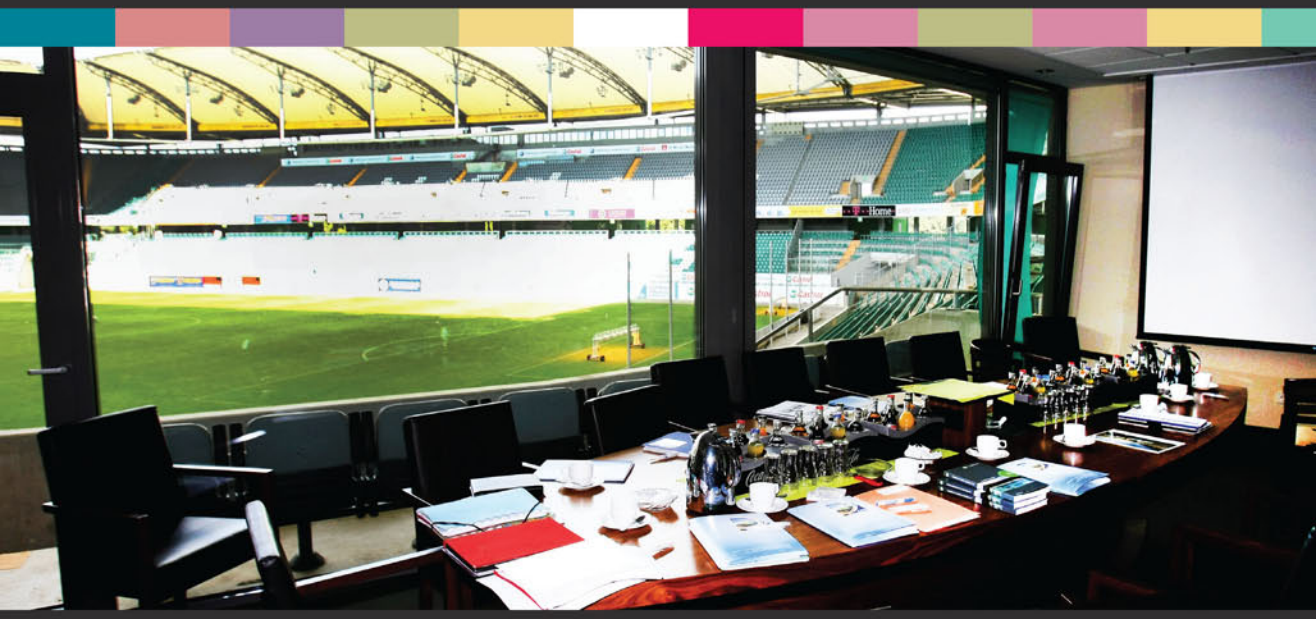
FOUNDATIONS OF SPORT MANAGEMENT

RESEARCH METHODS FOR SPORT MANAGEMENT



JAMES SKINNER, ALLAN EDWARDS AND BEN CORBETT

ROUTLEDGE

Research Methods for Sport Management

Research methods courses have become a compulsory component of most degree programmes in sport management. This is the first introductory research methods textbook to focus exclusively on sport management. Through the use of examples, cases and data taken from the real world of sport management it opens up a traditionally dry area of study, helping the student to understand the vital importance of sound methodology in their studies and subsequent professional practice.

The book covers the full range of quantitative and qualitative methods across the whole span of the research process, from research design and the literature review to data analysis and report writing. Every chapter contains a range of useful features to aid student learning, including summaries, discussion questions and guides to further resources, as well as examples drawn from contemporary sport around the world. *Research Methods for Sport Management* is an essential course text for all sport management students and an invaluable reference for any sport management professional involved in operational research.

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Foundations of Sport Management

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Foundations of Sport Management is a discipline-defining series of texts on core and cutting-edge topics in sport management. Featuring some of the best known and most influential sport management scholars from around the world, each volume represents an authoritative, engaging and self-contained introduction to a key functional area or issue within contemporary sport management. Packed with useful features to aid teaching and learning, the series aims to bridge the gap between management theory and practice and to encourage critical thinking and reflection among students, academics and practitioners.

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Research Methods for Sport Management
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Abbreviations

ABA	American Basketball Association
ANCOVA	analysis of covariance
ANOVA	analysis of variance
APA	American Psychological Association
AR	Action Research
ARU	Australian Rugby Union
AWS	Amazon Web Services
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CA	conversation analysis
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis
CDA	critical discourse analysis
CLS	critical legal studies
CMC	computer mediated communication
CRT	critical race theory
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DA	discourse analysis
DV	dependent variable
EAR	Emancipatory Action Research
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network
FIFA	Federation of International Football Association
GT	grounded theory
ICC	International Cricket Council
IRB	International Rugby board
IRC	Internet relay chat
IV	independent variable
KIM	knowledge and information management
LIFE	Leisure Involvement For Everyone
MANOVA	multivariate analysis of variance
MCD	membership categorization device
NASCAR	National Association of Stock Car Racing
NBA	National Basketball Association

NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NFL	National Football League
NOOC	naturally occurring online community
ORC	online research community
PAAS	Participant authored audiovisual stories
PAR	Participatory Action Research
QDA	qualitative data analysis
QRU	Queensland Rugby Union
RSS	Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary
SCR	surf company representatives
SFS	sponsored female surfers
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Services
SRP	standarized relational pairs
WNBA	Women's National Basketball Association

Part 1

Overview of the Sport Management Research process

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Chapter 1

Basic principles of Sport Management Research

WHAT IS SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH?

Sport managers strive for organizational improvement and this requires an ability to identify problems, to address these and search for potential solutions. To achieve this, sport managers can spend a great deal of time evaluating other people's research, deciding what the strengths and weaknesses are in each case, and hoping to apply their conclusions to their own reading and to the procedures they follow in their research. The world of sport, however, poses many unique and novel problems that are not experienced in business, government or charity work – for example very few managers will ever deal with an employee who can prove they are the best in the world at their job. As such, sport managers, perhaps even more than other types of manager, need to look carefully at the claims of others, judging for themselves whether or not those claims are convincing and reliable. To do that, they need to understand the process by which other researchers have come to their conclusions, and this means understanding both their methodologies and the intellectual frameworks within which they have operated.

