

Metadata

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Unit 1: Introduction to Research

1. What is research?

This module considers the role, purpose, structure and process of research. It aims to answer the following questions:

- What is research?
- Why do research?
- What types of research are there?
- What ethical considerations are there when conducting research?
- How might research findings be used?

2. Research is a sign of intelligence

Intelligence can be defined as the adaptation of an environment to suit needs, which is why humans can be acknowledged as the most 'intelligent' of species.

Humans observe, identify, plan and then effect change. Humans have social gain through information as well as resource sharing.

As apart from any other species, humans have complex language structures and the written word to share information from one person to another. Literate societies with well structured, permanent means of communicating information have immense evolutionary advantage.

3. We research everyday

Humans are 'intuitive' scientistsalways asking questions and testing theories about themselves, others, events, the environment and the world around them.

Research is asking a question and finding out the answer.....

- It is looking into something.
- It is looking for something.
- It is comparing and contrasting things.
- It is finding out more information...it is counting things ...making enquiries...being curious...finding out what people think...finding out what

people do....finding out what works.... finding out what doesn't work...finding out what people want...

What research have you conducted recently?

- What decisions have you made about your day?
- What decisions have you made today?
- What influenced your decision to take this course?
- How do you prepare and write assignments?
- How do you decide how to provide the best quality of service for your service users?

We all engage in or do social research as we act on the basis and results of our own research and theorising, therefore, what we think affects the way we behave....

4. What do we research?

What do we research?

We research people and their behaviour, opinions, attitudes, trends and patterns, also politics, animals, health and illness. Research can be conducted either informally for our own benefit, through asking questions, watching, counting or reading and formally, for medical or academic purposes, as a marketing strategy, to inform and influence politics and policy.

Research may be carried out in our own lives, through the media, in our place of work, with our friends and family or through reading past research.

Our views – personal, social, community and worldwide and our own identities are socially constructed through our own theorising.

5. What does research tell us?

Research gives us information about:

- Thoughts and opinions
- Attitudes
- Habits
- Culture
- Norms
- Scientific facts
- Medical information

What do we do with research?

- Have it as interesting fact
- Use it to make decisions
- Use it to persuade influence others
- Use it to affect change

- Use it to change behaviour
- Use it to better use...medical ...improve customer care...write better funding applications....monitor and evaluate our provision....

We research in order to understand society and social processes, as well as to test and or create theories in order that we are better able to inform about social action and potentially 'improve' social conditions.

6. Knowledge, Interpretation and dissemination

Research involves gaining knowledge, interpreting data and disseminating the findings.

Gathering data from direct and indirect sources:

- observations
- questionnaires
- interviews
- experiments
- other research

Processing data for interpretation numerically and or verbally:

- statistics
- themes or perspectives

Dissemination of findings

- written reports
- presentations
- seminars
- supply to media

7. When we conduct research, it should be...

- Systematic
- Non-discriminatory
- Open to criticism
- Independent and free from and direct and or indirect censorship

8. Research Theory

Research is approached in a variety of ways...in its methods, analysis and presentation...which may be influenced by the theoretical approach the researcher takes.

The appendix of "Research theory" offers a brief introduction to some of the theoretical positions as well as some links which you can use to research further.

9. Conclusion

All academic subjects require research to reach conclusions and establish theories, or simply to find out more about a particular situation or phenomenon.

This module aims to give you the opportunity to learn more about research methods and data in both an academic context, for when you are researching for assignments as well as a professional context in order to give you a better understanding of the role and uses of research within the voluntary and community sector.

10. Working Practice Exercise

Consider a working practice within your workplace.

1. How has this working practice developed?
2. What research was done and evidence collated that contributed to the decision being made that this way is the best way?

Appendix – Research Theory

Research Theory

There are several theoretical positions, to include:

Positivists and empiricism

Both positivists and empiricists believe it is possible to gather information about the social world and classify it in a way that makes sense. Auguste Comte, a positivist, believed that scientific knowledge about society could be gathered and understood, as in the natural sciences, in order to improve human experience and the running of society. Emile Durkheim, took a similar approach to his sociological understanding or research and society. Durkheim's *'Suicide'* (read the attached link for more information <http://durkheim.itgo.com/suicide.html>) is used as a model of positivist research. The following links provide further reading regarding the positivist and empiricist approaches.

- <http://www.skeptical.com/empiricism.html>
- <http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/6q.htm>
- <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/help/mach1.htm>
- <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/comte/1856/general-view.htm>

Phenomenology

Phenomenologists 'reject' quantitative or statistical research, as it believes that research cannot produce a causal explanation of human behaviour. They believe that all humans make sense of the world by imposing their own, unique and individual meanings and classifications on it, which make up social reality, which, therefore, can only be subjective and measured accordingly. The following links provide you with the opportunity to explore this approach further.

- <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/>
- <http://www.phenomenologycenter.org/phenom.htm>

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory originated with Glaser and Strauss who did research on the interactions between health care professionals and dying patients. This approach goes beyond the phenomenology approach because it produces new knowledge which is used to develop new theories about a phenomenon, therefore, this methodology is based on the collection and analysis of data about a phenomenon. An example of grounded theory is the theory of the stages of the grief process – denial, anger, acceptance and resolution – this is not a new phenomenon, but a theory that acknowledges and describes this experience – we now use this. We now use this knowledge of the grief process, which was derived from the grounded theory, to understand and help people through the grief process. The data collection techniques used to develop grounded theory includes:

- Interviews
- Observations
- The following information helps to make important contributions
- Literature reviews
- Relevant documentary analysis

New theory develops as the researcher recognises new ideas and themes that emerge from what people have said and/or from events which have been observed. The researcher will review the raw data which will inform patterns. Hypotheses about the relationship between various ideas or categories are then tested out and constructs are formed which lead to new understandings and concepts – therefore, the theory is 'grounded' in the data.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology, an American sociological perspective, applies the phenomenological perspective on the study of society, therefore they go beyond what classifications and meanings individuals give to social facts and look at how groups and society add respond to meaning and classification. Read the attached link which offers further information about the ethnomethodology.

- http://www.sociologyencyclopedia.com/fragr_image/media/ethnomethodology

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionists do not believe that any form of statistical data can be used to give an insight into human behaviour. Symbolic interactionists believe that all individuals understand and experience their own life and world according to their own 'self-concept', which is constantly altering as a result of their social interactions. Symbolic interactionists attempt to research the role of 'labelling' on individuals, and associate labels with opinions, attitudes and behaviours, for example, does labelling in schools as successful or unsuccessful affect ones self-concept which affects behaviour, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Interpretivist

Interpretivists advocate qualitative research over quantitative research methods, as they believe that the basis of sociology is to interpret social action, which can only be understood by understanding the meanings and motives on which it is based through

qualitative methods such as interview and observation. The link below takes a further look into this approach.

- <http://www.sociology.org.uk/revgrm5.pdf>

Critical social science, which favours qualitative methods and takes the view that research should be used to make positive changes within society, as it views society as oppressive and wishes to use research to liberate groups from oppression.

Feminists

There are three main approaches feminist research takes. The first is the attack on 'malestream' research, which feminists identify as any previous research conducted by men. This research is deemed to be sexist with patriarchal principles and it is argued that it is therefore subjective and therefore biased. The development and use of feminist research methods, for example, those used by Ann Oakley (1981) in *'Subject Women'* reject traditional, scientific methods and take on a more relaxed and open approach in order to gain a better understanding of social reality. And, finally, the feminist approach claims that feminist research, particularly in research regarding women and their experiences in the social world, can be better understood through a feminist approach.

