

# Qualitative Research

## *SBPD7002*

### Week 2

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# Topics to cover....

- Nomadic journeying & ethical questing...
- Research Philosophies
- Argumentation
- Choosing a topic for research

...nomadic journeying and  
ethical questing...  
Research...

...shh this is about ethics...

# Research...

Thoughts from a Harvard mathematician (Tom Lehrer)

You can do anything you want if...

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= YcGRNmKB00](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcGRNmKB00)

You've cleared it with?

Responsibilities

# Moral Philosophy

- Obligations, duties, rights, responsibilities
- Deontology (e.g. Immanuel Kant)
- Consequentialism (e.g. John Stuart Mill)
  - How does this relate to you?
  - Value(s) present in your research?
  - Linkage with axiology
- **Doing things “right” OR Doing the “right” things?**  
*[absolute/relative differentiation, law, legality, legitimation]*

# An ethical thread through your research...

Pause – at the end of your journey – you're a  
HERO! (conquest/victory)

*James Hillman on 'Efficiency'*

But at what cost? (*dehumanisation?*)

What were the consequences of your research?

Think again about your re-search...

(but my research doesn't involve people so I  
don't need to think any further)

Sense of-self?

# Assessing research: some key questions

- Who are the researchers?
- Who is it for?
- What is the purpose?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- Who are the beneficiaries or victims of the R?

*All of these important lines of inquiry have an ethical perspective*

# Research Philosophies

## The mind as a *tabula rasa*

David Hume, the eighteenth century philosopher, observed that because

*The mind is a 'blank slate' or 'tabula rasa', all **K** we gain about the world around is imprinted through sensations.*

So the claim of Locke's *tabula rasa* view is twofold:

- 1. That the origin of our ideas or concepts derives purely from sense experience;*
- 2. That our **K** of what exists can only be justified through sense experience*

Locke's observations offers an explanation of *pure empiricism*

# ***Strengths and weaknesses of the *tabula rasa* perspective***

## ***Strengths***

1. It works based on how children learn. If not given the necessary developmental stimuli, they fail to understand the world around them
2. It works with modern science which needs experimental evidence to confirm theories.

## ***Weaknesses***

1. It doesn't work with *K* of mathematics - mere observation of how a group of two and a group of three combine to make a group of 5 does not mean we know how  $2+2$  comes to be 5.
2. We appear to know that it does in advance of the observation

# ***Strengths and weaknesses of the *tabula rasa* perspective***

## ***.....More weaknesses***

3. It doesn't work either with knowledge of logical truths -  
E.g. our knowledge that a pane of glass cannot both be broken and not broken (true contradictions are not possible) cannot be based on experience as this must be true in all logical possible worlds.
4. It doesn't work too with ethical knowledge - we cannot learn from observation the difference between right and wrong. Surely, to do this we need some kind of 'moral sense' (or conscience?)
5. It is also doubtful that theological *K* - or *K* of the existence of God / Allah - can be acquired through observation.

# *Cogito ergo sum*

The philosophy of the seventeenth century mathematician, Rene Decartes, is encapsulated beautifully by the Latin phrase *cogito ergo sum*, which when translated means:

*'I think therefore I am.'*

The argument advanced by Decartes '*cogito ergo sum*' is twofold:

1. That our **K** of objects and shapes could not have come to us via the senses; we possess such knowledge *innately*, before we experience any sensory contact with the world around us.
2. That we can acquire non-experiential **K** - or some truths - through reflection over time on the relevant subject matter. For example we can come to know that the sum of the interior angles of a triangle add up to  $180^\circ$  by proving this mathematically.

Decartes observations offers explanation of pure rationalism

## So to the meanings of **Empiricism** and **Rationalism**?

- **Empiricism**

*"A philosophical theory which holds that all substantive **K** of the world is derived from experience"*

- **Rationalism**

*"An alternative philosophical theory which holds that knowledge of the world is innate and non-experiential and flows through reason, beliefs and ideas"*

*So....**Empiricism** and **Rationalism** represent the two key diametrically opposed epistemologies.*

# What are the meanings of **Epistemology** and **Ontology**?

- **What is Epistemology?**

*"The conventional belief systems and wisdom within a domain about how knowledge comes about, is to be conceptualized, interpreted and processed"*

- **What is Methodology?**

*"This describes the **epistemological** position adopted by the researcher i.e. positivist or interpretivist, qualitative or quantitative, rationalist or empiricist"*

- **What is an ontology?**

*"The formal representation of a set of concepts within a domain and the relationships between those concepts. It is used to reason about the properties of that domain, and may be used to define that domain"*

# Three reasons why philosophical thinking is important to research *strategy* and *tactics*

- **Reason 1**

*Helps the researcher to clarify the overall research strategy and tactics to be used, including the type and origin of evidence to be gathered, how such evidence is interpreted, and how it will help to answer the research question .*

- **Reason 2**

*Knowing the philosophical perspective helps the researcher to evaluate the different research strategies and tactics. This will avoid their inappropriate use and unnecessary work by identifying limitations at an early stage in the research process.*

- **Reason 3**

*Facilitates creativity in the selection and adaptation of research strategies and tactics that were previously outside his/her experience.*

*Source: Crossan (2005)*

So.....what constitutes a *research strategy*?

