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MULTIMETHOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Nanna Mik-Meyer[1]

Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

[1] Please direct correspondence to Nanna Mik-Meyer, Department of Organization, Copenhagen Business School, Kilevej 14A, 4th floor, 2000-Frederiksberg C, Denmark; email: nmm.ioa@cbs.dk.

MULTIMETHOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This chapter focuses on what Creswell (2015) has termed *multimethod research*. Multimethod research is research that uses multiple forms of qualitative data (e.g., interviews and observations) *or* multiple forms of quantitative data (e.g., survey data and experimental data) (Creswell 2015: 3). When researchers combine the two types of data spanning over two paradigms – qualitative and quantitative – they conduct *mixed method research*. Both attempts have been – and still are – welcomed and critiqued by scholars for a number of reasons. The chapter will first outline this debate concerning the combination of different methodological approaches by drawing on the literature on a) mixed methods and b) multimethod qualitative research. Hereafter, I will discuss the advantages of combining different qualitative methodologies in two research projects that examine identity negotiations in the field of disability (project 1) and homelessness (project 2).

Keywords: Mixed Methods, Multimethod Qualitative Research, Interviews, Observations, Documents, Combining Qualitative Methods, Disability, Homelessness

MULTIMETHOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Whether a researcher decides to combine quantitative with qualitative approaches or combines different qualitative approaches in one research project, the objective is to emphasise the value of the different approaches. In this way, a combination can contribute to a better understanding of a research problem compared to research that is based on only one methodological approach (Creswell, 2015: 3). However, it matters whether research methods are perceived as technical tools (methods) or as approaches that are based on a particular epistemological and ontological framework (methodologies) (Bryman, 1988: 127; Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020; Silverman, 2020). Examples from my own research on disability and homelessness, which I will present and discuss in the last part of this chapter, combine different qualitative methodologies based on a constructionist framework. The chapter will not emphasise the more technical aspect of a multimethod approach, but instead stress the necessity of basing different methods on the same epistemological and ontological perspective (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005; Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

THE MIXED METHOD APPROACH

As argued by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), mixed method research is not an approach that replaces a qualitative or quantitative approach – the goal of mixing methods is to draw from the strengths and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Creswell, 2015; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 14-15). Mixed methods are a "third research paradigm" that tries to create a bridge methodologically as well as scientifically between the epistemological and ontological basis of a quantitative approach and the epistemological and ontological basis of qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed method research is "generative and open, seeking richer,

deeper, better understanding of important facets of our infinitely complex social world", as Greene (2007: 20) puts it. As argued by Dörnyei (2007: 45) "[w]ords can be used to add meaning to numbers and numbers can be used to add precision to words". According to scholars who value a mixed method approach, sometimes confusingly also called a multi-method approach (Brannen, 2007), a purely qualitative or quantitative approach to research is not as different from a mixed method approach as they may first appear. According to Creswell (2014: 3):

> Qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be viewed as rigid, distinct categories, polar opposites, or dichotomies. Instead, they represent different ends on a continuum. […] Mixed methods research resides in the middle of this continuum because it incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

When mixing methods, the scholar integrates, links, combines and merges sequentially, so that the different datasets build on each other or are rooted within the other (Creswell & Clark, 2011: 5). The scholar will prioritise certain data that have significance when answering particular research questions as certain research questions can only be addressed with a mixed approach (Brannen, 2007). Just as a mixed approach may result in the development of a new hypothesis in a project as well as it might give the researcher the possibility to modify a research design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009: 266).

Creswell and Clark (2011), emphasise that the various procedures related to particular methodologies within qualitative and quantitative research are different, not just because they are either based on numbers and statistics or on the meanings that can be derived from, for instance, interviews, observations or documents, but also because these procedures are based "within [specific] philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses" (Creswell & Clark, 2011:

5). The concept of "triangulation" is used when scholars use different approaches to investigate different aspects of a phenomenon (Brannen, 2007: 281). In other words, a mixed methods design that triangulates different methodological approaches come in handy when each of the two approaches – qualitative and quantitative – are insufficient to investigate particular research questions (Clark & Creswell, 2008). If a scholar wants to generalise their findings, then a quantitative approach is relevant, whereas a qualitative approach is relevant if the scholar wishes to gain detailed knowledge of the meanings of individuals, actions or texts. And sometimes scholars work with topics that bridge both objectives.