Postmodernists

Post modernists do not believe that any form of research can be regarded as impartial and sees the role of research as a tool in which to examine the social world and to deconstruct or take apart existing explanations of society. Postmodernists believe that no approach is better than another and that research is essentially subjective.

Unit 2 Research and the Voluntary and Community Sector

1. Research and the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) continually researches...from formal monitoring and evaluations or surveys used to influence policy to informal chats with service users that assist in affecting change, to influencing best practice and responding to need.

This unit looks at the various ways in which the VCS uses research in its day to day work, in order to influence its own in-house policies and procedures, influencing its strategic plan and its standpoint in the sector as a whole.

2. Some uses for research in the voluntary and community sector

Some of the uses for research in the VCS include:

- market research
- meeting and responding to need

- funding
- monitoring
- evaluation
- lobbying (to include the use of research to bring about change)
- regeneration
- quality assurance
- Customer Care (Complaint, Acknowledge, Recover, Evolve)
- Sustainability

The following links to documents on the web offer examples of how research may be used in monitoring and evaluating services. Pay particular attention at this stage to its points on how research influences the monitoring and evaluation process of a project.

- http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/Events/Events_Archive/2008/Justin%20Davis%20Smith.pdf
- <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/departs/all/report/VoluntaryCommunityArtsEvalToolkit.pdf>

3. Research and the VCS

The individuals making up the VCS also benefit from research:

- better informed
- understand my job and those around me better
- find and evaluate good practices
- see ways for making job easier and myself more effective
- greater self confidence
- feeling in more control through deeper and better knowledge
- acquiring new skills of analysis and appraisal
- generating strategies based on reasoned arguments to implement as needed rather than react in crisis
- improve forward planning
- professional development

4. Research and its Influence of Third Sector Policy

http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/Events/Events_Archive/2008/Justin%20Davis%20Smith.pdf

The above link to, 'Bridging the Gap? Research and its Influence on Third Sector Policy', is the speech Justin Davis Smith, Chief Executive of Volunteering England delivered to the September 2008 Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference.

The speech provides an overview of the history of research and the VCS, its role, impact and potential on third sector policy.

5. The ESRC

The ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) is an independent research organisation which funds research into social and economic issues. Research funded by the ESRC has impacted on public policy and the work of the private, public and third sectors.

The link below provides further information about the role of the ESRC and how it serves to help third sector organisations.

http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Third%20Sector%20Brochure_tcm6-30420.pdf

6. ESRC Third Sector Engagement Strategy

For a more developed understanding of how the ESRC proposes to work with the third sector, read the following document which provides an overview of its engagement strategy.

http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index_voluntary.aspx

7. Research and the VCS

The following links report the findings of some government led and sponsored research into the third sector and provide you with an overview of the plethora of areas in which they research and the ways in which findings are used.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/general-content/communities/citizenshipsurvey/>

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/research_and_statistics.aspx

8. NCVO Research

The NCVO conducts and facilitates research within the VCS and support voluntary and community organisations through research findings. The attached link offers you the opportunity to research further into some of the findings of research supported by the NCVO. <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/>

9. What can research do for you?



E-tivity- What can research do for you?

Task: Reflect on the work you undertake within the Voluntary and Community Sector. Identify an area of research that could be conducted that would benefit your work. Consider its value and explain its needs and how you would go about making use of its findings.

Post your thoughts onto a discussion board.

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is...
[add deadline]

Unit 3 Primary and Secondary Sources

1. Primary and Secondary Sources and Triangulation

Researchers need to consider the sources on which to base and confirm their research and findings. They have a choice between primary data and secondary sources and the use of both, which is termed triangulation, or dual methodology.

Primary data is the data collected by the researcher themselves, i.e.

- interview
- observation
- action research
- case studies
- life histories
- questionnaires
- ethnographic research
- longitudinal studies

Secondary sources are data that already exists

- Previous research
- Official statistics
- Mass media products
- Diaries
- Letters
- Government reports

- Web information
- Historical data and information

2. Primary Research

When choosing and developing primary research, one must consider the most appropriate method, to include its reliability, validity and practicality.

Reliability

There are many debates over what is and is not reliable within research. Within the natural sciences, data are seen to be reliable, as they can be tested by different researchers at different times to find out the same or similar information.

Researching society and the people, systems and institutions that make up society does not offer the same guarantee for the same standard of reliability, however, when choosing which research method, one can go about being as reliable as possible - in the methods one chooses, being as objective as possible and applying and demonstrating rigorous collection and analysis methods and systems.

3. Primary Research

Validity

The validity of data refers to the truth that it tells about the subject or phenomenon being studied...a valid statement provides a true measurement, description and / or explanation of what it is claiming to measure or describe.

It is possible for data to be reliable without being valid.

Bryman in *Social Research Methods* (2001) identifies four types of validity:

1. *measurement validity or construct validity*: whether a measure being used really measures what it claims ... i.e. do statistics regarding church attendance really measure the strength of religious beliefs?
2. *internal validity*: refers to causality and whether a conclusion of the research or theory developed is a true reflection of the causes...i.e. is it a true cause that being unemployed causes crime or are there other explanations?
3. *external validity*: considers whether the results of a particular piece of research can be generalised to other groups – i.e. if one form of community development approach works in London, will it necessarily have the same impact in Leeds?
4. *ecological validity*: considers whether ‘...social scientific findings are appropriate to people’s everyday natural setting’ (Bryman, 2001) – i.e. if a situation is being observed in a false setting, how may that influence people’s behaviour?

Respondent validity also needs to be considered... i.e. may question the validity of a questionnaire about people’s happiness if they have just had an argument.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods need to consider their approaches and the validity of their methods and findings.

Practicality

The practicalities of the research needs to be carefully considered when developing the research design, for instance:

- cost and budget
- time scale
- size of sample required

Primary research sources will be discussed in units five and six.

4. Secondary Research

Secondary sources consist of data that has already been produced and can be contemporary or historical, qualitative or quantitative.

Secondary sources include

- Documents
- Letters
- Diaries
- Autobiographies
- Referencing other forms of research and using quotes

The benefits of the use of secondary sources include:

- Save time and money
- May provide information and access to historical data
- May be used to prove or disprove an argument or theory
- May be used to offer general background information
- Can be used to set the scene of the research and its findings
- May be useful for putting the research into context

Researchers must always carefully consider the reliability and validity of secondary sources.

5. Official Statistics

Since 1801, government have collated and produced a vast range of statistical data which has been coordinated and produced by the Government Statistic Service, visit the Publication Hub, Gateway to UK National Statistics www.statistics.gov.uk for more information.

Data collected include:

- Birth rates
- Death rates

- Marriage patterns
- Fertility patterns
- Divorce patterns
- Crime rates
- Suicide rates
- Economic information
- Employment and unemployment details
- Strikes
- Productivity

Figures are collected and published at various times, for example unemployment figures are produced monthly, while crime figures are published annually and the census is produced once per decade. The above statistics are available freely through publications such as:

- *Social Trends* – (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social_Trends39/ST39_Overview.pdf) is the 2009 overview.

The reliability and validity of official statistics must be considered by researchers when referring to them.

6. Historical sources

The use of historical documents can help researchers with both qualitative and quantitative information if they are seeking to find out the context of a situation or to look at how things have or have not changed, as well as seeking cause and affect answers. They are often useful in providing information or descriptions about social life.

