

Overview of the field

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Qualitative - Quantitative

- Observation
- Interview
- Focus groups
- Texts/documents
- Audio / video
- Small number
- In depth
- Focused (fewer)
- How, what, how come
- Social, cultural (naturally occurring)

Social Surveys
Questionnaires
Cards
Logs
Statistics
large number
quantity = quality
broad (many)
why
tests, surveys

What is best?

- No method of research, quantitative/qualitative is better than any other
- In choosing a method, everything depends upon what we are trying to find out
- Thus, it depends on your research question (Silverman 2005)

Qualitative research

- “Qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. [...] The goal of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data are quantified.” (Myers living version)

3 PARADIGMS WITHIN THE IS-FIELD

Positivist Research

- Reality is objectively given
- Reality can be described by measurable properties – independent of the observer and his instruments
- Theory testing
- Variables: emphasis on quantitative data
- Statistical tools and packages are an essential element

(Myers living version + Klein & Myers 1999)

3 PARADIGMS WITHIN THE IS-FIELD

Interpretive Research

- The aim is to understand phenomena through the meanings people assign to them
- Interpretive methods of research in IS are "aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the information system, and the process whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context"
- Not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges

(Myers living version + Klein & Myers 1999)

3 PARADIGMS WITHIN THE IS-FIELD

Critical Research

- Social reality is historically constituted and it is produced and reproduced by people
- People's ability to change social and economic circumstances is constrained by various forms of social, cultural and political domination
- Focuses the oppositions, conflicts and contradictions in contemporary society, and seeks to be *emancipatory* (i.e. help eliminate the causes of alienation and domination)

(Myers living version + Klein & Myers 1999)

- Within IS the Scandinavian Approach (Participatory Design) is an example of critical research (e.g. Ehn, P. & M. Kyng (1987): *The Collective Resource Approach to System Design*. Bjerkenes, G., P. Ehn & M. Kyng (eds.): *Computers and Democracy—A Scandinavian Challenge*. Aldershot, UK: Avebury, pp. 19-57).

4 METHODOLOGIES

- Action Research
- Case Study
- Ethnography
- Grounded Theory

Action Research

- History of development within social psychology
- Places researchers in a 'helping-role'
- Iterations of AR: diagnosing a problem, action planning, action taking implementing and evaluating outcomes. Evaluation leads to a new diagnosis...
- Contribution to the practical concerns
- Joint collaboration with the people experiencing the problem
- Contextuality and participation
- Vision: researchers have a vision on how the reality should be – not value free
- AR can be both positivist, interpretive, critical

(Myers living version)

Case Study

- Social science – refined and further developed by the founding fathers of GT Glaser and
- Strauss.
- Case studies involve in-depth examination of a single instance, event or example: a case.
- A case study is an empirical inquiry that:
 - investigates a contemporary instance or event within its real-life context,
 - boundaries between instance, event or example and context are not clearly evident
- IS research: the study of information systems in organizations (not just technical issues)
- Case study research can be positivist, interpretive, or critical
- Basic resources: interview, observation, document analysis

(Myers living version)

(Denzin & Lincoln 2005)

Ethnography

- Social and cultural anthropology
- Explicit interest in understanding social practices and interactions in diverse communities as they unfold in everyday life.
- It's an analytical endeavor.
- It seeks descriptions in terms relevant and meaningful to the people studied
- It seeks descriptions of what people do rather than what they ought to do
- Ethnographers immerse themselves in the world / lives of the people they study
- Researcher's positioning, descriptive, reflexivity, longitudinal + shorter studies, study natural settings / 'real world', face2face, description (vis-à-vis prescription), from the members point-of-view.
- Basic resources: *participant* observation, interview, note taking, photo, drawings, documents, (objects, artifacts)

(Madden 2010; Blomberg et al. 1993)

Grounded Theory

- Developed by the sociologists Glaser and Strauss
- Theory should be grounded - to take an existing (...) theory or a set of pre-defined concepts as point of departure (...) is a risky endeavor. It means that an external structure is imposed on the data. (Thoresen 1999)
- To develop theory that is grounded in data
- Special emphasis on continuous interplay between data collection and analysis
- "Grounded theorists give priority to developing rather than verifying analytical propositions". (Emerson et al. 1995:143)
- **Techniques of GT:**
- Asking questions aimed at exploring properties, connections, similarities and dissimilarities.
- Open coding (process of analysis - breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, categorizing data) reading data carefully to identify and form ideas, themes, or issues provided by the data - generation of analytical categories
- Axial coding (process analysis - focus on the phenomena's relationship to the context in which they occur + their relationship to each other) - relate the (above separate) pieces of data
- Code notes (memos - writing / forming theoretical propositions - focus on phenomena - breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and putting together data in new ways) - locating series of phenomena, topic or categories
- Open and axial coding serves to make complexity visible and systematic (Thoresen 1999).

METHODS

- Observation (passive, participant): objects, people, events, place (naturally occurring)
- Document analysis (e.g. screen dumps, newspapers, letters, agreements, brochures, etc.)
- Interviews: structured, semi-structured , open-ended (not naturally occurring settings)
- Video / audio -> tapes can be studied over and over and be re-transcribed.
- Focus groups -> group discussions usually based upon stimuli (topics, visual aids) provided by the researcher
- Note taking. Describe what you observe / encounter / hear / smell / engage in. Remember: date, time, place, persons present (roles, occupation, affiliation). Video, photos, tape recordings serve as good memorable-tones, but remember to 'log' them.

(Blomberg et al. 1993 + Silverman 2005 + Crang & Cook 2007 + Madden 2010)

Conducting field work + analyzing field material

you can ask the following questions:

- What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they use?
- How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?
- What assumptions are they making?
- What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes?
- Why did I include them? (Emerson et al. 1995:146)

Concepts

- Paradigm -> a pattern of thinking, a set of philosophical assumptions.
- Theory -> a set of propositions providing the principles of analysis or explanation.
- Analysis -> breaking something down into smaller parts to gain understanding of it. Put it together in new ways. Opening logics, questioning them, relating them novelty.
- Ontology -> theory of reality, existence, being (what is reality, how does something come into being).
- Epistemology -> theory of knowledge (why do we believe as we do? – how do I know the world?).
- Methodology -> research strategy, strategy of inquiry (how do we gain knowledge of the world?).
- Method -> a way of arranging the generation, analysis, and writing up of material.
- Reflexivity -> the process of reflecting critically on approach, positioning, relationship between different encounters in field and the representation.
- Emic/etic -> insider (researched) /outsider (researcher)
- Inductive/deductive perspectives -> theory building through bottom-up/top-down

How it connects

Within research fields different philosophical assumptions (**paradigms**) reside about the world: how we are to understand it, and how we are to study it. This, by turn, has lead to different strategies of inquiry (**methodologies**) and to different ways of approaching how we gather empirical material and analyze it (**methods**):

“Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion. At the same time, strategies of inquiry also connect the research to specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials. For example, the case study strategy relies on interviewing, observing, and document analysis.” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:25).

paradigms

methodologies

methods

Group work

- Identify and describe the three paradigms
- What is emic/etic?
- Madden outlines four forms of reflexivity – what are they?