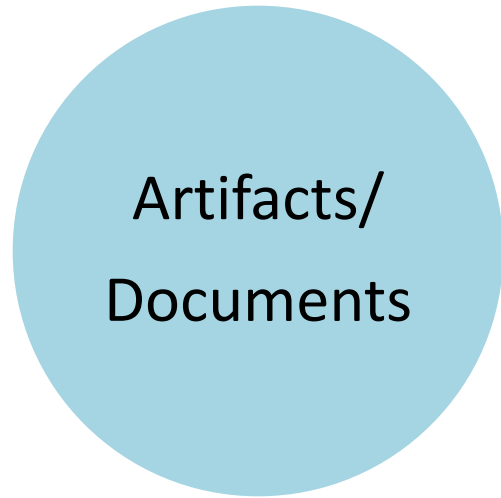
# CASE STUDY OF A UNIVERSITY COURSE



Student  
Ratings

COURSE EVALUATION  
INTERVIEWS FO STUDENTS


# CASE STUDY OF A UNIVERSITY COURSE



- Syllabi
- Assignments and project descriptions
- Samples of student work
- Assignment and test results



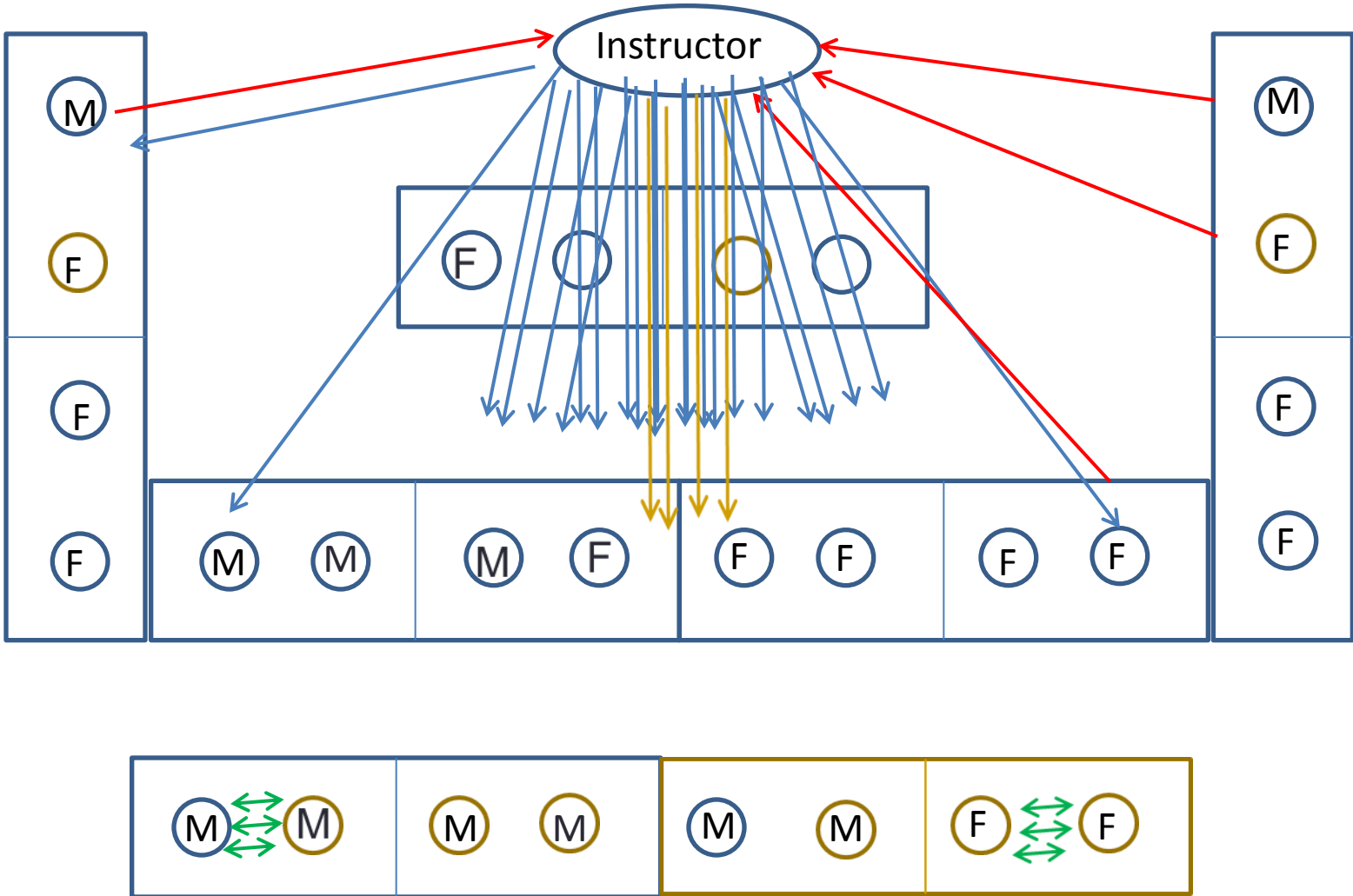
