

PRIMARY RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

In college, two paradigms of research exist: Primary Research and Secondary Research.

Primary Research involves gathering data by means of experimentation, or by means of qualitative or quantitative study.

Secondary Research involves gathering data by means of "reading" and re-reporting the primary research of others.

In Primary Research, a researcher follows the scientific method.

The scientific method is defined as a series of steps:

1. State the problem.
2. Find out about the topic.
3. Create a hypothesis.
4. Experiment or proceed in a study
5. Analyze the data from experimentation and review the results of the study
6. Establish a conclusion from the data/results
7. Report/publish findings.

Typically, when the scientific method is followed, one's hypothesis (if proven correct) becomes a theory.

The applied and natural sciences, as well as the field of engineering, typically follow a series of experiments to prove a hypothesis.

In the humanities and social sciences, typically, a series of studies is used to prove a hypothesis.

In primary research, two types of studies exist: Quantitative Studies and Qualitative Studies.

Quantitative

involves "counting"
to make claims or prove
hypotheses.

Versus

Qualitative

involves "observing"
to make claims or prove
hypotheses.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative Research focuses essentially on "observing" a target group. Again, focuses on a target group sample of the population or even an individual (case study).

Well, how do you observe a target group without counting them necessarily? You do all the things you can to observe them? The key is to gain insight on a target group, so you have to do all you can to record the activities, nuances, practices of this group.

Groups in qualitative research are usually considered under the terms of cultural anthropology, since these are the people who "give us" qualitative research. In respecting their wishes, we always discuss things as either a culture or a community or a society.

Culture - We categorize things as cultures since the traditional definition of culture implies things like time and place as a "a particular stage of advancement in civilization or the characteristic feature of such a stage or state." Think of people with precepts and concepts instilled among them - in other words, they have things and do stuff,

Community is the group, as the definition implies "a body of people having common organization or interests living in the same place in a common home or similar condition."

Society - refers to the larger community, yet is subject to being under or part of the culture.

Each definition tries to be superlative or hierarchical, yet each term is more conceptual

TWO TYPES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS

The Unseen Observer (The Most Suited to Quiet Types)

For example, you might try sitting in a "non-obtrusive" or "inconspicuous" spot and observe the practices of the group by simply making notes, running a tape recorder, using a hidden camera, snapping a quick photo or two, or even asking friends/others about the people in question away from the people in question, etc. Even consider the work

The Participant Observer (Most Recommended, Preferred)

Or, perhaps you take another approach. Observe by becoming part of the action. Become a participant in the group, then make your observations accordingly. I think you might learn more by getting your hands dirty and asking the "real joe" rather than getting the outsiders view? What do you think?

Qualitative Research is the heading of many different forms of study:

Sketch (or Cultural Sketch)

Case Study

Ethnography

Investigative Journalism/Reporting

Cultural Research

Here are some terms to be familiar with:

Subject = Informant

Data Set = Notes

Coding = "Weeding" Out Process of Observation

PROCESS OF QUALITATIVE STUDY

1) Pre-Researching (Scholarship) - amounts to finding out all you can on your target group before hand.

2) Observing - amounts to writing notes in the "field" or being in the task of observing Practices, Rituals, Routines, Actions.

When writing field notes, consider the idea of thick description.

Thick description essentially amounts to writing as many things as you can about a group or individual to gain some sort of insight into that group. In a later part of the process, you have to focus on reducing your notes to get to the most important aspects of the research (data reduction and coding).

3) Collecting (Information and Artifacts) - amounts to gaining insight into a group by collecting artifacts. Of course you should always ask when necessary. Remember the Christian-Judeo ethic: Thou shalt not steal.... Stealing is a crime.... Take only things you are invited to take.... In other words, if you are at an art museum studying who goes to art museums, do not take the priceless painting off the wall... Maybe take a pamphlet from a display or business cards or schedules for discourse/rhetorical analysis.

4) Asking/Questioning - the most important form of observing comes from obtaining answers to questions. Although following the preliminary task of observing can give you insight into the question you need to ask.

Forms of Questions:

Interviewing: Informal and Formal

Informal Interviewing - amounts to asking someone in an informal context and making rough notes of the conversation.

Formal Interviewing - amounts to asking someone in a controlled and formalized context and recording the conversation.

Surveys and Questionnaires - amounts to creating and administering some sort of questionnaire on the group to obtain generalities and specifics about the entire group or a sample of the group.

