Qualitative Research in Management

Methods and Experiences

Edited by
Rajen K. Gupta
Richa Awasthy

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Praise for the Book

This book is an outstanding first of its kind contribution to the methodology for doing social science research in India. It is a pioneer venture because it grows out of lived experience of a number of scholars who employed the narrative technique to present a comprehensive and yet easy to attempt ways of exploring and explaining complicated Indian realities. I think it is a must for all the newcomers to research in social sciences and will be refreshing for those who are seasoned in the old mode of viewing Indian reality.

~Jai B. P. Sinha
Professor of Psychology and Management, ASSERT Institute of Management Studies, Patna

A much required 'adventure' in qualitative research—enriched with coverage of fundamentals and deep reflections and insights from accomplished researchers—a must read for serious students of management.

~Mithileshwar Jha
Professor of Marketing, IIM Bangalore

Qualitative research is a challenging field for even the most experienced researcher. It's best mastered by doing it and best taught by those who have really done it and have experienced the highs and lows. While there are many books on qualitative research, this book stands out by the depth of experiences, diversity of approaches and the emotions of individual researchers. The decision to anchor in our national context and discussing it through the lived in, personal experiences of actual researchers is laudable. The book definitely helps the novice and experienced researchers

to confidently undertake the exciting journey into the world of qualitative research.

~Biju Varkkey
Professor, Personnel and Industrial Relations Area, IIM Ahmedabad

Management research faces the crisis of relevance. I believe that the trouble lies in its dominant quantitative orientation. As someone who has used his qualitative research for turning a large bank around, I am very delighted to recommend this book. Qualitative research has great possibility to connect research and practice. I, therefore, recommend this book to all serious researchers who want to make a difference.

~Anil Khandelwal
ex-CMD, Bank of Baroda and author of Dare to Lead

This book describes the experiences of scholars in doing qualitative research in India. For a predominantly quantitative researcher like me, this book opened up exciting new vistas in qualitative research. I enjoyed reading this book because it not only describes the various types of qualitative research methodologies, but it does so in an extremely engaging manner through providing first-hand experiences of scholars. This book is a must-read for all aspiring management researchers.

~Zubin Mulla
Associate Professor and Chairperson, Center for Human Resources Management and Labour Relations, School of Management and Labour Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

The effort of Professor Rajen K. Gupta and Dr Richa Awasthy to bring out a compilation of articles in the form of a book on qualitative research is really a praiseworthy effort. In the world of management research, where qualitative research is neglected and often misunderstood as something that lacks rigour, this maiden attempt of bringing out a book on various qualitative research methodologies is a good idea to rejuvenate the focus on a rather difficult domain of research. The nicely crafted chapters provide enough pointers to the budding qualitative researchers who can explore the suitability of various types of qualitative research

methodologies right from phenomenology to mixed methods research. I recommend it as a first book on qualitative research to the young professors and PhD students who can get a fairly decent idea of various qualitative research methodologies, written in a user-friendly format.

~Shiv S. Tripathi
Assistant Professor, Strategic Management Area, MDI, Gurgaon

There has been a dearth of 'high impact' management research, especially in India, and to me the major reason for this was absence of as well as the expertise of proper research tools. This book is one of the first attempts to fill this gap. Kudos to the book's editors!

~K. B. C. Saxena
Professor Emeritus, Fortune Institute of International Business, Delhi

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To Late Prof. Udai Pareek
Whose unconditional support to my first adventure has brought me so far

Rajen Gupta

To my beloved parents: S. P. Awasthy and R. K. Awasthy
Great parents never die
They live in my heart

Richa Awasthy

Thank you for choosing a SAGE product! If you have any comment, observation or feedback, I would like to personally hear from you. Please write to me at contactceo@sagepub.in

—Vivek Mehra, Managing Director and CEO,
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Preface

Overview

This book's beginning was the symposium on 'Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research' in the International Human Resource Management (IHRM) conference (10–13 December 2012), in which narratives of doing qualitative research were shared. The symposium saw scholars from the management sharing their experiences of conducting qualitative and mixed-methods research. Apparently, it was well received as indicated by attendance and rich discussion. The success of the symposium led us to the idea of developing an edited volume of such research adventures that might be helpful to the research community in expanding their methodological choices.

As is well recognized, India is a country known for its multicultural and multilingual heritage. Western frameworks are not sufficient to explain Indian socio-cultural reality. Ignoring these aspects in studying managerial phenomena seems to be extremely superficial. Hence, it is important for the Indian researchers to adopt research methods that capture such complex aspects of the Indian culture. Most of the models and theories available were developed in the West and were subsequently taken up with or without adaptations to fit the Indian context. Indian frameworks need to be designed to be able to capture the Indian cultural complexity. Nowadays, many Indian researchers are considering Indian societal challenges and context and hence have started adopting the qualitative research methods to study these issues in the management studies. This book is one such initiative to bring forward the Indian researchers' experiences of conducting qualitative research.

We encouraged contributors to write their stories. All they needed was to narrate their stories beginning with the choice of their research problems (better if it connects with their personal work–life experiences, but not necessarily so), how they came to the choice of methodology, what was their experience in collecting data, how did they analyse it, what were the difficulties and exciting moments, what were the outcomes, and most important, how this whole journey enriched them as a person and as a scholar. Whatever scholarly elements that came in while telling their stories were welcomed. We believe it was a very cathartic and a fulfilling experience for them, and it may greatly benefit other young scholars.

It is pertinent to clarify before we discuss the structure of the book that we have taken pure interpretivist stance and encouraged our contributors to express themselves in terms of depth and direction the way they wish to.

Structure of the Book

This book has three parts and each part aims at unfolding the experiences of becoming a qualitative researcher.

The first part tries to familiarize the reader with the framework for doing qualitative research through Chapters 1 and 2. These two chapters come from the editors of the book. The first chapter is an introduction to the qualitative research. Editors explicitly illustrate their understanding about qualitative research. It contains evolution of qualitative research in India. This chapter covers the process of conducting qualitative research and its unique contribution to the management research. Chapter 2 focuses on how to become a qualitative researcher. This chapter is written in the form of a narrative. It begins with the qualitative journeys of three senior qualitative researchers, and thereafter one of the authors derives important themes as wisdom from these journeys. The chapter ends with the metaphor of *karmayogi* (discipline of action) for becoming a qualitative researcher.

The second part of the book is the most exciting part of the book. It has 10 chapters from different qualitative researchers where they

have narrated their journeys of doing qualitative research. These chapters present stories of numerous types of qualitative research experiences. The chapters are diverse and cover different research areas and methodological choices. Each chapter is different, but all are equally important in providing a comprehensive and honest look at what it means to be a novice qualitative researcher. Each chapter has an editorial note to indicate the substantive area of research and the methodology persuaded by each contributor as their valuable contribution to this edited volume.

The third part of the book presents conclusions based on contributors' chapters. It explains issues and challenges related to the thinking, doing and trustworthiness of qualitative research. It covers contributors' reflections on becoming a qualitative researcher. This chapter ends with the *guru–shishya parampara* (traditional relationship of the mentor and the student) as a metaphor for the guide and the doctoral scholar relationship in qualitative research.

Unique Contributions of the Book

- The most salient contribution of this book is that it is the first Indian book on qualitative research and qualitative researchers' lived-in experiences and feelings.
- This book is written from the perspective of novice qualitative researchers and brings forward the Indian researchers' experiences of conducting qualitative research.
- Contributors' chapters have focus on their experience, process and method.
- This book is a motivation for young scholars who are anxious to take up qualitative research for their doctoral program as the editors' experiences and reflections make it easy for them to connect to the real-world scenario of the qualitative research.
- The editors of the book adopt inductive approach to write the chapter on becoming qualitative researchers and are able to derive unique lessons from it.

- The prominent feature of the book is that it brings in indigenous perspective. Journey of senior researchers enlightened indigenous perspective on qualitative research and on becoming a qualitative researcher. It brings forth the notion of *karmayogi* in becoming a qualitative researcher.
- The narratives demonstrate the unique relationship of the mentor and the student exhibited during this adventure. It explains the importance of a guide in the doctoral student adventure and draws parallel with indigenous *guru–shishya parampara*.
- This book will be useful for research scholars and faculty members who are teaching qualitative research paper in doctoral programs in social science and management.
- This book covers different qualitative research approaches (grounded theory, phenomenology, quasi-ethnography, case study research, mixed methodology and more) in different management domains (organization studies, organizational behaviour, information systems and strategic management).
- This book's contribution lies in guiding the novice researchers to conduct various qualitative approaches. The chapters from diverse qualitative research approaches highlight various methodological challenges associated with these approaches. They are embedded in a narrative form, which makes it interesting and realistic to read and understand what goes in conducting qualitative research.
- The chapters try to engage the reader in a reflective process about the qualitative research that motivates students to take up their research as an exciting adventure.
- Each method in qualitative research is based on a specific understanding of its objective. This book also serves as a guide to enables the researcher to choose the most appropriate methodological approach with respect to his/her research question and issues from a great variety of specific methods, each of which starts from different premises and pursues different aims.

In a nut shell, this book is an attempt to address the novice researchers when they come face to face with the real-world issues and problems in the day-to-day conduct of qualitative research. It gives an overview of the field of qualitative research, related methodological approaches, and their applications, dilemmas and solutions.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to many people who saw us through this book; to all those who provided support, talked things over, read, wrote, offered comments, allowed us to quote their remarks and assisted in the editing, proofreading and design.

We are grateful to Professor Jai B. P. Sinha and Professor Anand Prakash for granting interviews for the book.

We take this opportunity to thank all the contributors whose support has made this book possible. They accepted our request and met tight submission deadline from our side. In fact, their initial positive reaction to the thought about the book gave us lot of encouragement to pursue this idea.

We would like to thank SAGE Publications, New Delhi, for enabling us to publish this book. Special thanks to Mr Sachin Sharma and Mr Sekhar R. Chandra from SAGE commissioning team for their feedback on the draft and support. We thank the publishing team at SAGE Publications for their support and involvement. We would like to especially thank independent language editor Mrs Archana Gupta for helping us in editing and going over our drafts again and again.

A Special Word of Appreciation from Richa Awasthy

I am blessed to have worked with my mentor Professor Rajen, who gave me this opportunity and motivated throughout with his insightful and thought-provoking discussions. The thrust and iterations of his wisdom are indelibly stamped upon me through the guidance he offered me for this book. Above all, I thank my family, especially my sister Deepa (my patient cheerleader) and my little son Ojasvinn, for providing their support, patience and encouragement, despite all the time my work took me away from

them. This acknowledgement section on my behalf would be incomplete without mentioning my almighty, my parents, who made me the way I am.

Last but not least, I beg forgiveness of all those who have been with me over these years and whose names I have failed to mention.

All of these people made the whole book process simpler as it would not have been otherwise. May their joy and hope infuse these pages and motivate others as much as they motivated me.

PART ONE

Philosophy of Qualitative Research

1

Qualitative Research: An Introduction

Rajen K. Gupta and Richa Awasthy

Introduction

India is a country known for its multicultural and multilingual heritage. It is in this land of stark contrasts and wealth disparity where development as freedom assumes great importance, so that organizational transformation touches the lives of all segments of the population. However, rooted in this ethos and cradled particularly over the past two centuries in the arms of an embedded bureaucracy, Indians at the modern workplace are now adapting to a different paradigm of values, such as professionalism, quality consciousness, innovation, competition and adjustment with expatriates. The opposing values with which Indians presently live reflect a cultural paradox. Western frameworks such as Hofstede (1991) are not sufficient to explain Indian cultural paradox. Undoubtedly, culture, values and paradoxes influence human behaviour and interactions. While studying individual and group behaviour, ignoring these aspects makes a research extremely superficial. Hence, it is important to adopt research methods that can help capture such complexity. Unfortunately,

we do not have sufficient indigenous models and theories to explain our Indian context. Hence, we end up fitting our data with western frameworks and testing their models in the Indian context. However, there is a shift; some Indian researchers have started adopting qualitative research to study various behavioural social issues in management studies.

Although Indian researchers are very good in understanding various theories proposed by scholars abroad, and also in identifying the limitations of those theories to capture Indian realities, Indian researchers seem to very rarely propose any new concepts and theories. One argument against doing this is: why reinvent the wheel? Useful concepts and theories have been developed abroad; all one needs to do is to understand them, analyse them and then use them! However, it should be accepted here that the scholars abroad have not stopped from continuing to create new concepts and theories: theories of personality, theories of motivation, theories of cognition and so on. Why can't Indians? Why shouldn't Indians?

This book is one such initiative to bring forward the Indian researchers' experiences of conducting qualitative research. This chapter will present an overview of qualitative research and various approaches.

Meaning of Research

Science is a personal conviction, with a universal intent.

Michael Polanyi

These words of Michael Polanyi (1958) have moved both of us. We strongly believe in the first part of his statement; however, it is observed that many researchers are more concerned about the second part. Our motto would be to encourage researchers to align both parts into their research agenda.

It is imperative to talk about what research means to us. Research is a process to get deeper insight into any concept, issue or process. It is a systematic detailed study of a subject, especially to discover any (new) information or reach a (new)

Box 1.1: Some Guiding Questions for Research
1. What is the purpose of the research? 2. What questions will guide the research? 4. What data will answer or illuminate the research questions? 5. What resources are available to support the research? 6. What criteria will be used to judge the quality of the findings?

understanding (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2003). Process of research includes any gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge (Shuttleworth, 2008). Process of conducting research does not mean following linear steps, such as deciding hypothesis, collecting data and data analysis, rather it implies getting deeper into the phenomenon under investigation (see Box 1.1) and contribute to knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Designing a research is as much art as science. In research as in art, there can be no single, ideal standard. In the subsequent section, we turn to present a discussion on our understandings about qualitative research. We share our perspectives of three fundamental facets of research—ontology, epistemology and methodology and provide an outline for planning, implementing and evaluating the quality of one's research. We clarify each of these research facets, their interrelationships, and their contributions to research practice and appraisal.

Ontology–Epistemology–Methodology: From Physical Reality to Inner Reality

Throughout the history, researchers have used a variety of theories to explore and explain the reality. The foundations on which the researchers work are their ontological and epistemological positions. Since social reality can be approached in different ways, researchers can take different ontological and epistemological positions which are greatly reflected in the choice of methodology and approach. These positions are very critical to one's research, as they shape the approach to theory and the methods

utilized; and they are grounded deeply in the researcher's beliefs about the world.

Ontology is the study of being. Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality. Researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work. Two basic distinctions can be made here: first, there is a social world that is a hard, concrete, real thing out there, which is composed of a network of determinate relationships between constituent parts and in these concrete relationships an external and real social reality can be found; and, second, the social world is a continuous process created afresh in each encounter of everyday life as individuals impose themselves on their world to establish a realm of meaningful definition.

Epistemology then is the theory of knowledge. One's epistemological position reflects the 'view of what we can know about the world and how we can know it'. Again there are two major distinctions to be made here: first, the knowledge of the social world implies a need to understand and map out the social structure and gives rise to the epistemology of *positivism* with an emphasis on the empirical social world. It encourages a concern for an *objective* form of knowledge that specifies the precise nature of laws, regularities and relationships among phenomena measured in terms of social *facts*. This implies that an objectivist view of social world encourages an epistemological stance that is based on studying the nature of relationships among the elements constituting the structure. Second, the knowledge of the social world implies a need to understand the social reality embedded in the nature and the use of modes of symbolic action like language, labels, actions and routines. This phenomenological-oriented perspective gives rise to the epistemology of *interpretivism* based on understanding the processes through which human beings manifest their relationship to their world and also encourages a concern for *subjective* form of knowledge.

To summarize, there are two completely opposite positions with regard to ontology and epistemology that have absolutely nothing in common. These are reflected in different research traditions to which we will turn now.

Positivism has been developed from the empiricist tradition of natural science, which sees that social science is capable of the same possibilities that are there in the natural science. That is, it is possible to formulate laws, thus yielding a basis for prediction and generalization, thereby denying any reality dichotomy. Positivists usually use quantitative methods as research tools, as these are objective and the results are generalizable and replicable. They look for explanation of behaviour, not for the meaning. A deductive approach is undertaken. Correlation and experimentation are used to reduce complex interactions with their constituent parts.

The opposite position is taken by interpretivists. They believe that most of the reality which is meaningful for human beings is largely constructed by them as an ongoing process of interacting, experiencing and sharing. For them, it is not possible to make objective statement about the real world because the nature of social reality and how it is imagined by the human is a product of the human mind; humans are autonomous and are creative; and therefore research methods need to explore individual understandings and subjective experiences of the world. Hence, rather than assuming universality *a priori*, they would consider it more scientific to be sceptical of this assumption. The interpretivists recognize that the knowledge is built through social construction of the world. Because the world is only socially constructed and so are the social phenomena, which positivists claim to be able to examine by sheer observing the causal relationships of the physical world which are stable. The interpretivists challenge this idea because the relationships do not exist independent of our interpretation and every observation concurrently affects what we observe. Unlike positivists, they look at understanding social behaviour rather than explaining it and focussing on its meaning and usually employ qualitative research methods.

In line with the above argument, we can say that the phenomenal aspects of understandings derive largely from our verbal images. As we read, it is sometimes phenomenally as if we are speaking to ourselves. We often 'hear' an inner voice. This inner voice explains the similarities and differences in what it is like to undergo perceptual experiences. This introspectively accessible, inner voice of our heart is referred to as *qualia*. The root of the

subjectivist position lies in the idea of *qualia*, that is, an inner quality or property as perceived or experienced by a person. Every human *qualia* is unique and it is true for that person. When we are looking at a human being as a social entity, we take a position that whatever happens among people is because they co-construct reality. So reality is a process of interaction. This is an epistemological issue that further guides you to make your methodological choices between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Research questions should act as a guiding principle for the methodological choice.

We hereby urge our readers to rethink about their ontological assumptions. They must question themselves about their view of reality, their belief in a singular reality of the world around them or do they see multiple realities co-existing. The phrase *multiple realities co-existing* may be interpreted as multiple versions of a reality co-existing. For instance, if somebody is asked to describe him/herself with respect to his/her different roles in life, like as a child, as a wife/husband, as a mother/father, as a professor, different versions of truth will be elicited. It does not mean that he/she is lying. Human self is contextualized; so every answer is true in its own context and brings forth that reality is much more complex phenomena and that perception plays a vital role in this process. Social scientists view reality as a social construction that results in a world of continuous process. The social world is created in every instance of everyday life. It is demonstrated via multiple realities and does not have a concrete status. Multiple views of reality acknowledge complexity and do not have simplistic narrow view of the reality. At the onset, it is important to note that for analysing and interpreting the social reality, one must take an interpretivist or constructivist subjective position.

Constructivist is a qualitative research position that uses art-like, non-routine portrayal (e.g., sculpture, photographs, drawings, dramatization, etc.) to elicit the challenges and shifts existing in various contexts. Constructivists see language as the creation of human beings and believe that one word may have many meanings and hence they do recognize the existence of ambiguity. The subjectivist position focuses on capturing the meaning of a

distinct subject, that is, an individual: how this subject constructs, interacts with and gives meaning to his world.

Epistemology also poses questions like: What is the relationship between the researcher and what is to be researched? How do we know what we know? What counts as knowledge? Positivist researchers may answer these questions in the form of *numbers* through measurable data by using standardized tools like questionnaire, psychological tests and many more. These psychometric instruments do make an attempt to convert features into numbers, but numbers can only measure their intensity, that is, more or less. How can numbers unfold the real-world situations, and how can they be used to reach generalizable conclusions. When these instruments ask questions whether one is happy with the rating scale, the usefulness of these instruments is debatable. Can they capture human reality? We are all made up of some basic constitution but are known by our uniqueness. Numbers can lead to the inference of generalized conclusions but cannot address the uniqueness of individuals. These limitations call for a research that is intrinsic, and any claims for the generality of its conclusions rely on analytic rather than statistical generalization. Research with an interpretivist approach attempts to give words to *my experiences* rather than *I choose from the category*. An interpretivist perspective sees the world as constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with wider social systems. Interpretivists explain behaviour as being created out of evolving meaning systems that people generate as they socially interact. Here we would like to suggest that since every language and every culture has an implicit worldview, first-level theorizing in human sciences must be culture or language specific. This stance to the creation of concepts and theories has another payoff. Such concepts and theories will be better understood by lay people in the respective cultures, and would largely overcome the problem of abysmal utilization of social–scientific knowledge in our country.