As with all sources, historical sources have questions over reliability and validity, they:

- are subject to a number of interpretations
- may be subjective

Life Documents

Life documents include:

- Diaries
- Letters
- Photos
- Memos
- Biographies
- Graffiti
- Memoirs
- Suicide notes
- Memorials of tombstones
- Films and videos

- Paint pictures
- Make music

Generally, life documents are any form of record that detail the accounts and experiences of a person's life. They are predominantly qualitative and can be contemporary or historical.

Life documents are open to subjective interpretation, therefore it is useful to consider who the audience was intended to be when reading through life documents, as this may influence what is written and the context in which it is intended.

Whilst there are obvious limitations to life documents and their validity may be questionable, they are, none the less, useful, as they offer a great insight into the subjective perspective of individuals in both their own lives and that of wider society.

7. Mass media and content analysis

The mass media is a useful source of information about current and historical affairs and events and public opinions and attitudes, however, researchers must always bear in mind that they are often inaccurate and there is a degree of subjectivity...personal, political...of both the author and the audience, therefore, its reliability and validity is obviously questionable.

There are four approaches to carrying out content analysis (which may be qualitative or quantitative) which Pawson in *Developments in Sociology*, vol. 8 (1995) identifies:

1) Formal content analysis

A systematic sample of texts is used in the study, and classification systems are devised to identify different features of the text, which are then counted with an emphasis on objectivity and reliability.

2) Thematic analysis

'The idea is to understand the encoding process, especially the intentions that lie behind the production of mass media documents. The usual strategy is to pick on a specific area of reportage and subject it to a very detailed analysis in the hope of unearthing the underlying purposes and intentions of the authors of the communication.' (Pawson, R., 1995)

The weaknesses of thematic analysis is that researchers can choose themes that suit them and that there may be a lack of understanding behind the reasons for using themes.

3) Textual analysis

The analysis of the use of words and phrases within a text – and the consideration of if and how words and phrases may be used to influence the reader.

Textual analysis often involves semiology or semiotics, which is the analysis of signs. For more information, visit the link <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/semiolog.htm>

4) Audience analysis

Considers the response of the audience of mass media – whether they accept or reject the content and what it means to them.

8. Evaluating Secondary Sources

In *Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research* (1990), Scott offers some useful guidelines for evaluating secondary sources. The four criteria are:

1. **Authenticity:** consideration of how genuine the document or source is with regards to its soundness and authorship.
2. **Credibility:** consideration must be given to the amount of distortion to the document or source, which will affect its sincerity and accuracy. i.e. has the author given a true account of the situation, or has it been distorted in some way to make the situation look better?
3. **Representativeness:** Scott states that ‘...sampling documents must be handled carefully and as systematically as the sampling of respondents in a survey’ and a researcher must give careful consideration to how typical or untypical the documents being sourced are in order that they can recognise limits to the conclusions they can draw from them. Scott identifies survival and availability as two of the factors which may limit the representation of documents.
4. **Meaning:** concerned with how well the researcher will be able to understand the document.

In order to keep up with the advances of modern technology and to make sense of the newest source, the internet, Stein in *Sociology on the Web* (2002) highlights six criteria for consideration:

- Authorship
- Authority of the author
- Authority of the material
- Authority of the site/organisation
- Currency (i.e. is it up to date)
- Pressure groups/objectivity

9. Triangulation

‘The rather partisan, either/or tenor of debate about quantitative and qualitative research may appear somewhat bizarre to an outsider, for whom the obvious way forward is likely to be a fusion of the two approaches so that their respective strengths might be reaped.’

Bryman in *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, 1988

The combination of qualitative and quantitative and primary and secondary research is known as triangulation or methodological pluralism. Triangulation offers the benefits of:

- The ability to cross check

- May be used in the facilitation or to assist in research design...i.e. the data gathered from interviews or observations may be used to assist with the design of a questionnaire or survey
- May complement or support the research conducted...i.e. findings show that most people are satisfied with the services provided as 8 out of 10 people asked
....

10. Uses of multi-strategy research

Bryman offers 10 ways in which multi-strategy research can be used:

- 1) The logic of triangulation: it may be used to offer support
- 2) Qualitative research facilitates quantitative research: qualitative research can be used to generate quantitative studies
- 3) Quantitative research facilitates qualitative research: quantitative research may tell how many or how often, and the qualitative research may seek to answer why
- 4) Filling in the gaps
- 5) Statistic and processual features: *'In some circumstances quantitative methods are used to study the more stable aspects of social life while qualitative methods are employed to study changes'*.
- 6) Researchers' and participants' perspectives: qualitative data may give a view to the perspectives of the people, while the quantitative information may tell researcher what they are trying to find
- 7) The problem of generality: a small sample may be used for the qualitative element, while the quantitative element may be used to include a wider sample, therefore increasing the generality of the findings
- 8) Qualitative research facilitating the interpretations of the relationship between the variables: i.e. quantitative research may identify patterns, while qualitative research can offer to explain the patterns
- 9) Studying different aspects of a phenomenon: i.e. quantitative methods might help one research what people thought of religion and qualitative research might research how religious beliefs and rituals affected behaviour
- 10) Solving a puzzle: i.e. if the results of a research do not make sense and there is a need to clarify what has been found

11. Careful consideration

When embarking on research then, one must carefully consider the source of their research, and the issues of reliability and validity, whether that research is primary or secondary.

References

- A Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (1988) Routledge
A Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (2001) OUP
R Pawson (1992) 'Feminist Methodology' in M. Haralambos (ed.) *Developments in Sociology* Vol. 8, pp. 113-135, Ormskirk: Causeway Press.
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S Stein, *Sociology on the web* (2002) Pearson Education

Unit 4 Research Design

1. Introduction to Research Design

Research is the study of materials, sources and data in order to get conclusions. Getting the research design right is the first step towards organised research, which is more likely to be good research.

The research design provides the structure of the research and links all of the elements of the research together. It provides the researcher the opportunity to carefully consider the research and to plan the way in which they will approach the research, for example, the following elements will be considered:

- sample
 - chosen
 - random
- purpose of research
- how will the data be collected or generated
- how will the data be analysed (i.e. how you got your results)
- explain how you will obtain your results
 - the data obtained may affect the results
 - clarify why you chose the research methods
 - provide evidence that the data will be collected in a consistent and acceptable manner
 - demonstrate that the research methods are appropriate to the research
- identify and acknowledge any issues or barriers and how you might go about dealing with them

2. The research process

Values

Values and beliefs of the researcher-----consider your values and beliefs...

- What are they?
- How will they affect the research project?
- Will they be affected by the research project?

- How will you manage your own values and beliefs?

Funding

Funding is an important factor in the design of the research

Some funders include:

- Nuffield and Rowntree Foundation
(<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/go/Default.html>)
- Economic and Social Research Council
(<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index.aspx>)
- The European Union (http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

It is important to consider the affect the amount of funding will have on the methodologies used in the research, as well as the values, beliefs, aims and objectives of the funders and how they may impact on your research...

Practicalities

- Availability of existing data
- Practicality of collecting data
- Gatekeepers...who are the gatekeepers? Is there a group of people you would like to research but can't as they are difficult to gain access to / or are they unwilling to participate in research? – how might you get around this?

3. Some links

The links below may be used to assist in developing a research design and/or proposal.

- <http://www.markwebtest.netfirms.com/teachRDE/start/default.html>
- <http://www.scholarshipnet.info/scholarship-tips/how-to-write-a-research-proposal-1/>
- <http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/researchtools/>

4. Planning Research: Issues to Consider

Research plans depend on what you need to find out, what data you need to collect and what will affect your decisions, for example, if you are researching a Customer Care issue, you may already have a topic chosen for you, i.e. 'How do we improve our Customer Care?', whereas if you are undertaking research for academic purposes, you may have a host of issues or topics you are interested in researching.