## *A Research strategy*

*"is a high level approach to the research that determines much of the detailed work the research will be doing. This high level approach is thought to reflect the researcher's philosophical beliefs and understanding of the nature of the research s/he will undertake"*

*Source: Remenyi et.al. (2006)*

*Source: Crossan (2005)*

# So.....what constitutes a *research strategy*?

## Theoretical (Rationalism)

Draws on ideas and concepts from the literature and through reflection and discourse , develops, extends, and provides fuller insights into the issues and relationships within the domain of inquiry

## Empirical (Empiricism)

Draws on experience and/or observation of primary evidence so as to understand the phenomenon being studied. The researcher has to go out, meet people and collect new evidence in some way, which can be quantitative and/or qualitative

## Positivist

An approach to the study taken by the researcher which is **quantitative** and relies on numbers (metrics) and the research's skill as a mathematical or statistical analyst.

## Interpretivist

An approach to the study taken by the researcher which is **qualitative** and produces data/results not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.

*Source: Remenyi and Money (2005)*

## So the *positivistic or quantitative approach to research*:

- Resembles that of the natural sciences and thus uses quantitative methods;
- Demands that the researcher is objective;
- Reduces the research problem to manageable components;
- Separates the data's underlying values from the researcher's values so as to achieve objectivity;
- Derives possible hypotheses from scientific theories and then tests theses empirically;
- Only counts or measures phenomena which can be observed;
- A test of observations is the final arbiter in any theoretical dispute.

*Source: Remenyi and Money (2005)*

## In the *interpretivist or qualitative approach to research*:

- The researcher is not objective and cannot be;
- The aim is to provide an in-depth understanding of the world of the research subject;
- Samples are used that are deliberately selected for their particular attributes i.e. not at random;
- Evidence collection methods involve close contact between researcher and subject of study;
- Evidence is detailed, information rich and extensive;
- Analysis is usually open to emergent concepts and ideas;

*Source: Remenyi and Money (2005)*

So.....what constitutes a *research*?

## *A Research tactic*

*"follows the researchers decision to adopt a particular research strategy and may be defined as an evidence collection and analysis approach, which can be used for the purposes of understanding a phenomenon and thus contributing to the body of knowledge "*

*Source: Remenyi et.al. (2006)*

# Research Tactics

1. Action Research
2. Case Studies
3. Ethnography
4. Field Experiments
5. Focus Groups
6. Forecasting
7. Futures Research
8. Game or Role-Playing
9. In-depth Surveys
10. Laboratory Experiments
11. Large-scale Surveys
12. Participant-Observer
13. Scenario Discussions

# “Reading” research

- How do you approach reading research?
- Distance?
- Reading with?
- Reading over?
- Reading against?
- Superiority and inferiority
- Hermeneutic approach to “reading”
- Cultural, geographic and gender differencing?

# Research Questions and Approaches

- What is the main research question?
- Are sub-questions clearly unpacked and logically related?
- Is the analysis geared to answering the research question(s)?
- Data and personal security (primary/secondary)
- Confidentiality?
- Informed consent?
- Vulnerable adults/children?
- “Hidden histories” and “surfacing undiscussables”
- Examples of codes of conduct e.g. <http://www.bera.ac.uk/>
- See the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research

# Methodology

- What are the overall perspectives and methodology adopted?
- Do the researchers specify *what there is* (ontology) and *how we come to know it* (epistemology)?
- Are ethical concerns discussed? Participation? Voice? Action research (look-think-act) cycles and using pilot studies
- What specific methods are chosen?  
(qualitative/quantitative – but there are many others)

*Again, where are ethical perspectives given voice?*

# Results

- What are the results?
- Do the results answer the research question(s)?
- Is the scope and relevance of the results clearly defined?
- Sampling, validation and ethical application of research outcomes

# Reflections and Conclusions

- Does the research include some reflection on processes, limitations etc.?
- Do the conclusions identify the significance of the research for the wider field?
- Are further research related questions identified?
- Has the research really contributed to useful knowledge?
- Re-turning to sense-of-self?