In this book the concept of research means the systematic *collection*, *analysis* and *interpretation of data to answer a certain question or solve a problem*. All the italicized words attach specific meaning in the steps of actually developing and executing a research project. At its basic level, research is a way of investigating problems with the aim of finding solutions to those problems, or at least raising questions and issues that future researchers will investigate. The same is true of Sport Management Research, which devises questions relating to specific problems or issues in the field, and then devises methods by which these problems or issues can be answered (or at least better understood). This process is important because it can add knowledge about sport management issues, improve sport management practices, inform sport management policy issues and become a catalyst for complex thinking, informed communication and toleration for competing paradoxes.

WHAT MAKES SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH DIFFERENT?

Sport management is a nexus. The discipline was rooted and grown in university Health or Exercise Science departments that saw the need to study and educate 'sport people' in sport organization governance (i.e. the management of high performance development systems and

grassroots club participation). As sport management expanded, alliances with business researchers and courses became more common to the point that business schools began to offer a sport management degree. There are numerous universities that offer a sport management degree, yet it continues to spread across business and health schools, highlighting the interdisciplinary connection.

As Smith and Stewart (2010) described, sport has been divided between two opposite viewpoints, but actually lies somewhere in the middle:

> At one extreme, sport is viewed as a unique cultural institution with a host of special features wherein the reflexive application of standard business practices not only produces poor management decision making, but also erodes its rich history, emotional connections, tribal links, and social relevance. At the other extreme, sport is seen to be nothing more than just another generic business enterprise subject to the usual government regulations, market pressures and customer demands, and is best managed by the application of standard business tools that assist the planning, finance, human resource management and marketing functions. (p. 1)

It is not hard to suggest from this statement that the sport purists (born in the Health Science Schools) side with the first extreme, and the management purists (born in Business Schools) side with the second extreme. The truth does lie in the middle, with theory and research frameworks from health and business borrowed, adapted or amalgamated in the study of sport issues.

The convergence of disciplines occurs not just between health and business schools, but also within the business school disciplines. Economics, marketing, strategy, finance, organizational behaviour, sustainability, human resources, law and politics to mention some, are all topics a sport management researcher can both simultaneously apply to existing business theory and diverge within a unique sport context. While sport often, and more frequently, operates in a business setting, there are significant theoretical and practical variations that require a sport management researcher to alter traditional business viewpoints. For example, can a model designed to explore marketing practices to business 'customers' easily transition to study sport 'fans'? The sport management discipline offers researchers a wide variety of business studies within the inimitable and complex contexts of sport. Smith and Stewart (2010) noted the following special features of sport that separate it from institutionalized business principles:

- the fusion of loyalty, identification and irrational optimism;
- the tension between winning and profit-making;
- transforming the sport-field into a workplace;
- the dilemma of corporate sport;
- the need to balance variable quality against competitive balance;
- the crucial importance of setting up structures for collaborative behaviour among competing interests;
- supply chain restrictions (i.e. on-field performance);
- managing the fishbowl-experience of players;

- managing players as income earning assets;
- the confounding influence of league structures.

Finally, sport management offers a connection to other disciplines, such as tourism, entertainment and leisure. The globalization of sport and the continued rise of mega-sport events affects tourism, and the principles of tourism can be applied to sport tourists – whether it be direct and indirect tourism, triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental) impacts or the legacy left by showcasing host regions. Sports have always been entertainment for the masses, competing against other forms of arts, music and films. However, they also converge closer than ever in the new millennium with sport often combining with other entertainment options to leverage additional viewers. Entertainment is a form of leisure, but the connections to leisure extend further, and range from spectatorship to community sport participation.

WHY DO SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH?

Research and reflection are essential in any discipline if that discipline is to grow in a positive and beneficial way. Thomas, Nelson and Silverman (2005) asserted:

> one of the primary distinctions between a discipline or profession and trade is that the trade deals only with how to deal with something, whereas the discipline or profession concerns itself not only with how but also with why something should be done in a certain manner and why it should even be done (p. 6).

The same authors go on to discuss some of the problems associated with research and its applicability to practitioners and professionals in sport management: problems directly affecting Sport Management Research and sport management practitioners. In particular, they discuss the language and jargon of research, which can be at times too technical, too unfamiliar and, dare we say, too 'academic'. Additionally, practitioners may not always see the relevance to the work they are actually undertaking. These are all concerns that the sport management researcher should heed before embarking on their research project. They should ask some important questions of themselves: Is this topic relevant? Who will benefit from this research? If the answers to these questions are that the topic is of relevance only to the researcher, and the researcher her/himself is the primary beneficiary of the research outcome, then serious consideration should be given before proceeding down this particular path.

Sport Management Research can add important information to the discipline's knowledge base. Such information, where relevant, can be drawn on by other researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and even other stakeholders such as club members, athletes, fans, existing and potential sponsors, advertisers, marketers and any other interested member of the general public. For the researcher, a particular research study may be on a topic or issue previously ignored, or perhaps on a 'new' topic that had never been considered before. The research may also build on previous research studies, providing results to confirm or extend the previous study, or even to question its findings. This is true of any academic discipline and sport management is no exception. A research report might provide a study that has not been

conducted and thereby fill a void in existing knowledge. It can also provide additional results to confirm or disconfirm results of prior studies.

Research can assist in advancing organizational practices through suggesting new ideas to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiencies. It can help practitioners evaluate approaches that they hope will work in their own management settings and at a broader level create relationships between sport managers who may be trying out similar ideas in different locations. Research also informs conversations, for example by influential policy makers, which might directly impact on sport managers. For example, policy decisions relating to drugs in sport or the funding of youth sport in deprived areas. Research can help the policy makers weigh up various perspectives and make informed decisions: decisions that therefore should be fair, contextualized, responsible and (hopefully) effective.

TRENDS IN SPORT MANAGEMENT

We have set forth what makes Sport Management Research different and the reasons for conducting Sport Management Research. But what are the current trends in sport management that a future researcher has the opportunity to study? Some broad environmental trends have opened research opportunities to many of the same disciplines we discussed above, and include technological advancements, commercialization and globalization. Each of these trends affects sport, and often in different ways than in business or health. In addition, each trend compounds with the others creating a complex web of pressures for change.

Technological advancements have made the quantity and quality of sport engagement swell. It is easier than ever (and will continue to get easier) to watch sport on television, computers and mobile devices. This has led to a global audience for many sport teams and leagues, increasing the commercialization of these properties. Fan engagement via the Internet, especially on social media websites, provides an opportunity to build stronger relationships with a global audience and expand sponsorship sales. However, the global demand drives up player costs and broadcast rights fees – which are also increased because the quantity and quality of offsite spectating is reducing the growth rate in onsite spectating. Gate receipts, formerly the largest revenue generator for sports, have fallen behind broadcast rights as primary income for many top level leagues.