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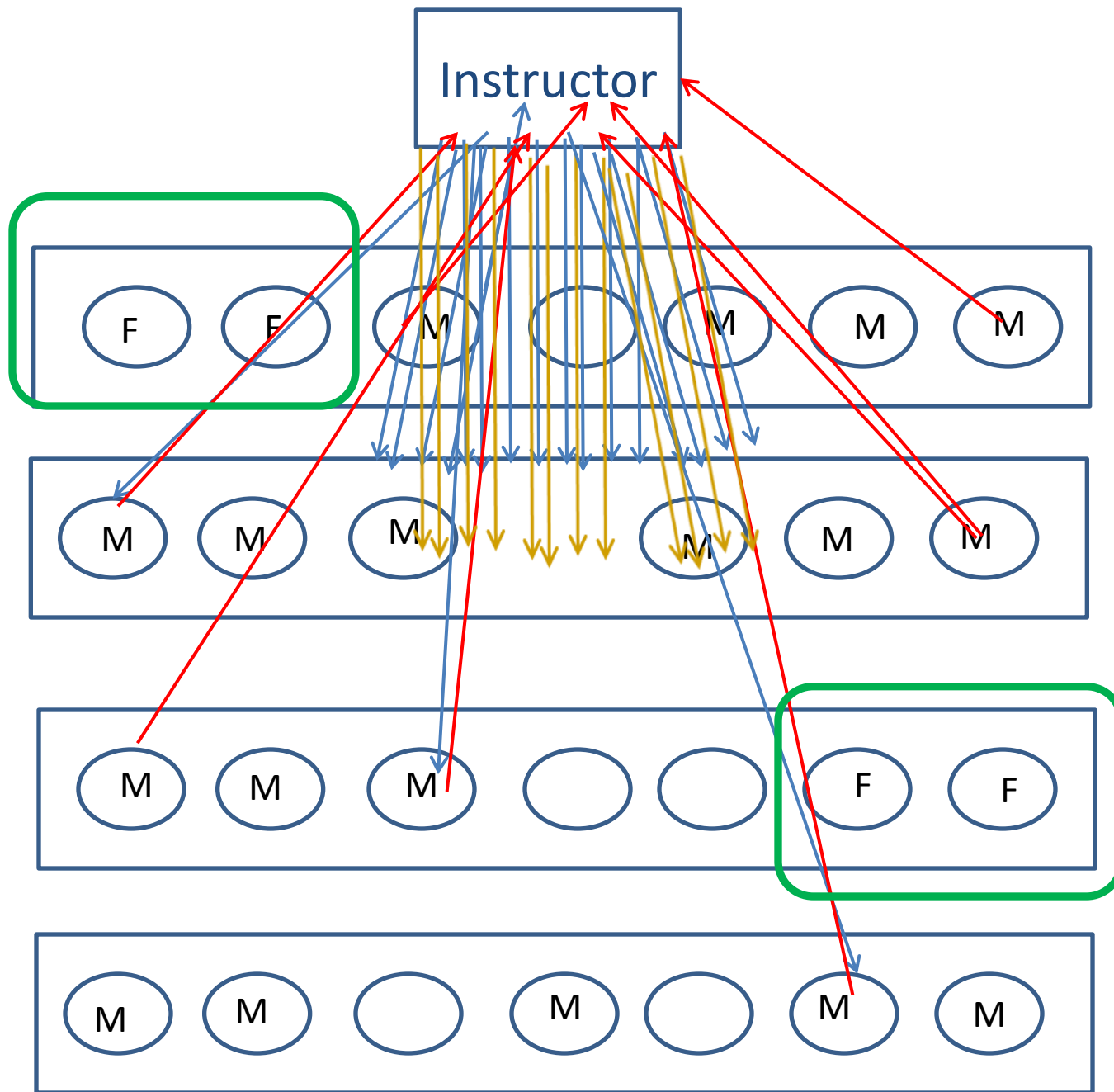


Interviews/  
Survey

- Alumni Surveys
- Classroom Observation
- [RatemyProfessor.com](https://www.ratemyprofessor.com)

# Flow of Communication Map





# FACTORS FOR JUDGING A GOOD CASE RESEARCH

- What is new?
- So what?
- Why so?
- Done well?
- Why now?
- Who cares?

