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BTM8108-8	**Dr. Bob Levasseur**
Qualitative Research Design	**Week 6 Assignment**

Faculty Use Only

Dr. Robert Levasseur **Letter Grade:**

Week 6 Assignment: Review Qualitative Articles

One of the best ways to develop fluency with any research method is to read many peer reviewed journal articles. For this assignment, you should visit the Northcentral University Library and locate five peer reviewed qualitative studies. Summarize the topic, problem, purpose, design, and findings of each.

Support your paper with a minimum of 5 resources. In addition to these specified resources, other appropriate scholarly resources, including older articles, may be included.

Length: 5-7 pages not including title and reference pages
References: Minimum of 5 scholarly resources.

Your paper should demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the ideas and concepts that are presented in the course and provide new thoughts and insights relating directly to this topic. Your paper should reflect scholarly writing and current APA standards. Review APA Form and Style.

Be sure to adhere to Northcentral University's Academic Integrity Policy. View the Northcentral Academic Integrity Tutorial to refresh your knowledge of how to achieve academic integrity.

Upload your assignment using the Upload Assignment button below.

Selected articles:

1. Zhang, K. (2015). Mining Data from Weibo to WeChat: A comparative case study of MOOC communities on social media in China. *International Journal on E-Learning, 14*(3), 305-329.

2. Callahan, G., & Fribbance, I. (2016). The use of Facebook to build a community for distance learning students: a case study from the Open University. *Journal of Open, Distance, and E-learning, 31*(3), 260-272. doi:10.1080/02680513.2016.1229176

3. Drysdale, J., Graham, C., & Borup, J. (2016). Teacher and student perspectives on facilitating a sense of community through an online high school's "shepherding" program. *International Journal on E-Learning, 15*(2), 148-178.

4. Powell, W. P., Gray, G., & Reese, M. K. (2013). Connecting with others: A qualitative study of online social networking site usage. *The Practitioner Scholar: Journal of Counseling and Professional Psychology, 2*, 52-67.

5. van der Velden, M., & El Emam, K. (2013). "Not all my friends need to know": a qualitative study of teenage patients, privacy, and social media. *Journal of American Medical Informatics Association, 20*(1), 16-24. doi:10.1136/amiajnl-2012-000949

Qualitative Research: Learning from Examples

By Fahmeena Odetta Moore

Northcentral University

March 12, 2017

Full Course Number: BTM8108-8

Professor: Bob Levasseur

Writing the Results and Findings of Research

This paper consists of summaries of five peer-reviewed journal articles that provide useful information on and/or are useful examples of qualitative research design. The articles all fall under the topic social media – the topic of previous papers for the course. There is a focus on the use of social media to build online communities and relationships.

Qualitative Study 1

The first journal article is an interesting example of the qualitative comparative case design. The topic of the study is the use of social media to build online communities. The researcher (Zhang, 2015) investigated the practices of massive open online courses (MOOCs) in China, which were very successful/popular with Chinese users. The research questions used qualitative wording: (a) "How do MOOC communities in China utilize social media to promote MOOC and to support MOOCers?", and (b) "How do different MOOC communities serve varied members?" (Zhang, 2015, p. 308). Zhang selected three MOOCs for the study – a multiple case study design, noting that "compared to single-case design, multiple-case design is typically more robust with a higher explanation power" (Zhang, 2015, p. 308).

The researcher carefully selected three cases that would provide an in-depth understanding of activities of MOOCs in China. It is interesting that the researcher started collecting data (investigating MOOCs preliminarily) prior to selection of the MOOCs for the study. The researcher observed MOOC activity as a curious researcher and also followed MOOCs on social media as a MOOCer, which assisted with selection and further data collection. One of the MOOCs selected, the MOOC Academy, was the largest Chinese MOOC community that hosts half of MOOCers in China on its social networking sites.

Data for content analysis and other analyses for answering the research questions (the primary research) came from several sources such as posts on the various social media platforms used by the MOOCs – tweets on Twitter, blog posts, and so on; archives of the community Web space; and media (secondary) reports. These different data sources enhanced credibility or provided triangulation of sources. It is interesting that the researcher's data analysis included both quantitative and qualitative analysis, which was another form of triangulation.[1] The researcher used ROST Content Mining System, a text mining system, to analyze data.