Globalization and technological advances are beginning to shift the balance of power from traditional commercialized sporting regions (i.e. North America, Europe) to largely populated regions (i.e. South America, Asia Pacific). The rise of the economically emerging BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) in the global sport market adds significant opportunity to develop sport. Mega-events are targeting these nations, with the International Olympic Committee recently awarding bids to China (Beijing, 2008), Russia (Sochi, 2014), and Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, 2016), and the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) awarding the World Cup bids to South Africa, 2010 and Brazil, 2014.

Technology, globalization, and commercialization may be the principal trends; however they are not the only trends affecting sport management. Researchers have the opportunity to study other trends, including modernization of sport organization governance, regulatory changes, innovative equipment and merchandizing, demographic changes (i.e. aging populations, change in employment patterns, increasing diversity), sport for development

and many more. More recently, the management of doping has been in the forefront of Sport Management Research.

TYPES OF SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

In this book we refer to two main types of research: *basic research* and *applied research*. These are, in effect the 'extremes' of the research continuum with basic research being at one end and applied research at the other, as their methods and applicability to the sport management practitioner are so diverse. In the field of sport management, research is generally not only basic or applied, but often a combination of both.

Basic research is theoretical in nature, and deals with theoretical problems. It looks to try and make sense of the world and the way in which the world operates. In general, the research takes place in a controlled setting such as a laboratory, but for the sport manager this could be an interview room or any other venue where the researcher can control the conditions under which the research takes place. In this situation, the results of research may have little direct application for the sports manager (i.e. a team manager or government health promoter). The research may yield important data for the researcher and other academics interested in the same theory or problem. However, the form in which the research is reported/conveyed, i.e. academic journals, and the types of data collected make it unlikely to be of direct relevance to a sport management setting. Applied research on the other hand takes place in the real world, or real world settings such as the sporting organization, and therefore, if undertaken well, can produce results that are relevant to the sport management practitioner and can be implemented back within the specific sporting organization to improve practice. Most Sport Management Research is neither purely applied nor purely basic, but incorporates some aspects of both.

The second way of classifying research projects involves looking at the distinctive methodological features of the research. These are: (1) organizational and design concerns such as whether or not the proposed research is exploratory or highly structured; and (2) the conceptual and theoretical frame of reference that will guide the research – that is, qualitative or quantitative research.

Manheim and Rich (1995) define *exploratory research* as:

> research intended only to provide greater familiarity with the phenomena one wants to investigate so that one can formulate more precise research questions and perhaps develop hypotheses. Such studies can be essential when a sport management researcher is investigating new phenomena or phenomena that have not been studied before (p. 89).

In contrast, *structured research* refers to a research process that follows a relatively familiar patterned arrangement. For example, in a structured study, the researcher organizes or *structures* what one is looking for according to a protocol that guides him/her in terms of 'What to look for, the order in which to make observations and the way to record the results' (p. 202).

As a future sport management researcher, it is necessary to understand the various types of research that exist as it can influence your research questions and your research design. When you have completed this text it will become clear how the type of research you engage with affects the way it can be interpreted, reported and utilized.

SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

To begin, we would argue that there is no one best research approach. The sport management researcher will determine which approach will be most effective for the resolution of their specific research question, and this is often determined by the nature of the question or topic being investigated. The research methodology chosen will generally be influenced by the philosophical beliefs of the researcher, as well as the resources available to conduct the research – including available participants and the research site. Undertaking research from a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods perspective affects the approach to the research process itself.

A quantitative approach to Sport Management Research

It has been suggested that quantitative approaches to Sport Management Research have historically dominated the discipline (Amis and Silk, 2005). Quantitative research is a type of research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects quantifiable data from participants, analyses these numbers using statistics and attempts to conduct the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner. Creswell (2008) sees three main features of quantitative research that are prevalent today:

- collecting and analysing information in a numeric form;
- collecting scores and then using them to measure the performance or attributes of individuals and organizations;
- procedures and processes by which groups are compared or by which factors common to individuals or groups are related through experiments, surveys, correlation studies and other methods. (p. 48)

In general terms, when employing this approach the researcher will look at trends or variables whose relationship can be defined in a quantifiable manner. For example, variables such as gender or age, and attitudes towards a specific type of behaviour such as illicit drug use in sport, or undesirable off-field behaviour, could be studied to determine whether there is a relationship between the two and whether one variable influences another.

A qualitative approach to Sport Management Research

Under qualitative research 'the researchers attempt to understand the behaviour and institutions by getting to know well the persons involved, their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs and their emotions' (Nachimas and Nachimas, 1992, p. 287). Qualitative research presents

an alternative to the traditional form of quantitative research. Creswell (2008) sees the current characteristics of qualitative research as:

- A recognition by researchers that they need to listen to the views of research participants;
- A recognition that researchers need to ask general, open questions and collect data in those places where people live and work;
- A recognition that research can advocate for change and better the lives of individuals. (p. 51)

Qualitative research has been constantly evolving, with the development of naturalistic inquiry, or constructivism, to emphasize the importance of the participant's view; to take into account the setting or context in which the participants expressed those views; and to look at the meanings that people assigned to different issues. During the 1980s and 1990s, types of qualitative research design emerged including case studies, grounded theory research and narrative inquiry, along with the emergence of qualitative computer software programs for data analysis – examples include NVivo and Qualysis.

In the 1990s and 2000s researchers have seen the emergence of participatory and advocacy practices in qualitative research, themes that express concern for the needs of individuals in lower social classes, racial groups and women. These themes called for researchers to report, as part of their research, their own personal biases, values and assumptions. It cast research into politics in which it considered the rights of women, gays, lesbians, racial groups and different classes in our society – all traditionally under-represented in mainstream sport – and honoured different viewpoints during both the writing and the reading of qualitative reports. It also spoke about qualitative data collection procedures in which inquirers were sensitive to participants, actively collaborated with them (rather than studying them) and respected the dignity of each individual who offered data for research.

A mixed method approach to Sport Management Research

With the mixed method approach, the sport management researcher decides to collect both quantitative data (quantifiable data) as well as qualitative data (images, interviews, stories). This is not merely a process of collecting two distinct types of data – quantitative and qualitative – the researcher needs to merge, integrate, link or embed both separate types of data.

One form of mixed method design that can be successfully utilized by the sport management researcher is *triangulation mixed methods*. In a *triangulation* study the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, analyses both datasets separately, compares the results from the analysis of both datasets, and makes an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other. The direct comparison of the two data sets by the researcher provides a more reliable perspective on the problem being studied: a 'triangulation' of data sources.

