What is Qualitative Research? And Doing Research Design

Week 2 | Thursday 9 October 2014
Qualitative Research

• “Qualitative Research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4).

• “Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman 2008, p. 366).

• Discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world (Sandelowski, 2004, p. 893).
Qualitative Research

- Flexible
- Unstructured
- Subjectivity
- The study of ‘natural settings’ (Observation data)
- Small number of cases
- Verbal rather statistical analysis of data
- Open-ended questions
- Text and image analysis
- Themes, patterns, and interpretation
- Interview data, document data, audiovisual data
- Exploratory and Descriptive focus
Quantitative Research

• “Quantitative Research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion. Like qualitative researchers, those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4).
Therefore...

- **Qualitative Research questions** ask **how** or **what**, whereas **Quantitative Research questions** ask **why** and look for **comparisons** in groups.
Worldviews

- Worldviews, according to Guba (1990, p. 17), are “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. To Creswell, world views are “...a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds. These worldviews are shaped by the discipline area of the student, the beliefs of advisers and faculty in a student’s area, and past research experiences. The types of beliefs held by individual researchers will often lead to embracing a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach in their research” (2014, p. 6).
## Worldviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1 Four Worldviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postpositivism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Determination</td>
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<td>• Reductionism</td>
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<td>• Empirical observation</td>
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<td>and measurement</td>
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<td>• Theory verification</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy/Participatory</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Political</td>
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<td>• Empowerment Issue-oriented</td>
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<td>• Collaborative</td>
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<td>• Change-oriented</td>
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Worldviews: Postpositivists

According to Creswell (2014, p. 7)

• “Postpositivists hold a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes. Thus, the problems studied by postpositivists reflect the need to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes, such as found in experiments. It is also reductionistic in that the intent is to reduce the ideas into a small, discrete set of ideas to test, such as the variables that comprise hypotheses and research questions. The knowledge that develops through a postpositivist lens is based on careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists “out there” in the world. Thus, developing numeric measures of observations and studying the behavior of individuals becomes paramount for a post-positivist. Finally, there are laws or theories that govern the world, and these need to be tested or verified and refined so that we can understand the world. Thus, in the scientific method, the accepted approach to research by postpositivists, an individual begins with a theory, collects data that either supports or refutes the theory, and then makes necessary revisions before additional tests are made.”
Worldviews: Social constructivists

According to Creswell (2014, p. 8)

• “Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences — meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied.”
Worldviews: Advocacy/participatory

According to Creswell (2014, p. 10)

• “...research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. Thus, the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life. Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. The researcher often begins with one of these issues as the focal point of the study. This research also assumes that the inquirer will proceed collaboratively so as to not further marginalize the participants as a result of the inquiry. In this sense, the participants may help design questions, collect data, analyze information, or reap the rewards of the research.”
Worldviews: Pragmatism

According to Creswell (2014, p. 10)

• “...pragmatism as a worldview arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions (as in postpositivism). There is a concern with applications — what works — and solutions to problems (Patton, 1990). Instead of focusing on methods, researchers emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem (see Rossman & Wilson, 1985)”
Qualitative Research Design

From Creswell 2014, pp. 13-14

- **Narrative Research**
  
  “...a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives (Riessman, 2008). This information is ten often retold or restored by the researcher into a narrative chronology. Often, in the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative.”
Qualitative Designs: Phenomenological Research

From Creswell, 2014, p. 14

- **Phenomenological Research**
  
  - Purpose: Understand meaning of a specific human experience
  
  - “...a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews.”
Qualitative Designs: Phenomenonological Research

From Creswell, 2014, p. 14

- **Grounded-theory**
  - **Purpose**: Generate theory about social structure and processes
  - A design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information

- **Ethnography**
  - **Purpose**: Describe a culture
  - A design of inquiry coming from anthropology and sociology in which the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time. Data collection often involves observations and interviews

- **Case Studies**
  - A design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time
# Qualitative Research Design