5) Data Reduction - amounts to reducing the amounts of "thickness" in your notes.

6) Coding - amounts to inductively finding the most important "things" (facts,

issues, artifacts and definitions) in your observations.

While we did not talk about coding in statistical or quantitative form, know that it exists. Coding in a quantitative circumstance amounts to proceeding "deductively" by constructing questionnaires establishing categories or "blanks" based on proceeding knowledge (fore-knowledge or fore-sight) or theories about the target group.

7) Share Data with Informants (Subjects) - amounts to ruling out the dreaded biases and obtaining clarification on all conclusions. Of course, sometimes, the truth hurts. In my experience, the truth is even weird for people... They say things like "hey, I don't do that..." to which you say, "oh come on, Man, I saw you do.... What did you think you were doing?"

8) Write It Up!

Remember: This introduction is filled with the basics. If you need more depth, research: Statistics and Quantitative Research Methodology

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

"Quantitative research focuses on the statistical (how many?) It attempts to, in a sense, quantify the extent to which a "group" are aware of, think this, believe that or are inclined to behave in a certain way; otherwise, it simply focuses on finding how many."

STUDY SAMPLING

Target Group -> Group which you study

Sample -> Piece of the Group which you study

"For reliable conclusions to be drawn from the research, samples for quantitative research must be representative of the target group..."

There are several ways to do this:

Random Samples = absolutely random

"often being regarded as the most 'pure and statistically correct' (and usually the most costly)"

Quota Samples = selecting subjects from the group who meet certain criteria or specific criteria

"(selecting respondents to match certain criteria, e.g. socio-demographic) the more cost-effective, and still reliable. While it may seem most cost-effective to buy in a mailing list (which may be sold as a "sample"), it is highly likely that the poor quality of the list, and the resultant low response rate will produce highly misleading and unreliable results..."

Does Size Matter?

Usually, a larger sample is better than a smaller one.

RESEARCH METHODS

There are about three different methods. They amount to three different ways (one-way research, two-way research, and observational research)

- 1) One-way research amounts to giving someone a questionnaire or survey without dialogue, they simply complete it and that's it. (e.g. a postal questionnaire, an e-mail questionnaire)
- 2) Two-way research amounts to having an elaborate dialogue with someone to complete the research via question and answer (Socratic methodology). (e.g. a telephone survey, face-to-face interviews, a focus group)
- 3) Observational Research is something like Mystery Shopping. The researcher conducts observations, although this method is criticized as being sometimes too similar to qualitative research, unless the observation strictly involves isolating variables in a "counting" circumstance.

Problems or possible sources of error= People lying or people exaggerating, but also sometimes we ask bad questions....

QUESTION DESIGN

First, there are two types of information....

Specific (ask specifically about information needed within a given circumstance)

General (ask for demographic information)

The design of the questionnaire is crucial, but design of the question is even more crucial.

Consider design of questions in this light; there are two types of questions in the questionnaire.

Closed questions – "only able to answer with the choices offered – good for finding out specific quantitative information that is easy to interpret and tabulate."

Think of multiple choice questions with the answers presented to you.

Open questions – "answer in their own words – good for finding out what people think and feel – the qualitative things." Think of the dreaded essay question on those blasted Humanities tests.

Closed (forced choice-format)

-Easy and quick to fill in

-Minimize discrimination against the less literate (in self administered

questionnaire) or the less articulate (in interview questionnaire)

-Easy to code, record, and analyze results quantitatively

-Easy to report results

Open Questions

-Allow exploration of the range of possible themes arising from an issue

-Can be used even if a comprehensive range of alternative choices cannot be compiled

Scales and Rankings

Questions can also be answered along the lines of best to worst. Consider using questions which ask about rankings or scale preferences.

Here are a few different types:

1) Likert Scale:

Statement: *I like computers.*

Strongly

Disagree _____ Strongly Agree

This system asks the respondent to rank the degree he or she agrees or disagrees with the statement.

2) Semantic Differentials

Simple _____ Difficult

Interesting _____ Boring

This type of question asks the respondent to choose between sides of a continuum of opposing adjectives.

3) Simple Ranking

Question:

Please select the time most suitable to your needs. Put a 1 next to the time your most prefer. Put a 2 next to the time you prefer as your second choice, and so on.

8:00AM _____

9:00AM _____

10:00AM _____

11:00AM _____

4) Short Answer Rankings

Question:

Please tell me your biggest worries about the course. Please list your worst fear first, followed by the second and third.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____