In the following section, we will attempt to recognize the contrasts between positivism and interpretivism through the use of a tree metaphor. As simple as it is, it makes the understanding of these approaches even simpler.

Tree Metaphor for Ontological and Epistemological Positions in Social Sciences

The social science research paradigms may also be viewed as a tree and the contrasts between them may be highlighted by using the contrasts between a tree's trunk and its branches. To begin with, let us take the case of positivism. The scientific paradigm rose to study the social world through the ontological position of positivism, that is, in turn, one of realism. Realism is the view that depicts a static image of the social reality. This is similar to the case of a tree's trunk as it is static in its existence.

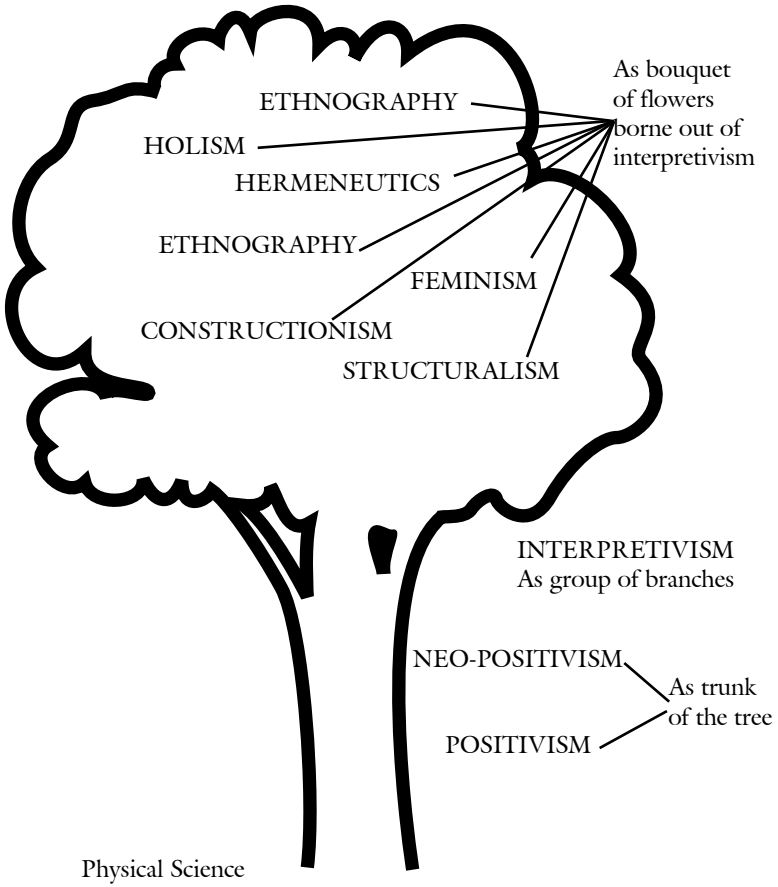
Then comes the notion of neo-positivism, which emerged from positivism. However, neo-positivism differs in several ways as it explains that 'every scientific statement must remain tentative forever', and in order to understand some scientific theories more than empirical data is needed. This again corresponds to the tree trunk in the way that in addition to its static physical existence it carries some intrinsic properties of the tree that need to be explored. Some aspects may be hidden from the researcher and those can only become known by going beyond the *a priori*.

In the schema presented, we have drawn an analogy of a tree from the epistemologies of positivism and neo-positivism. Now we are heading towards a more subjectivist epistemology with a theoretical perspective, that is, interpretivism. Interpretivism view is well removed from the objectivism and aims to bring into consciousness hidden social forces and structures. It is the view that all knowledge, therefore all meaningful reality as such, is dependent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. We need to remind ourselves here that it is human beings who have interpreted it as a tree, given it the name, and attributed to it the associations we make with trees. Meaning is not discovered; it is interpreted though the interaction between consciousness and the world. It may help if we recall the extent to which those associations may differ even within the same country. Tree is likely to have quite different implications to a lush green town inhabitant and to a treeless desert inhabitant. Thus, knowledge

and meaningful reality are interpreted in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social context.

This epistemology can be considered as the group of branches of a tree of social science research paradigms. Interpretivism has appeared in many forms like ethnography, holism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnography, feminism, structuralism, constructionism and sense making. It will be appropriate to consider these streams that have borne along as the bouquet of flowers out of interpretivism (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 The Tree Metaphor: Social Science Research Paradigms as a Tree



The tree metaphor allows us to study the contrasts between positivism and interpretivism in a simple way. In positivism, social reality (tree) is an objective entity but interpretivism is always looking forward to the unfolding of events (branches) over time. Some more contrasts between positivism and interpretivism may be summarized in Box 1.2.

Box 1.2: Key Differences between Positivism and Interpretivism

Features	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Reality exists objectively.	The reality exists outside the human mind, but it becomes meaningful to human beings only through their intentionality.
Epistemology	Researcher and the researched are independent. It is possible for human mind to know reality as it is.	The researched is not independent of the researcher. Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through persons' lived-in experiences.
Research object	Research object has inherent qualities that exist independent of the researcher.	Research object is interpreted in the light of meaning structure of a persons' lived-in experiences.
Approach	Objective	Subjective
Method	Statistics, content analysis, mathematical models, simulations, experiments, etc.	Hermeneutics, phenomenology, etc.
Location of the researcher	Researcher is distant.	Researcher is close.

(Box 1.2 Contd)

(Box 1.2 Contd)

Features	Positivism	Interpretivism
Based upon	*A priori* and theory testing	Emergent themes and theories
Findings	Generalization	Contextual understanding
Data	Hard and reliable data	Rich and deep observations, narratives, descriptions
Researcher reflexivity	Research results can be reproduced. Researcher can remove the influence of subjectivity through rigour of the method.	Researchers recognize and include the implications of their subjectivity.

Now in this section, we have seen that an interpretivist through the use of qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups and other qualitative methods to get an in-depth insight into a field) seeks to gain all the knowledge that he can have about the world that is only socially constructed. We make an attempt to unravel the qualitative research methods through the following section.

Demystifying Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a form of social science where focus is on understanding people's world, interpreting their experiences and making sense out of it. It is about the subjective world we live in. It is based on the worldview which is holistic and where multiple constructed realities exist. Behaviour is grounded by the situation and their interpretation of the context. It is all about inner life. The term *qualitative research* is derived from the Latin word *Qualitas*, which emphasizes on qualities of entities—the processes and meanings that occur naturally (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Atkinson prefers to use it as an umbrella term for the whole family of different frameworks—all aiming to understand the subjective

world of individuals, groups and organizations, such as ethnography, phenomenology and many more.

Qualitative research often studies phenomena in their natural setting; attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena and uses social actors' meanings to understand the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Of course, all settings are natural and so qualitative researchers study people doing things together at their workplace where things are done (Becker et al., 1986). Qualitative research addresses questions about how social experience is created and given meaning and produces representations of the world that make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Beyond this, qualitative research is 'particularly difficult to pin down' because of its 'flexibility and emergent character' (van Maanen, 1998). Qualitative research is often designed at the same time as it is being done; it requires 'highly contextualized individual judgements' (van Maanen, 1998); moreover, it is open to unanticipated events and it offers holistic depictions of realities that cannot be reduced to a few variables.

Qualitative researchers hold that the experiences of people are essentially context-bound, that is, they cannot be free from time and location or the mind of the participant. Researchers also believe in the socially constructed nature of the world and realise that values and interests become part of the research process. Complete objectivity and neutrality are impossible to achieve, that is, researcher is not separated from the phenomenon under study. This demands reflexivity on the researcher's part, that is, he/she must acknowledge his/her own position in the context setting as the researcher him/herself is an important research tool. Qualitative researchers employ a wide variety of interpretive practices to get a better understanding of the phenomenon under study since it is considered, in general, that each practice makes the reality visible in a different way.

Qualitative research, as a set of multiple interpretive practices and as a site of discussions or discourses is difficult to define (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The field sprawls all of the human disciplines. Qualitative researchers are variably committed to different approaches that this research implies. This wide range of approaches and their separate and multiple uses have made

qualitative researchers worldwide to come up with a number of definitions based on their personal understanding of qualitative research. Hence it is difficult to derive a unique definition that will be universally applicable, for it is never just one thing and thus we have captured what we believe are some most important aspects of qualitative research in Box 1.3.

We have borrowed and paraphrased from our understandings of the above existing definitions of qualitative research a much simplified definition as follows:

'It is a process of understanding the lived-in experiences of the participants in their social context'.

Box 1.3: Definitions of Qualitative Research

- Denzin and Lincoln (1994): 'Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalist approach to its subject matter'.
- M. Gall, Borg and J. Gall (1996): 'Qualitative research is inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational. The dominant methodology is to discover these meanings and interpretations by studying cases intensively in natural settings and subjecting the resulting data to analytical induction'.
- Creswell (1998): 'Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting'.
- Jacob (1988): 'Qualitative research is a generic term for investigative methodologies described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observer research. It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. Interaction between variables is important. Detailed data is gathered through open ended questions that provide direct quotations. The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation'.
- Ross (1999): 'Qualitative approach to research is based on a "worldview" which is holistic and has the following beliefs: (1) there is not a single reality; (2) reality is based upon perceptions that are different for each person and change over time; and (3) what we know has meaning only within a given situation of context'.

Significance of Qualitative Research

Purpose Is to Explore or Get Conceptual Clarity

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex theoretical descriptions of how the participants experience a given research context. It provides details about the lived-in experiences of human beings—that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals. The goal of qualitative research is not theory testing, rather theory development is one of the result of the study. The findings are effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent. Maxwell (2008) has cited five intellectual goals of qualitative research, such as, rich description, holistic perspective, exploratory study, understanding dynamism, conceptual clarity/building theories. We are here trying to rephrase the description of these goals in a version as given below.

Rich description: Findings are descriptive, direct quotes are presented to capture the participants' experiences; focus is laid on words and pictures than numbers.

Holistic perspective: This perspective seeks to understand the whole picture of the social context under investigation. As pointed out in Gestalt viewpoint, 'whole is more than sum of its parts'. It helps to understand complex interdependencies.

Exploratory study: When a phenomenon is less researched and specific research questions and hypothesis are unclear, qualitative research helps in developing hypothesis for further investigation. It attempts to answer what, how and why questions to get deeper, multifaceted understanding of the phenomena.

Understanding dynamism: Social relations and interactions are always in the state of confluence. One thing leads to another. It is

like, every action has a reaction. Qualitative study does not consider issues or reality as static entity; it acknowledges the dynamism in interactions and social discourses.

Conceptual clarity/building theories: Concepts are developed in qualitative research. It helps to recognize the unexplored or unanticipated dimensions. For instance, emotional labour was identified as an important variable in emotional intelligence literature through a qualitative study (Hochschild, 1983).

Another advantage of qualitative research may come across as its applied use into various disciplines. Qualitative research is useful to examine various subjects in organizational behaviour, marketing, information systems, strategy, finance, international business, cross-cultural and inter-cultural studies (see Box 1.4).

Box 1.4: Examples of Qualitative Studies

- Shah and Bhaskar (2010) did qualitative case study on leading Indian public sector, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), to examine their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
- Sharma and Kamalanabhan's (2012) study explored the extent to which practitioners in an Indian public sector undertaking (PSU) use internal corporate communication dimensions to develop their company's brand image among employees. Twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted and data was analysed for content.
- Singh and Krishnanan (2005) looked at those behavioural manifestations of transformational leadership that are unique to Indian culture.
- Sarkar and Cybulski (2004) carried out phenomenological investigation of project managers' experiences with the implementation of web-based employee service systems (ESS).
- Ang (2010) conducted in-depth individual interviews and group discussion to understand the key factors driving success in private banking and the issues that management of private bank should address to craft a winning strategy in Asia.
- Carr's (2004) study was based on in-depth interviews examined the effect of diverse national values on strategic investment decision (SID) making in the context of industry globalization.

Qualitative Research Process

As quoted by Denzin and Lincoln (2011),

> Three interconnected, generic activities define the qualitative research process. They go by a variety of labels, including ontology, epistemology and methodology; or theory, method and analysis. … The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory) that specifies a set of questions (method), which are then examined (analysis) in specific ways.

The researchers choose a variety of methods to achieve their answers. These include ethnography, phenomenology, conversation analysis, discourse analysis and cooperative inquiry among others. Some forms of social inquiry, such as action research, and also feminist approaches, though not always, use qualitative methods and techniques. Speaking about the world of human experiences requires an extensive commitment in terms of time and dedication to the process of conducting qualitative research. Every qualitative research methodology is distinct in its own but all of them are based on certain prime characteristics of qualitative research. These characteristics are:

1. Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world of participants.
2. Qualitative research is based on a set of interpretable material, such as interactions, artefacts and practices that make the world visible.
3. Researcher converts the series of events, representations including field notes, interview conversations, photographs and many more.
4. Qualitative research emphasizes on the process rather than the outcome of that process.

Emic Approach

The salient feature of qualitative research is that it is concerned with the understanding of the participants' perspective. Efforts are not made to fit data to test existing theories or concepts. Emphasis

is laid on getting a feel of the 'insider's view'. Researcher tries to gaze the participants' interpretation of the context. In anthropological study, it is called the emic perspective. The emic perspective focuses on cultural distinctions meaningful to the members of a given context. Emic perspective is essential for the intuitive and empathic understanding of a context, and also for conducting effective ethnographic fieldwork. Emic accounts describe thoughts and actions primarily in terms of the participants' self-understanding—terms that are often culturally and historically bound. Emic researchers tend to assume that a culture is best understood as an interconnected whole or a system. Methods in emic research are more likely to involve sustained, wide-ranging observation of a single cultural group (see Box 1.5). In classical fieldwork, for example, an ethnographer immerses himself or herself in a setting, by developing relationships with informants and taking on social roles.

Box 1.5: Emic Perspective and the Associated Methods

Features	**Emic/Inside View**
Defining assumptions and goals	Behaviour described as seen from the perspective of cultural insiders in constructs drawn from their self- understandings. Describe the cultural system as a working whole.
Typical features of methods associated with this view	Observations recorded in a rich qualitative form that avoids imposition of the researchers' constructs. Long-standing, wide-ranging observation of one setting or a few settings.
Examples of typical study types	Ethnographic fieldwork; participant observation along with interviews. Content analysis of texts providing a window into indigenous thinking about justice.

Source: Morris, Leung, Ames and Lickel, 1999.

Inductive Approach

Inductive reasoning is a theory-building process, starting with the observations of specific instances and seeking to establish generalizations about the phenomenon under investigation. The purposes of using an inductive approach are to (a) condense raw textual data into a brief, summary format; (b) establish clear links between the evaluation or research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and (c) develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data. The general inductive approach provides an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analysing qualitative data that can produce reliable and valid findings. Although the general inductive approach is not as strong as some other analytic strategies for theory or model development, it does provide a simple, straightforward approach for deriving findings in the context of focused evaluation questions. Many evaluators are likely to find using a general inductive approach less complicated than using other approaches for qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2006).

Eclectic–Flexible Approach

Processes and flexibility at different stages of research are imperative in qualitative research. Like any other research, researcher starts with the formulation of study questions and objectives. However, as one gets familiar with the context, he/she refines or develops sharper research questions that are explored in due course. Flexibility is needed at the stage of data collection in terms of methods of data collection techniques and how are they being carried out. Eclectic–flexible approach refers to the openness to adapt inquiry as understanding of the context deepens and/or situations change; the researcher avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge. A researcher may start with interviews and feel a need to explore an issue through focused group interview. Design flexibility stems from the open-ended nature of naturalistic inquiry as well as pragmatic considerations.

Next stage where researcher requires flexibility is while analysing the data, that is, inductively. Data should be the guiding principle and not a theory or framework.

Main Steps in Qualitative Research

A good qualitative research study involves a broadly and clearly defined purpose, in which there is coherence between research questions and methods or approaches proposed, and it generates meaningful and rich data. Qualitative research always involves an element of the unknown as it is not simply being done to duplicate what is already established, and a key strength of qualitative research in particular is that it can explore unanticipated issues as they emerge. Steps in qualitative research are not, therefore, discrete but they are a continuing process which calls for constant review of decisions and approaches. But still a researcher needs to plan the salient in advance.

Broad Research Question

Research question need to be broad but focused, similar to understanding the change process in a public sector organization. It must be clear, comprehensible and unambiguous. The research question should be socially relevant and useful.

Broad Literature Review

The literature review is useful and desirable before one starts his or her research. It helps to identify specific areas to be explored through the study. The role of existing theory and research in shaping the research objectives in qualitative research studies is one of vital importance. Qualitative research uses an understanding of how the study can be built upon the existing knowledge or ideas, and a tentative theory or conceptual framework is important aid to the research. Qualitative researchers have hunches at this stage, but further exploration of the literature will definitely wave off those hunches.

Unit of Study

Selecting research settings and sample involves identifying those which, by virtue of their relationship with the research questions, are able to provide the most relevant, comprehensive and rich information. This decision will flow from what the research questions are, but will be informed by the existing literature or understanding of the research context. Qualitative research is not always about a large sample rather it may composed of only a single subject or just one case, a small group, a small community or a small organization. Instead, the sample design should be structured around context(s) rather than around a series of individual participants. The focus should be on the process or the context under study.

Eliciting Human Experiences

The researcher should be descriptive as far as possible; do not filter any observation or conversation at this stage. Eliciting human experiences requires a number of demands from the mental and intellectual abilities of the researcher. First, the ability of the researcher to listen is fundamental. The researcher must hear, absorb and comprehend the participant's answers in order to decide how to probe further. Second, it requires a clear and logical mind. The researcher needs to be able to think quickly to distil the essential points of what the participant is saying, exercise judgement about what to pursue, and simultaneously formulate the relevant question. Third, curiosity—an enquiring mind—is an essential asset in a researcher. It greatly helps if the instinct of the researcher is to want to know more about what they have been told.

Data Churning

Data churning is similar to the process of churning of milk. Churning of milk involves vigorous agitation of milk in order to separate butter from butter milk. In a similar fashion data is always churning in the mind of the researcher and he/she is in a

constant attempt to separate the relevant information from all the data that he/she has gathered until now. It is a process of deep engagement with the data internally, and the researcher must be comfortable with the process which goes back and forth. This is a kind of spontaneous process of emergence. In Indian analogy, it can also be seen as the churning of the cosmic ocean, which is full of all kinds of elements including *amrita* (the nectar for immortal life) and *visha* (poison), in order to obtain *amrita*. Then codes, themes or patterns are identified; both apriority and emerging issues are identified. If need be, further data collection is done for greater clarity of some emerging issues, such as during the analysis, research found that intergenerational issues is repeatedly mentioned by respondents. Researcher will make a conscious attempt to collect further data. Sometimes, specific research questions emerge at this stage.

Interpretation of the Data

This again requires researcher to take the discussion through respondents' comments as an evidence to support and explain themes and patterns emerged in data churning. Metaphorical thinking is useful at this stage.

Conceptual and Theoretical Linkages and Significance of the Findings

One of the main steps in qualitative reporting is to find ways of telling the 'story' of the research in a clear and cogent way. In doing this, it is important that the subtlety richness and details of the original material are displayed while keeping the right balance between description and interpretation. There will also be a need to demonstrate the bases on which interpretations have been made and conclusions reached through showing the evidence available to support them. There will be many occasions on which descriptive and classificatory accounts will be needed to display the evidence collected. These will be required to show the nature of all kinds of phenomena, covering attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, factors, features, events, procedures and processes.

Further, researchers need to draw on ideas or concepts from other researches to help explain the findings of their study. In doing so, writers will need to give some background to how the concept or theory they are using was developed. They will also need to provide evidence, in ways already described, that there is some match between their evidence and their theory or idea.

Conclusion

We now come to the final stage of the qualitative research—that of writing the conclusion. To do so, we go full circle to the key steps of qualitative research and frame a brief summary of the outcomes of the phenomena being explored. This stage is the culmination of the whole process. It provides an opportunity for further thought as the data is assembled into a coherent structure to convey the research findings to the target audience(s). The data is assembled into a final package, which will display the findings with ordered and reflective commentary. Conclusion is therefore an interpretation of the whole journey of research.