However, there are also disadvantages to doing mixed methods research:

- It takes many resources to do proper, rigours qualitative *or* quantitative research, as both approaches are time consuming if conducted in a consistent and rigorous way (Creswell, 2014: 20-21).
- Most researchers still work with either qualitative or quantitative data, which means that many researchers "may not be convinced of or understand the value of mixed methods", as Creswell and Clark (2011: 15) argue.
- Some mixed method research that bridges quantitative and qualitative data may be harder to publish, not least because of the "positivist assumptions" in most quantitatively based research, which means that theory and methods are disconnected in the analytical work (Silverman, 2017: 207).

The problem is that "the phenomenon under study is not the same across methods. Not only does cross-validation and complementarity in the above context violate paradigmatic assumptions, but it also misrepresents data" (Sale et al., 2002: 49). Although many researchers have tried to work out project designs that accommodate this type of

epistemologically and ontologically based critique of how to combine different research methods (Bryman, 2006: 99), much literature within the qualitative paradigm stays critical. Scholars argue, for instance, that project designs end up being "unnecessarily complicated" with a "myriad of designs" or conversely "too simplistic". Mixed method research does not "represent [a] consistent system" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009: 267), as mixed method designs do not fully grasp the difference between paradigms (Sale et al., 2002: 49), that is, the fundamental difference between a positivist-inspired quantitative approach and an interpretive-inspired qualitative approach (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020).

Silverman's scepticism towards a mixed method approach is additionally centred on the superficial approach to data. According to him, combining different kinds of data usually means that the dataset is not sufficiently analysed:

> Mixed methods are often adopted in the mistaken hope that they will reveal 'the whole picture'. But for Constructionists this 'whole picture' is an illusion which speedily leads to scrappy research based on under-analysed data and an imprecise or theoretically indigestible research problem. […] It is usually far better to celebrate the partiality of your data and delight in the particular phenomenon that it allows you to inspect (hopefully in detail) (Silverman, 2020: 413).

Analysing a single dataset takes time, skills and resources, which means that analysing several datasets may be too big an assignment for the researcher, leading to parts of the dataset being under-analysed. As he argues, "You will also need to avoid the temptation to move to another dataset when you are having difficulties in analysing one set of material" (Silverman, 2020: 416). Furthermore, documents and interviews are responses composed for different audiences, which makes it difficult to compare such different methodologies

(Silverman, 2017: 209). However, regardless of these deficiencies, there are good reasons for mixing data as well – it all depends on what you are trying to find out (Silverman, 2017: 9). Silverman (2017) elaborates: "There are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working" (Silverman, 2017: 195). For a fruitful example of mixed methods research, see Koppel and Telles, this volume.

MULTUMETHOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Researchers mostly define mixed methods as the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods within the same study. However, research that combines methods *within* either qualitatively or quantitatively based studies, are usually termed *multimethod research*. In other words, uniting different methodological approaches can take two forms:

- as a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., a survey and open-ended interviews), that is, mixed method research
- as a combination of various qualitative methods (e.g., interviews and observations), that is, multimethod research (Silverman, 2020: 402).

It is the latter that is key in this chapter, where the goal is to emphasise the advantages of combining different qualitative methods in order to investigate the multiplicity and the contingency of the social world (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006).

Using different qualitative methods, all based on the same epistemological perspective (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012), may strengthen the quality of the research, as different methods allow for different angles and nuances to be visible (Essén & Sauder, 2017; Krølner et al. 2014; Tierney et al., 2019). Some argue that using different qualitative

methodological approaches provide knowledge that otherwise is inaccessible to the researcher (Frederiksen et al., 2014), which is why some scholars see "research designs that include multiple research strategies [as] the strongest ones" (Esterberg, 2002: 37).