Being focused about what you want to gain from the research will help you to be more effective and efficient in your research.

Issues to consider when planning research include:

- what is the scale of the breadth and depth you want regarding the information you need
- what resources do you have / are available to you?
 - time scale
 - existing resources
 - existing knowledge
 - manpower
 - man hours
 - support
 - sample
 - funding

5. Key Considerations

- What is the focus of the investigation?
- For what purpose/purposes is the research being done- i.e. what will you do with the research and what do you want it to be able to decide?
- Is it a replication of previous research?
- Is it an extension of previous research?
- What is the prediction?
- Is the prediction a logical conclusion to the evidence presented in the introduction of a report?
- Who is / are your audience(s) for this research?
 - funders
 - partners
 - board
 - management
 - staff
 - volunteers
 - service users
 - customers
- What kinds of information is needed for the research?
 - do you need to know how much/how often/when
 - is the research about behaviours, attitudes, opinions?
 - quantitative or qualitative information
- From what sources should the information be collected?
 - documents
 - service users
 - customers
 - staff
 - management
 - board
 - funders
 - partners
 - other agencies, organisations or projects
 - particular sample-
 - community (location)

- community (commonality)
- How can / should the information be collected? i.e. what methodology is most appropriate
- What is the time scale and / or time frame for the research?
- What are the available resources for collecting the information?

6. Hypothesis

Writing a hypothesis...

A hypothesis is a question that is being asked or a statement that is to be tested...a hypothesis requires an investigation...some research....

A testable hypothesis is one that can be carried out by others in the same way.

A testable statement that links the variables under investigation.

Below are different examples of what a hypothesis might be:

- the experimental hypothesis - a precise prediction of the relationship between the variables
- the colour of all swans is white
- $F = k x$
- the null hypothesis - all variations in results is due to random variability
- swans can be any colour
- extension in a spring is not related to the applied force
- hypotheses can be rejected if found false
- hypothesis are never proven but are supported with a certain level of confidence or probability

7. How are hypotheses tested?

- Statistics examine the null hypothesis to see if there is no significant difference or relationship between variables, in effect they examine if the results come from the same population rather than different ones or results are unrelated
- Hypotheses can be one-tailed or two-tailed
- Previous research may indicate direction for a one-tailed prediction - i.e. there is a positive relationship between the amount of alcohol drunk and reaction time or boys can name more football teams than girls
- Two-tailed predictions do not specify a direction in difference or relationship, e.g. amount of sleep and mood are related or boys and girls differ in verbal ability

8. Experimental Design

Independent groups/independent measures between groups design

- two or more conditions with different people in each condition e.g. males and females; medication/placebo groups

Repeated measures / related measures with groups design

- same individuals in two or more conditions e.g. before and after medication; morning / afternoon ability

Matched pairs design

For example, different people in each condition but groups contain similar backgrounds, such as same age, same gender, same social background

9. Qualitative Research Design

The study of phenomenon

- A way of describing something that exists as part of the world we live in
- Phenomenon can be events, situations, experiences or concepts

Examples:

- We know people are carers, but what does caring actually mean and what is it to be a carer
- Or...back pain – what is it like to have back pain, what problems does it cause and how does it affect people's lives?

10. Key Areas of the Research Proposal

When writing a research design or research proposal, ensure you consider and cover the following areas:

1. A working title or topic area - ensure that you convey the key points of the research
2. General overview of the research area - provide a brief synopsis of the research
3. Identification of the relevant literature - reference any key literature that may support your proposal and use the literature to demonstrate how/where it fits within the context of the subject area
4. Key research questions - in order to demonstrate that your research is viable and do-able it is essential to identify some of the key questions it aims to answer
5. Methodology - outline the methodologies you aim to use
6. Timescale / research planning - identify the timescale and acknowledge the planning done, required and/or involved
7. Bibliography - ensure to include a Bibliography for any references to literature within your research proposal

11. Review of secondary research



E-tivity-Review of secondary research

Task: Review the attached pdf, “UK Giving 2007/2008: Results of the 2007/2008 survey of individual charitable giving in the UK”.

As a secondary source, comment on its design and use within the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Post your comments on a discussion forum for this e-tivity

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is... (add deadline).

<http://www.cafonline.org/pdf/UK%20Giving%202008.pdf>

Unit 5 Quantitative Research

1. Overview of quantitative and qualitative methods

Methodology is concerned about both the ways in which the research is carried out – i.e. its structure and process, as well as with the way in which this information is analysed.

The two approaches to research are:

- *Quantitative* – based on the methods used in the natural sciences
- *Qualitative* – based on methods which are said to be humanistic

Quantitative methods:

- Used to find out how much, how many, how often, to what extent
- Aims to be objective and scientific in its approach
- Quantitative research is hypothetico-deductive in its approach to constructing social theories

- Aims to assess and measure
- Is regarded as a way to get to the truth, to understand the world well enough so that we might predict and control it through identifying cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative research can be
 - administered by the researcher
 - self-administered
 - one to one
 - in a group
 - face to face
 - telephone
 - postal
 - email

The attached link provides an insight into the use of quantitative methods to search for truth.

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Maldon/validity.htm>

This unit will investigate quantitative research, its role, purpose, process and strengths and weaknesses.

2. Theory and quantitative methodology

The theories introduced in Unit One which would advocate a quantitative approach to research include positivist and empiricism

Quantitative research is influenced by the empiricist paradigm, which means that it is concerned with cause and effect of social phenomena and uses the data – which is based on empirical observation and their critical interpretation

Qualities of quantitative research

- Deductive
- Begins from theory – i.e. it is established to test theory
- Can be used to make generalisations and / or to test hypotheses

Popper and Falsification '*...theories cannot be verified absolutely and forever; however, they can be falsified – i.e. they can be proven to be wrong – given a certain degree of certainty (or probability)*' (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1959)

- Testing theories can 'improve' them, but it cannot 'prove' them

- Quantitative research needs to be open and open to criticism – which should be at the heart of quantitative research
- Theories that cannot be tested, re-tested and (based on their falsification) be changed should be dismissed
- Theory – concept - indicator

For more information about Popper and Falsification, visit <http://elm.eeng.dcu.ie/~tkpw/index.html>

3. Importance of Quantitative Research

1. More reliable and objective
2. Can use statistics to generalise a finding
3. Often reduces and restructures a complex problem to a limited number of variables
4. Looks at relationships between variables and can establish cause and effect in highly controlled circumstances
5. Tests theories or hypotheses
6. Assumes sample is representative of the population
7. Subjectivity of researcher in methodology is recognised less
8. Less detailed than qualitative data and may miss a desired response from the participant

4. Quantitative Analysis

➤ Laboratory experiments

- deliberate manipulation of independent variable, strict control of other variables
- test cause and effect relationship

➤ Field experiments

- natural environment but independent variable still manipulated
- difficulty in controlling the situation so more likelihood of extraneous variables
- ethical problems of consent, deception, invasion of privacy

➤ Quasi-or natural experiments

- examine effects of independent variable without control over independent variable itself which often occurs naturally
- unable to manipulate independent variable because of ethics or because it is impossible

5. Quantitative Observation

Observation can also be carried out in a quantitative context and may involve:

- Counting the use of services
- Number of people accessing services
- Ascertain busy/quiet times

6. Questionnaires

Questionnaires or social surveys are a method used to collect standardised data from large numbers of people –i.e. the same information is collected in the same way. They are used to collect data in a statistical form.