There are certain temptations that need to be resisted in qualitative research. These include abundantly elaborate accounts, with too little selectivity of the issues or phenomena that need to be relayed; the desire to display frequency; and overuse of illustrative verbatim text or 'quotations'. It is far more important that readers are offered a clear account of the conceptual base to the analysis and how descriptive and explanatory accounts have been derived. These steps are different from the quantitative research process, hence require different skills, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Qualitative Research Design Approaches

1. *Case Study*: In a case study, a single person, programme, event, process, institution, organization, social group or phenomenon is investigated within a specified time frame, using a combination of appropriate data collection devices (Creswell, 1994). Case studies are routinely employed in

business, medicine and law. Case studies are constructed to richly describe, explain, or assess and evaluate a phenomenon (e.g., event, person, programme, etc.). The case is studied onsite within its natural context. The data-gathering process is often interactive as the researcher or researchers associate with persons involved in the case under study. The data is collected primarily by fieldwork, but secondary data collection is also usually employed. It is important that the researchers understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. There are mainly three approaches to case data analysis:

a. Interpretational analysis
b. Structural analysis
c. Reflective analysis

The case narrative richly and fully reports the subject's perceptions about the phenomenon being investigated. Researchers using the reflective analysis strategy try to draw their readers into the participants' experiences using emotive writings, poems, etc. Researchers using the other two analysis approaches tend to use an objective writing style and effectively use tables, figures, matrices, etc. Articulating theory about what is being studied and what is to be learned helps to operationalize case study designs and make them more explicit (Yin, 2009). Case study designs need to maximize their quality through four critical conditions related to design quality: (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity and (d) reliability (Yin, 2009).

2. *Ethnography*: Rooted in anthropology, ethnography involves the study of an intact group, logically defined, in its natural context for a sustained time interval. The researcher is typically an observer or a participant observer (Creswell, 1994). Goetz and LeCompte (1984, pp. 2–3) describe ethnography as '[an] analytical description of social scenes and groups that recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of those people'. Great emphasis is given to the relationship between culture and behaviour. Ethnographic research is very labour and

time intensive, involving extensive fieldwork in a natural setting. Usually, general research questions are identified. Once entry is gained and rapport (or trust) is established, the research questions are continually refined becoming more focused. It is not uncommon for the larger research questions to be segmented into more numerous, focused ones. Ethnographic researchers use multiple data collection devices so that interpretations maybe grounded and triangulated. Three specific data collection devices can be outlined as:

a. Participant observation
b. Ethnographic interviews
c. Artefact collection

Data analysis within ethnographic research occurs as data is collected. The researcher codes and classifies data (e.g., events, observations, quotes, etc.) into a meaningful taxonomy. New data is compared and contrasted to old so as to note patterns, etc. This iterative process continues until the researcher is able to make assertions that describe the participants' reality and perspectives. Findings are reported in the form of research-based assertions supported by analytical vignettes, interview quotes and interpretative observations, all intended to present a holistic, rich description of the experiences and perceptions of participants.

3. *Phenomenology*: Phenomenology is rooted in philosophy, owing its origin to the works of Husserl (1859–1938, 1982) and later authors like Heidegger (1889–1976), Sartre (1956), Merleu-Ponty (1908–1961), Moustakas (1994). The researcher develops an understanding of subjects' 'reality', however, they perceive it. In essence, this approach investigates an individual's or group's perception of reality as he or she constructs it. These realities may be expressed as an event, programme, relationship, emotion, etc. The researcher often has also a significant personal interest in the phenomenon under study. Once a phenomenon is selected, the researcher engages in much the same process as used in ethnographic study.

The process of analysing phenomenological data, according to Moustakas (1994), follows a systematic procedure that is rigorous yet accessible to qualitative researchers. The inquirer describes their own experiences with the phenomenon, identifies significant statements in the database from the participants and clusters these statements into meaningful units and themes. Next the researcher synthesizes the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals (textual and structural descriptions), and then constructs a composite description of the meanings and the essences of the experiences. The illustrative project on the experiences with a ripple effect that follows explains this process (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

4. *Grounded Theory*: Grounded theory is a general research methodology used in building naturalistic theory and is rooted in sociology. Using naturalistic iterative data collection and relationship analysis processes, researchers derive, from the data, a theory (Creswell, 1994). The theory is the expected outcome of the inquiry. Using the iterative processes of data collection and analysis, relationships between concepts are continually identified and refined so as to enable theory development. Grounded theorists employ the same data collection devices as do other qualitative researchers. The process is iterative with early data being compared and contrasted with newer data to refine, discard, generate or extend questions, hypotheses or conclusions. Using the iterative process between data collection and analysis within grounded theory, the researcher seeks to identify patterns of interaction between and among subjects (not necessarily individuals) by logically linking two or more data categories (i.e., similar topics sharing the same meaning). Strauss and Corbin (1999) explained the three major data-coding strategies used in grounded theory research:

   a. Open coding
   b. Axial coding
   c. Selective coding

Two or more related categories (or concepts) give rise to a theory, which is referred to as a proposition. Since several conceptual relationships (i.e., concepts) are required to define a theory, such theories are said to be conceptually dense. In order to achieve *integration*, the core category (or concept) is presented as a storyline which becomes the lens through which all other categories are examined. The relationships are compared to the data for validation, refinement or discard.

A modified form of grounded theory is also used for analysing data in research that is based on the researcher's interpretation, and description of phenomena based on actors' subjective descriptions and interpretations of their experiences in a context (Charmaz, 2006; Locke, 2001). Acknowledging the positivist leanings of the original authors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a later adoption of the theory by interpretive researchers stresses that theory does not emerge from data, but data is constructed from the many events observed, read about or heard about (Charmaz, 2006; Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1999). This is also referred to as constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Its two processes, discovering and emerging, are understood as covering a meticulous interpretative process in which the resulting concepts, and eventually theory, are constructed. This approach does not seek the truth as universal and lasting, but the research product is seen as a rendering or one interpretation among multiple interpretations of a shared or individual reality (Charmaz, 2006).

5. *Narrative Research*: Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use this methodology requires adopting a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). People shape their daily lives using stories of who they (and others) are and interpret their past in terms of these stories. A story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as

story, therefore, is the first and foremost way of thinking about experience. Narrative research relies on records, diaries, oral histories, photographs and other artefacts to describe, analyse and explain past events and philosophies. The artefacts and records used are driven by the particular study and its research question(s). Narrative research relies significantly on inductive and logical reasoning. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that stories illustrate the importance of learning and thinking narratively as one frames research puzzles, enters the inquiry field, and composes field texts and research texts.

Although it is lacking highly defined methodological traditions, it is a four-step process with considerable overlap:

a. Identification of the research problem
b. Collection and evaluation of source materials
c. Once evidence is collected, it must be examined. External and internal criticisms are essential components of the examination.
d. Synthesis of information
e. Analysis, interpretation and formulating conclusions

As noted above, data collection is a function of identifying documents or artefacts, examining their authenticity, chronologically ordering them, and then determining value or contribution to the research effort. Cross-referencing (triangulation) is essential to establish the veracity of a single document or artefact. Each document or artefact needs to undergo chronological examination. Core ideas, concepts and facts need to be 'pulled together' so as to make sense, given the context of the period of time or event under study. Reports of research are usually presented in narrative, without headings; however, this is changing now. The purpose of the study is typically cited first and placed within a context. Next, any research questions or hypotheses are presented with supportive or contradictory evidence; the hypothesis is either retained or refuted. Once all the evidence is presented, conclusions are drawn.

Evolution of Qualitative Research

There are plausible academic as well as social indicators that qualitative research has become an indispensable part of the methodological repertoire of the social sciences. It has been used by researchers worldwide including India for many exploratory studies. It is desirable for us to acknowledge the warriors in India who dared to conduct qualitative research when there was no recognition and skill development. Doctoral programme in management in leading institutions and universities did not have a course on qualitative research. A few pioneers of qualitative research in India are researchers like Professor M. N. Srinivas (1976, 2002) in anthropology, Professor Narayan R. Sheth (1968) (IIM-A) in ethnography, Professor Udai Pareek (1961) in action research , Professor Ranjan Das (2000) in strategy and Professor Rajen K. Gupta (1990) in auto-ethnographic action research.

Dr Girishwar Mishra (2009), a senior professor of psychology in Delhi University, pointed out in a conversation that, in his experience, research in psychology in India has given attention to only testing of existing (mostly foreign) theories and none to concept formation and theory building. This approach tends to focus mainly on the published scholarly literature, identifying the so-called 'gaps' and unexamined relationships between umpteen variables for unmentioned populations. To top it all, there is always a replication waiting for every new study done abroad. It is enough to keep all our doctoral scholars busy and much more.

We would like to briefly mention our strong allegiance to an ontology for human sciences that not only acknowledges that there exists an inner human reality along with visible behaviour but also admits that without taking account of the inner reality there exists no 'human' science; only physics, chemistry and biology, etc. This ontological position has serious implications for the epistemology and methodology of doing research. The psychologists not only need to recover the legacy of Wundt (1973) and James (1978) but also need to embrace the insights of Husserl (1859–1938), Heidegger (1889–1976), Dewey (1910), Berger and Thomas (1966), Glaser and Strauss (1965), Gergen (1996) and others.

We also feel that Indian philosophical literature has extremely valuable insights into our humanness and its yet unrealized potential. This is both at the ontological and the epistemological levels. We firmly hold the view that the modern western model of the human being is a truncated model, and unfortunately so because it leaves out what is most important in us. It leaves out our spiritual potential which the mystics in every tradition have experienced, and without the acknowledgement of which we are bound to remain stuck in the quicksand of the lower elements of our nature. But lest we be misunderstood, here we are not suggesting a revisionary approach of psychology which accepts ancient scriptures as the received 'truth'. Instead, what we are advocating is twofold: first, it is very well worthy of a scientist to consider the insights from the scriptures as serious conjectures about the nature of reality, and second, to take their methodological recommendations as seriously as those of the modern material sciences. Here we wish to point towards the insufficiency of even the latest qualitative and interpretive methods being developed in the west today. We sense the possibility of developing more appropriate research methodologies using Buddhist literature and the writings of Sri Aurobindo. In our reading, Sri Aurobindo is the most creative philosopher–psychologist of modern times. His model of the evolving human being seems to be the most comprehensive model we have come across. However, it is only a model for us to examine through a rigorous process of inquiry consistent with the complexity and richness of the model. Dr Dharm Bhawuk's (2011) work in this direction is worth emulating. The work done by the Indian Psychology Institute, under the leadership of Dr Cornellisen (2001), is out rightly commendable.

However, we are not recommending that we limit ourselves to scriptural models. Each one of us has the creative potential to think anew and demolish, modify or extend any existing idea based on our experience and insight. Here we would like to mention the creative efforts of some of our compatriots. Professor Pareek (1968) extended McClleland's theory of motivation. This was further extended by Dr Prayag Mehta (1994). Dr J. B. P. Sinha (1980) disputed the appropriateness of the western theories of leadership in Indian culture and proposed a new

model of leadership. Dr M. N. Srinivas (1966) gave the concepts of *sanskritization* and *westernization* to explain social change in India. There may be some other examples that we are not aware of in various sub-domains in psychology. Dr Abinash Panda and Dr Rajen Gupta (2007) have written a review of such efforts in the field of organizational behaviour. More recently, Professor Satish Kalra (1997) had proposed a new framework for 'Human Potential Management' in organizations, which received international recognition and being researched upon. Dr Ashish Pandey (2008), a faculty member in IIT Mumbai and a doctoral scholar from Management Development Institute (MDI), had developed a new conceptualization of the *spiritual climate* of an organization, which received recognition in international reviews (refer Pandey and Gupta, 2008).

There is another crucial process in the scientific inquiry. A concept does not achieve scientific status until it is discussed a number of times through various media, such as conferences and peer-reviewed journals. Only when it goes through refinement that it forms a part of theoretical lexicon of the concerned knowledge domain. Establishing a new concept is not an overnight activity; it takes years of work and dialogue.

We have another pain point here with regard to our community. Simply said, we do not take the conceptual contribution by our compatriots seriously. Look at the reference lists of published papers and you would understand what we are trying to say.

Science is an interesting activity in another sense. On the one hand it requires intensely focused activity by the individual, but on the other hand your efforts do not count until endorsed by a community, and seen to be connected to others' work. Hence it is our earnest plea to this community to take each other's work in the truly scientific spirit. Critique it thoroughly. To ignore it is worse than tearing it apart.

In nutshell, we suggest:

1. In spite of being a large community of highly intelligent scholars in various human sciences, we have contributed very few concepts and theories which could enrich our own knowledge base, as well as contribute to the global knowledge.

2. We surmise that, whatever be the reasons for not doing so until now, we can do so if we understand the process of living as a continuous process of knowledge creation for our use.
3. Given our innate ability to do metaphorical thinking, we can and must move into the playful game of proposing new ideas as constructs while being ready to engage in a sincere dialogue to modify or drop them.
4. We, therefore, must be ready for the tedious job of critically examining the constructs and their relationship through a thorough and rigorous inquiry.
5. Finally, we must engage in large communities, nationally and internationally, to compare, contrast and critique the value of emerging theories.

Conclusion

This book serves as a comprehensive introduction to the practice of qualitative research. It contributes to our understanding of qualitative research by providing a detailed analysis of the views of contributors about what goes into the production of good qualitative management research. With the caveat that good quality is a contested concept that has multiple interpretations, we have outlined the skills, knowledge and practices our interviewees saw as requisite for the production of high-quality qualitative research, and have discussed the implications for management learning in this area. From an interpretivist perspective, we maintain that it is important to understand the skills, knowledge and practices required for competence within the context of a researcher's conception of what it means to be a qualitative researcher, and that training needs to take into consideration qualitative researchers' sense-making processes around the nature of their work. It is a complex process to become an accomplished qualitative researcher. It requires engagement with a philosophically diverse field where there are different assessments of quality at play. It requires a range of skills and knowledge, besides the opportunities to reflect, be reflexive and experience being a

qualitative researcher in order to learn and develop. We hope that after reading this book, you will have a firm understanding of qualitative research approach as a holistic process. We present a series of chapters that have been written by upcoming researchers, which will take us behind the curtain to the real world of qualitative research, with its messiness, disappointments, ethical dilemmas, and unique joys. We hope that the book encourages critical questions along the way.

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2

On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher

Richa Awasthy

Prelude

This chapter describes two of my mentors' experiences and one my senior professor's journeys, whom I have always admired and desired to work with as qualitative researchers. My goal is to increase your understanding of qualitative research by capturing your interest in their narratives and the methods they have used. I followed an inductive approach to write this chapter and interviewed these senior professors to get deeper insights into their journey of becoming a qualitative researcher. For a neophyte qualitative researcher who is finding his/her voice as a growing qualitative researcher, these narratives serve as an inspiration. As the dialogue moves, the chapter provides you with a first-hand look at the experiences of Professor Jai B. P. Sinha, Professor Rajen K. Gupta and Professor Anand Prakash throughout their first qualitative journeys. Professor Jai B. P. Sinha's journey is derived from the inferences drawn from his published paper, 'Living and doing Psychology', which he shared with me

when I approached him with my questions about his qualitative journey. Each narrative highlights some of the most important ideas regarding the conceptual and pragmatic challenges that you will face. After introducing these senior qualitative researchers to you through their own personal qualitative journeys, I will review some of the basic concepts and principles that were identified from their narratives. I am not giving any prescriptions, rather I am trying to bring together their experiences of how they started from scratch and made their own *pagdandi* (path) and perhaps they have created a guiding path for others.

The experiences and voices of researchers ring loud and clear in building a sense of interest and devotion in the qualitative paradigm; and, after writing it, I am also energized to move forward with my own qualitative journey.

Professor J. B. P. Sinha's Journey[1]

A Highly Involved Journey: Full of Pain and Pleasure

When I look back at about 45 years of my research journey, I see three somewhat overlapping phases showing that my research has co-evolved with the way I related to my milieu. The first 15 years witnessed my struggle to outgrow the alien framework by conducting research that, I thought, addressed the most salient sociocultural issues in the Indian context with the methods that seemed to be the most appropriate. For the next 15 years, I tried to claim a legitimate space for my research on the international landscape. My encounters there—enriching and yet frustrating—led me to realize that I can at best be an Indian cultural psychologist. In the third phase, therefore, I returned to focus on my ongoing interest in organizational behaviour that I believe is deeply embedded in the Indian societal culture inheriting psycho-philosophical

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented in a symposium on Indian Psychology: Theory, Methods, and Trends during the NAoP Conference at IIT, Guwahati on 14–17 December 2008. This paper was also published in *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 22 (1) (2010): 95–119, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC.

thoughts from the ancient time. Hence, I have been exploring, through multi-authored, multi-centred and multi-method research, how the ancient Indian wisdom has filtered through contemporary experiences to create an inclusive Indian mindset that manifests in social and organizational behaviour.

A blend of my early childhood and adolescence experiences probably seasoned me to take an idealistic stance and stick to an impoverished place throughout my life without looking for a greener pasture. I justified doing so in the belief that our societal issues look so magnified from this vantage point that I can see them with my naked eyes and experience them first hand. My personalized understanding, I hoped, would establish a grounded knowledge base that could help identify strategies for improving human well-being. The rest of the chapter elaborates how I went through this process.

The journey has been long and highly involved. Hindi literature was my first love. But I opted for psychology under the influence of a close friend. Having made the decision, I opted for industrial–social psychology at the Ohio State in the early 1960s. I started believing that a worthwhile research must flow from a researcher's symbiotic relationships with his or her social milieu and that the findings must have the potential to impact the milieu in a positive way; scientific methods are only the means to this end. I came out of the American shadow and started probing the Indian social reality, and it was the reality that guided me throughout the journey. I started probing the Indian reality more enthusiastically, which so far was seen from the Western perspective, studied by borrowed methods and constructed either inadequately or inappropriately. I felt having a missionary zeal to either identify new cultural facets or refute the Western ones, hoping to turn around the Indian psychological research. Obviously, there was a shift from experimental to non-experimental publications for which Indian journals were more receptive than foreign journals. I was indeed grounding myself into the Indian issues, digging out new ideas and publishing them that, I thought, brought new facets of the Indian reality to the notice of other psychologists. I was becoming more Indian probably by shedding my earlier interjected American perspective. Corresponding to

the changes in the research interests, there was a shift in the methods that I employed. There was not enough time or a sufficient number of (right kind of) psychologists to patiently decompose the real-life problems into small researchable pieces and to investigate them in sequential order. I was tempted to develop profiles of some of the realities no matter how many pieces hung loosely here and there (Sinha, 1997, p. 80).

I was still itching for a foray into the international psychology. As the foreign journals had virtually closed the door, I had to find another route. The first opportunity arose when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPsyS) jointly organized a seminar on the transfer of Western psychological knowledge and its impact on traditional thinking patterns and values in the third world during the IAAP conference in Edinburg in 1982. For me, the seminar suggested an effective strategy to emphatically present the case of an Indian approach in subsequent conferences. It worked both ways. I was often questioned that helped me expand my perspective, and generate new ideas, which in turn gained me better visibility and acceptability. I also started getting heard and listened to and was able to engage my international counterparts in meaningful dialogues. Another avenue to international arena opened up unexpectedly in 1981. I was invited by the German Association of Psychiatry to present a paper on Hindu identity (Sinha, 1982b) and simultaneously to join them to form the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry (WADP). They expected me to share Indian religio-philosophical and spiritual thoughts that can enrich their deliberations. I was made a Vice President in 1984 representing the third world, along with two others for the USA and Eastern Europe.

All these recognitions were challenges to me to prove myself. It stimulated three streams of work. The first was to position psychology as a policy science expanding its role in defining national development in terms of human development, identifying the principles and suggesting strategies to engineer human development that can facilitate as well as get reinforced by economic development (Sinha, 1992a). The second stream of my

work pertained to my search of the ancient Indian thoughts for contributing to the ongoing deliberations of the WADP. To tell the truth, I was not particularly interested initially in the ancient Indian thoughts; for I used to suspect that such a past-oriented preoccupation would distract me from exploring the social reality in terms of contemporary factors such as poverty, people's habit, and social systems. However, once I started digging up the literature, I became increasingly impressed by the resilience and relevance of the ancient Indian wisdom for cultivating a more comprehensive view of the Indian mindset. I was particularly impressed by the concepts of *cosmic collectivism, hierarchical order and spiritual orientation*. Altogether, I wrote nine papers in course of about 10 years (Sinha, 1982a, 1983, 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1992b, 1993). All of them were published in the WADP journal, *Dynamic Psychiatry*. The third stream, leadership studies, in fact continued to occupy most of my attention. In due course, I found that Indians use coercive and referent power more frequently than other bases; coercive for *paray log* (out-group) and referent for *apane log* (in-group). Ideally, in my view, *daan* empowers both the donor and the recipient by creating a social norm of sharing resources. Extending this logic, it seemed to me that a leader's *daan* of *sneh* to the subordinates evokes *shradhaa* of subordinates, and thus empower both the leader and his or her subordinates.

