Walden University Academic Skills Center Webinar
An Informative Guide to Quantitative and Qualitative Research Philosophy

6:00 pm – 6:35 pm CST

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[Captioner standing by]
>> For those of you logged in, we'll get started in a couple of minutes.
[Pause]
>> While we are waiting, if you have not already done so, please introduce yourself in the chat area. Include where you live and what you study at Walden. I think it is always interesting to see what a diverse group we have.
[Pause]
>> According to my time piece, looks like we are at the top of the hour. So Shawn and Matt, as soon as you are ready, I think we can go ahead and begin. I know Shawn is going to connect the recording.
(No audio)
>> What you do is click the webinar title in the "download today's slides here" pod. When it opens you can save them to the computer for future reference. I believe they open in another browser window.
Third, we are recording the session and will post it tomorrow in our webinar archive on the Academic Skills Center website. The links to that webinar archive will be placed in the web links section. I will get to that right after we push record. So that will be available to you.
Finally, we know you have plenty of questions. We are here to answer them. Please type the questions into the questions pod on the bottom right-hand side of the screen. You are welcome to type questions any time. We will answer them throughout the presentation. I will push record and then introduce today's presenters.
[Pause]
Waiting for the button to show up.
[Pause]
>> Taking its sweet old time.
>> Yes, it is.  Sorry about the delay in that, folks.  Pat is probably waiting for the same thing I am, which is a notification saying recording is in process.  I'm not seeing it.
>> Yeah.
>> It wouldn't be a webinar without a little snafu.
>> That's right, that's right.
>> Try it a third time.  Third time is a charm, as they say.
There we go.  This session is now being recorded.
So, now I am pleased to introduce to you tonight's presenters, Dr. Patrick Dunn, an instructional specialist in the Academic Skills Center.  Dr. Dunn holds a Ph.D. in public health from Walden University in -- from 2015 and has over 30 years’ experience as a clinical exercise physiologist and program director in the field of cardiac rehabilitation and quality management.  Next, our special guest Dr. Matt Jones is a methodologist in the Walden's own Center for Research Quality. Dr. Jones has taught research methods for over a decade.  He is a co-author of a research methods text for public and non-profit administrators.  Matt and Pat, I'm turning the microphone over to you.  Have a great session everyone.
>> Shawn, before you go back on mute, like to have you introduce yourself.  You are a key part of the presentation.  You not only have such a wonderful voice but you are an incredible resource to us.  Can you tell us a little about yourself, first.
>> Definitely.  Wow, well thank you.  Boy, now I'm recording!  I'm Shawn Picht.  I'm the manager of faculty outreach and student communication.  I'll be in the background helping everybody through the chat and alerting Pat and Matt to questions going on.  Yeah, so please type any in there.  If you have technical questions along the way, please type them in the chat as well and we will see how we can help you with that as well.  Thank you, Pat.
>> All right.  Thank you, Shawn.
So Dr. Jones, thank you for joining us.  For those of you that take some of -- the statistics course, you may recognize Dr. Jones' voice.  You may even recognize his picture, because I know he has been very involved.  I know that several of the videos, courses, you know, Dr. Jones has been a part of that.  So Matt, welcome to our webinar tonight.
>> Yeah, thanks, Pat.  Really happy to be here.  I love doing these sort of things and having the opportunity to talk a little bit about research philosophy.
>> Awesome.  So, maybe we can start there.  You know, a lot of times, you know, through the Academic Skills Center I have the opportunity to tutor students that are in stats courses.  Sometimes there's a little bit of confusion about where the line is between qualitative and quantitative research.  You know, sometimes I know students think non-parametric tests are in the qualitative area.  I know in my own case I actually did a qualitative dissertation and a lot of my colleagues are, like, where are the statistics in your study.  So obviously there is some confusion there.  So can you help us clarify that a little bit?
Sure. I mean, that's a great question. Ultimately, we would really like to think the line is quite clear and there's a large divide between qualitative and quantitative research. And I suppose that's a viewpoint. There are a lot of different viewpoints in research methods, and that's why there's this whole field of philosophy that underpins it. But often that line can get quite blurry between what is qualitative research and what is quantitative research. So I think when we hear quantitative research, the first thing that probably jumps into everybody's mind is numbers. Math. And statistics. And that's certainly a very big part of it. But the underlying piece around quantitative research is really looking for relationships and trying to -- I mean, ultimately what we would like to do is establish causality. We can't always do that. But at least we can model some predictive relationship. Independent variables, dependent variables, these are all qualitative words used in -- or excuse me, quantitative words used in a quantitative approach. Qualitative research does certainly differ in the sense that qualitative research really tries to get to, you know, what I like to describe as that data that is just deeper and richer. Deeper, richer understanding of what's going on. In particular, some sort of central phenomenon that is going on, or a concept. So why quantitative research might ask very focused, specific questions about what is the relationship between X and Y, how strong is the relationship between X and Y, qualitative research can have broader research questions. So thinking about, you know, what is the nature of this that is going on. What's the nature of people's experiences around this one phenomenon. How do people feel about this particular concept. And even that last example is one of those examples where the line can get blurry. You can measure it in a qualitative sense or quantitative sense. >> Yeah. And you know, when I think of quantitative I think of testing for hypotheses and I think of, you know, more of a scientific method. Would that be a fair way to categorize quantitative?