In *Data Collection in Context* (1981), Ackroyd and Hughes identify three types of survey:

- Factual surveys: used to collect descriptive information, i.e. the government census
- Attitude surveys – i.e. an opinion poll – rather than attempting to gather descriptive information, an attitude survey will attempt to collect and measure people's attitudes and opinions, i.e. 4 out of 5 people believe...
- Explanatory survey – goes beyond the collection of data and aims to test theories and hypotheses and / or to produce new theory.

Researchers usually use questionnaires or surveys in order that they can make generalisations, therefore, the surveys are usually based on carefully selected samples.

Questionnaires consist of the same set of questions that are asked in the same order and in the same way in order that the same information can be gathered.

Questionnaires can be:

- Filled in by the participant
- Asked in a structured and formal way by an interviewer
 - Interviewer bias must be considered when done in this way, however, an advantage of this method over a participant filling in a questionnaire is that the interviewer may assist if there are any ambiguous questions or if the participant is confused in any way
- Postal questionnaire can be used, whereby a questionnaire is posted to the sample group and returned to the researcher by a specified time and date
- Administration of a questionnaire to a group is an option – i.e. at centre, school or group. The researcher needs to consider if the group will affect each other's responses and the concentration levels etc when undertaking this approach
- Telephone questionnaire
- Email questionnaire

7. Developing a Questionnaire

Developing a Questionnaire

The process of developing a questionnaire involves the following four steps:

1. Choosing the questions by operationalising concepts, which involves translating abstract ideas into concrete questions that will be measurable (i.e.....class, power, family, religion....add some sort of example)
2. Operationalising concepts involves a set of choices regarding the following:
 - units of analysis
 - units that can be analysed:
 - individuals (i.e. students, voters, workers)
 - groups (families, gangs)
 - organisations (churches, army, corporations)
 - social artefacts (buildings, cars, pottery, etc)
 - points of focus
 - treatment of the dimension of time
 - nature of measurement
3. Establish an operational definition which involves breaking the concept down into various components or dimensions in order to specify what is to be measured
4. Once the concept has been operationally defined in terms of a number of components, the second step involves the selection of indicators for each component.'
5. '...indicators of each dimension are put into the form of a series of questions that will provide quantifiable data for measuring each dimension.'

8. Questionnaire Questions

Questions in the questionnaire can then be:

1. Open ended (more difficult to extract quantifiable data)
 - This form of question requires the researcher to code the answers. Coding identifies a number of categories in which people have responded, more detail of this process is covered in the qualitative research unit
2. Closed
3. Fixed-choice
4. Likert scale – where participants are given a range of options, i.e. agree, strongly agree...for more information about the Likert scale and other scales of measurement, visit <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scallik.php>
5. the difficulty or negative of all of the close and fixed are that participants may be forced into an answer or may not be able to qualify or explain what they mean by what they have answered

The following links provide further information about social surveys and questionnaires:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/survey.php>

Refer back to the 'Evaluation Toolkit for the Voluntary and Community Arts in Northern Ireland' and read the section on developing a questionnaire, pages 39 – 42

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/departs/all/report/VoluntaryCommunityArtsEvalToolkit.pdf>

9. The advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires

The advantages of questionnaires

- Practical
- Large amounts of information can be collected from a large number of people in a short period of time and in a relatively cost effective way
- Can be carried out by the researcher or by any number of people with limited affect to its validity and reliability
- The results of the questionnaires can usually be quickly and easily quantified by either a researcher or through the use of a software package
- Can be analysed more 'scientifically' and objectively than other forms of research
- When data has been quantified, it can be used to compare and contrast other research and may be used to measure change
- Positivists believe that quantitative data can be used to create new theories and / or test existing hypotheses

The disadvantages of questionnaires

- Is argued to be inadequate to understand some forms of information – i.e. changes of emotions, behaviour, feelings etc.
- Phenomenologists state that quantitative research is simply an artificial creation by the researcher, as it is asking only a limited amount of information without explanation
- Lacks validity
- There is no way to tell how truthful a respondent is being
- There is no way of telling how much thought a respondent has put in
- The respondent may be forgetful or not thinking within the full context of the situation
- People may read differently into each question and therefore reply based on their own interpretation of the question – i.e. what is 'good' to someone may be 'poor' to someone else, therefore there is a level of subjectivity that is not acknowledged
- There is a level of researcher imposition, meaning that when developing the questionnaire, the researcher is making their own decisions and assumptions as to what is and is not important...therefore they may be missing something that is of importance

The process of coding in the case of open ended questions opens a great possibility of subjectivity by the researcher

References

K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959), reprinted (2004) by Routledge, Taylor & Francis

S. Ackroyd and J. A. Hughes, *Data Collection in Context* (1981) Longman

Unit 6 Qualitative Research

1. Qualitative Research is concerned with:

Early forms of research originated in the natural sciences: biology, chemistry, physics, geology and wanted to observe and measure in some way in order to gain understanding. Quantitative research refers to observations and measurements that can be made objectively and repeated by other researchers. Along with the development of social sciences: psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc, they were interested in studying human behaviour and the social world. The social sciences found it difficult to measure human behaviour in the simpler quantitative methods, therefore qualitative research methods were developed in order to look beyond how, how often and how many...it looks at why and attempts to further and deepen our understanding of the social world.

The theories introduced in unit one that take on a qualitative approach to research include:

- Phenomenology
- Ethnomethodology
- Grounded Theory
- Symbolic Interactionists
- Interpretivists
- Critical Social Science
- Feminists

Qualitative research methods:

- are concerned with opinions, feelings and experiences
- describes social phenomena as they occur naturally – no attempt is made to manipulate the situation – just understand and describe
- understanding is sought by taking a holistic perspective / approach, rather than looking at a set of variables
- qualitative research data is used to help us to develop concepts and theories that help us to understand the social world - which is an inductive approach to the development of theory, rather than a deductive approach that quantitative research takes – ie. Testing theories that have already been proposed.
- Qualitative data is collected through direct encounters i.e. through interview or observation and is rather time consuming

<http://www.aqr.org.uk/about/index.shtml> is the official site for the Association of Qualitative Research, UK.

2. The Nature of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is concerned with ‘...developing explanations of social phenomena...’

- The world in which we live
- Why things are the way they are
- Concerned with social aspects of our world
- Seeks to answer questions about
 - Why people behave the way they do
 - How opinions and attitudes are formed
 - How people are affected by the events that go on around them
 - How and why cultures have developed in the way they have
 - The differences between social groups
- Qualitative questions:
 - How
 - Why
 - What

3. Methods of collecting qualitative data

Data collection approaches for qualitative research usually involves:

- Direct interaction with individuals on a one to one basis
- Or direct interaction with individuals in a group setting

Qualitative research data collection methods are time consuming, therefore data is usually collected from a smaller sample than would be the case for quantitative approaches – therefore this makes qualitative research more expensive.