Many of my international colleagues insisted that I conduct cross-cultural studies, but my perception in this context is that they have a full-grown theory, a well-computerized research strategy, a comprehensive plan, and a grant or contacts to get data collected at several points on the globe. When they approach me, I find myself in a difficult position. Neither our approaches, nor our methods or priorities match. Their concepts and theories are at best only partly applicable in the Indian setting. I do not have the need to carry the cross of someone's theory or approach nor do I have the resources to try mine in some other cultures. My hunch is that even if I try, I will be imposing my emic under the delusion of realizing an etic. Maybe the best I can do is to try to be a cultural rather than a cross-cultural psychologist (Sinha, 1997, p. 83).

Around mid-1990s, I expanded the range of my studies of organizational cultures and attempted to frame them within the Indian societal culture. I believed that organizational cultures are embedded in their societal culture that provides a comprehensive frame for understanding the former. From Indian national organizations, I moved to study the subsidiaries (including one joint venture) of foreign multinationals. Of course, I tried to retain our scientific temper, but had to redefine what I thought to be scientific in terms of the methods and the procedures that seemed most helpful in understanding the unfolding of increasingly complex social reality. In each of these cases and so many others I could name, my journey began with intense curiosity to make sense of Indian culture that eludes me. After reviewing the existing research and literature, I still feel like there is something significant that is missing. In the process, I expanded my toolkit by adding and then prioritizing qualitative over quantitative methods as well as expanding the geographical coverage of my research. It is from such investigations that new theories are developed, new phenomena are understood, and professionals in a variety of disciplines can be better informed about concepts that can guide their practice. It has been an expedition that was full of pains and pleasures, and above all a sense of calling to keep going on. I hope to continue on until I fade away.

Professor Rajen K. Gupta

A Journey of an Inductive Researcher Who Emphasizes on Understanding Others Rather than Following Methodological Prescriptions....

Learning to conduct qualitative research is beyond the acquisition of research knowledge and technical skill. It is more of a personal journey which inculcates a variety of attributes and abilities like empathy, flexibility and inquisitiveness, among others. Hence in reflecting upon my journey as a qualitative researcher, I tune in briefly to my personal thoughts and feelings. I do not consider myself a systematic qualitative researcher because I do not believe

in following methodological steps mechanically. I am driven by my own intuition. My journey as a qualitative researcher can be traced back to my undergraduate studies.

When I was a young B.Tech. scholar at IIT-Kanpur, societal issues started bothering me. I was baffled by the social contrast of our Indian society in which at one end was the deteriorating city of Kanpur with no development and growth opportunities and at the other end there was IIT-Kanpur with so many bright engineers. I have always felt angst about the Indian society, and the conditions in Kanpur made these feelings more acute. My interest in human nature became more pronounced during a course on psychology in B.Tech. programme. This course motivated me towards Indian psychology and human behaviour, and I started reading Indian philosophy. I started feeling an identity crisis. Questions like 'do I really want to work as an engineer when my heart lies somewhere else' started puzzling my mind.

Then was the period between my B.Tech. and doctoral programme at IIM-Ahmedabad. There was a five-year gap. I was preparing for Indian Administrative Services (IAS), because I wanted to serve our society. I enjoyed reading classics of psychology, philosophy by Vivekanand and Sri Aurobindo, and somehow felt an existential crisis. At that time Sri Aurobindo readings guided me and I had him in my dream telling me, 'Do what you are good at and serve the society through that'. It has been the most cherished mystical experience of my life and it gave me a sense of oneness, openness and motivated me towards applied social sciences. I realized that IAS is not the only way to serve the society. I realized that I can contribute best by doing what I can do best and that became my guiding principle. It was an inspiring ideology that helped me to make sense of my behaviour and, consciously or unconsciously, 'doing what I am good at' became my guiding principle. Following my heart, I discontinued my preparation for IAS as I was not feeling connected with it. Soon after this incident, I joined master's programme in Applied Psychology, but with time I realized that psychology is influenced by positivist view. I felt that this is not what I was looking for. I was consistently feeling a trail of questions like 'what am I searching for', following me day and night. My instinct was further

reinforced by one of the reports that I came across at my home. It was prepared when I was in 7th or 8th standard. Our class underwent a three-day psychological assessment. The report said, '*iski shabdik yogyata, yantrik yogyata se adhik hai*' (his verbal skills are more profuse than his technical skills).

As a young man, I did not want to burden my parents with my expenses and hence I joined State Bank of India (SBI). It was around 1973 at SBI Hyderabad that I underwent T-group during an orientation programme. My exposure to T-group was exciting and useful and further reinforced my belief in studying human behaviour and doing something for the Indian society. Somewhere I felt I was becoming clearer on what I want to do. There I heard about Professor Udai Pareek who was a very famous behavioural scientist associated with the T-group. I felt Applied Behavioural Sciences to be fascinating. This feeling took shape of the impetus required for me to become a professional member of Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Sciences (ISABS) and I joined it. It is until today that I continue to be involved with ISABS.

After the orientation programme, I was sent to Lucknow to attend an induction programme of SBI. There I came across Sri Mahesh Yogi Meditation Centre, where I learned transcendental meditation and I started practising it. Then I was posted at Gandhinagar (Ahmedabad); it was my first posting. As I was near Ahmedabad, I decided to meet Professor Udai Pareek who was at that time teaching at IIM-Ahmedabad.

I met Professor Udai Pareek and joined IIM-Ahmedabad Fellowship Programme. It was at that time when I first thought about the qualitative research. It was not taught as a method. Also I did only one term paper on group dynamic course. I did study for this course term paper intuitively. At that time I interviewed a CEO and drew inferences out of it.

It was the 1976 era at IIM-Ahmedabad. As a part of course work, I did two assignments based on interviews, although we were not taught about qualitative research. Then, after completing comprehensive examination, I started developing my thesis proposal for theoretical research on psycho-emotional worldview. However, Professor Udai Pareek dissuaded me and suggested that I should study organizational reality while working on my

conceptual proposal. Along with my theoretical interest, I was highly influenced by socio-technical systems and action research developed by Tavistock School. My choice of action research was an emotional one. I was attracted towards it. I was never interested in pure research. I strongly felt that action has to be an integral part of it. Therefore, I chose action research. My guide, Professor Udai Pareek told me that he had never worked with this theory and if I know it then I should go ahead with it. I was interested in understanding Amul-India case and decided to go for the field work in a small town of Gujarat. Soon I found myself struggling with a sense of loneliness in that town. I decided to come back. Then I started doing action research in a textile mill. I wanted to focus on a particular section of the mill. However, the manager of that mill was reluctant to undertake any changes. Although it was possible to put pressure on him, I decided to drop that project. It was against the values of action research.

Professor Udai Pareek (a consultant to SBI at that time) introduced me to SBI for doing action research in Ahmedabad zonal office. I worked there in an informal capacity and provided them support in HR functions. Hence I had an opportunity to do participatory observations as well as initiate interventions.

I took radical position as a research scholar. Since I was doing action research, I was not collecting any data in the field, explicitly for research purpose. So my data was what emerged through action. I relied on observations, informal interactions, some interventions that I did over there. While I grappled with my doctoral course work, I was also struggling to make a choice among three professors for who would be my guide. Since I felt most comfortable with Professor Udai Pareek, I chose him to be my guide.

I used to read a lot in general and on action research, such as Michel Polanyi, John Dewey, the Grounded Theory and the social construction of reality. I found Polanyi's writings, in particular, to be very inspiring. As I gradually realized, his theories were very insightful for my approach and hence I started gaining confidence and clear argument of his work.

I did my research without being concerned about the *rigours of methodology*. I decided to undertake my own assessment of rigour in qualitative research and developed a clear argument for my

work; whatever we do it should have value. I did lots of reading. I was self-interest driven. I also read the grounded theory, which influenced me to write my notes in detail. I used to work on my field notes and reflections every evening. I used to connect them with the extant theory in the form of what are now called memos. I was continuously struggling to shape the ideas. I was trying to identify both views of reality: one that has already been confirmed by the existing literature and the changed scenario that I was now looking at. I did everything in my doctoral research purely intuitively. Professor Udai Pareek later on called my approach as *Quasi-ethnographic*.

After completing fellowship from IIM-Ahmedabad, I took up a job because I wanted to experience organizations before taking a faculty position. I got married and shared my life philosophy with my life partner, 'I would like to do that work which I find worthwhile and we will have to make do with the money which I get from that'. She lent her unconditional support to let me follow my heart. At that time I was working as manager at Jyoti Ltd.

When I joined IIM-Lucknow, I started observing that people had a narrow view of organizations, whereas according to me organizations are a fascinating creation of human beings. My mission was to orient future managers to view organizations from multiple perspectives. However, soon after moving to Lucknow, the political scenario there started changing drastically and the industrial development took a back seat. This made me feel that I was going out of touch from the latest developments in organizations. Therefore, I moved to Management Development Institute (MDI), where I got an opportunity to be a part of the faculty team that is involved in designing of the fellow programme. This kindled a mission in my mind to prove myself and others that good research is possible in India. I would like to acknowledge Professor Pritam Singh for giving me this opportunity. As a result, I could devote my last 15 years to fellowship programme and nurturing the young researchers. My view has been that we are preparing researchers for at least next 30 to 40 years. It has been an extremely fulfilling experience for me connecting and working with young scholars. It was a reflection of fulfilling my

desire. Whenever I see committed and hard-working researchers, I feel like nurturing and coaching them. When I see them doing well, I feel great. I also look for a match between mine and others' value system before establishing a relationship. It is important for me to experience a bond or a common set of values with whom I work.

Over the period of time, I have read a lot in my own discipline as well as on Indian philosophy. I am also impressed with the Buddhist philosophy, especially concepts like dependent co-origination, which means that everything is connected with everything. It does not have a concept of self. There is even the possibility of realizing liberation through selfless commitment towards scholarly work. For me, it resonates with the Buddhist maxim, 'when you achieve enlightenment, the only thing that is flowing is compassion (*karuna*)'. This principle helps me in my research. I am not driven by goal orientation, numbers or achievements. When I publish, I am concerned about the utility of that writing and not about the credit or points for that publication in my institute. The publication should reach maximum number of relevant people. I had the similar feeling when I published my first independent paper in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Somehow I have never re-written my papers and they have been accepted by research fraternity. However, I cannot write anything for the sake of writing. I write when I have something to say.

Reflecting further on the connection between my philosophy of life and pursuing research, the process of empathic interpretation seems to be inevitably the only way for a researcher to understand people's thoughts, feelings and experiences in an organization, and hence I feel that I have a natural inclination towards 'interpretivism'. For this, one has to go through the exploratory process of immersing oneself in the social phenomena of interest. A mode of immersion in observation assignment during qualitative research course or a case study of an organization can be partially a source of reflection. Interviews do not provide full opportunity for immersion, but deep listening may take one very close to it. Since I was concerned about the human conditions from the very beginning, I had a natural inclination for this.

As a researcher, I have respect for people doing research whether it is qualitative or quantitative. Doing research is a very important contribution in today's complex chaotic world. We need indigenous models, which future researchers of India will definitely provide. I feel satisfied and a sense of accomplishment when I see young researchers working hard and committed to the research. I would like to see them create a community of genuine enquirers into the human conditions and do whatever they can to improve it.

I would like to put summation to my reflection on becoming a qualitative researcher by acknowledging that intuition, reflection and intellectual dialogue have been influential in my journey. I will continue to do so! I feel satisfied as a researcher and as a person!

Professor Anand Prakash

A Journey of a Quantitative Researcher Turning into Qualitative Researcher through a Process of Reflection

My passion for doing qualitative research can be traced back to the time of my dissertation. Although I did my PhD in quantitative research in socialization of first-generation worker, I always looked forward to the qualitative classes that were taught as an appendage, as a secondary method. Almost for 15 to 20 years I continued in the direction of the quantitative research. I was following logical positivism where reality is seen from an outside view and which can be understood through instruments and questionnaires. In the early 1990s when I almost reached stability in my carrier, that is, about the time when I was an associate professor and had supervised about four to five doctoral fellowships, I had a mid-life reflection: 'What am I trying to do through research? Am I contributing to the development of the theory or the body of knowledge in any way? Is it helping me to grow as a person?' However, there was nowhere any satisfying answer to be found in response to these questions.

I was teaching applied psychology and there was always a quest to apply psychological knowledge. About that time, I did a project with Professor Jai B. P. Sinha for Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). We reviewed 120 projects and it was a discouraging experience. I realized quantitative research offers mechanics to measure without getting engaged with the human issues. How can human science be so unconcerned with human issues? So I felt that I should stop doing research and start doing something else. Since I was in the university teaching, there was an opportunity for me to bring a change in the department. To make most of it, in 1997, I with Grishwarji introduced a course on qualitative research. At the same time, two of my students wanted to do qualitative research but were rejected by the Department Research Committee (DRC). This rejection further strengthened my determination and I again presented their case and got it through. I did overcome the pressure of dominant voice in education, which was quantitative research oriented. I still do quantitative research. In my view, it is the research question that is more important to decide instead of which approach I take, quantitative or qualitative. All of my fieldwork experiences have some elements of complex human interactions and I have grown as a result of these experiences. Here I provide a brief narrative of how qualitative studies have impacted me, both personally and professionally.

I can see that being a qualitative researcher is helping me in growing as an individual. Makes me more reflective! I realized the importance of narratives and conversations. Language is very crucial to understand human experiences. If I want to understand human psychology, narratives and discourses become very important. We are looking at others' experiences and we are sharing our understanding of others' experiences. It is possible that I may bring in my subjectivity. Therefore, I should stop believing that there is anything that is free of prejudice and biases, so why don't I enclose it and acknowledge it in my scheme of things. To prevent oneself from its negative effect is only by becoming aware of it. Hence, one has to acquire the position of an informed researcher. We experience social transactions with people, and that brings changes in us. Then, why should we take the position of bias to

free truth. After all, truth can be multiple. In quantitative terms this is called bias, whereas in qualitative terms this has different versions of reality. Each one of us should be allowed to take their truth forward so that a more comprehensive truth can emerge. It makes one more accepting and takes away fundamentalism and provides with a liberating experience of a researcher. There is no anxiety to work without any fixed procedure.

Qualitative research takes one closer to the reality. Such as if I ask you to describe yourself as a child, as a wife, as a mother, as a professor, different versions of truth will be elicited. It does not mean that you are lying. Human self is contextualized; therefore specification of time, situation and place is very important.

I have also realized the importance of artefacts. There is a gap between the way I lead life and the way I describe myself. Such as right now, I am presenting a passionate qualitative researcher's image to you, whom I cherish, but when I share my experience, I am referring to the past and presenting this in the present. So my own version of that experience has changed. It happens when one asks me for something happened in the past and I actually share my interpretation of that experience. When I converse I want to move to an image which is closer to my cherishing self. Hence existence is multi-layered: there is physicality, mind and feelings. I can talk about furniture at physicality level. It is static. Human life does not live the same as the physical world. We experience unique feelings at psychological level. It is subjective, unique and an individualized experience, which can be understood in a qualitative way. There are continuous transactions, which leads to giving different meanings to the reality.

There is no difference between a dancer and a dance. There is so much of immersion that it becomes a part of the dancer; it's assembled. It is a different kind of experience. It makes one tolerant to different views. The researcher is no more concerned with the accuracy and accepts the reality in the way it is emerging. Recently, I interviewed the famous Indian *Kathak* dancer Shovana Narayan (*Padmashri*) who lives, worships and practises *Kathak*. It is part of her identity. I found her an exemplar of oneness between dance and dancer. Interacting with people and knowing and learning from their experiences is rewarding in

itself. Qualitative research gives me a platform to learn different shades of one's life. It keeps me in a learning mode, which is satisfying as an individual and researcher.

Being a qualitative researcher taught me to become critically reflexive. This is about asking why I am interpreting a particular thing in a particular way. I question my own interpretation. When one learns to direct queries to oneself, it starts getting reflected in his or her conversations. Such as when I say, *aap samajh nahin paaye* or *mein samjha nahin paaya* (you didn't understand or I was not able to make you understand). That is, whether you are taking the ownership or you are putting blame on the other side. Ramchandran's work tells us that mind manufactures its own reality and we tend to believe that our mind is telling us the truth. We are expanding our own reality. In his words, *hum gyaan ki soch mein bandh jaate hein* (we get engulfed in the thinking of wisdom). So we have a tendency to immediately interpret, which may not be appropriate when we are trying to understand someone else's world.

I became self-aware and more tolerant on my way to becoming a qualitative researcher. I entered into a tradition of dialogue and not discussion. Dialogue is when different voices prevail at the same time. In an interview, focus should be on dialogue. Whereas in a discussion, various ideas are crushed and one idea prevails as the upholder of ultimate truth.

Reading literature and writing poems is my passion. It's my very personal thing. I write Hindi poetry. It touches my heart and allows me to connect with people. According to me, stories and narratives have a very long life. Live examples are the great Hindu mythologies Ramayana and Mahabharata, which have lived more than 500 years. Recently, I bought all volumes of Mahabharata serial and I am watching everyday an episode. I am able to make my own interpretations and I find those lessons relevant even in today's context. One of my learning from reading literature is that I have overcome fear and anxiety of death. Reading helps me to appreciate that many interpretations coexist. Narratives touch something inside you. The way we live life has an impact on the kind of research we do (*self-awareness is crucial*). I was told by a colleague in Delhi University that the way I describe my

points, everyone gets connected. It is important to read between the lines. You listen more and talk less.

Writing skills is an issue with me. I write less. I write only when I have something meaningful to say. I prefer writing with paper and pencil without having books in front of me. It is more based on my thinking. The challenge for me is to convey my thoughts without so many words. Thick descriptions do not mean writing bundle of pages; it is about the intensity and richness. Such as if I have to share my relationship with my son qualitatively, it will be like: 'Due to our busy schedule we do not get much time to interact, so sometimes I go to his room, touch him and hug him. He also reciprocates. We communicate feelings to each other and there is no open dialogue between us and we feel each other's presence'.

Active listening has sharpened over a period of time. Rather than jumping into explaining what that was, I pay whole attention to the person and things that enrich my understanding. Such as, I am able to hear both the told and the untold voices of my students. Gone are the days when lecture method was the most appropriate method of teaching. Nowadays students want eclectic pedagogical approach. Hence I, depending upon their interest, design my sessions and I am always flexible to change.

Data collection is very important to me as a researcher. An interview of 45 minutes takes six hours to transcript. It is a boring job. I always feel that it is better to take notes. I note down whatever I observe. A researcher may write memos or reflective journal or field diary. This should be taken extensively. From the first interview to the fifth one, the researcher is more of an informed researcher. Saturation is when one gets to hear the same things over and again. That is the time to process the data otherwise new learning will not arise. The researcher has to undergo a fight between familiarity and new learning (*challenge existing wisdom*). New categories will emerge. The researcher may suffer from lack of validity and that fear may hold him or her back. Hence, researcher has to establish a connection with the existing literature. Although research is a very messy process, we have to present it in a very neat way. I have learned that the ability to tolerate ambiguity is very crucial. Qualitative research is liberating

as we accept ambiguity a way of life. If one is so much concerned about the sequential process of conducting research, then he or she may have difficulty in becoming a qualitative researcher.

I discovered through interviews that accessibility in data collection means accessibility in many ways! It is also interference in someone's personal life. How much one is willing to reveal, should be respected. There is always a calculated risk. Suddenly a person becomes cautious while sharing some aspects of his life. I don't push myself and re-establish my credential, rather I change my style. Such as when I was doing a project with Indian Airlines, I experienced people were uncomfortable with interviews. I changed my style and started collecting narratives, stories and informal conversations. That became my data.

One of my doctoral students was working on the notion of success in women managers. While collecting data, her respondent started crying and the student also became emotional. Both of them were crying. After completing her interview, she called me and asked, 'I started crying during the data collection. Have I spoiled my data?' I replied, 'Since you are aware of your emotional state, you should document it and it is an authentic data'. Sometimes it happens that when you are interviewing you share your own experiences with the respondent. It is absolutely fine. In interviewing we co-create meaning.