>> Well, it would in some senses. I would say for a long time, Pat, as you know and probably those people who have seen me in the videos in the course know I'm a big fan of quantitative research, sort of my primary focus. But I'm probably the biggest champion for qualitative research at the same time. I really think it has a place. So I would also describe qualitative research as being scientific, as well.

>> Yeah.

>> And that's -- and I see where you are going with the question. I mean, certainly you think about quantitative research. For many of us, we think about scientists, people in lab coats, psychologists in labs. Those are the first things that pop into our head. But qualitative research, you are engaged in social science. As most of us are here. You are a scientist. So collecting data and the questions, the approaches, is rigorous. It is just slightly different. I think what often, and maybe you are referring to is often people think of this quantitative approach as being very deductive. Top down. Okay. I have the research question. There's a theory. I'm going to test a theory. The theory is either confirmed or I fail to confirm. Just a very logical sequence of steps.
And qualitative research -- and it's not always the case. Sometimes there is delineation between, I know we will have a slide coming up where it is deductive versus inductive. That is largely how people try to break them apart. But again, there is gray area there. Sometimes quantitative research certainly can be inductive as well. But the qualitative research certainly is -- for lack of a better term I would want to say a little looser. Has a little more room to really get in there. That's, you know, where we are in, quote unquote, the scientific approach in quantitative research we have very large sample sizes. In qualitative research often we sacrifice that. I'm not sure it's a sacrifice, but we are focusing on smaller samples specifically because we want to get more information and leave room to obtain more data from those participants.

>> Yes, absolutely. So I know for a lot of people that are logged in here, they are probably thinking to themselves that, I did as well when I was a student: So how do I know which way to go. Should I be doing a qualitative study or doing a quantitative study?

Do you have any insights into how would a student even help to figure that out?

>> Yeah. I certainly have some insights and hopefully they are helpful. Pat, I'm sure you've seen it, and probably the biggest mistake a lot of people make is they have it in their mind going into a research project, okay, this is going to be qualitative or quantitative. They make decisions either based upon really love qualitative stuff or really love quantitative stuff, so that's the study I'm going to do. But really what is going to be driving that is what you want to find out. And what you want to find out comes from your purpose and then your research question.

So your research question is really going to be a big driver in what approach you're going to use. Whether it's qualitative or quantitative. Then the specific applications within qualitative or quantitative.

So, if you were looking at exploring some central phenomenon or asking, you know, how does this come about, what is going on here, those are inherently -- I understand these are sort of being very broad, but those are inherently qualitative research questions.

If you are asking things about comparisons, relationships, specific measurements, effects, cause, those sorts of words kind of trigger you into moving into that quantitative approach.

So that is definitely, you know, in drafting of your research question, go back to your purpose. As you draft your research question, really think tightly about what is it that I want to answer here.