The benefits of the qualitative approach is that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study

The main methods for collecting qualitative data are:

- a. Individual interviews
- b. Focus groups
- c. Observations
- d. Action Research

4. Interviews

Interviews can be

- Unstructured
 1. Can be referred to as ‘depth’ or ‘in depth’ interviews
 2. They have very little structure at all
 3. The interviewer may just go with the aim of discussing a limited number of topics, sometimes as few as just one or two

4. The interviewer may frame the interview questions based on the interviewee and his/her previous response
 5. This allows the discussion to cover areas in great detail
 6. They involve the researcher wanting to know or find out more about a specific topic without there being a structure or a preconceived plan or expectation as to how they will deal with the topic
- Semi structured
 1. Semi structured interviews are sometimes also called focused interviews
 2. A series of open ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover
 3. A series of broad questions to ask and may have some prompts to help the interviewee
 4. 'The open ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail'
 5. Semi structured interviews allow the researcher to prompt or encourage the interviewee if they are looking for more information or find what they are saying interesting
 6. This method gives the researcher the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate or to follow a new line of inquiry introduced by what the interviewee is saying
 7. Work best when the interviewed has a number of areas he/she wants to be sure to be addressing
 - Structured
 1. The interviewed asks the respondent the same questions in the same way
 2. A tightly structured schedule is used
 3. The questions may be phrased in order that a limited range of responses may be given – i.e. 'Do you rate our services as very good, good or poor'
 4. A researcher needs to consider whether a questionnaire or structured interview is more appropriate
 5. 'If the interview schedule is too tightly structured this may not enable the phenomena under investigation to be explored in terms of either breadth or depth.'

Qualitative interviews should be fairly informal and participants feel they are taking part in a conversation or discussion rather than in a formal question and answer situation.

There is skill required and involved in successful qualitative research approaches – which requires careful consideration and planning

Good quality qualitative research involves:

- Thought
- Preparation
- The development of the interview schedule
- Conducting and analysing the interview data with care and consideration

5. Focus groups

The use of focus groups is sometimes used when it is better to obtain information from a group rather than individuals.

Group interviews can be used when:

- Limited resources (time, manpower, finances)
- The phenomena being researched requires a collective discussion in order to understand the circumstances, behaviour or opinions
- Greater insights may be developed of the group dynamic – or cause and consequence

Characteristics of a focus group:

- Recommended size of the sample group is 6 – 10 people as smaller groups may limit the potential on the amount of information collected, and more may make it difficult for all participants to participate and interact and for the interviewer to be able to make sense of the information given
- Several focus groups should be used in order to get a more objective and macro view of the investigation. i.e. focussing on one group may give you idiosyncratic results. The use of several groups will add to the breadth and depth of information. A minimum of three focus groups is recommended for best practice approaches
- Members of the focus group should have something in common which is important to the investigation
- Groups can either be put together or existing groups – it is always useful to be mindful of the group dynamics of both situations

The aim of the focus group is to make use of participants' feelings, perceptions and opinions

This method requires the researcher to use a range of skills:

1. group skills
2. facilitating
3. moderating
4. listening/observing
5. analysis

6. Observation

Observation involves may take place in natural settings and involve the researcher taking lengthy and descriptive notes of what is happening.

It is argued that there are limits to the situations that can be observed in their 'natural' settings and that the presence of the research may lead to problems with validity.

Limitations with observation include:

- Change in people's behaviour when they know they are being observed
- A 'snap shot' view of a whole situation
- Think Big Brother...
- The researcher may miss something while they are watching and taking notes
- The researcher may make judgements or make value statements or misunderstand what has been observed

Strengths of observation

- Can offer a flavour for what is happening
- Can give an insight into the bigger picture
- Can demonstrate sub-groups
- Can be used to assist in the design of the rest of the research

Sometimes, the researcher becomes or needs to become a participant observer, where they are taking part in the situation in order to be accepted and further understand the workings of the social phenomenon.

Observation can sometimes obtain more reliable information about certain things – for example, how people actually behave (although it may not find out the reasons for why they behave in a particular way).

Observation can also serve as a technique for verifying of nullifying information provided in face to face encounters.'

People or environment can be observed.

When environment is researched, it can provide valuable background information that may inform other aspects of the research.

Techniques for collecting data through observation

- Written descriptions
 - The researcher makes written descriptions of the people, situations or environment
 - Limitations include
 1. Researcher might miss out on an observation as they are taking notes
 2. The researcher may be focussed on a particular event or situation
 3. There is room for subjective interpretation of what is happening
- Video recording
 1. Allows the researcher to also record notes
 2. Limitations may include people acting unnaturally towards the camera or others avoiding the camera
 3. The camera may not always see everything
- Photographs and artefacts

1. Useful when there is a need to collect observable information or phenomena such as buildings, neighbourhoods, dress and appearance
2. Artefacts include objects of significance – memorabilia, instruments, tools etc

Documentation

- Any and all kinds of documentation may be used to provide information – a local paper, information on a notice board, administrative policies and procedures...etc previous research, even

7. Self Study

Consider an area within your work that you might want to observe in order to get an answer, find out more or gain a better understanding.

Think about and plan:

- What your aim/purpose is.
- What permission, etc, you may need to gain.
- What your role/presence will be.
- How you will record your observation.
- What you will record.
- What you will do with your findings.

What are the pros and cons of this process.

8. Ethnography

Ethnography has a background in anthropology and means 'portrait of a people'. Ethnography is a methodology for descriptive studies of culture and people and looks at the people, cultures and commonalities of shared experiences.

Ethnographic research entails extensive fieldwork by the researcher. Data collection includes:

- formal and informal interviews
- often interviewing an individual on several occasions
- participative observations
 - therefore, ethnography is very time consuming and involves the researcher spending a great deal of time in the field
- analysis of ethnographic data = 'emic' – which means the researcher attempts to interpret data from the perspective of the sample that was studied, i.e. to understand the subjects themselves and the language and terminology they use, as well as the meanings behind this

- the risk of using ethnographic research is that the researcher may not fully understand or be familiar with the social norms of those they are researching and therefore there is risk of misinterpretation
- Payne and Payne *Key Concepts in Social Research*, 2004, describe ethnography as ‘...the production of highly detailed accounts of how people in a social setting lead their lives, based upon systematic and long-term observation of, and conversation with, informants’

9. Action Research

Action Research doesn't just involve asking about it, it involves doing it.

Action Research is a framework that is:

- Collaborative
- There is a practical intervention made – i.e. you do something to make a change or intervention in a situation that you research (i.e. the work that we do in vcs...project monitoring and evaluation...use for bids)
- The researcher will be actively involved in the planned intervention
- Checklands FMA model
 - F – framework of ideas
 - M – methodology being applied
 - A – area of concern

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Sengupta/default.htm>

10. Other forms of qualitative research includes:

Longitudinal research or panel studies

- When research is conducted over a long period of time and the researcher contacts the participant at various times: i.e. every two years
- Examples of longitudinal studies include:
 - West and Farrington's *Who Becomes Delinquent* (1973) which followed the development of 411 London schoolboys from the age of 8 to 18 to determine the factors that cause delinquency

Historical

- ‘The systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events’ (Gay, 1996)

Case study

- Case study research is a methodology which can take either a qualitative or quantitative approach
- In the qualitative approach, case study refers to the in depth analysis of a single or small number of units
- A case study unit may include a single person, a group of people, an organisation or an institution
- Some case study research may involve the research of a series of cases
- Case study research ranges in its complexity:
 - From a simple, illustrative description of a single event or occurrence
 - To a more complex analysis of a social situation over a period of time
 - To the most complex approach which is an extended case study which traces events involving the same actors over a period of time - enabling the analysis reflect changes and adjustments
- Case studies aims to:
 - Offer a richness and depth of information by capturing as many variables as possible to identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a particular manifestation '...to as identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a particular manifestation.'
- Case study as a method is very versatile, as it uses many methods of gather information, from observation to interview to testing
- One of the criticisms of the case study method is that the case under study may not be representative of a wider social setting and therefore it is argued that the results of the research cannot be used to make generalisations
- Therefore, the purpose of case study research is to describe that particular case in detail and take learning from that and develop theory from that approach – it is particularistic and contextual

The attached link will provide further information about developing a case study:

<http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/casestdy.htm>

11. E-tivity- Qualitative versus Quantitative Research

Task: Comment on the following statement, using the information you have learned in units 5 and 6 regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods.

