



“WHAT IS RESEARCH,
HOLMES??”

*“Why that’s elementary,
my dear, Watson. Look further and
learn from this unfolding story.”*

Dr Jens J. Hansen

www.woodhillpark.com



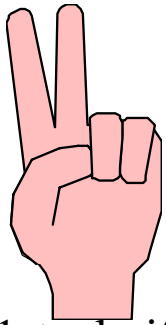


Research

- Answers questions;
- Provides ways of knowing;
- Involves a process that has a sequence of stages;
- Is a disciplined *question/proposition* answering process;
- Gathers data with which to test theories &/or questions &/or hypotheses.

NB: Theory argues relationships between concepts;

Data are facts and can be QL &/or QN in form.



Research stages include

- 1st, clarifying the research issue (*i.e. determining the research objectives/questions/hypotheses*);
- 2nd, examining the literature (*i.e. finding out what others have done. BTW, this need not be a discrete stage*);
- 3rd, selecting one or more methods & design the tools with which to gather data (*i.e. once the objectives/questions/hypotheses are clear, the method/s should become apparent & tools designed accordingly*);
- 4th, gather data to address the research objectives/questions/hypotheses (*i.e. implement the tools and methods you have designed*);
- 5th, analyse & interpret you data so that it affirms your story (*and addresses your objectives/questions/hypotheses*);
- 6th, discuss your story findings (*i.e. acknowledge bias which can stem from either omissions &/or commissions*);
- 7th, finally, share your conclusions/recommendations & engage in some crystal ball gazing – you have a right to do so after all of your hard story telling work.



Positivism or Quantitative Lies or all about torturing the data until they confess

The Five Stages of a Project

- 1: Initial Enthusiasm;
- 2: Total Disillusionment;
- 3: Blind Panic;
- 4: Passing the Buck;
- 5: Blaming the Innocent.



In the beginning

- Humanity thought that everything in the universe was able to be explained by *logical positivism*, by the manipulation of numbers and the application of clever formulae.
- Alchemists devised formulae for making gold; inquisitors, by dubious logic, proved that heretics could burn.
- Knowledge in the form of LOGICAL POSITIVISM reigned supreme.

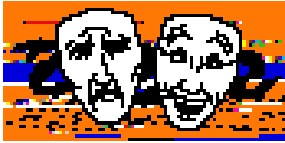


Positivism = Scientific Method

- All research was number based & measured observable, verifiable things → QUANTITATIVE
- Positivistic/scientific research addressed hypotheses (that were derived from one or more theories);
- Data gathered were focused on confirming/rejecting hypotheses and, therefore, theory/theories;

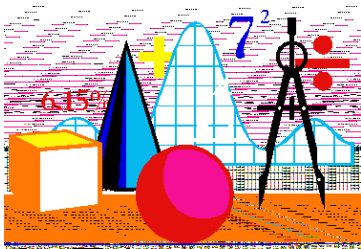
But there was a problem

- The problem was – how do you measure what goes on inside peoples' minds; how do you deal with values which are fundamental to being human? This is the *Black Box problem of science*;
- Hence, probabilistic (social) science statistics were founded;
- Such statistics seek to explain variations and the probability that such variations are correct in all probability that is



The Post-Positivist paradigm

- Accepts values and people's views (i.e. what they think) as important in furthering understanding;
- The approach can be either **Elemental** (understanding where *ego* fits in relation to role theory) or **Holistic** (understanding where *ego* fits in relation to structural theories);
- This approach is interpretative = qualitative;
- Such research seeks to heighten understandings (whereas positivistic research seeks to generalise);
- The emphasis is humanistic, data are language c.f. numbers and tools are different. How might they differ?



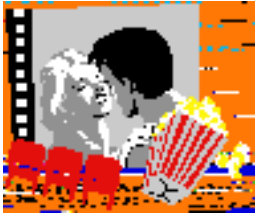
Quantitative Research - Two main data types

- Nominal measures - *feet, centimetres, etc.*;
- Ordinal measures - *strongly agree, disagree, etc.* Each form tells a different story;
- Ordinal measures are consistent with the *Black Box Problem of Science* because they explore (and quantify) feelings. Therefore, these data are treated differently;
- Most data we use are descriptive c.f. explanatory;
- But when quantitative research is undertaken, the design typically seeks to get quantifiable (closed) responses (e.g. how often? how much? how many? how strongly?);
- Results are, therefore, expressed numerically (e.g. $n = 24$, 50%).



Social Science research ...

- Often seeks to improve humanity & is often problem focused or issue orientated;
- Either gathers data *in situ* or reinterprets existing data;
- Inevitably seeks to TRIANGULATE and is always empirical;
- Addresses theory as well as practice and often addresses the pressing problem;
- Is most useful if recorded as a story.



The story is the thing

- When looking at any form of data:
 - Look for the story;
 - Be suspicious;
 - Ask questions;
 - Isolate the missing parts of the story;
 - Check out the truth by looking for other clues;
 - Make sure that the story is interesting and that it reads well.