My most fulfilling research experience has been maintaining long-term relationships. One has to establish a bond. The researcher is in a mode of cooperative inquiry. For instance, as a researcher I share my part of things with the respondents. Whatever a respondent shares with the researcher is a reflection of the researcher's capability of knowing that much truth. *Mujhmein itna hi sach sambhalne ki kshamta thi* (I have only this much capability of understanding), that is, I must enhance my credibility so that people are willing to share their experiences more in-depth with me. One should remember that you are not an investigating agency. Here I want to cite an example from my personal experience. I was interviewing a call centre's employees and since they work during night shifts, I had to fight against my biological clock and took interviews at mid night. Understanding the context is extremely important in social science research. There I

came across a young boy who for every question gave me a standard answer, 'it's cool'. Nothing concrete was emerging, I could feel that I was unable to touch the base. After spending sufficient time with him, I asked him, 'What is cool for you?' Somewhere I touched a very sensitive point for him and he opened so much with me. He was going through some family tussle and struggling for his love. I felt that he needed a shoulder to shed off his burden. Whenever I find respondents are not open to share their experiences, I tell myself to change my perspective so that I can better understand their side of story.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this work is that I started looking inwards to find out my biases. I learned to challenge them. For instance, as a teacher I have to find out ways to make my teaching interesting and find alternate ways. Asking question is an art! It is like learning art of conversation and how to ask facilitating questions. The researcher's own curiosity will play an important role. The researcher should come across as someone who is interested in listening, which gives confidence to the respondent. The researcher creates an evidence of listening.

Behaviour can be best understood in the context, such as when you are studying bank scandals then you have to look at the status of financial market and political conditions to explain those scandals. All beliefs and assumptions occur within a societal and cultural context.

The ability to read between the lines and staying close to one's own subjectivity is very important. Since researcher is a primary tool of data collection, acknowledging your own feelings, thoughts and transactions in our interactions and how they impact you is very crucial. *Kya kaha* (what is said) is your data and *kya samjha* (what you understand) is your interpretation. ... There should be integrity in these two things in the qualitative research.

The opportunity to be a qualitative researcher was stimulating for me. The way it engaged me as a learner, I found myself embedded in an environment where I am concurrently learning to extend my research skills and investigative abilities with a sense of a deep passion for and appreciation of the qualitative paradigm. I cannot help but get the sense that after decades of qualitative experiences, I am still learning as a scholar and growing as a

researcher. In reflecting on my journey of becoming a qualitative researcher, I saw it as challenging yet rewarding. The hallmark of qualitative work is its ability to expose theoretical boundaries and push theoretical insights.

Emerging Themes

As the reader of these narratives, I was struck by the diversity, complexity and richness of the research undertaken by these seniors and by the personal insights arrived at through self-reflection, dialogue with colleagues and engagement with literature and theory. In this section, I seek to draw out and interpret the emerging themes from these journeys as a qualitative researcher. The themes that emerge include: emphasis on reading; resilience; reflective mindset; conduct socially relevant studies; adopt methodology that makes people comfortable to share their feelings and opinions; epistemological position; strong belief in emic approach; personal experiences and engagement; empathic neutrality and mindfulness; and listen to your own intuition. These themes are elaborated further.

Reading

The first lesson that I learned was to read extensively and then read some more. Of course, this applies to any research undertaking. However, one needs to know what research exists and how others have treated a particular topic so that one can determine what additional research is needed. Prior studies provide a foundation, background and context for new research; it establishes a bridge between the (proposed) research project and the extant knowledge base. Not only readings pertaining to one's discipline but also those that engulf the researcher as a reader contribute towards becoming a qualitative researcher. All the three senior researchers were inspired by readings on philosophy, literature and culture.

Resilience

As an ideal, the qualitative researcher needs considerable flexibility and openness. Qualitative researchers should make decisions on the basis of their research design and in terms of the changing contexts and situations in which the research takes place. One of the strengths of qualitative approach is that this flexibility can enhance the research leading to unanticipated, but significant, issues.

Reflective Mindset

The qualitative researcher should be reflective about his or her own voice and perspective. A credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness. Reflexivity is a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective. Being reflexive involves self-questioning and self-understanding. To be reflexive, then, is to undertake an ongoing examination of what I know and how I know it. Reflexivity reminds the researcher to be attentive and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice, as well as the perspective and voices of the respondents. Reflexivity not only highlights how human positioning influences the research processes, but also exposes how an object of inquiry can be interpreted from multiple vantage points. In this way, reflexivity adds depth and plurality to the inquiry process.

Conduct Socially Relevant Studies

A research must not be done for credits or name in journals, but for a cause that is socially relevant. A worthwhile research must flow from a researcher's symbiotic relationships with his or her social milieu and that the findings must have the potential to impact the milieu in a positive way; scientific methods are only the means to this end.

Adopt Methodology That Makes People Comfortable to Share Their Feelings and Opinions

A researcher should adopt the research tools according to the comfort level of the respondents. This means that a researcher should engage in fluid, eclectic and creative approaches to inquiry. Researchers should allow for dynamics and contexts to dictate which questions should be asked, which methods to employ and which interpretive perspectives to use. This implies that researchers should have an aptness for creativity; they should know how to artistically adopt theories, techniques and methods, keeping in mind the context of the respondent. The adoption of suitable methods allow for a deep, rich, yet fluid, analysis of and critical interpretive connections between textual excerpts within the ongoing discourses.

Epistemological Position: Strong Belief in Emic Approach

Researchers using qualitative data should strive to understand a phenomenon as a whole. This means that a description and interpretation of a person's social environment, or an organization's external context, is essential for the overall understanding of what has been observed during fieldwork or said in an interview. This approach of the researcher is emic in nature. The emic perspective assumes that understanding can only be achieved by actively participating in the life of the observed and gaining insights by means of introspection. The emic researcher tends to assume that a culture is best understood as an interconnected whole or system. Emic research is more likely to involve sustained, wide-ranging observations of a single cultural group. In classical fieldwork, for example, an ethnographer immerses him or herself in a setting, developing relationships with informants and taking on social roles. Yet, emic description can also be pursued in more structured programme of interview and observation.

Personal Experiences and Engagement

This theme illustrates the all-encompassing and ultimately personal nature of in-depth qualitative inquiry, which means going

into the field—into the real world and getting closer to the people and their circumstances to capture what is happening. To immerse oneself in naturally occurring complexity makes it possible to understand and describe both externally observable behaviours and internal states. The researcher should have direct contact with the people, situation and phenomenon under study; the researcher's personal experiences and insights are important part of the inquiry and critical to the understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Empathic Neutrality and Mindfulness

Drawing from the journey of these senior professors, I would say that the researcher should take an empathic stance in interviewing by seeking vicarious understanding without judgement (neutrality) and by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness and responsiveness. This simply means that the investigator does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths. A neutral investigator enters the research arena with no theory to prove (to test but not to prove), and no predetermined results to support. Rather, the investigator's commitment is to understand the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidences with regard to any conclusions offered.

Listen to Your Intuition

You cannot understand qualitative research without understanding yourself—that is, your own motives, interests, values and goals. What are you searching for and what is that journey really about? Do it because you want to and you are convinced it's right for you. Don't do it because someone asked you to do it. Try as hard as possible to pick research questions that have to do with some passion or interest in your professional life. Qualitative research is time-consuming, intimate and intense—but it is also an adventure, with all the accompanying excitement and stimulation and self-growth opportunities. As is immediately evident from these research journeys, qualitative methods embrace and

honour subjective experience—not only of the informants and participants, but also of the researcher.

Qualitative Researcher as a *Karmayogi*

After reading the journeys of the aforesaid senior qualitative researchers, I wondered what is so unique about them. The unique attribute was apparently common among them. They all seem to be committed to doing research, which is significant and provides deeper understanding. They believe in contextual (grounded) understanding. They seem to be committed to contribute to the indigenous perspective. They dig deeper into Indian literature, philosophy and culture to draw inferences and explain the observed behaviour in our context. They all had their share of struggles and challenges that they took as an opportunity. Their courage, confidence and trust in qualitative approach are commendable. They dared to adopt qualitative approach when it was neither taught nor accepted. They intuitively found it to be a more suitable methodology to understand the human processes. They are reflective, empathetic, flexible and highly devoted towards their research.

While reading their journeys, I also started to cruise through my own journey and started remembering the beginning of my association with them. I found them very simple, resilient, approachable, tolerant, patient with both their colleagues and novice researchers. I felt very comfortable working with Professor Sinha and Professor Rajen Gupta. The most touching moment was when they gave me more than the required acknowledgement. It worked as a Pygmalion effect for me and I felt confident and followed their footprints. When I joined Professor Rajen, I used to say I don't want to work in the field of culture. Not that I was not interested in this subject, I was in fact keen to work in the area of culture, but at that time I lacked confidence. Both Professor Sinha and Professor Rajen encouraged me to work in this area and today when I look back, I realize that I am on a path which I was scared to enter. Most of my research work is in the area of culture and I intend to get deeper into it.

In fact, now I have also started appreciating Indian philosophy and reading Indian literature.

After writing emerging themes from their journeys, I felt something is missing. I felt I am not able to touch the implicit motivations. Putting together their journeys and my reflection, I feel their journeys echo the character of a *karmayogi* (discipline of action). They are implicitly pursuing an approach which has commonality with that of a *karmayogi*. Mulla and Krishnan (2008) found the relationship between *karmayoga* and the dimensions of empathy in a study on postgraduate students in India. *Karmayoga* is similar to altruistic motivation in the Indian context. Coupled with the earlier findings of Mulla and Krishnan (2006a, 2006b), *karmayoga* constitutes the Indian work, which is ideal and can be harnessed by leaders to motivate their followers. Having an opportunity to work with all these senior researchers, I can say that they are the *karmayogi*s and are role models for many young, aspirant researchers.

They are *karmayogi*s who have practised *karmayoga* to commit their whole life with conviction, belief and commitment towards the qualitative research. They have internalized qualitative research in their personality. Hence the journey of becoming a qualitative researcher can be understood from the Indian philosophy of *karmayogi* where *karmayoga* can be seen as a metaphor for becoming a qualitative researcher.

In *Bhagavad Gita, karmayoga* is described as a way of action, thought and willingness by which one orients oneself towards realization by acting in accordance with one's duty (*dharma*) without consideration of personal self-centred desires, likes or dislikes. One acts without being attached to the fruits of one's deeds. *Karmayoga* is the path of doing the right thing, of following one's *dharma* and accepting the life as it comes.

He is adaptable, tolerant, sympathetic, and loving while listening to others. He possesses a balanced mind and a distinct vision at the time of writing his research report. He is adept at intensive self-reflection and introspection and hence brings enormous trustworthiness to his data and rigour to his methodology. He always thrives for knowledge and thus reads widely and is knowledgeable about not only the interpretive paradigms but also about

the many overlapping perspectives about these paradigms. Thus, a qualitative researcher as *karmayogi* does not perform qualitative research per se but takes it as a way—an ideology for his life.

Stages for Becoming a *Karmayogi*-Qualitative Researcher

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore

Similar mystifying experience was experienced by Professor Rajen when Sri Aurobindo came in his dream and enlightened him with the guiding principle of his life: 'Do what you are good at and serve the society through that'.

Beginning of Practice

Dialogue, challenging existing wisdom and thinking in the larger interest are the beginning of *karmayogi*. Professor Sinha felt concern for the Indian society which determined his choice of research area and working on the concept of achievement motivation in India. Similarly, Professor Anand posed existential questions to himself: 'Why am I doing research; does it have any contribution for myself and others?' For him doing qualitative research acts as an instrument for reflection, thinking and questioning the existing vicious circle in the society. They strongly believe that the researcher and the research have to be in the state of oneness and immersion, the way dancer and dance get immersed in one another.

Awakening of the Inner Being

When we immerse ourselves in the process of meditation, intuition and thinking for a prolonged period, it begins to awaken the true self that comes forward to guide us in our daily life; this true self informs us on what work has to be done and which people

we can associate with. Work is now done with meaningfulness. As pointed out by Professor Anand Prakash, it was a liberating experience for him. He felt a sense of completeness and has been able to hear his own and others' silence. It has been helping him to connect with people from all walks of life. He feels that he has overcome the fear of death, which helps him manage his anxiety and fear.

Dedication

In this state, the task is completed with full concentration and without being daunted by obstacles, without being nervous of the prospect of failure. No insults or lack of recognition deter the *karmayogi*. This stage of enlightenment brings commitment, concentration and aim for perfection without being daunted by obstacles. This can also be understood through another analogy: the way river keeps flowing and continues giving life to others without being deterred by the rocks and other obstacles in its way.

I am perplexed with a whirlwind of some very popular *shloka*s from *Bhagavad Gita* that I have been listening to since my childhood. As the journey of a *karmayogi* qualitative researcher is of selfless action, the *shloka*, *yogah karmasu kaushalam* finds its place herein. This *shloka* is translated as 'yoga is excellence at work'. This *shloka* suggests us to perform our *dharma* (duty) in an excellent manner. *Kaushalam* signifies doing work with devotion and without attachment, that is, doing work with selflessness. The selflessness attitude enhances the values and improves the concentration and skills of the *karmayogi*. If we work with elegance, fortitude, full concentration and dedication, our work will become valuable to us as well as to the society. The way to achieve excellence is through experience and dedicated hard work. The trail of experience may be filled with mistakes. If it were not, we would not get to learn lessons from it. It is admirable to aspire to perfection, but foolish indeed to expect that it will come quickly or without mistakes. It certainly pays to expect the most out of oneself. It also pays to be realistic and patient. Let the desire for perfection push you, but don't let the absence of it stop you. In this world of

instant fortunes, instant communication and instant gratification, anything of true and lasting value takes time and effort.

Conclusion

This journey of senior researchers reinforces the need for an indigenous perspective on qualitative research and on becoming a qualitative researcher. Emic approach is needed not only in theory building but also in framing the notion about qualitative research. Having travelled this journey of becoming a qualitative researcher, I felt enlightened and derived my own learning out of it. I have tried to interpret the experiences of three senior researchers in this chapter, but qualitative research is best known and learned by doing. Last but not the least, I would like to urge my readers to derive their own wisdom from their own research journey. You have to take the road less travelled!

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PART TWO

Experiences and Methods

3

Phenomenology: Qualitative Research—An Odyssey of Discovery

Tara Shankar Basu

Editors' note: Tara Basu focused on understanding the meaning of trust in the experience of expatriate superiors and Indian subordinates and she used transcendental phenomenology as her method. To understand the trust, which is an emotion-laden concept, interviews are a better help tool. She chooses to interview expatriates in the office and rapport formation made it possible to delve deeper into the concept. A very important aspect of the data collection process is the ability to keep one's own biases and prejudices in check. She shares how through the process of *epoche* she managed her biases during research. She explains how through phenomenology *essence of experience* can be captured.

'I can't possibly ask them as direct a question as whether they trust their boss or not, they may be hesitant in responding with a no to that'. I said, 'True. Then how do you think you want to go ahead', said my thesis supervisor. 'I want to understand my participants' thoughts, their feelings. … I want to hear from them their experience to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon', I said. An encouraging look from my supervisor with the words 'It will be challenging, but seems a challenge worth taking on', reiterated my belief in the methodology I wanted to

adopt to pursue my research topic. This excerpt has been taken from my field notes. It was a conversation I had with my thesis supervisor.

Before highlighting the nuances of the qualitative research tradition that I chose for my study, I would like to familiarize my readers with the nature of my research topic and how I decided it.

Personal Experience Shaping the Research Topic

The journey as a scholar started a few years ago. A comprehensive coursework that acquaints you with various methodologies and helps you delve deep into various subject areas in your own domain was undertaken. Specializing in the area of organizational behaviour, I read extensively to understand the research that exists in the domain to finally arrive at research gaps that were worth pursuing. However, a mere review of literature was not how I intended to select the topic of my study. It had to be an idea that interested me, an idea that I was passionate about. At the same time, it had to be a topic worthy of research and the outcome of which would be useful to those in the corporate world. Therefore, through my research I endeavoured to study inter-cultural relations at work.

My personal experience helped me delineate my research area. Inter-cultural relationships and their dynamics have fascinated me for quite some time. My mother is from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh and my father hails from the southern part of the country, Tamil Nadu. Owing to the nature of my parents' jobs, I was raised in the North; primarily Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi. My upbringing has been rather cosmopolitan, and I do tend to call myself a cultural hybrid but growing up I realized that there were cultural differences between my parents' families. I also became aware that there is a sense of *us* versus *them* between the two cultures in general. My training in psychology helped me understand this domain better but many questions remained. After earning my master's degree in psychology, I went on to work in an IT consultancy. Through my vicarious learning from colleagues, I became aware of cultural differences of a higher

level, particularly between national cultures. Therefore, I began to explore the wider domain of cross-cultural management in my PhD journey, specifically looking into the aspect of trust in intercultural relationships between Western superiors and Indian subordinates within the organizational context.

An Exploration Using Phenomenology

The research design begins with certain philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of reality (ontology) and the relationship between the researcher and that being researched (epistemology). The ontological and epistemological stance, in turn, determine the methodology, or the way the researcher will go about finding out what he/she believes can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researchers also bring with them their own worldviews and beliefs (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the research topic, together with the researcher's orientation and his/her ontological and epistemological stance, determines the methodological choice. In order to understand the nuances of intercultural relationships, the thoughts and emotions of individual participants as they experience working with people of other cultures, to understand their perspective and how they defined trust, a qualitative methodology appeared to be the only way. The endeavour was to allow the participants to delve into their experience, their cognitions, their emotions, and not impose a set of predefined ideas, that of the researcher. Trust as a topic has been well researched, spanning several decades. However, recent studies bring to light the possibility that this concept may hold different meanings in different cultures. Since the objective was to explore a phenomenon, qualitative research seemed appropriate. A qualitative research methodology is characterized by inductive and one that emerges from the researcher's experience in collecting and analysing data (Creswell, 2007).

There are several qualitative approaches; grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, narrative research and phenomenology. In the current research, a phenomenological qualitative approach was undertaken. Phenomenological studies are a manifestation of

Box 3.1: What is Phenomenology?

Phenomenology is the first method of knowledge, because it begins with 'things themselves'. Phenomenology attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgement, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience (Moustakas, 1994).

the constructivist worldview or paradigm (Creswell, 2007). The researcher endeavours to understand the world in which he/she lives by relying on the experience of the participants. A phenomenological study is a description of the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon. The attempt is to arrive at a *universal essence* of the phenomenon from the individual experiences.

Phenomenology has a strong philosophical foundation, drawing primarily on the works of Edmund Husserl (Creswell, 2007). He was the pioneer of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), the methodology being used in this study (see Box 3.1). Phenomenology has been mostly used in social sciences such as sociology and psychology, and health sciences. Therefore, using this methodology in the field of management was not a popular course to take.

Actively Engaging with the Participants

This study was conducted using an in-depth interview technique to understand from participants what they meant by trust in their work relationships. Several Western expats to India in their capacity as superiors were interviewed as were Indians in their capacity as subordinates. A qualitative approach offers rich insight into the area being researched. Using in-depth interviews provides information that may otherwise not be possible even if one were to use reliable and valid scales of measurement. A phenomenological methodology makes it possible for the researcher to remain

focused on the participants and obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon (in our case, trust) under investigation.

The more acceptable, widely used quantitative approaches were the norm and therefore deciding on a qualitative approach and that too a phenomenological one, which finds little mention in management research, was not easy. With the kind of research problem I had at hand, I was sure that I could only understand it through the subjective experience of participants. Also, it is my belief that it is difficult to understand human behaviour and concepts like trust through objective measures. In some informal conversations with people prior to deciding the methodology, I asked them direct questions about trust and about intercultural working relationships. I found that my questions gave the participants an idea about the kind of answers I was expecting and put their thought process on a path determined by me. The value of such interactions was rather limited. Therefore, a qualitative approach using interviews as the technique was finalized.

Literature helps only to the extent of informing one about the nature of the work that has been done in the domain. It is not supposed to direct the course of the interview. The researcher is expected to enter the field without any preconceived notions on the topic. I prepared an interview schedule before I started the interviews, but it was only to ensure that the participants covered all the areas as they spoke to me. I had some guiding questions to get the interview started but the objective was to get the participants to speak openly and freely about their experience in totality. Oftentimes, the participants would narrate stories that may not have appeared relevant to the topic at that time, but as a researcher I tried not to interrupt the flow of their thoughts. I found with most participants that they enjoyed sharing their experience with me and though there was always a time constraint I did not want to dampen their enthusiasm by cutting them short.