Conducting multimethod qualitative research covers a broad range of methodologies. For example, the widely used methods of qualitative interviews can take the form of an individual interview, a focus group interview or an online interview, to name a few. Similarly, observational research covers a range of possibilities, from on-site participant observations, observation through video- or audio-recording, online observations, etc. (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020: 10-16). This chapter does not include all possible combinations of qualitative methods. Instead, I focus on the most common combinations, that is, combining interviews with observations and/or documents (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

Combining interviews, observations and document analysis

It is common to combine interview studies with various types of observation methodologies and analysis of documents. In my most recent research on homelessness, this combination was the rule rather than the exception when viewing colleagues' research on homelessness in a range of international metropolises (e.g., Marvasti, 2002; Osborne, 2018; Patterson et al., 2012). When scholars emphasise the quality of combining different qualitative methods they mostly argue that a combination of methods provides a "richer" account (Sade-Beck, 2004: 50), "deepen understanding", (Tierney et al., 2019), offers a stronger "trustworthiness" (Abramovich, 2017: 1486), or a "better […] unbiased" analysis (Kerins et al., 2019: 6-7).

However, the criteria for measuring whether an analysis is richer, deeper, more trustworthy, better, etc. are very different. Teachman and Gibson's (2018) integrated visual observations from the internet with dialogical interviews sought to include "multiple perspectives […] afforded by each type of data" in order to conduct an interpretation that

could take the complexity of the social world into account – which interviews alone would not allow (Teachman & Gibson, 2018: 7).

Pratesi's (2012) qualitative study of the felt and lived experience of parenting of same-sex parents combined face-to-face in-depth interviews with conversations and online-interviews, as well as with participant observation data and data extracted from diaries. According to Pratesi (2012: 96) this diverse dataset ensured that the analysis did not result in "arbitrary" findings. Where in-depth interviews may be a good starting point, Pratesi (2012) argues that a broader ethnographic "immersion" in the studied phenomenon complemented the interview data with valuable insights that could not have been gained otherwise (Pratesi, 2012: 96).

Sade-Beck (2004) uses the same mode of reasoning, when she argues that her ethnographic internet data must be supplemented with offline interviews so that she does not end up with "only a partial and limited picture without a link to the 'real world'" (Sade-Beck, 2004: 48). If internet research is not united with methodological approaches of the real world (real life interviews, on site observations etc.), then there is a danger that the findings gathered from the internet only applies to the sites themselves, which is why Sade-Beck (2004: 50) suggests "integrated methodologies".

Similarly, scholars emphasise the advantages of combining interviews and focus groups with photos and diaries (spoken and written), in order to provide a more complete picture of the researched phenomenon (Darbyshire et al., 2005; Gibson et al., 2013; McDonnell et al., 2017). Photos bring attention to themes that may not come up in interviews and provide a situation of "co-analysis", where the interviewer can learn from the participants (Gibson et al., 2013: 387).

Interviews and diaries differ in relation to the timeframe, as diaries provide longitudinal insights, whereas interviews provide situational insights. These two methods also

bring nuances to the dataset in other ways, as interviewing is a context in which the scholar is present, whereas data from diaries is a different context as the researcher was not present. McDonnell and colleagues (2017) furthermore mention "mode", as a diary is a data source that is written, whereas interview data is spoken (McDonnell et al., 2017). The key point for them is that data should represent as many nuances as possible.

Although the literature presents a wide range of arguments for why a multimethod qualitative design is preferable to a single methodological approach, there seems to be two overall considerations among scholars when arguing for the advantages of a multimethod approach:

- To find out what is really at stake in the "real world" they are investigating; a world that supposedly is separated from themselves and their bias.
- To collect as many voices and features from the participants' social worlds as possible, so that the analysis can be as multifaceted as possible and, hence, in compliance with the social world that is complex and multi-layered.