## Table 1.4: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tend to or Typically ...</th>
<th>Qualitative Approaches</th>
<th>Quantitative Approaches</th>
<th>Mixed Methods Approaches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use these philosophical assumptions</td>
<td>• Postpositivist knowledge claims</td>
<td>• Pragmatic knowledge claims</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Employ these strategies of inquiry</td>
<td>• Surveys and experiments</td>
<td>• Sequential, concurrent, and transformative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Employ these methods</td>
<td>• Closed-ended questions, predetermined approaches, numeric data</td>
<td>• Both open- and closed-ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches, and both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use these practices of research as the researcher</td>
<td>• Positions him- or herself</td>
<td>• Collects both quantitative and qualitative data</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collects participant meanings</td>
<td>• Develops a rationale for mixing</td>
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<td>• Focuses on a single concept or phenomenon</td>
<td>• Integrates the data at different stages of inquiry</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Brings personal values into the study</td>
<td>• Presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Studies the context or setting of participants</td>
<td>• Employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research</td>
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<td>• Validates the accuracy of findings</td>
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<td>• Makes interpretations of the data</td>
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<td>• Creates an agenda for change or reform</td>
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<td>• Collaborates with the participants</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Tests or verifies theories or explanations</td>
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<td>• Identifies variables to study</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Relates variables in questions or hypotheses</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses standards of validity and reliability</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Observes and measures information numerically</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Uses unbiased approaches</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Employs statistical procedures</td>
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Qualitative Methods of Data Collection

- People’s words and actions represent the data of qualitative inquiry and this requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour. These can be captured through:
  - Observation – participant and direct
  - Interviews
    - Group
    - In-depth
  - The collection of relevant documents
  - Photographs, videos, audio, etc.
Assignment I: Literature Review

- Due date: 31st of October 2014 at 16.00 (latest)
- This assignment is worth 40% of your final grade for this module ARTD6087
- 1,500 words with accompanying images
Assessment 1: Literature Review

• What you need to do:

• Choose an organisation or global media issue that you have an interest in and that is relevant to your pathway study. Imagine you have to investigate a management issue faced by this organisation or that you are an organisation that wants to understand the role/impact (social) media in your organisation. Describe, summarise, and analyse the existing research related to this management issue – this is also known as the literature review. You need to go through a range of sources both online and offline, including journals, books, news, magazines, market information and resources provided in your handbook. Demonstrate that you have read extensively and reviewed a range of relevant material for your research ideas. Pick out the key ideas or themes that your own research is going to focus on or emphasise and explain why. Identify any research gaps and explain, in detail, how your research idea builds on existing research. And with regards to the research gaps you have identified, what specific research questions are you proposing?
Assessment 1: Literature Review

• Structure (What your marker will be looking for):

1. Title

2. Cover Page

3. Introduction of the topic you have selected.
   • Include a background on your topic
   • A brief outline of the research gap you are trying to fill
   • How your management issue relates to the background information you provided and the gap you briefly identify.
   • Conclude your intro with your research question (to be covered more in depth with Assessment 2).
Assessment 1: Literature Review

4. Literature Review (This is where you review all of the literature you have researched for this assessment – MINIMUM 5 Academic Sources)

• Here you situate your management issue in relation to other scholars who have written about similar topics in your field of research

• **Key questions to ask yourself**
  
  • How does your work compliment the work of other scholars?
  
  • How does your work build on the work of other scholars?
  
  • How does your work contradict the work of other scholars?

5. Your literature review must extend the research gap you identified in the introduction.

• Here you want to review your literature and position your research question as a gap in the literature.

• A successful literature review will leave your marker thinking: this student understands how their research fits in relation to other scholars in their field of research.

• A successful literature review will explain why your research question is significant and needs to be explored further (which will happen in assessment 2).

6. References and Image list (not included in the word count)
Assessment 1: Literature Review

- **Learning Outcomes**
  
  Upon successful completion of this task, you will:

  - Be able to identify your research interests and present their background and context.

  - Be able to demonstrate an ability to research ideas and express them in an academic essay.

- **Submission**

  - Hand in two printed copies of your work to the student office.

  - You must also upload a copy of your work as a Microsoft Word document or pdf onto Blackboard: blackboard.soton.ac.uk. The student office will remind you by emailing you submission details closer to the deadline.

- **Resources**

  - Readings in your handbook, the Winchester School of Art Library, and Hartley Library.

- **Health & Safety**

  - wsa.wikidot.com/healthandsafety/

  - It is the duty of all students to work in a safe and healthy manner and to have a care unto yourself and others.
Seminar

• **Task**
  
  • You will be divided into groups. Within your groups, please discuss what distinguishes a Quantitative Study from a Qualitative Study.
  
  • We will then discuss briefly your thoughts on the matter.
  
  • We will then look at two different articles and see how the research questions are presented.