At the time of requesting the potential participants for a meeting, I would ask for one hour. The challenge in each interview therefore involved forming a rapport with the participant, getting them to relax and share their experience with me, covering all the relevant areas of the topic, and managing all of this in one hour. All the interviews were conducted in the offices of the

participants, a choice they made. With other meetings before and after, some of the participants found it difficult to continue the interaction beyond one hour, even if they wanted to. The nature of the interview was such that it required the participants to think back and recall events and episodes of working with people from other cultures. As a researcher, it was a huge challenge to get them to relax and share their personal experience with me as we sat and conversed in the company office. My endeavour was to create an atmosphere that was informal, where the focus was the participant and his/her story. With some participants, this was easy to achieve in the office setting, whereas with others it was rather difficult and in some cases the interview remained merely at a surface level.

At this point, I must also mention that I became conscious of being a female researcher. It would have been faster to build a rapport and get participants to open up in an informal setting, something outside the organization's office. However, as a woman, I felt hesitant to ask the participants to meet me in a setting more informal, like a coffee shop, since in our culture it may not be seen as the appropriate thing to do.

Conducting interviews yields rich information that may not be otherwise possible to obtain. However, getting the participants to give time for an interview is often not easy. I would ask for a minimum of one hour since it takes time to build rapport and to reach a stage where the person can share his/her experience openly. In busy corporate lives, people find it difficult to give this kind of time, and especially to strangers.

In the process of interviewing people, I also had to develop my skills in order to get them to talk about the relevant areas and cover as much ground in the time allotted. Some participants were able to talk more about their experience than others. To those who were not so forthcoming, I had to use different questions to get them to begin talking. Through the phase of data collection, there was constant learning on how to improve my interviewing skills.

In-depth semi-structured interviews provide information that may otherwise not be possible using scales or questionnaires. Use of such instruments restricts the information received, since the

questions are predetermined and the respondent does not have much choice but to select one of the options provided for each question/item. On the other hand, interviews yield information that the researcher may never have thought of. Instead of allowing my preconceived notions on the topic to determine the nature of the information I receive, using an interview I could get the complete and authentic picture from the perspective of the interviewee. Using only an interview schedule helps to give some direction to the interview, but the interaction is primarily driven by the interviewee. The main advantage of this technique is that it is flexible in nature and helps the researcher to remain with the experience of the interviewee.

Despite the advantages, the use of interviews as a method of data collection also has some problems. Participants are a little wary of the information they share. I would assure the participants of complete confidentiality of what they share, at the time of setting up and also at the beginning of the interview. However, there would be hesitation on the part of some participants. This was not difficult to understand because the interaction involved the participants talking about their intercultural working relationship and their trust in the culturally different other. This seemed to be a sensitive domain and one in which the narrative of the participant may not have been very positive.

Also important in this context was my own background as I interviewed the participants. The Western participants initially seemed hesitant to say anything even a tad bit critical of the Indian culture because of my cultural background. They did not want to offend me. One example that I would like to share is when a Western participant had this to say '…I think, I am not sure, and maybe I am wrong, and it could just be a personality thing and not a cultural thing, but Indians tend to be … what's the word for it … how should I put it … tend to be a bit descriptive'. This convoluted statement seems to have been made only to not sound condescending towards the Indian culture. Having sensed this discomfort from the participants, I began to mention early on in the research that I was speaking to them in the capacity of a researcher and not an Indian and that it would only help my research if they were honest with me, even if it meant being

critical of the Indian culture. To compliment my words with actions and to give them the confidence that their words would not offend me, I would nod in agreement and laugh with them as soon as they narrated an episode or behaviour of the Indians that they found culturally different. Using such gestures played a very vital role in portraying me as an unbiased researcher.

On the other hand, some of the Indian subordinates seemed to be very enthusiastic in their criticism of the Westerners using phrases like '…you know how these people are when…' and giving a sense that they thought we were one group against the Westerners. This was a problem of a different nature and therefore I became more careful to use words like *Indians* instead of *we* (since some of the Indian participants would refer to me along with them as *we*) and *Westerners* or *Americans*, *Germans* (depending on the case) instead of *them* to appear as neutral a researcher as possible. Therefore, my interviewing skills could not have been constantly the same through the process of data collection; it had to be tweaked, depending on the participant I was engaging with.

Another issue with using qualitative interview technique is that all the participants may not be comfortable with it. No matter how good the interviewing skills of the researcher, a willingness to share on the part of the participants is essential. The use of quantitative data collection techniques of scales and questionnaires being very popular, I was also asked by a few whether this was not more accurate a technique than the use of interviews. At the end of the interview one of the participants said that he was expecting a questionnaire with multiple choice answers. This also made me realize that people do not have the time to read lengthy emails that I would write to them with details about the nature of the topic and the interview. What was extremely pleasing to hear as a researcher was when the participants, at the end of the interviews, would tell me that they had fun during the interview though they had expected something different, in terms of more specific questions and answers.

It takes a while to connect with the participants during the interview. In this case, the nature of the topic was such that it didn't include any direct questions and answers. It was more

about the willingness of the person to remember events from the past, from the relationships with his superior/subordinate, as the case may be. It would take a considerable amount of time to build that rapport where the participant starts speaking, and then I'd realize that the one hour allotted to our meeting was almost coming to an end. Depending on the schedule of the person, we would either continue longer, or decide to meet again and in very few cases, just finish the meeting at that time with no plan for another meeting. The onus was on me to create the interest in the participant because that was the only way I would get them to share their experience. The questions I asked may not have had ready answers and required the participants to think back and recall events and episodes, which would not have been possible without the participants' interest in the discussion. Often the participants would not be able to narrate a specific episode because it required details that were confidential. Also because the participants thought, as some mentioned to me, that the example was a very insignificant one. Therefore, I realized that I must help the participants open up and talk about even those things that they considered trivial.

Making Sense of the Data: Textural and Structural Description

Qualitative approach requires spending a lot of time on the field. Data collection and analysis takes place simultaneously and without deciding *a priori* the sample size, data collection goes on until the researcher reaches theoretical saturation. Data analysis is not easy in the qualitative research tradition. Interview data yields information that is not very structured and it takes a lot of effort, reading and re-reading the data several times to make sense of it. The entire process is very time consuming.

Data analysis technique as provided by Moustakas (1994) was used for this study. The focus was on a description of the experiences of the participants in order to arrive at a universal essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990 in Creswell, 2007). Although the steps are clearly outlined, it is largely an

interpretation of the researcher as is the case in other qualitative traditions such as Grounded Theory. The role of the researcher in qualitative research approaches is very critical. I went through the transcribed interviews many times in order to be certain of the patterns and themes as I saw them emerge. At the time of interviewing, everything the participant said did not seem important or relevant to the topic. However, using *horizonalization* where each statement is given equal value, I realized it was important to transcribe and read through everything that the participant had said. On many occasions, it was only later that I understood the criticality of a seemingly insignificant statement. There were pages and pages of interview data that had to be analysed at different levels starting from horizonalization to composite structural and textural descriptions, going back and forth between different interviews in order to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon, the meaning it had for the participants.

Horizonalization was the first step of the analysis that identified the significant statements regarding the phenomenon from the participants' experience. Clusters of meanings were then developed from the statements identified above, forming themes. From these themes, a description of *what* the participants experienced was called *textural description* and the context that influenced *how* the participants experienced the phenomenon was called *structural description*. Finally, we arrived at an essence of the phenomenon, the common experiences of the participants. This process is called *intuitive integration* (Moustakas, 1994).

There is an element of uncertainty that marks qualitative research. At the start of data collection, I did not know how many participants I needed to interview. Theoretical saturation was used to determine that number. There was uncertainty also in making sense of the enormous amount of interview data. Even after following the analysis technique, I felt unsure of my understanding of what the participant had said. Hence, I read the transcribed interviews several times. The researcher establishes the credibility of qualitative research by being as close to the data as possible. Therefore, analysing qualitative data is a matter of great responsibility. A phenomenological study aims at description of the phenomenon that the various participants have experienced.

It was important that I kept the experience of the participants as the focus while analysing the data.

This brings me to my next point which is a very critical step through the process of any qualitative research. In conducting a research of this nature, it is important to keep one's biases in check. Phenomenology talks about *epoche* in great detail and as a fundamental starting point of the research. It was impossible to start my research with a clean slate, having experienced directly as well as vicariously, through the experience of others, the dynamics of intercultural relationships. Becoming aware of my ideas which I may not have been conscious about was the first step in conducting phenomenological research. Before speaking to my first participant, I wrote down my own understanding of trust in intercultural relations. Speaking to others, my professor and friends, also helped me in becoming aware of my ideas and my understanding of the phenomenon I was about to study.

Those from the quantitative research tradition are sceptical of the credibility of qualitative research. However, they fail to understand that the objective and the vocabulary used for qualitative research are different from the quantitative one. In the environment that favours quantitative research and its statistical tools, doing qualitative research can be a huge problem. Right from the beginning one has to defend and justify the use of this methodology. The credibility of the research is also achieved by following the process of data analysis and being as close and grounded to the data as possible, by giving an authentic picture of the real experience of the participants.

A Satisfying Journey

The qualitative approach used in my research has helped me understand the various nuances of the topic of trust in intercultural relations. It gave me the platform whereby I could delve into the experience of the individuals and understand the research problem from their perspective. My understanding of the phenomenon would not have been anything close to what it is, had it not been for the use of a qualitative methodology. Interviewing

people of different nationalities and at very senior positions in organizations has helped build my confidence. It also helped me to speak more eloquently about my research domain. Over the course of so many interviews I do think that my interviewing skills have improved. Qualitative research has taught me to be patient and to be able to handle a great deal of uncertainty. It also makes me more aware of my thoughts and biases. Qualitative research brings the researcher into focus, and I feel extremely confident today that in the research I conducted I played a very crucial role. I was an integral part of the research from data collection to data analysis. Qualitative research approach also gives a great freedom to the researcher in conducting interviews and analysing the data, and therefore with this freedom comes great responsibility.

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4

Semiotics: Doing an Emic Research the 'Semiotic' Way—Experiences and Challenges

Sumita Mishra

Editors' note: Sumita Mishra uses semiotics, a rarely used qualitative method, to study the experiences of Indian software professionals working with Japanese clients. She focused on knowledge sharing. Her chapter opens with labelling her academic journey as a paradox, and she continues to discuss this in her paper. She goes on to describe the process of data collection and analysis using semiotics. She concludes with revisiting her ontological position as well as demonstrating the conceptual contribution of her research.

Every academic journey is a paradox of illuminating moments, confused thoughts, tremendous pitfalls and at the end crystallized thoughts leading to action. As I entered into the realm of doctoral coursework, I was in a state of perpetual discovery. Through these cornucopias of researches that I was being exposed to, I had crystallized my thoughts roughly on doing a doctoral-level research on the impact of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing in multicultural teams (MCTs). But then came a pertinent and nagging question: what would I explore in both these domains, that is,

cultural diversity and MCTs given their vastness and complexity. This question indeed was the harbinger of an academic journey most exciting and contrarily one most challenging as well.

Why Do an Emic Research?

The word *culture* has always been an enigma to me as it has had so many interpretations over decades by dedicated researchers. However, the interpretation that held my interest was the one provided by Sackmann and Philips (2004). They defined culture as combination of assumptions, beliefs, values and practices that is distinctive to people of a particular group in their paper published in the *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*. Their paper was an appeal at two levels:

1. To look at culture from a micro level and not necessarily at the macro perspective, such as that of the society, nation and organization. Any group, that is, functional domains, vocational groups, racial groups, etc., may possess a culture distinctive to people of the group itself.
2. An individual may possess multiple cultural identities simultaneously. As I sifted, analysed and recorded a review of extant literature focusing on the impact of cultural diversity in teams, I realized that a micro perspective of cultural diversity and its impact in MCTs was a largely unexplored domain. Thus, began my preoccupation with the word/term emic[1] and readings into the works of Kenneth Pike.

With my explorations, readings and forays into literature focusing on the impact of cultural diversity in MCTs and those of Pike, I decided to record and narrate the emic experiences of Indians who have been a part of MCTs on the impact of cultural diversity.

[1] Emic constructs are accounts, descriptions and analyses expressed in terms of conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the members of the culture under study. Accounts of cultural anthropologists such as Geertz provide good examples of emic research.

Such a record or narration was absent in the extant literature. But then *team performance* was also a vast and complex construct. In my readings and reviews so far, I had discovered that the impact of cultural diversity was not really researched upon knowledge sharing in teams and MCTs through an emic lens. There were limited studies systematically researching its effect exclusively on the process of knowledge sharing in MCTs (Day et al., 1995; Napier, 2006; Vallaster, 2005).

Developing the Research Questions

As I reflect on the massive review of literature that I undertook to frame my research questions, my review basically had concentrated on three major theoretical domains. The first of these domains was focused on the impact of cultural diversity in MCTs (Andersen, 1983; Hambrick et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins 1996; Vallaster 2005). The second of these domains looked at process of knowledge sharing in teams/MCTs (Bunderson & Sutcliffe, 2002; Cummings, 2004; Faraj & Sproull, 2000). The third domain focuses on cultural characteristics of Indians in societal, business and team contexts (Saha, 1992; Sinha, 2002). A research gap that was common to all the domains of literature reviewed was the lack of a systematic research focusing on the impact of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing processes from the lived-in emic experiences of Indian professionals who have worked in MCTs. In recent years, India, among the transitional economies, emerged as an attractive global business destination. The Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sector in India has witnessed a phenomenal growth with regard to outsourcing and offshore business.[2]

[2] Outsourcing of operations to India from the United States has resulted in a gain of 15–20 percent in quality and productivity gains and has also helped US banks, financial services and insurance companies to save 6–8 billion US$ between 2001 and 2004 (http://www.nasscom.org, as accessed on 8 January 2012). The addressable global market for offshore IT is around 150–180 billion US$ and India now accounts for 65 percent of the global

Thus, given the previously mentioned research gap, coupled with the catapulting of Indians into global business, the focus of the research as mentioned earlier gained importance.

The literature review and subsequent identification of gaps gradually sharpened my focus on the major research questions of my study. These research questions were:

1. How is diversity in the national culture of team members in MCTs perceived by Indian team members as having an impact upon knowledge sharing in the team?

In my analysis of literature, the concept of heterogeneity in nationality of team members or nation as a cultural group had been extensively researched in MCTs with regard to their impact on individuals' functioning within the team or team performance as a whole. Despite the abundance of such studies, there were few studies that researched the impact of national cultural diversity among team members on knowledge sharing processes in MCTs.

2. How is diverse functional affiliations of team members perceived by Indian team members as a salient cultural group (with their own set of assumptions, values, beliefs and practices) having an impact on knowledge sharing in MCTs?

As mentioned earlier, the appeals in Sackmann and Philips (2004) paper had held great interest for me and hence I decided to explore multicultural emic identities in my research. My literature review also helped me narrow down my search to functional affiliations among team members that could be termed as a relevant cultural group. Functional diversity as conceived in our research refers to differences in the nature of the task performed by members in MCTs. This question explored a functional sub-group as a cultural group whose members shared a common cultural understanding about the nature of the roles that they performed with regard to

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market in offshore IT and 46 percent of the global BPO segment (http://www.nasscom.org/newsline/issue50/In_focus.asp, as accessed on 8 January 2012).

knowledge sharing and more importantly how these roles would impact upon the process of knowledge sharing within MCTs.

3. How do Indian managers cope with their multiple cultural identities (in this case nationality, function) with regard to the process of team knowledge sharing in MCTs?

These questions were the pivotal foundations of my research which further helped me operationalize my constructs and sampling procedures. As the focal point of my research happened to be an Indian team member, I felt it necessary to define myself as to what I meant by an Indian team member of an MCT. Suitable members were considered to be Indian by virtue of (a) their birth in India (b) the completion of their basic qualifications in India for formal employment, which would necessitate spending a minimum of 20 years of their early life in India.

The Research Site and Methodological Issues

After several consultations with my thesis advisory committee, I decided to situate my research in the IT and ITES industry. The organization that evinced interest in typically our kind of emic research and granted us an entry was Bankcorp Software Services (BSS).[3] BSS is a global software concern providing products and software solutions in banking and financial services sector since 1986. BSS's core competence focused in areas such as credit cards, cash management, relationship banking, credit risk and appraisal, trade finance, internet banking, data warehousing and analytics. The client list comprised of banks, insurance and trading companies. BSS was considered to be a sound selection for the collection of empirical data for the following three reasons. First, the organization was an Indian organization with a multinational presence in global banking software business. Second,

[3] The name of the organization, including its teams, products and solutions and the client-based companies, has been changed owing to confidentiality regarding the collection of empirical data with the organization.

with regard to its product and services, BSS had an established clientele and strong presence in southeast Asian countries with particular thrust on Japan. BSS also had a number of clients in India. Hence, as BSS worked with clients as well as partner vendors from different cultures, its work context was largely multicultural. Third, BSS functioned largely through global software development teams that were also multicultural.

Vital for an emic research was to engage for a substantial period of time with the organization and the sample. I engaged in a month-long study of the organization, its business, perusal through secondary sources and constant discussions with the Corporate Vice President of the company about my data collection. The work at BSS was divided into 11 internal business units (IBUs). Given the importance for Japan as a country where business was conducted for BSS, and also to provide a focus to our empirical research design, we decided to narrow down our sample by selecting those teams within IBUs that did business in Japan. We narrowed down to 15 software teams within the company from different IBUs. Moreover, because our aim was also to understand the perceived salience of functional affiliations of team members as a cultural group and its impact on the process of knowledge sharing within MCTs, we also interviewed informants from three different functional categories, that is, (1) Project Managers, (2) Senior Systems Analysts or Project Leads and (3) Software Engineers. These categories were drawn from a previous study conducted by Bharadwaj and Saxena (2005). After subsequent discussions with the Corporate Vice President and his Executive Assistant, we painstakingly finalized a sample of 59 respondents using the logic of purposive sampling.

Issues in Data Collection and Choice of Semiotics as an Interpretive Tool for Data Analysis

As the mainstay of research was an emic narration of experiential data, collected from Indian team members, I decided that semi-structured interviews would be best suited to collect data.

Box 4.1: What is Semiotics?

Semiotics is the study of signs. Semiotics was developed simultaneously out of the works of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce. As an analytical method it has rigour, structure and detail and can interpret data using relevant sign categories within a context.

Simultaneously, I was also finalizing my methodology of analysis of the data collected. Amidst the confusion and sharpening of my research focus, one such illuminating moment came when I accidentally read the seminal work of Stephen Barley published in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1983. Barley's (1983) narration of the cultural reality of a funeral home was interesting not because of its description solely but mainly because of the methodology used to analyse the data, that is, semiotics. As I read and reread his paper, I wondered for the umpteenth time that why was *semiotics* still an esoteric technique and not much in use in organization sciences as a method of analysis.

A concise introduction to semiotics is provided in Box 4.1. One of the finest examples of an extension of Saussurean semiotics in organization studies with particular reference to organizational culture has been that of Barley (1983).[4] My determination to use semiotics stemmed from two major reasons. First, as an interpretive tool its primary aim was to uncover a shared sense of reality as perceived by the members of any community, group, etc. Words and expressions would be considered as signs as interviews would form our main tool for collecting primary data from respondents. Thus, semiotics moved beyond a rudimentary frequency calculation or grasping explicit meaning of the language used to discover the implicit meaning attributed to such linguistic

[4] Semiotics in Barley's (1983) study provided lucid explanation of the semiotic approach to collect and analyse data. Through the construction of semantic grids he explained the reasons behind the desire of the funeral home to create an atmosphere of a living world. The semantic grids provided a perfectly logical explanation of dressing up a dead body and manipulating the features in a manner that is similar to that of a living, sleeping person and furnishing the surroundings to resemble a living room of a house.

signs in particular contexts. Second, Barley's (1983) use of semiotics complimented our primary tool of data collection, that is, interviews. Each of our interviewees was termed as informants.[5]

Appendix 4.1 contains the interview protocol utilized in my research. My informants gradually accepted my presence as a part of their daily routine. I sat with them, talked with them and even shared my meals with them. My informal discussions with them were as revealing as the formal interviews. I was constantly soaking up the language that they used. Given my choice of semiotics their words—typical and atypical—became very important for me and my informants were pleased when I spoke and responded in the same lingo.