You can never be accurate using qualitative data and therefore it is of little use in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Post your comments on a discussion forum for this e-tivity

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is...(add deadline)

References

L. R. Gay *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application Fifth Edition* (1996), Prentice-Hall.

G. Payne and J. Payne *Key Concepts in Social Research* (2004) Sage Publications Ltd

D.J. West and D.P. Farrington *Who Becomes Delinquent* (1973) Heinemann Educational Publishers

Unit 7 Ethics and Data Protection

1. Introduction

"My only merit is that I did not neglect the observation and that I pursued the subject as a bacteriologist."

Alexander Fleming on seeing the effect of the Penicillium bacteria on other bacteria.

When conducting research, one must be mindful of ethical and data protection issues. Ethical guidelines seek to work towards protecting the individuals, communities and environments involved in the studies against any form of harm, manipulation or malpractice. The importance of the role of ethics and data protection are explored in this unit.

2. An ethical approach

When conducting research, one must consider ethics, in order that they work within the law, to professional guidelines and act morally.

Adapting an ethical approach will contribute to:

- a sound starting point
- a suitable and valid method
- good and useful results
- solid conclusions

3. Principle's of Ethics

'...ethical behaviour helps protect individuals, communities and environments, and offers the potential to increase the sum of good in the world. As social scientists 'trying to make the world a better place' we should avoid (or at least minimise) doing long-term, systematic harm to those individuals, communities and environments...' (Israel and Hay, Research Ethics for Social Scientists, 2006)

The three principles of ethics include informed consent, confidentiality and avoiding harm to do good.

- **Informed consent**

It is important that those participating in the research understand its aims and objectives and that informed consent is given, for research that is carried out with children or vulnerable adults, it is essential to acquire informed consent from a parent, guardian or responsible adult

- **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality needs to be considered - how will confidentiality be maintained? is it always appropriate and applicable (i.e. criminal activities, if someone is in harm...etc)

- **Avoid harm and do good**

Ethics can go so far as to suggest that research needs not only avoid harm, but to ensure that its purpose is to do good...how might this impact on the methodology of the research? and the impartiality?

4. Ethics and the VCS

Some ethical implications for research in the VCS may include:

- vulnerable people
- confidentiality
- voluntary participation
- establishing informed consent
- considering risk of physical or psychological harm
- anonymity
- right of service (i.e. if there is a medical research with one sample taking a placebo and another taking the drug, all must be aware that they may opt for the service available to them if they request
- risk of bias, to acquire or account for funding

5. ESRC Research Ethics Framework

It is important to the ESRC (Economic Social Research Council) that it only supports research that is carried out to the highest ethical standards. The Research Ethics Framework has been developed in order to communicate its required standards in order that it may encourage and expect good working practices. Read the Research Ethics Framework attached below and carefully consider all of the areas the framework covers and how the standards may influence or impact on any research.

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf

6. Self Study Exercise

Read the following link - <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice> - which outlines the ethical framework within which the University of Leicester operates. When reviewing the link, consider the importance of the issues highlighted and how the code goes about aiming to protect the researcher, the phenomenon being researched and the university as an institution.

7. Safety of the Researcher

www.the-sra.org.uk/documents/word/safety_code_of_practice.doc

Researchers must consider their own personal safety from physical and psychological harm and to ensure they maintain professional boundaries. The SRA (Social Research Association) has developed a Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Research. Read the attached links to find out more about the role of the SRA and the Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers.

http://www.the-sra.org.uk/staying_safe.htm

8. Further reading

The following link offers access to articles relating to ethics in research, which may be reviewed for a further or more detailed insight into the role and implications of ethics and ethical behaviour in research.

http://scientificethics.suite101.com/article.cfm/ethics_in_social_science_researchModule9

9. Ethics in research



E-tivity- Ethics in research

Task: Read the following (www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ethics.php) which offers in brief a perspective of the history, role and importance of ethics in research.

Reflect on the information provided in the link and offer your own thoughts and opinion relating to the role of ethics in research.

Post your comments on the a discussion forum for this e-tivity

Respond: Review the responses of your course

	<p>colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.</p> <p>Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit. Completion date for this e-tivity is...(add deadline).</p>
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References

M. Israel & I. Hay *Research Ethics for Social Scientists* (2006) Sage Publications Ltd

Unit 8 Presenting and Using Research Findings

1. Introduction

Once you have carefully planned and conducted your research, you will need to consider how to analyse and present the data you have collected. This unit looks at how to handle, analyse and present qualitative and quantitative research to a variety of audiences.

2. Handling qualitative research data

Handling qualitative research data

- Researchers can either take notes during their interviews (transcribing) or observations, or take a recording
- Using a tape recorder:
- The benefits tape recording include:
 - The researcher can concentrate and listen and respond better
 - The discussion flows better when there are no distractions
 - In note taking there is an increased risk of the researcher being more subjective
 - The entire interview/observation is recorded, which gives a better, more holistic picture of what is going on
 - The participants may feel less observed if the tape recorded is used in a discreet way
 - During analysis, the researcher has the opportunity to go back over material
- Transcribing:
 - Transcribing the interview involves taking notes of the interview...it is the full 'script' of the interview and the aim is to take a full written version of the interview
 - Transcribing an interview is very time consuming, with an estimated time ratio of 5:1 (i.e. 5 hours of transcribing a one hour interview)
- Tape analysis can be used, which is a combination on the two and involves the researcher taking notes from the recording
- Bias must be considered when taking notes or using tape analysis

- Good quality transcribing relies on skills beyond just taking notes and there is often space for subjectivity

3. The ten steps of content analysis

The ten steps of content analysis are:

- 1) Copy and read through the transcript – make brief notes in the margin when interesting or relevant information is found
- 2) Go through the notes made in the margins and list the different types of information found
- 3) Read through the list and categorise each item in a way that offers a description of what it is about
- 4) Identify whether or not the categories can be linked any way and list them as major categories (or themes) and / or minor categories (or themes)
- 5) Compare and contrast the various major and minor categories
- 6) If there is more than one transcript, repeat the first five stages again for each transcript
- 7) When you have done the above with all of the transcripts, collect all of the categories or themes and examine each in detail and consider if it fits and its relevance
- 8) Once all the transcript data is categorised into minor and major categories/themes, review in order to ensure that the information is categorised as it should be.
- 9) Review all of the categories and ascertain whether some categories can be merged or if some need to them be sub-categorised
- 10) Return to the original transcripts and ensure that all the information that needs to be categorised has been so.

The process of content analysis is lengthy and may require the researcher to go over and over the data to ensure they have done a thorough job of analysis

4. Analysing Qualitative Research Data

The analysis of qualitative research involves aiming to uncover and / or understand the big picture – by using the data to describe the phenomenon and what this means. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis involves labelling and coding all of the data in order that similarities and differences can be recognised. Responses from even an unstructured qualitative interview can be entered into a computer in order for it to be

coded, counted and analysed. The qualitative researcher, however, has no system for pre-coding, therefore a method of identifying and labelling or coding data needs to be developed that is bespoke for each research. – which is called content analysis.

Content analysis can be used when qualitative data has been collected through:

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observation
- Documentary analysis

Content analysis is ‘...a procedure for the categorisation of verbal or behavioural data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation.’

