
Crim 321: Qualitative Research Methods

Study Questions for Hennink et al / Chapter 3

Qualitative Research Design

1. What role does the “research question” play in qualitative research? And where do research questions come from?
2. In the introductory section to the chapter, the authors talk about some of the diversity that exists among qualitative approaches in terms of the role played by the existing literature and theory in the design of research. Their approach is more “deductive,” which means that they see theory and existing understandings as the place to begin. How do they characterize other approaches, and on what basis do they dismiss those in favour of their own? How does your professor understand those disagreements regarding the relative importance of deductive and inductive beginnings to research design?
3. How do the authors define a “research question,” and what are the differences and linkages between a research question and interview questions, for example?
4. What are some of the variety of research objectives that the authors discuss? Can you have more than one in any given piece of research?
5. On pp.32-33, the authors give three research questions they say are examples of “good” research questions and another three they say are not appropriate for qualitative research. What is the difference between them and what does that tell you about the elements that make for a “good” research question for qualitative research?
6. On p.33, the authors state that, “Qualitative research is not intended to be representative of the general population, and through qualitative research we cannot measure or test effects, or relationships, or identify determinants.” While your professor would agree that most qualitative research does not begin with the objective of creating findings that are “representative of the population” – at least not in the way that more quantitative approaches conceive of it – he would disagree with the second part of the sentence that suggests one can never use qualitative research to test effects, or relationships, or identify determinants. Instead, he would suggest, “It depends.” But what does he suggest it depends on?
7. The authors of your text affirm their more deductive approach by stating that, with research objectives and research question in hand, your next step should be to review the relevant literature and incorporate theory into your design. What four advantages do they suggest accrue from doing so? While your professor has no problems with their explanation, he will suggest it is incomplete and thereby a bit misleading insofar as they do not consider the benefits

of adding or simply taking a more inductive approach. What does he say those benefits are? Relatedly, why does he suggest that the notion of “relevance” is a bit of a clinker here?

8. How does the early incorporation of theory benefit the process of research design?
9. The authors of your text often note that a core focus of qualitative research is an understanding of the world from the perspective of our research participants. If that is the case, might there be disadvantages to taking the more deductive approach that the authors advocate? Explain.
10. According to your text, what is a “conceptual framework” and what role does it play in the design of qualitative research?
11. The authors do emphasize more deductive elements (particularly the literature and theory) during the design phase of research. What do they say about the contributions that more inductive elements can bring?
12. The discussion on page 41 about “Selecting qualitative research methods” represents the next step in the design cycle where the researcher decides what specific methods will best help achieve the study’s objectives and answer the research questions. Table 3.1 is a useful illustration of the way that the advantages and disadvantages of the major methods discussed in the text can be compared, so do not ignore it, but please put just that information on hold for a while until we get into talking about the specific methods that are referred to in the table, i.e., I will not ask you anything about that table in the mid-term.
13. What does “mixed methods research” refer to? Although the authors of your text distinguish “mixed methods” from “mixing methods,” they are the only people I know who do so, and your professor will subsume both under the term “mixed methods.” What advantages are gained by engaging mixed methods in a single study?
14. The text distinguishes two types of mixed methods designs – concurrent and sequential – although the authors spend all their time focusing on sequential designs. When mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in a sequential design, does it matter to the authors which come first? How so?