# Roadmap for Case Research

- Question
- Case selection
- Literature review
- Research question
- Data collection
- Data organization
- Data analysis
- Conclusion

# Surveys

[SurveyMonkey: Free online survey software & questionnaire ...](#) 

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# Ways of knowing

- tradition
- revelation
- intuition
- everyday  
experience/common sense
- science

# Science as a Way of Knowing

Assumptions:

- no certainty; nothing is absolute
- reality is knowable (there are ways to know)
- accurate data can be obtained; measurements can be made
- there are cause and effect relationships
- researchers are limited by social conditions, the availability of procedures, and ethical considerations



# Theories

Theories are sets of statements that fit together to explain or make sense of a phenomenon-

## **Example:**

People who have a high degree of social integration are less likely to commit suicide

Protestants believe in greater self-determination (or individual responsibility) than Catholics

Protestants have a lower degree social integration, than do Catholics

Protestants are more likely to commit suicide

# Cause and Effect

A central difficulty of science is to demonstrate cause and effect

1. Time order

2. No other plausible explanation

Need to eliminate alternative causal variables  
(maybe it is not religious beliefs that account for suicide rates, but income or .... )

# Induction and Deduction

**Induction** - begin with a theory and then test it (develop a theory and then test it)

**Deduction** - end with a theory (observe the world, collect data and then construct a theory to fit explain)

# Theories

Theories are composed of concepts/facts (eg. religion, suicide, social integration), relationships between those concepts (higher rates).

Example: Older students are more likely to sit at the front of the class

concepts = students, class,

relationships = more likely

# Indicators

Indicators measure concepts

Catholic

suicide

students

Often very difficult to measure concepts (social class, gender, suicide, income.....)

# Variables

Variables are concepts which have more than one value, state or category

- income
- gender
- social class

Most concepts of interest to social analysis are variables

# Validity and Reliability

Indicators must be **valid** and **reliable**

valid = accurately measure the concept

reliable = consistently measure the  
concept

# Research Methods

Agreed upon ways of understanding the social world

Part of the “scientific method”

Must be:

- replicable (and therefore clearly described)
- tied to a theory - deductively or inductively (must build on the work of others -



# The research process

- Develop an area of interest, based on....
- Reading, thinking, talking to others about it...
- Going to the library...
- Refining your research question...
- Why important or interesting?
- Relate the research question to existing theories

- Clearly specify your concepts and the relationships to be studied
- Decide on the indicators that measure the concepts
- Examine the validity and reliability of these
- **SELECT THE RESEARCH METHOD(S) TO COLLECT DATA**

- Consider how access to data will be obtained
- **CONDUCT THE RESEARCH**
- Review the data collected
- **ANALYZE** the data. What does it mean? How does it relate to the theories? How does it fit with previous collected theories? How did the research methods influence the data collection?
- Present the findings including a description of the research methods

# Major Research Methods

1. **EXPERIMENTS** - “grand master” of research methods because causation (cause and effect) can be demonstrated
2. **SURVEYS** - very popular because large groups of people can be studied relatively quickly and at a low cost
3. **FIELD RESEARCH/CASE STUDIES** -

# Research Methods

4. **SECONDARY RESEARCH** - Use of already collected data (such as from journals, websites, books) -
5. **OTHER** - no limits - “content analysis” (waste, diaries, newspapers, government memos, university calendars, songs, etc.)...



# Ethics Tradeoffs

There are always ethical considerations when research involves human beings

- and other sentient beings?

There is always a balance that must be struck between the potential for harm (physical/psychological/emotional) and the potential benefit from research



# Changing Ethics

Research ethics have changed (and continue to do so)

Research conducted in the past would not be acceptable today

The balance between potential harm and benefit shifts over time and on the matter under study

# Ethical Principles

- balancing harms and benefits (minimize harm - maximize benefit)
- protection of human dignity (maintaining self-respect)
- free and informed consent of participants
- respect for vulnerable persons (children and others)
- privacy and confidentiality (including access to data, anonymity, reporting, etc)





# Ethical principles

- justice and inclusiveness
  - some groups must not be excluded
  - one group must not be burdened with all the harms
- delivery of obligations (the “social contract” inherent in research)

# The use of volunteers

Does the use of volunteers minimize ethical considerations?

- Volunteers cannot always be used (may be biased, cannot generalize, etc.)
- How voluntary are volunteers? (students, poor people, patients, etc)
- To what extent is there informed consent

# Further ethical considerations

- Fabrication of data
- Plagiarism
- Uses of research findings
- Others?

# Questions

- Under what conditions can subjects be deceived?
- Do (social) scientists have the right to free inquiry?
- Do the ends justify the means?
- Can scientists policy themselves?
- Who decides about research ethics?