

Research Methods Seminar

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Lecture 1

Focus specifically on the development of research questions and hypotheses

- What are the characteristics of a good research question?
- How do we know if a research question is good?
- Focus on the Whitley (2002) reading – see pp 93-95.
- Look at Maxwell's (2005) reading, and think through the process involved in generating “general” and “particularistic” research questions. Be prepared to give examples of research questions for qualitative studies.
- The formulation of hypotheses: think about how you operationally define your variables – that is – how will you measure your variables?
 - **What makes a good research question?**
 - Is it grounded in the current knowledge base?
 - Is it measurable? How easy is it to operationalize it?
 - Is it worth asking? How important is it? What information does it give us?
 - **Research Question Examples:**
 - **What is the impact of Facebook bullying on the mental health of young people ages 14-16 years in Australia?**
 - **How do young people who use Facebook experience and manage privacy issues**
 - **How do young people in Australia manage Facebook bullying in the context of their everyday life?**
 - **Does an older sibling who stutters effect the speech fluency of a younger sibling across the ages 1-18?**
- **Formulating the Research Question: (reading)**
 1. Refining a topic into a question

- Narrowing it down
- You have refined your topic into a researchable question when you can phrase the question in terms of the relationship between 2 operationally definable variables, such as
- “Is self-esteem related to jealousy in premarital relationships?”

2. Characteristics of a good RQ

- A good RQ has the potential to expand our knowledge base
 - 3 Characteristics of a RQ affect its potential for inc knowledge base
 - i. How well grounded the question is in the current knowledge base
The problem must have a basis in theory, prior research, or practice, unless, the question is anchored in what is already known, then we cannot judge how much it is contributing to the literature.
Identifying the ways in which the RQ will expand on our knowledge of human behavior
 - ii. How researchable it is
How easy is it to formulate clear operational definitions of the variables involves and clear hypothesis about the relationship between he variables.
Overlapping categories present poor discriminant validity in measuring the construct.
 - iii. Its Importance
The more information that the answer to the RQ can provide, the more information it is.
- When testing theories, a RQ that simultaneously tests several competing theories provides more information than research that tests a single theory. Can tell us which theory is more valid.
 - If you are testing only one theory, test it form a proposition that is important to the theory. Other theories are more peripheral to a theory.
 - Sources of Ideas
 - Find evidence to support a theory, to refute a theory, or, to compare competing theories
 - Practical problems can provide ideas for research

-Research Hypothesis:

- States an expectation about the relationship between 2 variables. The expectation derives from, and answers the RQ, and so is grounded in prior theory and research on the question.

- E.g., *“Unmarried members of romantic relationships who have low self esteem will exhibit more romantic jealousy than will unmarried members of romantic relationships who have high self esteem.”*
- H specifies that a negative relationship exists between self esteem and jealousy → low self esteem is related to high jealousy → not just that some unspecified relationship exists.

- The specificity of the negative relationship allows the results to accept or refute the hypothesis

-Statistical Hypothesis:

- SH= Transforms the research hypothesis into a statement about the expected result of a statistical test

- E.g., “There will be a significant negative correlation between scores on a measure of self-esteem and scores on a measure of romantic jealousy”