

**BMDB7002**

**Identity and Approaches to Applied Business Research**

**Assignment 1**

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## BLOG 1

The definition of qualitative research could be differentiated demonstrated as the nature and essence of this approach are hardly monotonously conveyed and grasp by simply add the features to a “mixed” definition, which only resulted in a long-winded paragraph. Instead, the key characteristics of qualitative research could serve the useful and meaningful illuminating role.

First, it is a systematic and strategic. It has strategic nature as it is a series of thoughtful, deliberate, conceived arrangements strive to minimize its limitations and maximize its assets with a broader attention to the context. Besides, it is not loosely but systematically formed for ad hoc purpose, which relies on a set of well-established and articulated methodologies to collect, organise and analysis the non-numerical and textual data generated from purposeful sampling.

Second, it is interpretive, iterative and inductive. Instead of making the researcher invisible, the qualitative research locates the observer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3), and let the agency to interpret meanings of behaviours, group interactions, phenomenon, process, mechanism in the context with their bias, therefore, it is also value laden. In order to ground up novel insights, the researchers usually iterate working between the field and desk to collect and analysis data. By using of various representations,

such as interviews, field notes, observations, artifacts, the researcher helps the participants to make their voices. Meanwhile, the aim of qualitative research is not theory-testing as quantitative research but moves from the specific observations and distinguish a pattern or theme, explore, generalize and build a theory.

Third, it is flexibility, and reflexivity. Not as quantitative research, the research design is emergent and iterative. Alternatively stated, instead of planning all the designs before the data collection, the qualitative researcher should have the ability to deal with the emergent data or themes and sometimes the researcher should potter between the natural-setting fieldwork and the “headwork” on the desk ( Van Maanen,2011), and make adjustment flexible. Speaking of the appeal of reflexivity in qualitative research, the omniscient and distanced qualitative writer is not acceptable, which indicates that the text cannot be separated from the references and interpretation of the author, whose cultural, social, economic, gender position are inevitably the interpretation of the research in a specific history and location(Creswell and Poth, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative author should make reflection of how the interaction with participants shape the co-constructed results.

There are certain types of problems are best suited for qualitative inquiry. First, when the problems can not be addressed

by simply measured with quantitative method (not “how many”) and requires deep understanding and explanation and exploration (“how and why”) of the meaning and context. Second, there is gap between the preexisting theory and the phenomenon, therefore, by using qualitative research, the researcher could move from the specific behaviours to discover the patterns or themes, explore, generalize and then generate a “fit” theory to explain the phenomenon. Third, when the natural setting is crucial to uncover the mysteries of some problems, at this situation, qualitative research allows not separating participants from their context. Last but not least, some qualitative research empowers marginalized individual and emancipate those in the dilemma of inequality of power and ought to make a change to the society, for instances, critical theory, feminist theories, disabilities theories, etc.

In my opinion, qualitative study is an indispensable research strategy and methodology for business and management study, because the organizations filled with humans of different demographic, historical, cultural, economic, educational background. There are multiple stakeholders around the organization. The world is complexity and messy. Deep understanding and holistic vision is vital for exploring the multiple truth of the organization.

To sum up, qualitative research is important to social research, and I would like to make a closure of this blog by quoting my favourite qualitative researcher, Yin (2015):

*Study the meaning of people's lives in their real- world roles, represent their views and perspectives, identify important contextual conditions, discover view or additional insights about existing social and behavioural concepts and acknowledge the contribution of multiple perspectives.*

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## BLOG 2

According to spirit and core value of the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care of the UK, one of the paramount principles of research is to promote the health and well-being of society, alternatively stated, all participants' rights, safety and dignity should be considered as the priority of any research. Besides, as indicated by Trusted (1987) and Birch et al., (2002), ethics could be the foundermental judgements and a suty of good conduct. In my opinion, a research without ethical considerations is not a good research, expecially in the case of qualitative study, which invloves more personal issues, more risk of making intrusion of participants' life and more complex interaction between researcher and participants. For instance, how to take special care for voluntary participants, how to acquire the permission to access them and how to appropriate conduct measures to obtain the consent and protect their private information, how to not make any disturbs when immersing and participating in the ethnography activity, how to avoid the power imbalance between the inquirer and the one being researched, etc. These ethical considerations not only surface in a particular phase, such as the data collection stage, but also in all stages, from the begining to the end, including designing, collecting, analysing, writing and reporting, etc. Designing and

conducting an ethical research entail anticipating and addressing all possible emergent ethical problems in the study.