The strength of this design is that it combines the advantages of each form of data – i.e. quantitative data provides for generalizability whereas the qualitative data offers information about the context or setting. This design enables a researcher to gather information that uses the best features of both quantitative and qualitative data collection. It can be difficult, however,

to transform one form of data into the other form in order to integrate and compare data. Additionally, even if integration of the data is possible, inconsistent results may emerge, making it necessary to collect additional data or revisit the collected databases to reconcile the differences.

What the above discussion indicates is that as a potential sport management researcher there are a number of methodologies and approaches that you can choose to employ. Before you can do this, however, you need to have a sound understanding of each method as well as the knowledge of how to implement a research study that may employ one of these methods. We devote much of this text to providing you with this knowledge, as we believe such knowledge is essential for sport managers in the twenty-first century.

RESEARCH PARADIGMS

We believe that it is important that sport management researchers understand research paradigms and that they have an understanding of the major frameworks that they will come across in their reading. This is because it is not a matter of having a theory and putting it into practice, nor of doing something and deriving a theory from it, but of both theory and practice happening simultaneously, interactively and continuously. Understanding the range of possible frameworks, and how others have used them is key to understanding your own processes of thought. Paradigms can be considered as ways of seeing the world in terms of perceiving, understanding and interpreting a theory, explanation, model or map. Edwards and Skinner (2009) believed that most sport management researchers have an intellectual framework that governs the way they perceive the world, and their own place within it, even if they are unable to articulate just what that framework is.

This paradigm, or framework, shapes research from the beginning to the end, because it provides the structure within which choices (including the initial choice of a research subject) are made. This framework comes partly from the institutional setting within which research takes place – the position taken by employers or those who commissioned the research, or by supervisors, by the department within which researchers work and by the university/college that employs them. Part of it will come from the personal position of the sport management researcher which may have been shaped by their biography of experiences as well as their previous education, political and religious beliefs, gender, sexual preference, race and/or class affiliations. So your choice of a research topic, its conduct and its results will be governed by your own beliefs about your understanding of what constitutes knowledge and knowing.

Research paradigms can shape our thinking (and research) processes as they allow us to understand what kinds of knowledge are possible, and how we can ensure they are both adequate and legitimate (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). As an introduction to this way of thinking, we will touch on three research paradigms: (1) objectivism, (2) constructivism and (3) subjectivism.

Objectivism suggests there is an objective reality and things exist irrespective of observers. Understandings and values are objectified in those being researched, and if we go about it 'the right way' we can discover objective truth. We often associate objectivism with positivism, as both approaches sense the bases of valid knowledge and suggest that knowledge is advanced through careful observation and experiment. It is argued that theory is universal and not context

bound. Such approaches search for an invariant causal relationship and imply that there is a body of scientific knowledge waiting to be found through rigorous objective research often referred to as the 'scientific method'.

Constructivism suggests there is no universal objective truth 'awaiting discovery' and that there is no meaning without mind and therefore truth/meaning is not discovered but constructed. Truth (meaning) comes into existence in, and out of, our engagement with our unique realities. Constructivist approaches include interpretivism, which suggests that life is explained in terms of multiple interacting factors and that cause and effect are mutually interdependent. Humans make sense of their world by construing or constructing and therefore it is impossible to have complete objectivity. We need to understand each individual in context and not pursue general laws, as the world is composed of tangible and intangible multifaceted realities that are best studied holistically. In this light, inquiry is value laden as values influence the framing, conduct and focusing of the research problems. Similarly, the constructivist approach can be seen in critical approaches to research that acknowledge that a great deal of life cannot be personally controlled. Interpretations of reality only make sense against a background of social rules, practices and beliefs. Critical approaches argue that research must involve the reformulating, or 'resymbolizing', of events through constructing rather than through discovery, recording or transmitting. In critical approaches, including feminism and queer theory, the fundamental aim is liberation and emancipation.

Finally, subjectivism suggests that truth (meaning) comes into existence in, and as a product of, our engagement with our world realities as there is no reality 'out there'. Meaning cannot originate in an interaction between humans and their world realities, since the latter are not valid. Subjectivism is associated with the post-structural and postmodern domains. These domains reject faith in reason, rationality and belief in evolutionary progress. They seek to challenge the authority of convention and science and examine the ideological underpinnings of convention and science. Researchers who work within these domains argue that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the contemporary world and embrace multiple perspectives of race, class, gender, age, sex orientation and other group affiliations. As such they acknowledge and recognize the importance of different discourses and of marginalized people, and reject meta-narratives or universals that hold true everywhere. For post-structuralists it is through the deconstruction of texts that researchers are able to expose contradictions, inconsistencies and concealed hierarchies of power/oppression.

HYPOTHETICAL CASE EXAMPLE: RESEARCH INTO THE CULTURE OF DRUGS IN SPORT

Members of a rugby team have been identified as taking performance enhancing drugs. Following a series of media stories, 'leaks', suspensions and even a prosecution, the team's management wish to know whether the culture of drug taking remains endemic in their team. They commission you to research the team's cultural beliefs towards drug taking.

The three frameworks above would take a very different approach to this question.

An objectivist (or positivist) would seek to measure the team's culture, as objectively as possible, perhaps using validated questionnaires – on the grounds that if it cannot be

objectively observed/measured then it is not 'real'. Likewise, the objectivist approach would seek to use universally applicable theories of team culture to frame the issue and interpret any data generated.

A constructivist (or interpretivist) would seek to understand the unique and immeasurable way in which the team's culture is constantly constructed and reconstructed by its members. While no universally 'valid' theory can be applied, rules describing the transmission of beliefs and attitudes could be described and used to identify key individuals, groups and networks that might allow a successful intervention to prevent/reduce drug taking.

A subjectivist would reject the possibility of either applying a general theory or generating a unique theory for this particular social group. Instead, the subjectivist might seek to participate in the group's processes and interactions, with a view to influencing attitudes and beliefs (as well as personally experiencing their content and transmission). While the 'system' may be influenced and experienced, no objective knowledge about it can be generated or extracted, and at best the researcher's experiences will form any resultant 'data'.

Which approach do you most agree with, and why?