The former fits best with a more positivistic or realistic approach to research, whereas the latter is supported by a more constructionist approach to research (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020; Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

This objective of presenting an analysis that reflects the "real world" (or "the whole picture" according to Silverman's (2020) critique) can be problematised within a constructivist framework that emphasises the context and various perspectives in research (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020). I support this critique and it follows that the reason I suggest we conduct multimethod research is not to get closer to a real world nor to be able to present a more complete picture of the phenomenon that we investigate. In my case, the reason for

conducting multimethod research – a time-consuming and labour-intensive endeavour (McDonnell et al., 2017; Pratesi, 2012) – is that combining interviews with observations (and to some extent documents as well) enables me to develop a more sensitising approach.

I agree with McDonnell and colleagues (2017: 533) when they state that the choice of a single method or multiple methods is not (only) about whether research will provide a "fuller or a more rounded picture of participants' lives" as it has to do with giving participants agency. They suggest letting participants choose the methods that are right for them, rather than them having to follow a certain "methodological rule" (McDonnell et al., 2017: 533).

My position is slightly different. My reason for combining field notes with interviews or observations with interviews etc. reflects my wish to incorporate the participants' verbal reflections on their situation, so that their reflections will be part of my reasoning when analysing data. Similarly, I often consult the legal framework of relevance for my research topic as this framework is often known by my participants, which is why I assume that they react and engage with each other with the legal aspects in mind – even in the situation where they do not explicitly discuss the law, simply because its regulation is too obvious for the participants.

It is as important not to overstate external factors in an analysis of people's interaction as it is not to understate the expert knowledge of participants when they meet in real life. And one way of levelling with the participants in a research project is to try to get to know as much about their lives as possible – by talking with them and consulting the documents they consult – and use this knowledge reflectively in the process of analysis.

Preferably, I want to give the participants the possibility to voice their situation, knowing fully that their utterances will be part of my analytical work (Rabinow, 1986). However, even so, the possibility to voice your situation is agency as I see it. Their verbal

expressions can be obtained by using naturalistic data (Luff & Heath, 2012) by audio- or video-recording meetings in which they participate, or their verbal reflections can be obtained in interviews. However, what is essential when deciding on which design to use, is what you want to find out. In that sense, I fully agree with Silverman, when he explains that "[t]here are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working" (Silverman, 2017: 195).

MULTIMETHOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: THE CASES OF DISABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS

In my research, I often employ a multimethod approach and combine interviews with audio- or video-recorded observations of real-life encounters, participant observations as well as key documents such as legislation, organisational scoring schemas, etc. My research field concerns the negotiation of identities in various organisational settings. My two latest projects are about what it means to have a visible disability, cerebral palsy, in work organisations (Mik-Meyer, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017) and how service providers and homeless individuals negotiate homelessness in placement meetings in Danish shelters (Mik-Meyer, 2020a; Mik-Meyer & Haugaard, 2019; Mik-Meyer & Silverman, 2019).

The study of identity work in organisations is best suited for qualitative methodologies, such as observation methodologies and interviewing. The purpose of scholars examining identity work in organisations is to shed light on the way in which context, that is, a broad range of organisational factors, affects identity processes. Research questions aiming at examining how particular identities are embedded with the organisational context falls within a constructionist approach. The strength of a constructionist approach is exactly the emphasis on how the setting in which people meet affects their actions, interactions and perceptions of each other. Within constructionism, theory and methods are not seen as

separate units in an analysis. The assumption in constructionism is that theory affects all parts of a research project, from developing the research question, interview guide, focus of observations as well as choice of strategy to analyse the data, and so forth (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

My constructionist approach derives from a number of sources:

- Symbolic interactionism since this tradition puts the interaction between individuals and their negotiation of meaning at the centre of the analysis. Meaning is made up of social products "that are formed in and through defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, 1969: 5). The attention of the researcher is both on verbal and nonverbal actions and on the contextual factors affecting these actions.
    - Including in particular the work of Goffman on face-work, presentation of self, etc. (e.g., 1990b, 1990a) as well as more contemporary work on the way that institutional identities develop in different organisational settings (e.g., Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, 2001; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).
- Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis. The strength of a discourse analysis approach is the explicit focus of this theory on power and the way that dominant discourses create certain understandings of social problems (Hacking, 1999, 2004; Jenkins, 2008; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2012).