A Semiotic Analysis of Data

Although useful in interpretive analyses, semiotics has found limited mention in organization sciences (Barley, 1983; Brannen, 2004; Manning, 1979; Mishra & Gupta, 2007). As interviews with our informants formed the major source of empirical data, I chose Barley's (1983) semantic framework to analyse our data. Table 4.1 provides taxonomy of all the semiotic terminologies used in this study under three different headings with their meaning. The first heading details the terminologies used in highlighting the basic properties of a sign. The second heading provides the rules for connecting a sign vehicle with its attributed meaning in any given context. The last heading provides the meaning attached to the concept of a semantic code and the two different categories of codes, that is, denotative and connotative.

The first step in a semiotic analysis of data is the arrangement of data (interview transcripts) into relevant domains. Spradley (1979) provided an exhaustive account of domain analysis, defined a domain as 'Any symbolic category that includes other

[5] We have used the term informants to designate the employees interviewed at BSS. According to Spradley (1979) informants are native speakers and are engaged by the interviewer to speak in their own language and dialect. The informants are a source of information and they also become teachers for the ethnographic interviewer in the long run.

Table 4.1 Taxonomy of Semiotic Terminologies

Properties of Signs	
Semiotic Terminology	*Meaning*
Sign	A combination of signifier and signified
Signifier (Expression)	The sign vehicle such as a red stop light or certain words, emotions, etc.
Signified (Content)	The meaning that people in society attribute to that signifier
Signification	The relation between the signified and signifier
Arbitrary coupling	Signs carry meaning according to the context in which they are used.
Opposition	Signs signify by opposites or contrast. For example, the colour white is understood by its opposition, i.e., the colour black.
Rules of Linking Signified with Signifiers	
Metaphor	Semiotic research has used metaphors to understand similarities between two different sign systems.
Metonymies	They act as secondary forms within the context in which the metaphor has been used. For example, for the sign 'fire', 'smoke' can be a metonymical expression.
Semantic Codes	
Code	Chain of significations
Denotative code	The literal expressions of codes. For example, the sign 'oak tree' will have leaves, branches, etc., as the denotation.
Connotative code	The reflexive and intuitive expressions of codes. For example, the sign 'oak tree' can connote Englishness, solidity, history, etc.

categories is a domain. All the members of the domain share at least one feature of the meaning' (p. 100). Thus, any domain has a cover term which titles the domain and a set of two or more included terms that fall within the range of that domain. Each of the included categories of the domain is linked to the cover term through a semantic relationship. It is important for a

semiotic analysis not only to collect data on included terms within a domain, but also on terms that may not be included within the boundary of a particular domain, that is, contrast terms. The property of opposition is crucial to the understanding of signs as signs signify not only through similarity but also by opposition. Thus, questions were asked to informants to gain an understanding of included terms as well as contrast terms within any domain. Our interviews continued until there was no new information imparted on any domain.

After a listing of all the preliminary domains, a taxonomic analysis was conducted. This helped to understand the relationship between different included terms within a domain (Spradley, 1979). It also arranged smaller domains within larger and more inclusive domains. This step is important in the mapping out of denotative codes as we subsume smaller domains within a larger domain with multiple included terms (signifiers). The included terms of the largest domain identified within any code would represent the denotative codes of the domain. On completion of the taxonomic analysis, connotative codes were mapped out during the final phase of data analysis. This was done on analysing the interview transcripts to discover similarities between the included terms (denotative codes) of the largest domain identified.

Culmination of Semantic Codes

My data collection and data analysis progressed simultaneously given the emic stance of the research and as I reiterated, I could see my semantic codes shaping up. I provide herein a detailed description of the first semantic code to depict the use of the method and a summary of the remaining two codes.

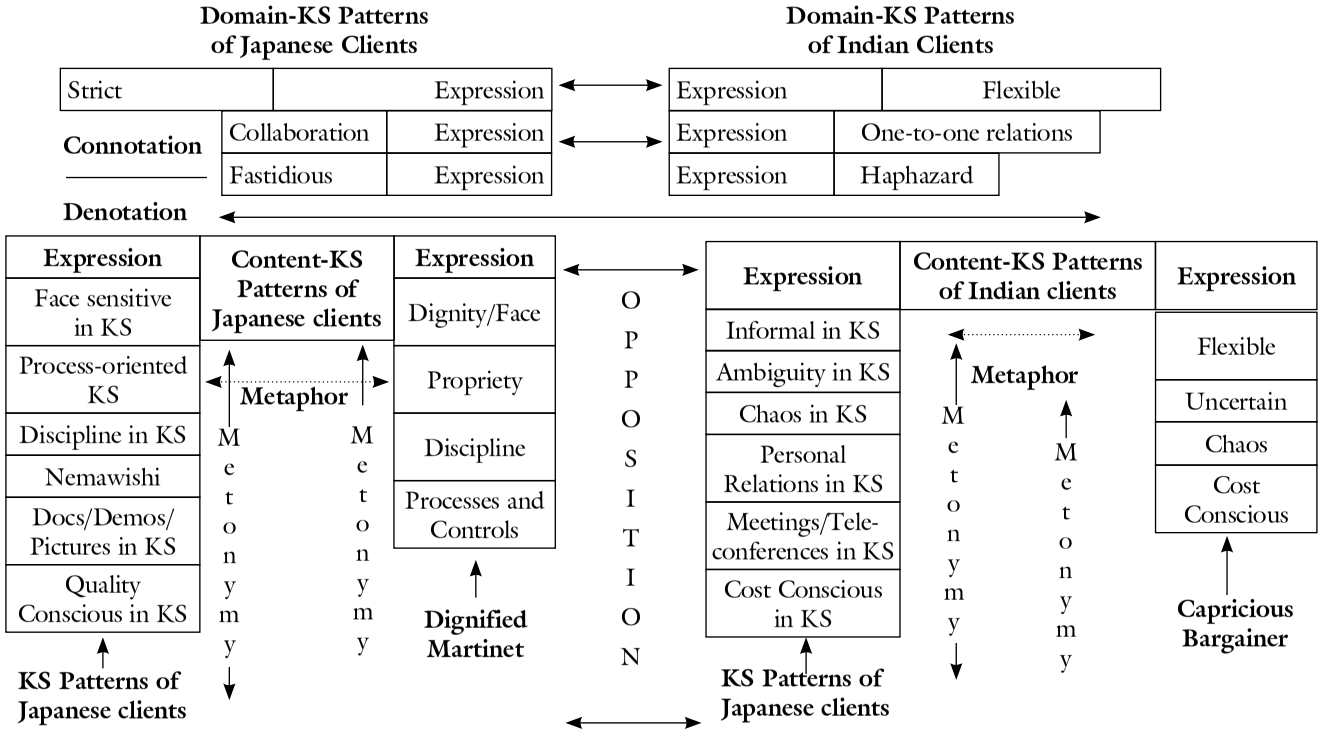
Semantic Code 1: National Cultural Patterns in Knowledge Sharing within MCTs

The semantic code 1 was structured on the first research question of our study as outlined earlier. The main purpose of this code was to gain an emic perspective on how heterogeneity or diversity

in the nationality of team members impacted upon their knowledge sharing patterns within MCTs. There were two major signified to the code, that is, 'knowledge sharing patterns of Japanese clients' and 'knowledge sharing patterns of Indian clients'. These signified were also emic and contrasts to each other. Both these signified along with their denotations, connotations, metonymies, and metaphorical expressions were arranged together in a semantic grid as adapted from Barley (1983). Figure 4.1 presents the semantic grid of this code.

The denotations of the first signified, that is, 'knowledge sharing patterns of Japanese clients' indicated a client community that maintained a 'face' or a sense of dignity and propriety in knowledge sharing, which was disciplined and process-oriented knowledge sharing with the vendor team and encouraged total participation of all stakeholders involved in knowledge sharing. The Japanese also preferred the use of documents, pictures and prototypes in knowledge sharing with their team members. Last, they were perceived to be extremely conscious about the quality of the software developed. Connotatively they signified a client community that was strict, collaborative and fastidious in the process of knowledge sharing. If we look at the emic contrast to this signified, that is, 'knowledge sharing patterns in Indian clients', then the denotations signified a client community that encouraged informality and personal relations in knowledge sharing as well as preferred meetings and teleconferences instead of documents in knowledge sharing with the vendor team. Moreover, the Indians were ambiguous about the nature of the project and induced continuous changes, thereby creating a chaotic process of knowledge sharing. Moreover, they were perceived to be extremely conscious about the costs vis-à-vis quality. The connotations to this signified were also contrasts of the earlier one. Two metaphorical expressions as indicated in Figure 4.1 were also used to further illustrate each of these signified. It might be noted that the contrasting signified, the metaphorical expressions and the denotations/connotations were not literal but arbitrary (see Table 4.1) as they were emic and made sense in the context of our research, that is, software MCTs at BSS.

Figure 4.1 Semiotic Grid of the Code of National Cultural Patterns in KS within MCTs



Source: Adapted from Barley, 1983.
Note: KS: knowledge sharing.

Semantic Code 2: Functionally Affiliated Roles in Knowledge Sharing within MCTs

Semantic code 2 was structured on the second research question of our study. This code had two major signified as in the case of the previous code, that is, 'role of project managers (PMs)/project leads (PLs) in knowledge sharing within MCTs' and 'role of software engineers in knowledge sharing within MCTs'. Both these signified were emic and contrasts to each other. The metaphorical expression of 'captain of a team' has been employed to illustrate the first signified whereas the metaphorical expression of *player of a team* was utilized to illustrate the second signified. PMs/PLs were central in the process of knowledge sharing because they liaised between all the stakeholders (clients, vendors) and their own team. Software engineers were critical in knowledge sharing during the production and testing of software and mainly provided support to their PMs/PLs in knowledge sharing during the course of the software development life cycle (SDLC).

Semantic Code 3: Coping Mechanisms for Knowledge Sharing within MCTs

Semantic code 3 was structured on the third objective of our study. Informants were multicultural as they belonged to different cultural groups simultaneously. Informants apart from belonging to a particular nationality, that is, India, they belonged to diverse functionally affiliated groups. Thus, our final research objective explored the coping mechanisms employed by Indian professionals to manage their multicultural identities to deal with multicultural clientele with regard to knowledge sharing. This code had one major signified *diverse coping mechanisms*. A contrast to this signified was obtained in order to provide a clearer understanding of the significations in this signified.

Worth of a *Semiotic* Research: Concluding Thoughts

In the aftermath of the award of my doctoral degree, I have had the opportunity to publish and make several presentations on the

scope, methodology and contribution of my research. There have been a myriad of reactions on these, especially with regard to methodology. The common question that has cropped up time and again is: Can an emic research have a semiotic narrative? To this obvious question my answer has always been a resounding yes. The first vindication in the use of this methodology came in the form of acceptance from my thesis advisory committee and my very own academic peers and seniors. The second came from the acceptance by my external examiners. However, the more I presented my research, the more I wrote with the aim to publish my findings, to use methodology or to review the literature; the more I began to realize that this was not the end of the road for me, but the beginning of another exciting journey.

The conduct of this emic study with the use of semiotics did have valuable theoretical contributions, especially keeping in mind the gaps in the extant literature. On the practical front the findings did have implications for the management at BSS to make their culturally sensitive training programme more worthwhile and relevant and use effective retention mechanisms for the project leads who were an integral part of the knowledge sharing network. However, I would maintain that the research made the biggest contribution in the realm of qualitative research methods in its use of semiotics. Even at the level of doctoral research, the use of semiotics was limited.[6] Given such a scenario, the significance of our research from a methodological standpoint was augmented by detailed description of the use and efficacy of semiotics in analysing our empirical data. To the best of our knowledge, Barley's (1983) semantic grids have not been utilized given a research context and focus such as ours. With comprehensive details on the structure of these semantic grids coupled with the analysis techniques provided by Spradley (1979), our research could be of value to those wanting to understand a coherent and structured use of Barley's (1983) semantic grids in analysis of data

[6] A cursory survey of the Proquest database yielded only four hits of doctoral level dissertations that have used semiotics as a method to analyse empirical data, in different areas of management research and submitted to global institutions of repute from a total of eight listings. Moreover, none of these theses have been conducted in the area of organization sciences.

from interviews. We also digressed from Barley's (1983) original semantic grids while building semantic codes 1 and 2 to fulfil the scope of our research.

Thus, I believe my methodological journey in presenting and arguing the use and the reuse of semiotics is just the beginning. Looking back on my journey of doctoral research, I firmly maintain that the choice of semiotics, the risks, challenges and the newness attached to it was worthwhile in the long haul. I do hope that this chapter would act as an encouragement to researchers to travel the path less trodden and use methodologies that are rarely used. That is and probably will remain the only way in which research could make meaningful contributions to academia.

Appendix 4.1: Interview Protocol

General Questions to All Informants

1. Management cadre of the informant: senior/middle/junior management
2. Designation of the informant at BSS
3. Qualification of the informant and work experience
4. Tenure with BSS
5. Name of the MCT of which the informant was a part of
6. Tenure of the informant with the team
7. MCT interactions with the Japanese clients/vendors etc: Yes/No
8. Mode of MCT interaction: offshore (virtual)/onshore (face-to-face)/both
9. Tenure of MCT interaction with the Japanese

Knowledge Sharing in Teams

1. What is the knowledge created by the team for BSS?
2. What is the kind of knowledge shared between the members of the team?
3. Who apart from the team members do you share knowledge with?

4. What is the knowledge shared between the team and the client?
5. Do you use ICT tools in the knowledge sharing with remote members or clients?
6. How do you share knowledge with a client or members located remotely?
7. What are the preferred artefacts by Japanese clients to share knowledge with? Can you provide some examples? How is this preference different from that of an Indian client?
8. How do the Japanese like to communicate in terms of work?
9. Who or what you consider as important sources of information with regard to preferred behavioural modes of Japanese clients with respect to knowledge sharing?

National Cultural Diversity and Knowledge Sharing in MCTs

1. What is the profile of the Japanese client that your team is serving? Who are the functional users and major stakeholders form the client's end?
2. Are Indians and Japanese different with regard to working styles in terms of knowledge sharing in MCTs?
3. Is there a barrier sometimes in knowledge sharing between Indian software development teams (as yours) and Japanese clients? Can you give an example? If barriers do exist how do you overcome such barriers?
4. What are the pros and cons of working with both Indians and the Japanese as clients?
5. How do the Japanese feel about automating their systems with the help of the software that you provide?
6. As a member of a MCT what is the preparation that you make when you meet an onsite client for the first time?

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5

Grounded Theory: My PhD Journey—Finding a Method to the Madness

Twisha Anand

Editors' note: Twisha opens her paper with how she passionately connects with her research topic. She also cites importance of interdisciplinary reading. Twisha has used grounded theory to study helping behaviour in software industry in India and the United States, and for this she innovatively recruited the participants from the United States and interviewed them over the internet. It was a delight to read. She takes her readers through her personal life and its impact on her decisions at various stages of research and grounded theory approach.

Topic Hunt

'Well begun is half done'. However, this beginning was not easy for me and finding the right topic was the most confusing phase in my PhD journey. The areas of my research interest were many and finding the right topic was a big challenge. This was even harder because I knew I would feel extremely motivated and passionate about my research only if it was connected to my life experiences.

I was a software developer prior to doing my PhD and I wanted my experiences to contribute to my choice of research topic.

After months of searching on my own, followed by multiple discussions with my advisor and my seniors, I came up with a list of *hot research areas* in organizational behaviour, such as corporate social responsibility, leadership development, and organizational citizenship behaviour.

The Aha Moment

Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) appealed the most to me. OCB is discretionary individual behaviour that is not formally awarded by any organization, and promotes organizational well-being. My work experience had shown me the importance of good citizens in an organization. Co-workers who were helpful, disciplined and self-driven are appreciated and respected by all. I studied the five dimensions of OCB: altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue and sportsmanship. Out of these, I instantly related to altruism.

My attraction towards altruism sprung from my work experience. I was an electronics and communications engineer but was assigned a software programming project. Hence, I required a lot of help everyday to learn and complete my work. Moreover, I had made friends and had developed partnerships through mutual help and collaboration. I moved on to studying interpersonal helping and found its dynamics extremely interesting.

Studies on interpersonal helping led me to help seeking. Different aspects of helping had been vastly researched. However, I felt something important was missing. I started writing down my own experiences of interpersonal helping at work. While I could map most aspects of real life with the existing studies, I could not find much about one key aspect—people who sought help or help seekers.

I felt interpersonal helping could be studied completely only if equal importance could be given to the two stakeholders—helper and help seeker. From my personal experience, I knew help seekers were as important as helpers. A few studies I found dating

back to the 1970s also mentioned help seekers as initiators and key players in helping interactions. I felt motivated to delve deeper into the studies on help seeking.

I looked for cross-disciplinary articles in educational psychology, social psychology, medicinal psychology, and sociology. My work experience further helped me in understanding and connecting with the concepts and ideas. I knew help seeking would be my topic of study. My Aha moment had arrived.

Methodology Maze

The next phase was deciding on a research methodology. As a new PhD scholar, I had often heard from my peers that quantitative research was less cumbersome and more verifiable than qualitative research. It was a lot more difficult to interview, interact and observe people, and the findings could get fuzzy. I wanted to opt for quantitative methodology.

To my horror, all my attempts to work around quantitative methods failed. I had no clear visibility into the variables and their interrelationships. Hypothesis formation was impossible. No prior instruments on help seeking existed. I had to get into the dark tunnel of exploration and make my own path. My tryst with qualitative research was about to begin.

I was scared, unsure and the prior notions about qualitative methodology being extremely difficult clouded my mind. I shared my inhibitions with my advisor. She advised that I do a pilot study with some people on campus to get a feel of the process. This helped remove most of my apprehensions and I felt more confident.

Grounded theory technique appealed the most to me for the study. Since much of my interest in help seeking came from my life experiences, I wanted a technique that would be based on story building. I was very keen to hear others' experiences with interpersonal helping at work. I wanted to find out what went on in the minds of the help seekers when they sought help. I was about to research help seeking in organizations using grounded theory technique.

Sampling Shocks

Software industry suited my study in multiple ways. Software work was team based and dependent on knowledge sharing necessitating helping interactions. Also, my work experience was in the software industry due to which I had a robust social network there.

Excited, energized and enthusiastic, I decided to add one more layer to my study. Since the software industry comprises of many multinational organizations, I wanted to bring in a global perspective to my research. Hence, I decided to compare help seeking in India and the United States. These two countries have had outsourcing partnerships for many years. I also had some of my social networks in the United States, which could have facilitated data collection. The participants were divided into three sets: Indians in India, Indians in the United States, and Americans in the United States.

The next step was to solicit participation in my study. The grounded theory technique requires the participants to be unfamiliar with the researcher to avoid biases (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Hence, I asked my friends to request some of their contacts in the software industry to participate in my study. I drafted an email describing the purpose of my study and the expectations from the participants and sent it out to all the contacts I could get.

The response was shocking and disheartening. Most Indians responded to my emails and expressed an eagerness to participate in the study. They were able to acknowledge and verify my credentials. However, I did not hear back from any American software professional. After weeks of failed attempts of soliciting American participation, I started seeing an end to my cross-cultural study aspirations.

Data Collection, Flying and Crying

I was extremely fortunate to get the most supportive and understanding thesis advisor and committee members. They encouraged me to travel to the United States to find participants.

This would also enable me to experience the culture I was studying. I landed in California, the Silicon Valley, crossed my fingers, and started looking for some American participants.

Upon interaction with some academicians in the United States, I realized that the ways of data collection in the United States are completely different from those in India. While in India, the name of the associated business school is enough to solicit participation; in the United States, study participation is most often incentivized.

Having no monetary incentives to offer, I had to find novel ways to solicit participation. My advisor helped me draft a participation email that clearly specified that the participants would gain an increased awareness about self and work from the interview process. I call this mailing phase as the *carpet bombing* phase. I mailed everyone I knew and requested them to mail everyone they knew. There were days I spent just emailing people. Finally, some responses started coming in.

Nevertheless, the American participant set gave me a tough time with phases of despair, tears and anger. Grounded theory technique requires data collection until saturation in findings is achieved. As the requirement for participants used to increase, my heartbeat increased. There was a time when some of my friends felt so concerned that they suggested I interview Chinese software developers in America instead of Americans! The contacts of Chinese developers were more readily available to me, but I wanted to go the way I thought my study would look like. Merely convenience sampling would not have helped the research design. I continued my search—tired but unfazed.