We shall explore research paradigms later in this text, as Sport Management Research embraces a diverse array of practices driven by varying knowledge constituting assumptions. This eclecticism legitimizes distinctive perspectives and research agendas yet identifies a need to be concerned about how and why in particular social contexts certain research practices are deemed valuable while others are discounted as valueless aberrations.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

From the above discussion it is clear that the field of Sport Management Research is diverse, complex and constantly evolving. Key to dealing with the complexity of the sport management environment is the ability to undertake research. In the following chapters we set out a framework for the sport management researcher to be able to do this, as well as provide an insight into the different approaches and methods that can be used by the sport management researcher. Through this understanding we hope that you will be able to answer important questions and investigate issues of relevance to both the sport management researcher and the sport management practitioner in order to provide potential solutions to emerging problems in the world of Sport Management Research. In Chapter 2 we present an overview of the research process, beginning with an overview of the three research paradigms discussed in this book: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Chapter 3 continues the discussion of the research process by looking at how a sport management researcher identifies their research problem, conducts a review of the literature and, importantly, considers the ethical implications of the research study to be undertaken.

Part 2 of this book examines qualitative research processes. Chapter 4 examines different qualitative data collection techniques and their applicability to the field of Sport Management Research. Chapter 5 then explores techniques of qualitative data analysis, including trends, and methods of determining validity. The following chapters then discuss particular qualitative

methodologies that have the potential to be utilized by sport management researchers. Chapter 6 looks at Action Research, and the iterative cycle of plan, act, observe and reflect (and plan again based on the outcome of the first cycle), which the sport management researcher will undertake from within the organization. Chapter 7 discusses case study method and how it allows the researcher to delve into a real-life context and produce a rich description from which to understand the situation. Deconstruction and its applicability to the study of sport management literature are discussed in Chapter 8. The discussion of discourse analysis and ethnomethodology in Chapter 9 looks at how these methodologies discover 'ways of being' and how people make sense of themselves and others in everyday life, and how these methodologies can be applied to Sport Management Research in real and practical ways. Chapter 10 looks at traditional ethnography, including some emerging ethnographies such as autoethnography, netnography, ethnodrama and phenomenography, and discusses the applicability of these emerging ethnographies to Sport Management Research. Chapter 11 discusses the concept of gender as a methodology. In particular, the concepts of feminism and queer theory are examined, and we discuss the impact these theories could have on the sport management environment. Narrative inquiry and the stories sport management researchers can tell is the focus of Chapter 12. We examine narrative inquiry as a qualitative research methodology and look at the capacity it has to bring to the field of Sport Management Research an understanding of the unique experiences of sport managers. Chapter 13 addresses phenomenology and looks at how this enables the sport management researcher to gain an understanding of the lived experience of those in the sport management field. The final chapter in this section, Chapter 14, looks at emerging qualitative approaches. Here we examine some of the key features of social network theory, whiteness studies, race/critical race theory, disability studies, visual sociology and participant authored audiovisual stories. Additionally this chapter looks at postcolonialism and globalization and discusses how the process of globalization has impacted on world sport.

Part 3 of the book examines quantitative research processes. Chapter 15 begins with an overview of research design for a quantitative study and looks at the most common quantitative designs used by sport management researchers. This chapter also introduces the concepts of descriptive and inferential statistics. Chapter 16 examines data collection methods for a quantitative study and looks at different statistical techniques. We then discuss the principles of sampling and provide examples of a number of sampling techniques that can be used by the sport management researcher, and finally we will introduce some foundation statistical techniques and provide a greater understanding of the place of statistics in Sport Management Research. Quantitative data analysis techniques are discussed in Chapter 17. Statistical software packages are introduced, as are the processes of coding and different ways of presenting the data. Chapter 18 follows on from our earlier discussion of inferential statistics defining the nature and purpose of inferential statistics, and arguing that these statistical methods go further than just describing data: they attempt to determine whether differences or relationships are real due to chance and allow us to infer any such differences to populations. In Chapter 19 correlation and regression analysis is addressed, and we discuss in general terms how the relationships between two or more variables can be explained through the use of statistical techniques. Chapter 20 looks at how the researcher can determine difference among groups and we examine the criteria we use to establish which inferential test should

be chosen to effect an appropriate analysis. In the final chapter in this section, Chapter 21, chi-square and Spearman's rho are discussed, both of which are non-parametric tests that are used when you have serious violations of the assumptions required to perform parametric statistical tests.

The final section of the book, Part 4, looks at alternative approaches to Sport Management Research. In Chapter 22 we examine mixed methods approaches to research and look at some of the ways this can be applied to Sport Management Research. Chapter 23 discusses the emerging framework of Research 2.0, and whether this can be adapted to Sport Management Research 2.0.

Chapter 2

The Sport Management Research process

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- compare qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research approaches;
- discuss the importance of developing a research process;
- explain the basic steps involved in formulating a research process;
- reflect on the differences between qualitative and quantitative research process, and the possible overlaps with a mixed methods approach;
- describe some methods by which a research plan should be evaluated.

KEY TERMS

Qualitative research – research that seeks to provide understanding of human experience, perceptions, motivations, intentions and behaviours based on description and observation, utilizing a naturalistic interpretative approach to a subject and its contextual setting.

Quantitative research – research based on traditional, more formal scientific methods, which generates numerical data and usually seeks to establish straightforward causal relationships between two or more variables, using statistical methods to test the strength and significance of the relationships.

Mixed methods research – a style of research that adopts research procedures that are typically applied in both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Research plan – a detailed description of the procedures that will be used to investigate your topic or problem.