There are some seminal work and institutions that offer relevant ethical principles and useful and practical ethic guidelines for how to apply them in different phases of the research, such as Creswell and Poth (2018), Denzin and Lincoln (1998), Social Care Research Ethics Committee ([www.screc.org.uk](http://www.screc.org.uk)), University Research Ethics Committees (<http://www.urec.org.uk/>), The Social Research Association ([www.the-sra.org.uk](http://www.the-sra.org.uk)) and the American Psychological Association (APA; 2010), etc. Among them, a book of Creswell and Poth (2018) delineated a comprehensive and vivid picture for audiences especially those naive students like me by array and applied typical ethical principles to different types of ethical issues emerged in different time during the process as well as the coping strategies. Three typical ethical principles refer to respect for persons, concern for welfare and justice. Also, there are other relevant principles as honesty, benevolence, do not harm, judgement based on each case, experience and social construction of ethical choice, etc. In the matter of informed consent, there are many gray fuzzy areas that deserve researchers' attention. According to Hurd (1996), consent is a state of mind, therefore, it is changeable. Participants as an autonomous person have the rights

to join the withdraw a study in any time. Second, consent needs the ability and knowledge of the object of being consented to as well as the withhold or withdraw capacity without duress. Third, it is the description of the object not the object itself that individuals make consent to, and if the leading description accounts for misleading results, it is not accountable as a consent. Fourth, consent is neither the excuses for escaping some undesired results nor the facilitator for some occurrence of an action. The last one reminds me of the Didi Case in China, the curfew of female using the services is another way of information that indicates if something unwanted happened, it is the passengers' responsibility, as Didi has officially stated the rules.

In order to be a good researcher, sometimes, it is not uncommon to put ourselves in an extreme position, when facing the dilemma of balancing the protection of participants against the obtaining the valued forms of knowledge. Standing the side of utilitarianism, it is the difficulties forms of knowledge that can make most people happy, and it could contribute to other vulnerable and marginal people by providing some good examples and knowledges for policy making. But for the supporters of the Kant's philosophy assumption, the golden rules "do unto others" imply that do not sacrifice the victim in any circumstances. Alternatively stated, the inquirer should not take

any inappropriate actions for any reasons, the do not harm and respect is the paramount principle for any good research. Personally, I advocate the second view, all the conflict, the imbalanced power between the researcher and the participants should be avoid unless the inquirer could find the satisfactory way to make the participants truly happy.

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Department of Health Research Governance Framework –  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## BLOG 3

Interviewing refers to a social interaction or conversational practice where knowledge is constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee(s) (Brinkmann,2008; Brinkmann and Kvale ,2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Different types of interviews have been used and developed in the long river of history, for instance, Catholic confession, legal interrogation, and oral examination are old practises of interviewing in human society (Brinkmann,2008). The early pioneers adopt interview as a means of producing knowledge including Socrates, Plato, Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget as well as some members of Chicago School of Sociology (ibis). In current society, interviews are pervasive, which has been considered as one the most common methods to acquire validated knowledge in so many disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, education, etc.

When it comes to the taxonomy of interviews, it could result in different categorisations according to different criteria. It could be divided into one-to-one interview and two or more interviewees or focus group depending on the number of participants. Considering the instrumentality, whether it is in the physical space or talking through phone (Shuy, 2002) or online platform (such as chat room or bulletin board groups) (Krueger and Casey, 2014), or make

interaction using writing text could be chosen according to the researcher's need and limitations. The differences of the previous forms are easy to understand, and last but not least, when it refers to the degree of formality, Maccoby and Maccoby's definition of regarding the distinction among relatively structured and unstructured forms of interviews as the continuum could help us understand the differences not just in theory but also in real settings, as the supporters assert that there is not completely structured or unstructured forms of interview in reality, because some utterances and discourses before or after the recording could be crucial to understanding the respondent's answers and behaviours in the standardised interview (Parker, 2005), and even the life history interview could not be considered completely unstructured interview, as the questions are prepared by the interviewer (Brinkmann, 2013).