Common to these research traditions, is that they examine a given socio-political problem in its context or discourse. This means that they take a critical position towards socio-political categories that for policy makers, professionals and lay persons seem "natural" and "obvious", such as the idea that a disability or being homeless is the dominant identity for "disabled employees" or "homeless individuals". Symbolic interactionism and discourse

analysis assume that identity markers – homelessness and disability – reflect a *certain* historical and practical socio-political context or discourse and, hence, that the identity markers would be different if the socio-political contexts were different. The power of individuals and institutions are measured against their ability to stabilise certain identities. Consequently, the goal of research is to uncover the work of power in these identity processes.

The combination of a symbolic interactionist approach with a discourse analytical approach enables an analysis of what the dominating discourse in a given organisation is, how people engage within this setting, as well as how the various actors negotiate, conform and manage within this frame. A discourse analytical approach guides the researcher towards the power, ambiguity, precariousness and the conflicts of interests that characterise dominating discourses. A symbolic interactionist approach guides the researcher to investigate what the participants actually do and how they deal with the power, ambiguity, precariousness and conflicts of interests by focusing on concrete (speech) acts, interactional bodily dynamics, and spontaneous stories during interviews, etc.

So, when examining identity processes, observational data such as audio- or video-recordings of naturalistic encounters etc. are optimal data (Heath et al., 2010). However, other types of data are relevant in addition to this. Documents such as legislation that regulates the field under investigation, organisational scoring schemas guiding professional work (Mik-Meyer, 2018) as well as other documents may be relevant [see Jacobssen, this volume]. Furthermore, conducting open-ended interviews with the participants will provide information on how they interpret their own as well as their co-participants' actions. Open-ended interviews with few interruptions by the interviewer may lead to spontaneous talk by the interviewee that may provide a valuable insight in dominating perceptions of a field.

When I investigate identity processes – that is, the way employees with a disability are "othered" in relations to able-bodied colleagues, or the ambiguity in the field of homelessness – I use a combination of different methodological approaches that are all based on a constructionist paradigm (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

Negotiating disability[2]

In 2012-2013, I did an ethnographic study of how the disability of employees with cerebral palsy affected their work relations with able-bodied colleagues and managers (Mik-Meyer, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017)[3]. After conducting participant observations in two workplaces, where employees with cerebral palsy worked, it was clear that most able-bodied employees did not want to talk about how the disability of their colleague affected work relations, even though it was clear that the disability of their colleague had a profound effect. This observation made me adopt a more passive role than what I would normally do in the scheduled interview situations, allowing them to talk about the disability of their colleague without too many leading questions from me. Furthermore, reading documents from the participating workplaces made it clear that inclusion and tolerance were key concepts of the work organisations. An assumption on my part was therefore that talking about the disability of their colleague could be perceived as an intolerant and non-inclusive behaviour. Perhaps able-bodied colleagues wanted to appear as the "same and equal" to the co-worker with a disability in order to avoid being seen as an intolerant and non-inclusive person (Mik-Meyer, 2017).

[2] The research project was supported by Elsass Foundation (grant number 4677).

[3] Please consult the referenced publications for an elaborated presentation of ethics. Very briefly explained, I first contacted the participating employees with a disability, who then suggested which colleagues and managers to interview. The participants could withdraw at any moment and was told so when signing up and before and after the audio-recording of the interviews. Everyone participated anonymously.