KEY THEMES

- What are some of the basic differences between qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches?
- How does the research process differ in each of the approaches?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter makes explicit the notion that, when undertaking any research study or investigation, careful and methodical planning on the part of the sport management researcher is required (Edwards and Skinner, 2009). From the outset, the sport management researcher must carefully plan every step of the research process – from formulating the initial question, conducting a review of the literature, refining the research question(s), formulating the research design and determining the methodology to be used. This chapter will look at the different ways the sport management researcher can approach the development of their research plan from the perspective of a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is our attempt to distinguish between three research methodology paradigms, in terms of the type of data they generate. A *paradigm* is a perspective based on a set of assumptions, concepts and values that are held by a community of, in this case, sports management researchers. For most of the twentieth century, the *quantitative* paradigm was dominant. During the 1980s, the *qualitative* paradigm came of age as an alternative to the quantitative paradigm, and was often conceptualized (sometimes wrongly) as the polar opposite of quantitative research – after all, all research seeks to answer questions and improve our understanding of phenomena. Finally, as the 'gap' between qualitative and quantitative methods was questioned and closed, mixed-methods research became the legitimate third paradigm, in particular following the publication of the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research generates numerical, comparable data that, in sports management at least, often entails the use of large-scale survey methodologies, such as questionnaires or structured interviews. If a researcher has stopped you at a stadium or if you have responded to an online survey, in most cases, it falls under the umbrella of quantitative research. Economic impact of a sporting event is a common quantitative study used in sport management, and is often accomplished by in-stadia and/or online surveys of attendee spending. This type of research reaches many more people, but the contact with those people is much quicker than it is in qualitative research. Surveys, however, are not the only available option; Creswell (2009) outlined five different categories of quantitative research designs: experimental; quasi-experimental; single subject experiments; correlation; and survey research. In reality, however, it is often very difficult to conduct controlled experiments in the sport management setting – leaving questionnaires and correlational research as perhaps the most pragmatic quantitative options. As a rule of thumb, quantitative research is often associated with deductive approaches: testing existing theories by using them to make predictions that can then be compared, as impartially as possible, to real and 'accurate' measurements.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Researchers who use *qualitative research* for their studies are interested in understanding, exploring and discovering. They use interviews and focus groups, analyse documents, observe behaviours in groups, investigate culture and look for trends and patterns in the data they collect. For example, teams often use focus groups to gain valuable data from the local community before undergoing new stadium construction. The data collected is then analysed to find trends in what the community prefers in a new stadium (e.g. seat plans, food outlets), where and how the stadium can be built to minimize disruptions (e.g. noise, traffic), and what other ways the community desires to use the stadium and surrounding facilities outside of team competitions. Under the umbrella of qualitative research, there are many different methodologies, some of which are discussed in later chapters. As a rule of thumb, qualitative research is often associated with inductive approaches: building theories and explanations where none (or nothing suitable) currently exist.

MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

Mixed methods research adopts procedures from both quantitative and qualitative studies, often seeking to balance out the weaknesses of using either approach in isolation. The purpose of these designs is to build upon the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to more fully understand a given phenomenon than would be possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone. As a rule of thumb, mixed methods studies, like their qualitative counterparts, tend to be deployed in situations where exploration is necessary – open-mindedly detecting and attempting to explain trends in a data set. Continuing the example above, stadium developers often use a mixed methods approach during the tender process. Quantitative methodologies assist in projecting economic, social and environmental impacts of a new stadium, followed by qualitative methodologies that uncover community preferences and influences for those impacts.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Performing research can be challenging, and the sport management researcher beginning a research project with only a blank sheet of paper might feel quite overwhelmed. 'Getting organized' and developing a process can provide a clear pathway that will both guide the research project and offer the researcher some peace of mind. The following section will provide a model research process that can be used as a guide for accomplishing your research project or dissertation. It will discuss research methods and provide a comprehensive graphical model that can be used as a guide to quick-start your research effort. A research process can be defined as a detailed description of the procedures that will be used to investigate your topic or problem. In general, a research plan will include the following two key elements that, between them, encapsulate the ideas and methods the sport management researcher may use:

1 a detailed presentation of the steps to be followed in conducting the study – i.e. an overall view of what, when, where, how and why for performing the research;

2 a strong idea of how each step will inform the next – i.e. how the literature review will frame neat research questions and formulate clear research questions, and how the methods and analysis will answer these research questions.

A number of textbooks provide a highly similar overview of a typical research methodology and, in some cases, the philosophical assumptions underpinning it. For example, Creswell and Plano-Clark (2010) outlined a typical seven-step process and demonstrated how this process frames the construction of reports of research studies (see Figure 2.1).

Using Creswell and Plano-Clark's procedure as a basis for developing a research strategy, a new eight-step process can be evolved, specific to sports management. The process should include the steps illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Unpacking the research process

The research process outlined in Table 2.1 addresses both the research process and a number of subsequent options in a matrix format, with rows representing the steps in the process and columns representing those elements in the research designs. The model allows researchers to locate where they are in the process and compare research designs, options for methods, analysis and interpretation. The expectation is that having this tool as a map might guide decision making within the research process, as well as alleviating any confusion experienced

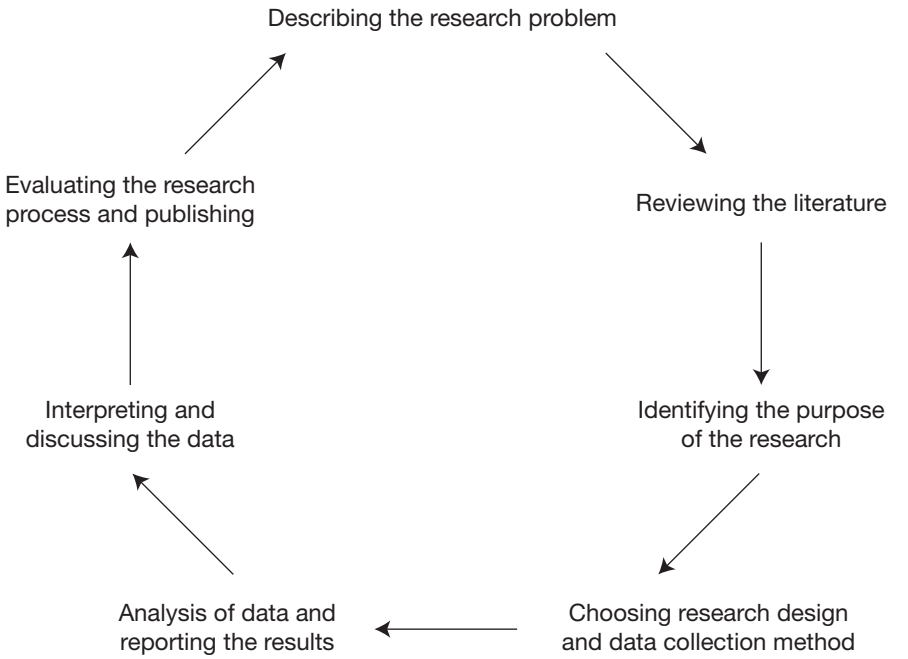

Figure 2.1 *The seven steps of research proposals*

Source: Creswell and Plano-Clark (2010, p. 67)