One the very end of the continuum, the relatively structured interviews are implemented by asking the same standardized questions to each participant from a predesigned questionnaire. One the other end of the continuum, the main role of the researcher is to be a listener (Wengraf, 2001) in the relatively unstructured interview such as narrative interview about historical life story. Right in the middle is the form of semi-structured interviewing, also known as qualitative interviewing, which not only allows more room for

interviewee's opinions being brought forth but also gives the opportunity for the interviewer being visible in the process of knowledge-constructing by focusing on some points that she or he considered them as important to the research. In addition, the strengths of the intensive qualitative interviewing are not limited as such. As indicated by Husserl (1954), the phenomenology of human life could be understood through intensive qualitative interview, which serves a role of unfolding the meaning of the participants' experiences (Brinkmann and Kvale ,2015). Furthermore, interviewing is a crafting work(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012), which could be tailored to be flexible enough for the interviewee to be interested, active, fully involved, disobedient and even yield contrasting views to light(Latour, 1993; Parker, 2005).

Regarding to the procedure of the interviewing, authors like Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) and Rubin and Rubin (2012) offered seven stages for guidance, thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying, and reporting. Instead of keen on the description of each steps, I would like to end up this blog by offer a reminder that always consider the ethical issues in all stages of the interviewing, the researchers should be trained to be put the participants' confidentiality, informed consent, consequences of participating in the priority and ensure no harm could be imposed to

them.

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## BLOG 4

### *Brief Introduction*

David Morgan (1996), the author of the “Focus Group Kit” defined focus group as a research approach that studying the predetermined topic of the researcher’s interest and collecting data through group interaction and dynamics. it is neither different from some of the group discussion or group interview such as nominal groups (Delbecq & Andrew, 1971) and Delphi technique (Rescher, 1998). Which actually do not embedded group interaction or group observation, nor some conversations derived from the natural setting groups that do not used topics predestined by the researcher. In a focus group, whether the participants comparatively free to decided their willing and activeness in the topic in a more exploratory way as the researcher may not fully think out in detail, or the moderator take control on the track, alternatively stated, whether it is less structured, semi structured or more structured depending on the research purpose, particularly, the preference of the how much the data are uncontaminated and emerged from the natural setting Morgan (1997). But by no means, it is still unnatural setting if we rigorously examine it, scholars as Gamson (1992), considered the intrusion as one of its backward in the focus group.

### *Process and Tips*

## 1. Designing and Preparing

When planning the session, the first order is to identify the major goal of the group meeting, it could vary the full scope regarding whether its aim to depict social behaviours and cultural norms, sharing and comparing and generating collective insights, revealing and learning participants' views and languages towards a given issue, or exploring a sensitive topic. Secondly, carefully develop the group questions, group size, group number, group stratification as well as the sample method. Speaking of the sample (participants), the researcher should leave the room for non-attendants and different teaching material provide different answers for the group size and number, most of them varying from 4-20 (or more) per group and 4-20 (some even more) groups. The personal preferences regarding the group design should be tailored according to the research topic and objective. But usually, on one hand, the smaller group, the less dynamics, which means there is not much tendency and fruitiness for the information exchange. On other hand, it places greater burden on the moderator to keep the conversations and ensure the enough time for each participant to express their substantively perspective if the group is too big. Another concern is the array of stratification, especially for those topics that could generate tension and difficulties on different

attributes of participants, for instance, gender, it is better to split them into sexually homogeneity group. As for the group question, which could be divided and labeled into opening, introductory, transition and key questions, all need to be open and inviting enough to stimulate a ripple effect, but some of them are expected to finish in short times but some of them need to be deeply discussed and lingered. Thirdly, while preparing the session, some detail but “mundane” issues need to be addressed such as previously calling the potential members before several days checking the recorders as well as settings and refreshments, etc. Fourthly, some foci need special caution when analyzing the data. For instance, it is the group not individual in it is the unit of data. And more text is not equaling to more importance. Sometimes, it is effectively distinct the text of conversations to be the view of one member of the theme of a group? whether it is the repeated view from a single participant or frequently emerged from most of the participants’ interest? The two types of repetition should both be the focus of researcher, but in my opinion, the later one is considered as the most important sign.