Another article from this study investigated able-bodied colleagues' "spontaneous stories" of what it meant to be different from their co-workers (to be "othered"). Spontaneous stories are stories that are not spurred by my questions but are developed by the interview person alone (knowing, of course, that it is told to an interviewer). Spontaneous stories became key in my study, as they turned out to comprise of an underlying, intrinsic dynamic that the interviewer would not have been able to directly ask about. In other words, it was my on-site observations and reading of key documents of the work organisations that had made me aware of this key feature of not wanting to talk explicitly and unequivocally about having a disability on these workplaces. My analysis suggested that this ambiguity was a result of the able-bodied colleagues not risking being seen as an intolerant and non-inclusive person. The ambiguity had a great impact on the relationship between able-bodied employees and colleagues with a disability.

The spontaneous stories in interviews gave a valuable insight into how able-bodied colleagues perceived their colleague with a disability. So, based on my on-site observations of the resistance to talk about the role of having a disability in a direct manner and based on reading the work organisations' documents on "who they were" and what was key values in the work place, it became clear that I needed to adopt a more passive interview role with room for long pauses for the interviewees themselves to spontaneously think of something to say. My article "Othering, ableism and disability: a discursive analysis of co-workers' construction of colleagues with visible impairments" focuses on these spontaneous stories.

In the same study, my preliminary participant observation also spurred an interest in caring relations. Care was a recurring phenomenon in the everyday work-life in the two workplaces I observed. In everyday encounters, the special position occupied by the employee with cerebral palsy quickly became obvious. Participants would approach their colleague with a disability using a louder voice, with an extraordinary encouraging and

smiling attitude, using their colleague's first name repeatedly, and asking about his or her private life in ways they did not do with other colleagues. In the interviews, the able-bodied managers and co-workers repeatedly spoke about their colleague with a disability in terms of a "care relationship" (without being prompted to do so). The concept of care here refers to all situations and statements in which the participants displayed a form of caring contact, or used terms such as "pay special attention", "taking care of", "supporting", "protecting", "looking after", as well as examples of using nicknames pointing to people in need of care ("bear cub", "pet"). The special attention to the colleague with a disability necessitated a closer look at this phenomenon and – once more – it was my observations that made me search for this phenomenon of care in my interviews (Mik-Meyer, 2020b: 58)[4].

In addition to participant observation notes and audio-recorded interviews, this project's dataset furthermore included audio-recorded conversations conducted in my car. In the two-week-period where I drove to and from one of the participating workplaces (2x30 minutes daily) I had the company of one of the participants with a disability. He had invited me to join him at work, and I gave him a lift both ways each day. We talked informally in my car and these conversations gave me a qualified perception of what it meant for him to have a disability at this particular workplace. These informal, but recorded, car conversations gave valuable insights into how he interpreted the role of his disability as an employee and how a caring relationship was experienced, seen from his perspective. Other informal conversations with study participants, as well as participant observations in another work organisation, additionally spurred my interest in gender issues, as the caring approach to the employees with disabilities turned out to be a gendered phenomenon as well. Searching for gender issues in the interviews resulted in a third paper on the ambiguity that rose from being treated stereotypically as a woman although most participants were men (see Mik-Meyer, 2015).

[4] Section copied with the permission from SAGE.

Negotiating homelessness[5]

In 2018-2019, I did an ethnographic study of how homelessness was negotiated in 23 placement meetings at three Danish shelters (Mik-Meyer, 2020a; Mik-Meyer & Haugaard, 2019; Mik-Meyer & Silverman, 2019)[6]. In the project, my prior knowledge of the ambiguity defining the area of homelessness was pivotal for the analytical work. I got this knowledge from reading the legislation concerning homelessness, from analysing organisational scoring schemas (Mik-Meyer, 2018) as well as from my visits at shelters and – importantly – my interviews with staff and the homeless participants. However, the key data of my analysis in most of my publications from this research project is the 23 video-recorded placement meetings (mostly conducted without my participation). However, the analysis of the 23 video-recorded placement meetings were affected by my knowledge of the field, stemming from analysis of key documents as well as from my interviews with all of the members participating in the placement meetings.