Due to the research methodology, there were preliminary findings as well as "final" findings. Some findings included information on strategies used by MOOCs – one MOOC used Twitter/tweets to have "calls for participation" (Zhang, 2015, p. 315) and also highlighted the MOOC and instructors to "promote MOOC instructor's social presence, strengthen connections among peer MOOC learners, as well as between learners and instructors" (Zhang, 2015, p. 315). Another interesting finding was that many MOOCs chose to use private communities for discussions.

Qualitative Study 2

The second journal article is an interesting single case study on the use of social media to build an academic community. The study looks at the example provided by the Social Sciences Faculty at the Open University on the use of Facebook to help build an academic community. The Social Sciences Faculty developed its Facebook page in 2013 with the goal of encouraging interaction and communication (and reducing isolation) among distance learning students. The page would "build bridges between formal and informal channels of learning, to introduce Faculty academics and to encourage students to engage in discussions with some of these

[1] The paper did not include details of the quantitative analysis.

teachers around contemporary news events" (Callahan, 2016, p. 263). The research question was qualitative: To examine "the extent to which the Faculty of Social Science's strategy to use the social media platform of Facebook to help build an academic community with existing and potential learners has been successful" (Callahan, 2016, p. 260).

The single Facebook page (in the single case study) included different ways to involve students. For example, the page provided links to other material such as iTunesU and television and radio programs. There was fun activity such as a competition for the best student photograph of life in a street, used to introduce other issues.

The researcher obtained 'Insights' data such as reach/likes of posts from the Facebook page (a lot of the quantitative data for analysis). There was an important "methodological constraint" (Callahan, 2016, p. 264) associated with the Facebook data, which affected its use. Analysis included the quantitative review of the reach of posts, number of participants in discussions, topics that led to more activity, and so on. Part of the analysis included a more in-depth review of interactions resulting from Friday Thinker posts, questions posted to foster discussion (Callahan, 2016, p. 268). The researcher selected a sample of those posts for further analysis. There was a lot of quantitative analysis; the separate analysis of interactions made the study more qualitative.

The study found that the strategies used on the Facebook page were very successful, especially the Friday Thinker posts that received responses from different individuals, including individuals who were not students. The researcher noted that the Facebook page supports Wenger's learning theory around communities of practice. The page demonstrates the key elements of the theory: "it is an inventive way of engaging learners, it provides access to resources and it creates a space where discussion can take place" (Callahan, 2016, p. 270).

Qualitative Study 3

The third journal article also falls under the subtopic: use of social media to build online communities. Drysdale, Graham, and Borup (2016) used a single case study, specifically a single program (a shepherding program) that an online charter school implemented to build a sense of community among students, to study the building of communities to support online learning and the role of facilitators. The study took a subjective approach – it focused on the perspectives or perceptions of program participants. For example, the second of the two research questions was: "How do purposefully sampled MHA student responses compare with how purposefully sampled MHA teachers perceived the impact of the shepherding program on shepherd-student relationships?" (Drysdale, Graham, & Borup, 2016, p. 151). It is interesting that the research questions include the language "purposefully sampled" to focus on the participants only. The questions are sometimes broader – covering general conclusions that could be drawn.

The researchers believed the case study approach was most appropriate because they "wanted to understand a specific phenomenon that has received limited research attention within the natural context where (they) had no influence or control" (Drysdale, Graham, & Borup, 2016, p. 155). The method used to select individuals for data collection was very interesting. Drysdale, Graham, and Borup (2016) used focus group interviews (interviewing a group of 3–4 teachers) then "stratified purposeful sampling across subject domains" and "intensity sampling" to narrow teachers from the total of 22[2] at the charter school to 5 (p. 156). The researchers selected students in a similar way after asking teachers to recommend students for participation. Each teacher-student relationship could be looked at as a "case" of the relationships of interest in the program.

[2] The paper did not explain why in the lower section of page 155 "N=22" while the first section states that "MHA had 21 teachers and 381 students."

The researchers used Rovai's sense of community framework as a starting point for analysis (and also as a yardstick). Their analysis found strong evidence of Rovai's sense of community in the teacher-student relationships. The researchers noted that there were several "negative cases" where the teacher-student relationship did not work as well or was problematic (Drysdale, Graham, & Borup, 2016, p. 169).

Qualitative Study 4

The fourth journal article also falls under social media and deals with relationships. The main reason for selecting the article was because the researchers used a qualitative phenomenological methodology/design. The justification provided was: it is a "method for researchers to learn about a phenomenon that has little research by exploring the experiences of people in their natural environment rather that confirming or denying a preconceived theory" (Powell, Gray, & Reese, 2013).