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## BLOG 5

Unobtrusive research refers to data collection method that do not consist of direct or over interfere with participants, it could be qualitative or quantitative. (Baker, 2008). It is also named nonreactive, indirect, naturalistic, hidden, noninvasive or nondisruptive data collection (Janetzko,2017), in which subjects are usually not aware or informed that they are under investigation, so as not to change what they behave and their “actual” behaviours would not be affected during the data collecting process (Webb et al., 2000). In terms of various forms of unobtrusive research methods, Webb et al. (1996), classified three types of unobtrusive data, named physical traces, simple observations, and archival records.

In addition, Webb et al. also categorise it into erosion and accretion approaches (ibis), for instance, the worn traces in the carpet (the former type) and the incremental volumes of books (the latter type). Others like Baker (2008) used broad categorisations of printed and nonprinted materials as division of the different forms. The printed materials involve newspapers, books, broadsheets, articles, diaries, letters, medical records, historical documents, government documents, census data, etc. And nonprinted materials could be listed but not limited as the research proxies (People who are hired and trained to take part in a purposeful and designed

activity), the online data (such as blogs, websites, social media, etc.), and recordings (speeches, television programs, interviews, classroom discussions, lectures, videos, audios, films, etc.) Personally, I would like to tailor and categorise the data sources of unobtrusive research method into content analysis of “texts” (including written copy, the content of what we see or hear) and physical traces of human behaviour.

When examine the strengths and limitations of various forms of unobtrusive study, general advantages and disadvantages would be discussed. First, one of the major advantages is to eliminate the Hawthorne effect, which refers to the possibility of participants become awareness of the presence of the researcher, to revise their behaviours while being observed or studied in the obtrusive settings such as interviews, observations, as well as questionnaires, etc. unobtrusive study allows the researchers to seek evidence of what people actually do, as opposed to what they say they do, and thus be capable to collect more reliable data. Second, some researchers are benefit of its comparatively low-cost and convenience as some of the participants are inanimate objects, that do not need to travel to somewhere and make appointment. Third, unobtrusive research offers a more forgiving and easier way for the researcher to correct mistakes. Due to the nature of some other research methods, it is

painful to revise or reframe some of the critical procedures as omitting some data or making some mistakes while collecting them. For any field researchers, it is disastrous if you need to “do-over.” By contrast, it is far easier to make up for the mistakes and correct the problems because the original data can be obtained in a simple way. Fourth, unobtrusive studies are conducive to historical and comparative research, which uses objective sources of data to examine long-ranging process and enable the researcher to use the cost-effective way to investigate the process that occurred decades before and make comparison over time and space. Finally, unobtrusive research can transform the large volume of mundane, taken-for-granted texts into interesting topics (Payne & Payne, 2011).

The biggest limitation could be the validity problem. The content, the sequences, the structure of original work implied the “author’s ideas” (ibis), which could be created for different objective compared to unobtrusive researchers. In the process of interpretation, researchers’ bias could generate big difference between ‘manifest’ content and ‘latent’ content (Holsti, 1969). Therefore, the results are more difficult to justify. Second, it is easy to omit the context while collecting and analysing the data. Compared to other qualitative research method, it is easy to get understanding of what happens but not why and how it happens. Ryle (1971) and Geertz (1973),

criticise the unobtrusively data collecting method only generates thin description, which lacks meaningful contextual cues. Third, the informed consent and possible invasion of people's privacy as well as plagiarism, misrepresentation of information and violations of copy right make it more difficult to get the approval from ethics review board (IRB). Therefore, any precaution measures including getting the support letter from the owner of the site and website, be honest with archival staff about the intention, address the confidentiality issue should be taken to ensure no harm is done (Janetzko,2017).