# Information Challenge

- There is so much information available
- Focus on information useful in getting the job done do not waste time on information only of 'interest'
- Stay focused on your information needs

# Data v. Information

- Data- undigested facts and figures which have been gathered but not processed
- Information- data that has been processed and selected for your needs
- Information overload is really a data overload
- Information can be combined with a manager's experience and insight to become knowledge to enable effective action

# Types of Information

## **Quantative**

How much? How many? How frequently? How likely? How quickly?

Gives you breadth of information.

## **Qualitative**

Non numerical requirements which is subjective- What? Why? How?

Gives you depth of information.

# Collecting Data

- **Primary Data**

Gathered by you or your team for your own purposes. Could include surveys, commissioned reports, meetings with consultants.

- **Secondary Data**

Gathered by other people for their own purposes. Includes: journals, reports, commercial databases.

# Collecting Secondary Data

- Know what you are looking for- draw up a briefing if others are helping or doing the research.
- Use all the clues available- indices, contents pages, scan journals, search engines- do not read more than you have to.
- Do not get side- tracked

# Collecting Formal Primary Data

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Face to face
- Telephone
- Postal
- Email

# Questionnaires

- Do not ask too many questions
- Easy questions first, sensitive questions in the middle, classification questions at the end ( age etc.)
- Simple logical structure
- Avoid leading questions
- Avoid jargon
- Avoid words which can be interpreted in many ways such as reasonable or satisfactory
- Avoid multiple questions
- Use open questions with care- they take longer to analyse

# Types of Questions

- Likert Scale- strongly agree, slightly agree, neither agree or disagree, slightly disagree, strongly disagree
- Semantic differential- sliding scale, circle the mark which most closely resembles your view 1-5 etc.

# Interviews

- Structured- set questions and format, prescriptive
- Semi- structured- set of topics but more freedom in how interviewer asks questions
- Unstructured- up to interviewer what questions are asked and how
- Get more in depth information from unstructured interviews but the data is more difficult to analyse as interviewer has more influence over the information gathered
- Can use focus groups

# Collecting Informal Primary Data

Use your network:

- At work- courses, contacts, previous jobs
- Family, friends
- Contacts from leisure activities
- Your time in education- school, college, university
- Be careful, are these people the best to ask, is the information correct, do they have a vested interest, will the information be available on time?

# Quality Information

- Relevant
- Current
- Adequate
- Timely
- Reliable
- Cost- effective

# Meaning and Interpretation

- Qualitative analysis is a subjective process of interpreting meaning.
- How can you use qualitative data to develop an interpretation or theoretical framework?

# Express your arguments.

- Provide a concise summary of what you have learned (or believe you have learned) from your research about each of the themes you identified.

# Check your arguments.

- How might you go about checking whether your arguments are a valid interpretation of the data?
- Are there other possible interpretations?
- Are there any examples that do not fit your argument or theory?

# Substantiate your arguments

- What kinds of 'evidence' should you provide to persuade a reader of your interpretations?

# Choosing a topic for research

- Your topic should be:
  - Related to your research interests
  - Related to theories and the literature
  - Able to generate some new information about the real world
  - Do-able in the time available

# What makes a good research topic?

- Value – how beneficial will it be to know more about the topic?
- Feasibility – can I reasonably expect to fully explore my topic within the scope of the research project?

We need to focus our research to find out what we really want to learn about a topic.



# **DBA Candidates Led Discussion**

# *Qualitative Research*

1) Does “Qualitative Research” Make Sense? Justify with examples.

# *Qualitative Research*

2) Why do you think it is important to take theory into consideration in your Research?

3) What is the difference between Inductive Research and Deductive Research? Use examples to illustrate your point

4) What is the difference between between Epistemology and Ontology? Use examples to illustrate your point

# Research

5) Why are “Research Questions” important in the overall research process?

6) What is your understanding of Research Design?

# **Case Study & grounded Theory**

7) What are the arguments for and against the use of Case Study in Research?

8) What do you understand by the Grounded Theory research methodology?

9) Are case studies used in Qualitative Research only?

# Population and Sample

10) Using examples, what is the difference between the above two?

11) Why is population size important?

12) What is the difference between the Secondary and Primary Data? What are the weaknesses and the strengths of each?

# Secondary and Primary Data

13) What is the difference between the **Secondary and Primary Data** two?

14) What are the weaknesses and the strengths of each?

# ***Triangulation***

15) What is Triangulation?

16) What implications does it have for ensuring qualitative research credibility

# Interviews

17) What types of Interviews are you conversant with and what are their benefits as well as weaknesses?

# Focus Group

18) What do you understand by this?

19) What are the advantages does the “Focus Group” in comparison to an individual qualitative interview?

20) Are there circumstances you think it is a good idea the participants know each other?

# Observation

21) What do you understand by this? Do you think this is a good way to carry out research?

22) What are the main ways to record data in an observation?

23) Take into consideration Ethical issues.  
Use Examples?