The goal of the research was to obtain in-depth information on how heavy social networking use affects the lives of users. Previous research provided contradictory information on the effects of social networking use. Some research reported positive effects while some reported negative effects such as addiction and social isolation. The research questions included: (a) "How do individuals make meaning of their experiences using social networking sites?" and (b) "How social networking site users describe their online and offline social relationships?" (Powell, Gray, & Reese, 2013, p. 55).

It is clear that the researcher wanted to (and made an effort to) design and conduct the research properly/scientifically. The researcher used a sample of eight student volunteers who responded to advertisements to student groups. To participate, the students needed to use social

networking websites at least 2.5 hours daily – the mode[3] noted in previous research. The main method of collecting information from participants was interviewing, specifically semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. A demographics questionnaire provided data on the participants for analysis. The researchers also maintained a reflexive journal to record issues with participants, reactions, and so on. The research team included the principal researcher, an external auditor, and another member skilled in qualitative research. The principal researcher consulted with the external auditor on areas of the research. The researcher also asked participants to confirm results of analysis mainly the commonalities/themes found.

The results of the research were interesting too. The researchers identified five themes that included sub-themes – a sort of typology of the effects/results of social networking use. Table 1 below shows the themes and sub-themes.

Table 1
Themes and Sub-themes on Social Networking Use - from the results of research by Powell, Gray, and Reese (2013)

Theme 1: Connecting with others

Subtheme 1: Increased Use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) Due to Limited Offline Interactions; Subtheme 2: Increased Feelings of Isolation when not using SNS; Subtheme 3: Using SNS to Develop Offline Events.

Theme 2: Feelings (emotive responses) resulting from social networking site usage

Subtheme 1: Positive Emotive Responses; Subtheme 2: Negative Emotive Responses.

Theme 3: Compulsive use of SNS

Subtheme 1: High Frequency of Use; Subtheme 2: Desire to Use SNS Less Frequently; Subtheme 3: Using SNS to Avoid Offline Responsibilities; Subtheme 4: Preferring to Have Offline Relationships

Theme 4: Preferring to have offline relationships

Subtheme 1: Damage to Offline Relationships Due To SNS Usage; Subtheme 2: Simultaneous Use among Partners.

Theme 5: Communication using SNS is easier than offline communication

Subtheme 1: Superficial Online Relationships; Subtheme 2: Online Anonymity; Subtheme 3: Varying Levels of Communication According to Association

[3] Mode is the statistical term that refers to the most common item (hours by the majority of participants).

Qualitative Study 5

The fifth journal article looks at the sharing of personal, health-related information by patients in online communities. The main reason for selecting the article was because it touches on privacy along with online communities. The objective of the study was to "understand how chronically ill teenagers manage their privacy on social media" (van der Velden & El Emam, 2013). Another reason for selecting the article was because it uses an interesting qualitative approach – qualitative description – which involves describing experiences in everyday language.

The researchers selected teenagers because they are not interested in informational privacy, but very concerned about their social privacy. Separating different aspects of privacy could help to explain contradictory results in the literature. The research questions included: (a) "Do teenage patients use social media and do they share their personal health information on social media?" and (b) "When teenage patients choose not to use social media, or not share personal health information on social media, are they motivated by privacy concerns?" (van der Velden & El Emam, 2013, p. 17).

The sample included 20 teenagers with a chronic illness at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) in Ottawa, Canada that serves a population of approximately 600,000 children and youth. Patients at CHEO can access the internet (even borrow laptops). CHEO also provides access to a private/closed social network for young patients in Canada. The researchers used purposeful sampling so that patients would be selected based on their experience.

The researchers collected information from participants primarily through interviewing. There were standard questions, but the flow of the interview could be different depending on

what the patient said or revealed. The interviewer was very experienced with a background in qualitative research and interviewing patients.

Content analyses resulted in the identification of codes and themes from data collected. The researchers identified five themes. The first two themes provide general information on the online activities of the teenage patients: (a) they do not seek information on their illness online and do not participate in communities by patient organizations (theme: online information-seeking behavior), and (b) the majority of patients use Facebook to post public status updates, chat privately with friends, and so on (theme: online communication). The additional three themes provide more detail on their privacy behavior: (a) applied privacy awareness, (b) self-protection, and (c) self-definition.

In summary, the five examples provide excellent examples of the issues researchers face and the care they take in making decisions on the research/study. In two of the examples, the researchers used experts to provide skills they lacked. In almost all of the examples, especially in case study research, the researchers selected the cases with much care. The papers also helped with my understanding of how the research methods/methodology could be applied.

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