A central dilemma at Danish shelters is that a stay should not be too homely and pleasant for the clients and so they want to leave. On the other hand, most staff members do not believe it would be morally justifiable to work in a shelter that clients dislike. This dilemma is related to a central question for the staff: Are the clients capable of living on their own and taking care of themselves, or are they so heavily burdened with problems that living independently becomes an unrealistic goal? (explained to me in interviews). The video recordings showed this dilemma. Often, the social workers addressed the clients' aspiration to engage in daily activities and follow the requirements of the shelter. They focused on the will

[5] The research project was supported by Independent Research Fund Denmark (grant number 701500081B).
[6] Please consult the referenced publications for an elaborated presentation of ethics. Very briefly explained, I contacted shelter managers first (as a direct contact to the homeless individuals would not be a legal approach). Hereafter, the managers contacted staff at their shelters that recruited the homeless persons. The participants could withdraw at any moment and was told at all occasions: when signing up, before and after the audio-recorded interview and the video-recording of the placement meeting. Everyone participated anonymously.

of the clients to change their life, take responsibility, and engage in a process of change. However, the clients' everyday actions indicated that they often could not live up to the organisational sanctioned demands and requests of staff. Thus, staff would have liked that the clients had all these positive qualities that the activities in the facilities demand of clients. Moreover, clients preferred to focus on the structural problems related to their situation: lack of housing, money, and so on. Another dilemma related to housing shortage. In homeless shelters, staff must find affordable housing for the homeless individuals, but the task is challenging. Just like other larger cities in Europe, apartments and rooms in most Danish cities are too expensive for clients living off social welfare (documented in policy reports, etc. and explained to me in interviews). In addition, there is typically a year-long waiting list for the few available apartments/rooms that clients can afford (section copied from Mik-Meyer, 2020a, in press).

In this case, video data of real-life placement meetings were key in order to investigate the negotiation of the organisational dilemmas related to homelessness. However, an analysis based on the video data alone would have had significant shortcomings, as the knowledge gained from the supplementing interviews, the analysis of law texts, key documents in the shelters (e.g. organisational scoring schemas) etc. provided me with an understanding of the dilemmas and ambiguity defining the area of homelessness. The video-recordings did not display explicitly and unequivocally the contrary expectations of a stay at a shelter, the recordings did not show that it was the legal framework that were often the base of the staff's approach to the clients, nor did the video-recordings display the rules and procedures of the municipalities that had to solve the housing problems, and so forth. However, using knowledge gained from interviews and documents when analysing the identity work in placement meetings added valuable insight into the dilemmas the participants had to "solve" in these encounters. Supplementing the video-data with interviews

with staff and homeless individuals and reading a diverse range of policy and legal documents provided me with knowledge of relevance for supplementing my analysis of what happened in the recorded interactions.

CONCLUSION

The chapter opened by outlining the advantages and potential drawbacks when using a mixed method approach (combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies) or a multimethod qualitative approach (combining different qualitative methodologies). The focus of the chapter has been the multimethod qualitative research approach, which comprises a wide range of methodologies. Interviewing, for instance, can be conducted face-to-face, online, in groups, informally in a car, and so on. Similarly, observations can be performed on-site, as audio- or video-recordings of real-life events, etc. Document analysis is a methodology that includes policy documents, diaries, patient journals, organisational scoring schemas, legislation, and so forth. The point is that there is a myriad of different variations of interviewing, observing and conducting document analysis. The choice of combination rests on the research question to be answered.

I have presented two cases from my own research, where I combine different qualitative methodologies that are based in a constructionist approach to social research. Although, I find a multimethod qualitative approach suitable for investigating the broad research field of how identities are negotiated in organisations, I have reservations as well. Firstly, scholars need a sufficient level of expertise with the different methodological approaches before deciding on a research design that combines several. So, multimethod qualitative research is a safer choice for experienced researchers than for junior scholars with limited experience.