The content can be analysed on two levels:

- Basic level or the manifest level: a descriptive account of the data i.e. this is what was said, but no comments or theories as to why or how
- Higher level or latent level of analysis: a more interpretive analysis that is concerned with the response as well as what may have been inferred or implied

Content analysis involves coding and classifying data, also referred to as categorising and indexing and the aim of context analysis is to make sense of the data collected and to highlight the important messages, features or findings.

5. Analysing Quantitative data

The analysis of research in any project involve summarising the mass of data that has been collected and the presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important findings or features

- The analysis of quantitative research involves the analysis of any of the following:
 - Frequencies of variables
 - Differences between variables
 - Statistical tests designed to estimate the significance of the results and the probability that they did not occur by chance
 - All of the above is achieve by counting and comparison

6. Presenting Qualitative Research

- When planning the presentation of qualitative data, consider that the data are:
 - Subjective
 - Interpretative
 - Descriptive
 - Holistic
 - Copious

- It may be suggested that the researcher base the structure of the presentation of the research around the categories or themes that have emerged
- The themes or categories may be presented as sections with relevant sub-sections
- Quotes can be used to demonstrate and or inform or support findings, but it is recommended that the researcher consider the reliability and validity of each quote
- Consideration may also be given to whether or not qualitative data can be represented in a quantitative form (i.e. 6 out of 10 people...)

7. Computerised data analysis

Software packages are available for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Each package has different features and the researcher needs to choose carefully. The aim of all of the packages is to assist in the categorisation and matching process. The packages can save time, but there is still a great deal of time required to set them up and input the data and check through the process.

The most well known software packages are listed below, some have links attached which you may wish to read through for further information:

- SPSS
<http://www.spss.com/uk/statistics/?gclid=COqEmJPdw5sCFRISzAodvX4KdA>
- ATLAS/ti
http://www.psychologysoftwaredistribution.com/ATLAS_tj/atlas_tj.html
- NVivo
http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo7/NVivo7_Tutorials_Lyn_Richards.pdf
- NUD*IST <http://www.sdgassociates.demon.co.uk/learnnudist.htm>
- QUALPRO

Ethnograph

There are also a number of networks available that are accessible via the Internet, CAQDAS is one of them, available at <http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/caqdas>

8. Overview of reporting research findings

Introduction

Introduction of the research, objectives and how achieved, methodology and main findings.

Literature Review

Review any previous work to do with the topic of research. Include a general discussion of how it relates to research - i.e. supports, contests, proves or disproves.

Method

Discuss how the results were achieved and provide explanations of how data was gathered/collated/generated and how the data was analysed. Discuss any methodological problems and their solutions and or effects on the research.

Remember:

- the purpose of the research section
- keep notes of what you did, why you did it and what happened
- remember who your audience will be

Results and Discussion

Provide the interpretation, presentation and/or discussion of the results. Also, any comparisons with the results of previous research or effects of methods used on the data obtained.

Conclusion

- has the research question/problem been solved?
- to what extent have the objectives been achieved?
- what has been learned from the results?
- how can this knowledge be used?
- what are the shortcomings of the research or methodology used?

9. Consider your audience

As introduced in unit one, research in the voluntary and community sector has a variety of uses and purposes, therefore, when presenting and disseminating research findings, one must consider the audience they are presenting to. Potential readers of research findings may include:

- academics
- board members, managers and staff
- service users
- funders

It is important, then, that one adopts an appropriate approach to presenting their research. The following links offer an insight into some of the possible ways in which one might present data.

- <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=13>
- http://www.howto.co.uk/business/research-methods/how_to_report_your_findings/

Assessment Guide for Module 9

The assessment for this module is as follows:

Part 1: Research Proposal

Word Limit: 3000 - 3500 words

Submit a research proposal for a research project that would benefit your organisation in its strategic planning. Ensure to include:

1. An introduction to include a working title or topic area - ensure that you convey the key points of the research
2. General overview of the research area - provide a brief synopsis of the research, to include details of the sample and purpose of the research.
3. Identification of the relevant literature - reference any key literature that may support your proposal and use the literature to demonstrate how/where it fits within the context of the subject area. Ensure that you are able to support your proposal using theoretical arguments and information.
4. Key research question(s) - in order to demonstrate that your research is viable and do-able it is essential to identify some of the key question(s) it aims to answer.
5. Methodology - outline the methodologies you aim to use and ensure to explain:
 - How the data will be collected or generated
 - How the data will be analysed (i.e. how you will go about formulating the results)
 - Explain how you will obtain the results:
 - The data obtained may affect the results
 - Clarify why you chose the specific research methods
 - Provide evidence that the data will be collected in a consistent and acceptable manner
 - Demonstrate that the research methods you selected are appropriate to the research
 - Identify and acknowledge any possible issues or barriers in conducting your research and how you might go about dealing with them
6. Consider the ethical implications and describe how you will go about ensuring your research is ethical and follows any relevant data protection guidelines.
7. Timescale / research planning - identify the timescale and acknowledge the planning done, required and/or involved
8. Bibliography - ensure to include a Bibliography for any references to literature within your research proposal.

Part 2: E-tivities

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a three or four paragraphs limit.

An e-tivity is an interactive learning activity which is carried out online, through a discussion board such as Blackboard. For most e-tivities you will be given a 'triggering' statement or specific reading materials to consider. You will have to post your replies under the relevant section of the discussion board and you may have to respond to comments posted by other students or the tutor. As part of your assessment for this module you must post at least one meaningful comment for each e-tivity.

You will be asked to participate in four e-tivities as follows:

1. E-tivity Module 9 Unit 2: What can research do for you?

Task: Reflect on the work you undertake within the Voluntary and Community Sector. Identify an area of research that could be conducted that would benefit your work. Consider its value and explain its needs and how you would go about making use of its findings.

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is...(Please add deadline).

2. E-tivity Module 9 Unit 4: Review of secondary research

Task: Review the following pdf:

"UK Giving 2007/2008: Results of the 2007/2008 survey of individual charitable giving in the UK". (<http://www.cafonline.org/pdf/UK%20Giving%202008.pdf>) As a secondary source, comment on its design and use within the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is...(add deadline).

3. E-tivity Module 9 Unit 6: Qualitative versus Quantitative Research

Task: Comment on the following statement, using the information you have learned in units 5 and 6 regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods.

You can never be accurate using qualitative data and therefore it is of little use in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is...(please add deadline).

4. E-tivity Module 9 Unit 7: Ethics in research

Task: Read the attached link (www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ethics.php) which offers in brief a perspective of the history, role and importance of ethics in research.

Reflect on the information provided in the link and offer your own thoughts and opinion relating to the role of ethics in research.

Respond: Review the responses of your course colleagues and respond to at least one other posting.

Length: Please try to fit your responses within a two to three paragraph limit.

Completion date for this e-tivity is ...(add deadline).

Part 3: Reflective statement

Word Limit: 500 - 750 words

Throughout the learning units for this module you will have to keep a reflective journal, which you will have to submit by the deadline stated. Your **theme** for your Reflective Journal in Module 9 is:

“How evaluating others’ and conducting one’s own research may play a part in the effectiveness and survival of a VCS organisation”

N.B. It is anticipated that you would normally add entries to your Reflective Journal at the start of the module and continue doing so progressively and towards the end of the

module (i.e. add entries into your reflective journal as soon as you have completed your readings for the first learning unit!).

The submission deadline for all parts of the assessment except for activities for Module 9 is ... (add deadline).

Please ensure that you submit the whole of your assessment for this module (i.e. four activities, written assignment, and reflective journal entry) by the deadlines as indicated above.