Content analysis is a tool of qualitative and quantitative research that use systematic reduction, categorisation and interpretation techniques to present the meaning, background, and cultural information of the authors according to the written or visual sources (Hsieh & Shannon,2018; Stan,2012). According to Hsieh & Shannon (2018), there are three approaches of content analysis, inductive, deductive and summative, which the selective strategies are depends on the research objective and the availability of preexisting knowledge and theories. Indictive approach is well suited when the existing knowledge is absent, and the researcher's aim is to create knowledge. By contrast, if the purpose if test the existing theory, deductive approach is appropriate. And when

quantification is desired, summative approach is ideal.

As a DBA student, the application of content analysis in business and management domain should not be neglected. Currently, this technique is widely used in marketing, advertising, media research, cultural, gender and age studies, ethnography and anthropology, case study, etc. A typical example could be D'Aveni and MacMillan (1990) applied it to investigate the different focus of attention of top managers in companies that are surviving or failing bankruptcy.

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## BLOG 6

The writing template of Myers (2018) provides a clear and practical perspective of forming the writing strategies for naïve, which contains nine items that could be modified according to your specific requirement. The nine items involve title, purpose, authors, audience, method, public outlet, theoretical contribution, practical contribution, and materials included. The purpose of applying these kinds of template is not to make your work to be dogmatic, rigid, or long-winded like the product of assembly line, but allow you to have a big-picture thinking, focus on the ultimate goal and deliberate considerate in case of missing essential part. Furthermore, Myers (2018) did carefully and heart-to-heart job as an editor and supplicated qualitative writer for those in the field of business and management by suggesting five main groups of audience, namely, academics, students, business professionals, institutions, general public. Each of them has different preferences varying from theory-focused, learning-oriented, practical implication, project targeted to interest and knowledge acquired. Specifically, Penrod (2003) described her vivid experiences of how to successfully writes proposal for getting fund of qualitative project. And Dempster et al., (2015) gave a lavishly illustrated guide tour of various kinds of digital tools applied in qualitative writing.

Journal paper, conference, book, textbook, newspaper, magazines, reports, etc. could be regarded as some major conventions of sharing research findings and provide the researcher channels and opportunities to join the conversation of different parties. As for a lecturer of business management discipline in university and a DBA student, the most important output is top-tier peer-reviewed journal article. It is a well accepted fact that 'publish or perish' environment makes the journal article become the currency for promotion and tenure (Myers, 2018). Borrowing the "social club" view of Myers (2018), conducting qualitative research itself is a social process that full of interactions among multiple reality holders. The peer-review process is designed to ensure the greatest extent of objective and fair regarding to the knowledge contribution. But it is still cannot wipe out the subjective and bias of expertise, they are human beings! In order to get invited into the social club, researchers need to follow some implicit rules and pay their dues by actively participating in the review work of the journal. It is a reciprocal process, by making contribute your endeavour of reviewing other's article, you become more familiar with the reviewing process, knowing your audience better, and evade some common mistakes.

There is a general rule of writing qualitative results no matter whichever outlet you would like to choose. It is the golden rule to be

interesting (Cachon, 2012; Caulley, 2008; Ely et al., 1997; Grills, 1998; Myers, 2013; Van Maanen, 1988). Audiences like academics, students, institutions, practitioners, and general public, who could say no to something that contribute to knowledge and interesting? The “so what” question is a classic but not old fashion question when you are writing, which could be interpreted of what is the significant of your work? How does it enrich my knowledge? What is the implication of your research? It is easy to get lost by going astray of just hurry to complete the assignment in the journal of writing and presenting. Therefore, it is helpful to imagine the audiences looking at you and asking the “so what” question.

I would like to end the blog by some comments given toward my “ascetic” description of academic work from one of my favourite lectures, who asserts that “it is your choice to be a academic worker, and it is your work. You can have a say to how to shape it according to your will, although sometimes you are not the solely deal-maker.” As suggested by Sinclair & Ladkin (2019), the perceptions and response as well as the materiality of your body influence your sense-making process as a writer. So, listen to your body’s voice of delight, surprise, or frustration etc. and “writing through your body”!

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The “so what” question:

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