In that respect, I fully agree with the warning notes presented by Silverman (2014, 2017, 2020). He argues that a researcher must have sufficient time and resources to gather and analyse multiple datasets if they do not want to risk doing a superficial analysis. Doing a proper and rigorous analysis is indeed a time-consuming process. The researcher needs to think about the role of the audience of different methods. Talking to an interviewer is different from writing a document for a political audience – and proper analysis takes such consideration into the analytical work. Documents are constructions (Prior, 2003) just like interviews and observations. Often, researchers choose to combine different qualitative methods to achieve a fuller picture, as I discussed in the chapter. Nevertheless, it is fair to consider whether there is "such a thing as an 'overall picture' of a phenomenon?", as Silverman (2020: 410) asks.

All this said and building on my own experience, there is much gained when combining different qualitative methodologies, if the argument for combining the different methods rests on your research question and if you base the different methodological approaches in the same paradigm.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The chapter provides an overview of the pros and cons of conducting mixed method research and multimethod qualitative research. This discussion is based on a comprehensive literature review.
- Based on previous research, the chapter presents and discusses previous research that combines interviews, observations and document analysis.
- The chapter presents examples from a research project on homelessness. It discusses the advantages of combining video-recorded naturalistic data with interviews and analysis of key documents.

- The chapter presents examples from a research project on the negotiation of disability in work organisations. It discusses the advantages of combining audio-recorded interviews and informal conversations with participant observation and analysis of key documents.
- The chapter sums up and lists key reservations of conducting multimethod qualitative research.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Books and texts that discuss pros and cons of combining different methodologies in social science have never been more prudent than now. With the internet, and the strengthened creativity of researchers, we are experiencing a great expansion of methodologies that are combined in qualitative research today. In relation to the digital development of society, concepts such as online ethnography, virtual ethnography, netnography, social media ethnography, digital ethnography etc. emphasise the way that social life changes these years. This digitalisation of the social world demands that qualitative researchers expand their knowledge of pros and cons of combining different methodological approaches.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between mixed methods research and multimethod research?
- What is the difference between the concepts of “method” and “methodologies”?
- What are the advantages of using a multimethod qualitative research design?
- What difficulties and disadvantages should you be aware of when conducting a multimethod qualitative research design?

- Give an example of a research question that would benefit from a multimethod qualitative research design and discuss why a multimethod qualitative research design is beneficial.
- List reservations of combining different methodologies in a research project, discuss all difficulties such an approach may result in.

RECOMMENDED READING

Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London: Routledge.

This book focuses on the classical debate about quantitative and qualitative research and the merits and disadvantages of the two styles of inquiry. The book stresses that the difference between the two approaches is not just technical but concerns philosophical issues as well. This focus is particularly emphasised in qualitative research.

Creswell, J. W. (2015). *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

This book introduces mixed methods research by taking the reader through the essential steps in planning and designing a study. The book stresses the combination of different *methods* (and not methodologies) by emphasising data collection, analysis and the process of interpretation.

Justesen, L., & Mik-Meyer, N. (2012). *Qualitative Research Methods in Organisation Studies*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

This book discusses interviews, focus groups, participants and documents in relation to three theoretical perspectives – realism, phenomenology, and constructivism – and provides the

reader with a more qualified understanding of the epistemological and ontological base of typical qualitative methods.

Järvinen, M., & Mik-Meyer, N. (2020). (Eds.) *Qualitative Analysis: Eight approaches for the social sciences*. London: SAGE Publications.

This book introduces eight qualitative analytical approaches in social science research. All chapters use different methodological approaches. Each of the chapter's empirical analysis *shows how* to conduct qualitative analysis rather than *telling how* an analysis can be carried out.

Silverman, D. (2014). *A very short, fairly interesting, quite cheap book about qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications.

This book is an informal and handy book about the broader issues of qualitative research. Based in studies of qualitative research that use very different datasets, the book emphasises that good research can be methodologically inventive, empirically rigorous, theoretically alive and practice-oriented.

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