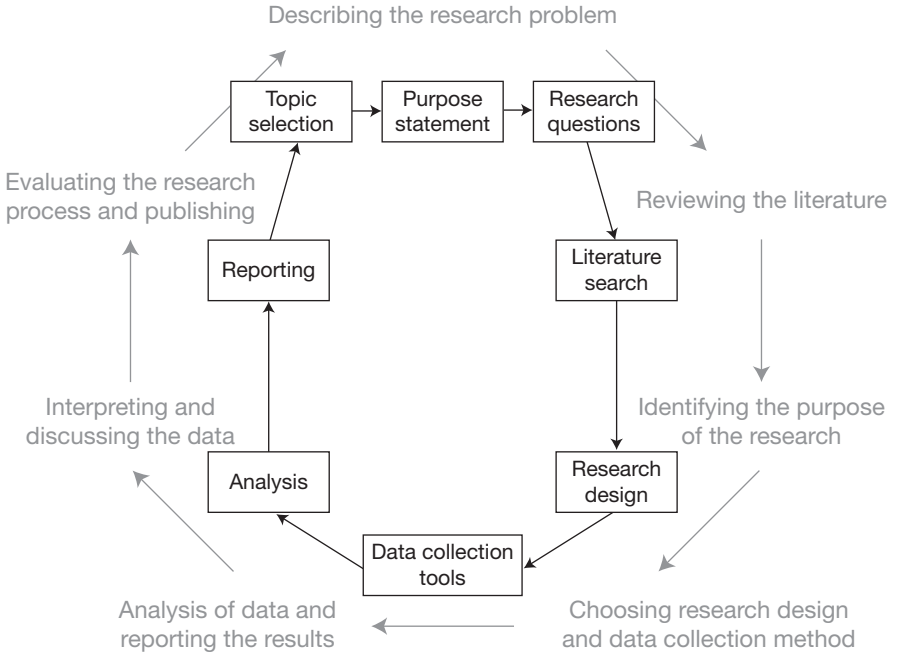

Figure 2.2 *Mapping a process for Sports Management Research*

by novice sport management researchers. Planning, executing and reporting the research process can all be supported by making reference to the matrix provided here.

While the sequence looks linear in the process, in actual practice there is a great deal of iterative or recursive effort, circling back, to refine and revise earlier steps. It is also important to note that, depending upon the research design, some of the linear/sequential steps can actually occur simultaneously (e.g. data collection and analysis). However, regardless of this real-life 'truth', the writing of proposals and reporting of the process tend to follow quite a common structure and format.

Preparing the research proposal

The *research proposal* is a document one typically writes with a view to gaining funding, supervision, or to have one's project formally approved (e.g. by an ethics board). Typically, once a research proposal is completed and approved the researcher will be required to follow the proposal submitted just like a contractual obligation. Developing a written research proposal forces the sport management researcher to think through every aspect of the study. However, 'best laid plans' don't always survive exposure to reality, particularly the more exploratory forms of research mentioned above, and with the approval of supervisors or funders, it can be acceptable to change the plan in response to new and interesting findings.

Table 2.1 *The research process*

Research designs	*Qualitative research*	*Quantitative research*	*Mixed methods research*
Topic selection	Topic assumes reality is constructed by individuals involved in the research (subjective). Researcher and their biases may be known to participants in the study.	Topic assumes something can be measured objectively. Researcher and their biases are not known to participants in the study (double blind studies).	Objective and subjective researcher characteristics may be known to participants.
Purpose statement	Seek to gain an in-depth understanding of what a particular situation, phenomenon or experience means to individuals, groups or cultures.	Test hypotheses, look at cause and effect and make predictions.	Combines rationales.
Research question	A *qualitative* research question asks a question about some process, issue, or phenomenon that is to be explored. Uses words such as explore, discover and construct.	A *quantitative* research question is an interrogative sentence that asks a question about the relation that exists between two or more variables. Uses words such as describe, explain and predict.	A mixed method approach seeks to examine a problem or a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon as well as describing at least two variables and a conjectured relationship between them.
Literature search	The literature tends to play a minor role in suggesting a specific research question to be asked but justifies the importance of studying the research problem.	The literature tends to provide a major role through suggesting the research questions to be asked. It also justifies the research problem and creates the need for the direction (purpose statement and research question or hypothesis) of the study.	The literature tends to be directive and supportive of both qualitative and quantitative questions/ hypotheses.
Research methodology and design	Uses inductive logic. Categories emerge from the informants and lead to patterns or theories that help to explain a phenomenon. Study of behaviour in a natural environment. Designs include narrative, phenomenology, ethnographic, case study, grounded theory approaches.	Uses deductive logic. Concepts, variables and hypotheses are chosen before the study begins. Study of behaviour under controlled conditions isolates causal effects. Designs include experimental, quasi-experimental, single subject experiments, survey and correlation approaches.	Study of behaviour in a natural environment as well as under controlled conditions.

Data collection	*Qualitative* researchers use various types of interviews (including focus groups), observation and field work approaches, and/or examine documents and artefacts (including photos, letters, diaries).	*Quantitative* researchers use surveys, specific measurement tools or instruments; set up control groups; test hypotheses and look for relationships among variables or set up processes for identifying predictions.	Data from open-ended responses, interviews, participant observations, field notes, reflections and precise measurements using structured and validated data collection instruments.
Data analysis	Exploratory or bottom–up: the researcher generates a new hypothesis and theory from the data collected. Identifies patterns, features, themes. Data analysis includes a variety of approaches (axial coding, analysis of themes, thick description, structural description, personal bracketing), depending on the type of study being conducted (i.e. narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, case study or ethnographic study).	Confirmatory or top-down: the researcher tests the hypothesis and theory with the data. Studies use analysis approaches that include the use of descriptive, correlation and inferential statistics. Data analysis is a discrete process that occurs after all of the data has been collected.	Identifies patterns, features and themes as well as statistical relationships.
Reporting the results	Narrative report with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants. For *qualitative* research reports, the purpose of the project and the nature of the themes being addressed provide a process for the report. Researchers tend to take a subjective (reflexive) and biased approach. Reflexivity means researchers tend to reflect on their own biases, assumptions and values in the context of the research. Particular or specialized findings that are less generalizable.	Statistical report with correlations, comparisons of means and statistical significance of findings. For *quantitative* research reports, the steps of the quantitative research method are used as the structure of the report. Generalizable findings that can be applied to other populations.	Research reports tend to use flexible, emerging structures and evaluate criteria. Researchers tend to also take an objective unbiased approach.

Research proposal purpose

In light of the above requirements to gain supervision, funding and ethical approval, the research proposal has several core purposes:

1 A research proposal should contain all the key elements involved in the *research process* and include sufficient information for the readers to evaluate the proposed study.
2 A research proposal is a *planning tool*: a map or sketch of activities to be executed, resources to be employed and a time frame to be adhered to.
3 A research proposal serves the function of *convincing* people of the value of the proposed work by showing them how the research will make a difference to the world, or by identifying a dilemma in existing theory that the research will help resolve.
4 A research proposal *demonstrates the expertise of the researcher* in a particular area of study by summarizing, comparing and integrating all the relevant theory and existing research pertaining to a specific topic.
5 A research proposal seeks to *demonstrate competency* to carry out the proposed study by describing an appropriate and feasible research method.