And those words will drive whether you do a qualitative or quantitative approach.

>> Yeah. I can give an actual personal story with that. I mean, I come from a very quantitative background. I'm a number cruncher. Love numbers. Obviously I'm a stats tutor in the Academic Skills Center. I work for an organization, my day job, the American Heart Association, that is very quantitative driven. I just assumed that I would be doing a quantitative dissertation. My area of research interest is health literacy. And I was all through my coursework, I was preparing for my -- basically the hypothesis that I was going to be doing.

But as you say, as I started reviewing the literature I started realizing there are a lot of unknown questions. There is really a need for deeper insights before I
could even form a really good hypothesis. And so I literally switched from a quantitative approach to a qualitative approach. And again, to your point, it is really driven by, you know, what was the research question that I was trying to answer. So anyway --

>> Yeah, that's a great example. In a similar vein, for a committee I am a chair on. We just had a similar conversation. The student was convinced this was going to be a quantitative approach. The reason why he approached me and I signed on to this. Once we started working on the proposal and really thinking about what the research question is for this study, the rest of the committee -- we came to the conclusion that, you know, this is a qualitative study.

What you want to find out is if you are trying to force fit. If you find yourself trying to force fit language into your research question, that's the time to pause and think about what is it I'm really trying to do here. He was trying to force fit that.

[overlapping conversation]

>> ... research language into an inherently qualitative study. And that is not the only case. I have a number of students who have come to me over time that -- coming to me because they want some assistance with a quantitative approach.

>> Mmm-hmm.

>> But they are -- their studies could benefit from qualitative approach. The types of questions they are asking.

>> Yup. So I'm sure a lot of students now are saying, okay, all right. I decided to go quantitative or decided to go qualitative. And I'm putting a slide up here with some resources. But so Matt, you and I work in two different centers. You work in the Center for Research Quality. I work in the Academic Skills Center.

Can you give us a little bit of insight into what kind of resources? And it's kind of broken into kind of two areas. You know, the coursework area as well as preparing for dissertation.

But what -- tell us a little more about the (No audio).

>> Yeah. So in the Center for Research Quality, we have some resources. And particularly I would like to let everybody know if they don't already about our drop-in, open office hours. And these are specifically targeted towards students who are in their Capstone phase. So you are either engaged in a project study or dissertation, whether it's at the very beginning, maybe drafting a premise, or much further along.

And the offer of qualitative and quantitative office hours once a week. And those -- I think we have the web links -- I think you can see them right there in the pod. CRQ qualitative methodology and CRQ quantitative methodology. It works on this exact same platform we are using here today for our conversation. So there is no appointment needed. It is first come, first serve. Usually there aren't a lot of people in the office hours. So you can easily have your question answered. In fact, we find that some people just like to show up once a week just to hear other people's trials, tribulations, challenges, and hopefully at the end of the conversation, success, clarity, and resolution to what's going on.

So that's what we offer in the Center for Research Quality. Again, I want to
stress that that is to support my students who are in that Capstone phase. I know we have a lot of resources in the Academic Skills Center. I will let you speak to that.

>> Sure. We have several different types. Those links are also there. You can link to the Academic Skills Center. I put it in the slide. It's a lot of words but I tried to highlight -- a good link to remember or literally to book mark is the academic guides.WaldenU.EDU.

And when you get there you can select the Center for Research Quality, you can select the Writing Center, the Academic Skills Center. There's a lot of awesome resources there.

In the Academic Skill Center we do tutoring for statistics.

And it is centered around coursework. It's not intended to be -- we have in the past, but we are kind of refocusing and really focused on coursework statistic support.

And you know, we support all the statistics courses in the university. So you can get to those links through the Academic Skills Center link here. And so in addition to that, you know, we have a series of webinars such as what we are doing tonight. We post those webinars so you can go back -- there's a lot of literally video tutorials, particularly on how to use SPSS.