Research proposals come in different formats, as different universities, funders and governing bodies will place a different emphasis on certain elements of the research process. For example, some will emphasize scientific rigour, while others might emphasize accessibility and dissemination of findings. Likewise, the process may vary for qualitative and quantitative projects. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 outline a generic proposal and then potential variations when writing qualitative and quantitative proposals.

THESIS PROPOSAL FORMAT

Although every proposal is unique, they all aim to persuade the reader of one 'big idea'. This central claim is otherwise referred to as the *'thesis'*; hence a research thesis usually refers to the development of one central claim. This tendency is reflected in research degree requirements that ask candidates to demonstrate a 'significant original contribution to knowledge, and/or to the application of knowledge within the field of study'.

With this in mind, the following thesis proposal templates include elements regarding publication, media and/or communication/dissemination of one's project with a writing and communications focus. This template is offered as a guide that may require adaptation based on your research goals. Consult with the appropriate supervisors as you adapt and develop this to your specific thesis project.

Quantitative methods and the thesis

A thesis using quantitative methods may be seen as a formal application of the scientific method to test certain hypotheses, answer specific questions, examine relationships between/among variables and generalize the results. The focus of this type of thesis may be theoretical or applied.

Table 2.2 *A generic template for writing a research proposal*

1 Overview of the study
   - Introduction to the study
   - Background to the study

2 Statement of the research problem
   - The qualitative paradigm format
   - The quantitative paradigm format

3 Research objectives/aims

4 Research questions

5 Research hypotheses

6 Research rationale

7 Scope of the study

8 Literature review

9 Conceptual process

10 Definitions, delimitations and limitations

11 The nature of the necessary evidence

12 Selecting a research methodology
   - The qualitative paradigm
   - The quantitative paradigm
   - The mixed methods paradigm

13 Results and their dissemination

14 Budgeting

15 Referencing

Table 2.3 *Typical differences between qualitative and quantitative research proposals*

Qualitative research proposal	*Quantitative research proposal*
Identify the general research issue	State the hypothesis
Explain how the researcher intends to gain entry to the research site	Determine the participants
Identify the participants	Select measuring instruments
Estimate the time that will be spent in the field	Choose a specific research design
Determine the best ways to collect data	Specify procedures to conduct the study
Identify appropriate ways to analyse the data	Stipulate the statistical techniques

The basic research methodologies of a university thesis using quantitative methods are listed and described in Table 2.4, briefly, to give you an idea of what is involved when tackling a quantitative research thesis.

Table 2.4 *Typical methodologies adopted within quantitative research projects*

Research method	*Description*
Experimental research	Investigates the effect of the manipulation of one or more independent variable(s) on a dependent variable. This is accomplished by exposing one or more experimental (treatment) groups and comparing the results to one or more control (non-treatment) group(s). Random assignment of subjects to the groups is essential in this design.
Quasi-experimental research	Allows the investigator to 'approximate' the conditions of experimental research in a setting that does not allow random assignment to experimental and/or control groups or control and/or manipulation of all important variables. Attention must be given to internal and external validity in this design.
Causal-comparative (ex post facto) research	Investigates possible cause-and-effect relationships by identifying some existing consequence (dependent variable) and going back through the data (or time) to search for plausible causal factors (independent variables).
Correlational research	Investigates the extent to which variations in one variable are related to variations in one or more other variables.
Case and field research	Studies intensively the background, current status and environmental interactions of a given unit. A unit may be described as an individual, group, institution or community.
Historical research	Allows the investigator to reconstruct a historical event objectively and accurately in its own unique setting.
Philosophical research	Tries to find in the subject matter (philosophical position) a basis for comparison, classification, interpretation or generalization.
Theoretical research	Presents a detailed description of a 'theoretical model' that describes the interrelationships among all important variables related to the behaviour under investigation.

In quantitative research there is a typical chapter structure. This structure may vary depending on the research, the supervisor's preference or a particular university's preferred approach (although this is rare). In general terms, however, the quantitative thesis structure is outlined in Table 2.5.

Qualitative methods and the thesis

Qualitative research seeks answers to questions that are not easily quantified, such as those involving an individual's experience, different social settings and the individuals who inhabit those settings. Qualitative researchers are most interested in how humans make sense of their surroundings through symbols, metaphors, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth. Qualitative methods emphasize measures that are intentionally unobtrusive.

Creswell (2007) identifies five approaches to qualitative research that encompass specific data collection and analysis tactics; these approaches are outlined in Table 2.6.

Table 2.5 *A typical chapter structure for a quantitative research thesis*

	Quantitative thesis format
Chapter 1	Introduction: General statement of the problem, background of the problem, significance of the problem, definition of terms as necessary.
Chapter 2	Review of relevant literature: Comprehensive review of articles relevant to the study. This review justifies, to some extent, the researcher's methodology and provides a rationale for research.
Chapter 3	Design: Specific statement of the problem hypotheses to be tested, general methodology, including analytical procedures, population/sample instrumentation, if any.
Chapter 4	Results: Findings and interpretations of data.
Chapter 5	Summary: Conclusions, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

Table 2.6 *Typical methodologies adopted within qualitative research projects*

Research approach	*Description*
Narrative approach	Focuses on the analysis of stories portrayed by an individual through text or discourse. It includes collecting stories, reporting experiences described and chronologically ordering the experiences.
Phenomenological approach	Focuses on the common conscious experience of a phenomenon shared by multiple people. It describes the essence of how and what the participants experience without additional explanation or analysis.
Grounded theory approach	Focuses on a large sample of interpretations regarding a process, action or interaction. Interpretations provide the data from which to generate a theory about the phenomenon.
Ethnographic approach	Focuses on the shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language developed among a group of people. Research describes how the culture works through the analysis of shared values.
Case study approach	Focuses on the values, behaviours and interactions within a bounded system. The report describes themes based on detailed data collection from the specific case.

Most recent qualitative research includes such methods as: case studies; observation of experiments in natural settings; interviewing; historical analysis (historiography); and analysis of documents/texts. A suggested format for a thesis based on qualitative methods is outlined in Table 2.7. Exceptions, revisions and modifications to this format are acceptable.