Finally we have role accounts. We can send you maybe the link to those. But the role accounts are emails. There's a stats support. That's the primary one we use. So stat support@waldenU.EDU. And all of our tutors review those emails. Shawn, you may need to correct me. It may now be stats support@mail.WaldenU.EDU. I haven't had to check that to verify.

The other thing we are just beginning is on the -- we have historically focused on quantitative. We actually now have a tutor that does NVivo training. It is different than training qualitative. It is actually training for the actual software. NVivo is one of the most popular software programs for qualitative research.

So those are really the resources there that we have to offer. I think what we'll do now, we have about ten minutes. We always like to open up literally open the chat lines. We can't open the audio lines or we would have sheer chaos on our hands, but we like to open the chat lines for questions you may have.

So feel free. And between Shawn and Matt and I, we will try to kind of scroll through the questions that may come up.

So while we are doing that, Matt, I have a question. Since I was, you know, very quantitative, I switched to qualitative, a lot of my colleagues are frankly not that familiar with qualitative methods. They kind of turn their nose down to it. What are your thoughts? Is this a hierarchical thing that qualitative is inferior to quantitative? Or how would you respond to that?

>> Yeah. I would say that perception is definitely out there, that qualitative isn't real research, it isn't science, it's journalism.

So there is that view out there.

You know, my own personal view, I think I mentioned earlier, is that I think if done correctly qualitative research certainly is scientific if it follows scientific approach. That's the challenge, is really making sure you are doing it correctly. So we do have -- when I say we, I'm speaking loosely about the world here, this
bias to move towards quantitative because we always ask what do the numbers say.

>> Mmm-hmm.

>> And we have established this history, which is actually quite short. The history of statistics is extremely short. Statistics is actually quite a new field compared to a lot of other disciplines. And -- but it has quickly gained, ah, popularity. I think that's a good thing. Because we have been -- had some success with being able to establish causality or at least predictive relationships. Pat, you work in the health field. Now we know all of these things that --

>> ... or risk factors of cardiac arrest. A myriad of other things. So we are able to see those numbers. We see that as, quote, unquote, proof --

>> ... qualitative sort of -- some people think it just comes across more like telling a story.

>> But there is something there. That is data. It is just thinking about data in a slightly different manner.

>> Yeah. Having a new appreciation for qualitative -- I found a quote by Albert Einstein. It says not everything that can be measured counts; not everything that counts can be measured.

So that's one -- you know, it is kind of a fallacy on the quantitative side that just because you're counting or collecting data that means that it is the right data. You know. A lot of that, again, kind of goes into the methodology on both sides. Whether it's collecting quantitative or qualitative data.

>> Yeah, exactly. And anybody who has received an email from me has probably seen the quote that I love, a very popular quote from an extremely prominent statistician, George Box. Quite simply, he said all models are wrong. Some are useful. So his --

>> ... point is they are all wrong. It's just how wrong do they have to be --

>> -- So --

>> Sort of a -- dragging your nails across the chalkboard phrase for me is whenever somebody says proof. That --

We don't do that. Even somebody who loves statistics, there is way, way too much uncertainty. And modern statisticians are trying to get that message across. That we need to embrace uncertainty and be comfortable with it. You know. Don't draw too much from these inferential models. They tell you something but don't tell you everything.

Same in qualitative research, as well.

>> Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, you know, I mean, to your point about causality, you know, there is -- you really can't establish causality in one study or one analysis. It is really looking across the literature before -- even things like in my field, like you know, smoking and lung cancer. There is no one study that is, you know, finally said, yes, this is causal. It was looking, you know -- so
that -- you're correct. I think that can be a fallacy.

I think --

[overlapping conversation]
-- not only the conceptual -- go ahead.

>> Go ahead, Pat.

>> Go ahead.

>> I was going to say, I know we are talking --

>> Go ahead, Pat. I think --

>> Go ahead.

>> Ah, okay. Yeah. I -- ah, okay, I was going to say a lot of it comes down to your methods, you know. It is one thing to understand, you know, the big picture of quantitative and qualitative.

But it is as important to really make sure that you are -- both on quantitative and qualitative that your methodology is really sound. So that you really are able to go back and answer those research questions and, you know, either have a -- test your hypothesis or not.

>> Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. And Pat, I can see just a couple of questions about some resources.

One thing I like to make everybody aware of if they are not already is through the Walden University library, one of the databases is Sage research methods online. And it is a fabulous database. Sage Publications is probably one of the premier publishers for research methods texts in the social sciences. And as part of that database, online again, just go to the Walden University website. Once you log in, go to databases. Drop down menu. Of course under S., Sage research methods online. Purposely being repetitive here. And I think at last count there was access to over 700 books in there. So there is a vast array of both quantitative and qualitative resources that is in that database. So for everybody who is building their proposal or prospectus, or wanting to know more about a particular research method, that is a great place to start.

>> Yup. I see a question about mixed methods.

So very interesting. So I was, you know, I'm a stats tutor and I did a qualitative dissertation. So I immediately thought, oh, it makes me a mixed methods researcher. That is absolutely not the case.

So mixed methods is yet a third methodology that actually incorporates both methods, but there's -- the research that I have done, I've actually taken the time to really kind of look into, you know, what really is mixed methods. And it actually has its own -- literally its own methodology. So really kind of draws from both.

We have a question about a detailed -- I don't know we have time for a detailed example. But of quantitative and qualitative study.

So maybe I can use my [indiscernible] as an example. So I originally wanted to do a quantitative study looking at different educational approaches for patients with heart -- so heart disease or diabetes. So you just had a heart attack. I was going to study different ways to, you know, to improve one's health literacy skills. You could form a hypothesis and test that. That would be an example of a quantitative.

What happened to me, I realized that I didn't know -- and I actually didn't think the literature was clear on how you actually build health literacy skills. So that's
why I switched to qualitative.  
So what I did is I actually did a study looking at how does -- basically how does someone who just had a heart attack, you know, know how to do what they do.  How do they build health literacy skills in a way that can help them manage their health.  
And so I couldn't measure that.  I couldn't, you know, test a hypothesis.  I literally had to interview patients and healthcare professionals and ask them, you know, how do you know how to manage your condition or how do you help your patients manage.  I had to get, you know, literally their responses.  I had to -- from that, I was able to form my analysis.  But those would be two examples.  
One is, you know, number-based, hence the term quantitative.  The other is really more text or, you know, response-based.  
>> To add on to that, Pat, I would also encourage people as a resource, again go to the library and look in the databases under dissertations.  And it is actually broken out by, you know, dissertations in general and those Walden specific dissertations.  
For multiple reasons this is a good exercise, just to look at some Walden dissertations.  Maybe go and read Pat's.  It sounds fascinating.  And look at what other people have done.  What constituted a quantitative study, what constituted a qualitative study.  
And you will be able to see a lot of this just from the abstract alone.  You'll be able to gather exactly what happened and why this is a quant or qual approach.  
>> To your point, Matt, that is exactly what I did as I was preparing to do my proposal.  I went out and looked and I specifically looked for Walden dissertations just to get the feel for how -- and I found, you know, you have different types of research questions.  You know.  
Instead of what is the impact or are there differences, is there -- what is the relationship between.  
Those are all very quantitative terms.  Versus, you know, what are the perceptions of ... or what are the insights from ... which are, again, much more non-quantitative but still scientific in their methods.  
I know we have gone a little bit over.  We could probably talk about this all night.  But probably none of us want to do that.  So, maybe I'll turn it back to Shawn to see if there is any closing housekeeping we need to do.  
Before I do that, Matt, really want to thank you for the time and the great information that you have provided for us.  
>> Yeah, again, thanks for having me, guys.  Love to talk about this stuff.  For everybody out there listening, don't be afraid to come see us during methodology office hours.  I'm one of the people that's on the other line during the quantitative office hours.  
>> Great.  
>> I'll be in residency in Atlanta next week for anybody who is interested in sitting down and talking some more about this.  
>> Okay.  So I think that is a wrap on tonight's webinar.  Again, thanks everybody.  And enjoy the rest of your evening.  
(Event concluded)  

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