Interview Itches

The stint in the United States was a great opportunity to learn about culture and communication. The common language of communication was English and not realizing the contextual differences led me to some wrong decisions. For instance, in my initial emails, I kept looking for 'IT professionals', which implies IT support in the United States, but software developers in India.

I kept learning and correcting myself through such episodes to be accurate with the culture and context.

Interviewing is like doing a stage play over and again. The more shows one performs, the better one gets at it. My initial interviews were painfully long and I kept groping in the dark for the right questions. I slowly observed the interviews getting shorter but giving more useful data.

A qualitative researcher should not let personal biases get in the way of research. However, as humans it is natural to judge people. There were participants who came across as haughty and rude. For instance, a software architect kept talking at length about how he was more intelligent than all the other developers in his team. There were those who I felt like empathizing with. There were emotions of anger, loss and grief. For instance, a participant had recently lost his mother and described how his co-workers helped him cope with that loss. No matter how I felt, I had to observe, record and carry on with my questions. One of the most amazing things I realized was that I had the capability of being non-judgemental, something I thought I could never be. My kindergarten teacher taught me to treat all human beings equal, and my qualitative research taught me to treat all participants equal.

Transcription and the Carpal Tunnel

Upon signing up for qualitative methodology, the researcher also signs up for a lot of typing. I did not trust the accuracy of speech recognition software enough. Each interview was at least an hour long and had to be transcribed within 24 hours to add memory-based interaction notes. This meant 8 to 9 hours of typing every day.

I never forget to mention in my thesis-related presentations that the data collection process gave me more than 1000 pages of transcripts, and the Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. I missed on taking exercise breaks and paying attention to ergonomic adjustments. My work took precedence over my health when both should have gone hand in hand. This is a big take away from my experience.

Data Analysis and the Sketch Pens

As a part of the grounded theory technique, I started data analysis during the collection process. The *colourful phase* of my PhD started with the biggest pack of sketch pens available in the market. The first round of searching for codable moments gave me coloured bed sheets, coloured walls, and 1000 multicoloured pages. It really seemed daunting to collate and categorize the data. My PhD colleagues advised me to take the help of some coding software. Till date I am not sure if it would have been better, but dirtying my hands (literally) and coding manually really brought me closer to the data.

During my coding journey, I discussed my work with my peers. We used our coffee and lunch breaks to brainstorm about our respective studies. Talking about my topic gave me much more clarity into different concepts and ideas and helped reduce some of the personal biases that I might have added to my conceptualization of the codes.

Coding Cribs

I read a lot on grounded theory technique. There were conflicting schools of thoughts, different ways to go about coding, and even within a single way of coding, there were variants. I was lost again. I decided to stick to the basic three-step coding process: open, axial and selective coding.

Coding was not easy. As a qualitative researcher, I often found myself stuck with words, struggling to comprehend their real meanings. For example, did the participant seek help since the potential helper was a friend, or because the potential helper seemed friendly? There were so many layers to interpersonal relationships like friends, good friends, close friends and work friends. It was very challenging to gauge, separate and compare the relationship levels.

It took me several weeks of organizing and reorganizing the codes to reach the final stage. One word to describe the coding process will be 'madness'. It was a crazy time full of coloured

pens and sheets of papers. There were multiple rounds of reading, comprehending, drawing, tearing the paper and again reading. I became the participant, read out the transcripts aloud, and then became the researcher, analysed the codes. I had bored my family and friends with discussions to reason out relationships between the codes.

Writing a Winner

Writing was difficult, particularly with my thesis companion, Mr Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. I had considered myself a decent writer until I came out with the first thesis draft. I gave more time to coding and analysis than to writing. No matter how good and fancy the ingredients are, if a dish looks unappetizing, no one eats it. My first draft came out dismal.

After a month of re-writing, I did churn out a much superior thesis draft. My advisor's reaction to the first draft prompted me to work harder and better—'I see some words; where are you in this?' A good thesis does not preach, but talks to its reader.

Seminar Shivers

I was not confident on the day of the thesis seminar. I was madly in love with my work, but there was something missing. My friends and teachers were present to support me, yet I knew something was not right. Once the presentation started, I spoke like fire. But no matter how good a speaker one is, one's work should speak for oneself. My work remained silent.

The questions in the seminar helped me think and reflect more on what was missing. The end product of my study was a list of inhibitions that help seekers have before they ask for help. The most common question asked after the seminar was 'so what?' I had to ensure that future research knows how to benefit from my work. Overall, I was far from the finish line.

After the seminar, I was feeling embarrassed, disheartened and scared when I entered the meeting room. Contrary to my

expectations, all the faculty members were very supportive. They shared their appreciation for my data collection efforts and my work, and felt that it had a lot of potential. They encouraged me to come up with something much more valuable.

Resurrection

Looking back at the seminar debacle, I realized that my work lacked the key ingredients of a good thesis—discipline and planning. I had read many articles on grounded theory technique and tried to follow all of them. This not only unnecessarily increased my work, but also left me directionless. I realized that I have to read everything but choose one path to follow. There had to be a method to the madness!

I went back to the grounded theory research. I read the articles again, and chose one path to follow. I used the reflective coding framework to tell the story of help seekers. The conditional relationship guide helped me describe all categories in great detail. Once I achieved clarity on the categories, the reflective coding matrix helped me come up with a process of help seeking.

Scott (2002) developed the conditional relationship guide (CRG) to bridge the gap between open coding and axial coding. CRG permits a higher level of abstraction than the coded data, and represents the data as a whole (Scott, 2004). Organizing the categories in CRG helped me elaborate on each and see relationships between various aspects of help seeking. Table 5.1 shows some examples of how each category was elaborated upon.

I then used the Reflective Coding Matrix (RCM) to find the core category and other major categories that relate to it. The RCM suggests building core category around properties, processes, dimensions, contexts and modes of understanding the consequences (Scott, 2004). The RCM is located at the lowest level of the conditional matrix (Corbin & Strauss, 1990)—the level of the individual. Several rounds of reading and reflecting on the RCM showed that the descriptors were showing the pursuit of the help seeker towards a positive experience of help seeking.

In the selective coding step, I developed a storyline, which described the central phenomenon around which the help-seeking

Table 5.1 Conditional Relationship Guide

Category	*What*	*When*	*Where*	*Why*	*How*	*Consequence*
Task-related issue	Problem in completing the task at hand Technical problem Logistical problem Problem domain	Task to be completed	Task context	Lack of technical competence Lack of authority Lack of resources	Information Advice Feedback Clarification Resolution Resources Workforce Time	Identifying the problem
Seniors feel more self-competent	Seniors feel more competent at work Competence expectations	Technical issue	National context Organizational context	More tenure in industry More tenure in organization More knowledge More influence Self-esteem	Helping others More experience in the organization More experience in the industry	Hesitating

behaviour revolves. It also helped to establish help-seeking dynamics in relation to the macro and micro environments surrounding the help seeker. I could answer the question—what is happening in the mind of the person in need of help?

I used the storyline developed from the RCM to move to a higher level of abstraction by collating the patterns, processes and relationships. The conditional matrix framework (CMF) then helped me conceptualize, discover and track conditions that influenced help seeking. This matrix helped me think both 'geographically and conceptually' (Strauss & Maines, 2010, p. 60).

Applying the CMF gave the emergent model describing the phenomenon of help seeking. This model showed that a help seeker first comprehends the problem and then experiences hesitation to seek help, assesses the risks in seeking help, strategizes how to reduce those risks and finally addresses the problem by asking for help. Each of these processes has its own properties and dimensions to describe help seeking more clearly. Setting this process into a storyline gave me the most intricate details of the help-seeking decision process.

The other big finding was the importance of a positive experience in the help-seeking process. It was a great revelation for me that a person would not seek help, unless the problem was extremely critical, if he/she expects a negative experience out of seeking help.

The *so what* was answered. My findings were grounded in my data and showed how people make help-seeking decisions at work. It also showed that organizations could encourage interpersonal helping interactions if they create an environment, so that the experience of help seeking is positive. Academically, I saw my study furthering the research on help seeking by giving a base to create a tool to measure a person's propensity to seek help.

I knew I had a winner this time.

Defence Like a True Warrior

As melodramatic as it sounds, I did defend my work like a valiant warrior. The model was clean; the ideas were crisp; there was

a justified method; the answer to *so what* was clearly there. The presentation ended with a grand applause.

Mirror Mirror

Intellectually, the PhD journey was the most enriching period of my life. I made my own mistakes and made my own amends. This chapter will be incomplete without sharing what I learnt from my journey.

As a qualitative researcher, I got the opportunity to interact with many intelligent and interesting people who I otherwise might not have met. I could learn a lot from their experiences and observations.

My appreciation for others' views has increased tremendously and am able to look at them from a non-judgemental perspective. There were times when computer engineers, with little formal education in human psychology, gave me eye-opening insights, some of which I use even today to introduce organizational development initiatives in my employer organization.

During this time, I also got the opportunity to live in another culture. The experience was enriching, and required me to understand and assimilate the differences. I wore my researcher cap all the time. I used to notice cultural nuances in public places and social interactions. Experiencing the culture I was researching facilitated my work tremendously.

I learnt to manage my own time. A PhD programme is devoid of deadlines. I learnt to set micro deadlines for myself and became more disciplined. I could complete my PhD within the average five years because I kept reminding myself to be disciplined and considerate towards time.

I gained the most wonderful relationships of my life during this phase. I got married to the most supportive person I could have asked for, another PhD in the world, who empathized with my woes and worries and walked with me on this journey. I found my role models in the most knowledgeable and humble professors who held my hand whenever I was about to fall, sometimes even before I knew it. I made new friends across the PhD batches.

Our brainstorming sessions, debates and mock seminars created a strong camaraderie, which continues till date.

There is no doubt that the PhD journey is difficult, full of uncertainties and requires tremendous amount of commitment. However, it certainly does not imply locking oneself up in a room for years working. As a qualitative researcher, I needed people at all stages—right from conceptualizing the research, to data collection, to analysis, to the final writing. I also gained the maximum out of my PhD journey by participating in all campus events, watching movies, making new friends and sticking to my hobbies. An hour of dancing every other day gave me that extra energy to do better at my work. I went for runs to keep myself physically fit to work better. A professor once complimented me—it seems you transferred your weight to your thesis.

My biggest influence and guiding force in the PhD journey were these words of my advisor—your PhD and you should become one. I believe I could churn out a well-appreciated thesis because my work came from my soul.

There is no key to get easy access to the PhD club, but there certainly is a method to the PhD madness. The day you are able to identify your method, it is an easy road ahead. So find your method, complete your journey and share your story for the future PhDs of the world to learn from.

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6

Quasi-ethnography: Methodological Design for Exploring Knowledge Creation in Organizations

Anjan Roy

Editors' note: Anjan Roy studied the dynamics of knowledge creation in an Indian firm. In terms of research design, he adopted *a plural approach* in following both interpretive and positivistic philosophies. For data collection, he used a quasi-ethnographic approach and then integrated it with the process of theory building from a perspective of narratives. He presents strength of qualitative research in studying the knowledge-creation phenomena in real-life setting, while remaining systematic. He discusses the importance of field visits and observations through various cycles of new product development, keeping notes about day-to-day business routines and social interactions in understanding the context and the phenomena.

Introduction

Most researches necessarily contain a section on methodology whose sophistication and elegance may overwhelm their purpose. The discussion on methodology however often proceeds without

clarifying any underlying link with the intended objectives, which seems to be assumed as obvious. In fact, the term *methodology* in research has been used interchangeably and loosely (Hirscheim & Klein, 1992) with others such as *method, technique, design, paradigm* and *approach*.

According to Mingers (2001), *method* and *technique* denote well-defined sequence of operations carried out in the research process. They, however, belong to certain *paradigms* or *approaches* (Burell & Morgan, 1979) that represent worldviews in terms of epistemology, ontology, research object, theory of truth and rigour claims (Weber, 2004). In contrast, *methodology* or *design* of research is the particular combination of *methods* keeping in view the implications of the underlying *approaches* subscribed by the researcher. It is, according to Hirscheim and Klein (1992), an intermediate concept between philosophy and method. Several researches, it would seem, ignore this little contrast leading to methodological gaps. These gaps remain hidden for most but become more evident in the conduct of qualitative research.

This chapter reports the construction of methodological design for a research problem as to how organizations create knowledge. The nature of the research question was such that there were associated problems of subjectivity and definitional complications with implication for methodology. Clearly, without crafting and clarifying the methodology, such research could not be systematically undertaken or reported. The following discussion lays forth the basis for the design of methodology for studying knowledge creation in an organization.

The Research Problem

The context of research was the survival of indigenous firms in India, which in the decade following liberalization faced with globalizing economy that threatened their traditional sources of competitiveness. During this time, many firms embraced foreign sources of products and technologies, but still failed to survive. However, there were certain firms, which not only survived but emerged to become stronger within their industry. Study of these

firms could provide insights into the dynamics of survival and leadership.

Strategic management literature suggests that to keep pace with the changing business environment and to survive, firms must have dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). Defined as the ability to interpret and identify the changes in the market environment, *sense and seize the opportunity* (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993), the concept implies that firms must not merely respond and adapt to the changing environments but also create new markets and rules of competition.

Growth of dynamic capabilities has been linked with knowledge creation. Knowledge creation as discovery and development of products, and business concepts lead firms to newer markets and niches and underlies Penrosian growth and expansion. Studies of long-lasting businesses inform that firms that have survived for a century or more are based on several industrial inventions made by them (Dyer & Gross, 2001). Zollo and Winter (2002) have pointed out that to have dynamic capabilities a firm must accumulate knowledge and invest in knowledge articulation and codification processes conceptualized under the gamut of knowledge creation.

There are models of knowledge creation, such as the Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI model, which have attempted to describe the phenomenon as a process comprising of stages—socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. The model was built upon cases of new product developments in Japanese organizations. However, the model may not be universal and particular studies of knowledge creation in different business settings may provide important differences. Therefore, it emerged as a relevant research question as how could knowledge be created within an Indian firm.

Crafting of Research Methodology

The research question thus posed set the objective for exploring and discovering processes that led to knowledge creation. Knowledge, by itself, is a difficult construct which viewed from

various disciplinary perspectives, such as philosophy, cognitive psychology, sociology, etc., can pose a myriad and often conflicting variety of definitions. Broadly, there are western philosophies which posit separation of reality of physical world from the individual, while there are eastern philosophies that stress upon knowledge to be occurring to the whole personality and character rather than in separated components of body and mind. Accordingly, there have been positive traditions that treat knowledge to be objective and interpretive traditions that considers knowledge to be subjective. Both traditions have their own methodological implications for study and research.

According to the interpretive approach, knowledge is personal and constructed through interpretation of meanings. Knowledge is emergent and path dependent. Therefore, by building a linked structure of event pathways, the processes of accumulation of knowledge and its creation can be constructed. Such study involved collection of naturalistic data and observations, and interpretation and validation of meanings. It required creation of a framework for undertaking the research.

The interpretive research paradigm, however, was relatively new with its traditions yet to be fully established. Only a few works existed to demonstrate the use of methods for data collection, analysis and theory building. Apart from principles suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Klein and Myers (1999), which were yet to be widely applied and agreed upon, there were no standards for conduct and evaluation of such research.

Some researchers as Gioia and Pitre (1990), Mingers (2001) and Weber (2004) had argued that claims of insurmountable differences between the interpretative and other research traditions were overstated, and different philosophical viewpoints could be accommodated to formulate a research design. This stance was important to reflect the multifaceted nature of reality. Therefore, while this research was intended to be carried out in the interpretative philosophy, it was felt that it could gain much by borrowing certain principles from positivistic approach that could enable building up rigour. Accordingly, a pluralistic methodology (Mingers, 2001) using combinations of techniques was crafted, which are detailed in the following.

The Methodological Design

Figure 6.1 describes the methodological framework designed for undertaking the research. The design was based upon strategies of sense making (Table 6.1) as described by Langley (1999),

Figure 6.1 Methodological Design

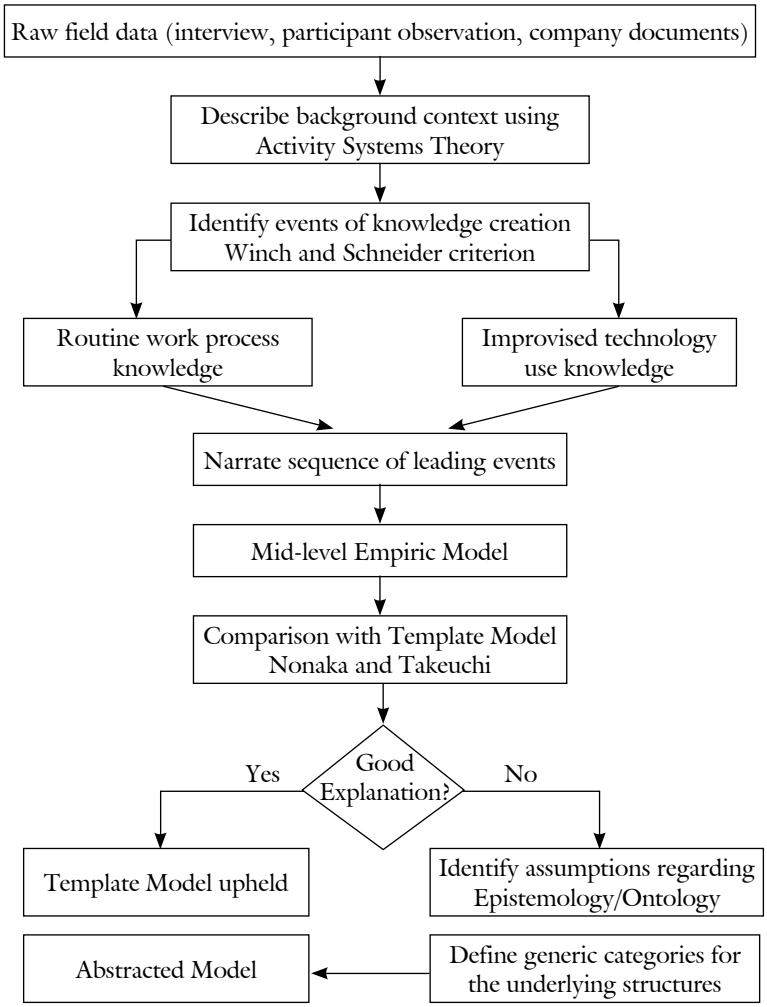

Table 6.1 Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data

Strategy	*Fit with Process Data Complexity*	*Specific Data Needs, Key Anchor and Sense Making*	*Good Theory Dimensions*
Grounding Strategies			
Grounded theory	Adapts well to eclectic data and ambiguity. May miss broad high-level patterns.	Needs detail on many similar incidences. Key anchor: Incidents, categories. Sense making: Meanings, patterns.	High in accuracy. Moderate simplicity. Maybe difficult to go from substantive theory to more general level.
Alternate templates	Adaptable to various kinds of complexity Different templates capture different elements.	One case is enough. Degrees of freedom come from different templates. Key anchor: Theories. Sense making: Mechanisms.	Each theory can be simple and general. Together they offer accuracy but simplicity and generalization differ with theory integration.
Organizing Strategies			
Narrative	Fits with ambiguous boundaries, variable temporal embeddedness and eclecticism.	One or a few rich cases. Can be helped by comparison. Key anchor: Time. Sense making: Stories, meaning making.	High in accuracy, lower in simplicity and generality.
Visual mapping	Deals with time, relationships, etc. Less good for emotions and interpretations.	Needs several cases in moderate detail to begin generating patterns. Key anchor: Events. Sense making: patterns.	Moderate level of accuracy, simplicity and generality.

(Table 6.1 Contd)

(Table 6.1 Contd)

Strategy	*Fit with Process Data Complexity*	*Specific Data Needs, Key Anchor and Sense Making*	*Good Theory Dimensions*
Replicating Strategies			
Temporal bracketing	Can deal with eclectic data, but needs clear temporal breakpoints to define phases.	One or two detailed cases are sufficient if processes have several phases used for replication. Key anchor: Phases. Sense making: mechanisms.	Accuracy depends on adequacy of temporal decomposition. Moderate simplicity and generality.
Quantification	Focus on events and their characteristics.	Needs many similar events for their statistical analysis: One or few dense cases are best. Key anchors: Events, outcomes. Sense making: Patterns, mechanisms.	High simplicity, potentially high generality.
Synthetic (comparative)	Needs clear process boundaries to create measures. Compresses events into typical sequences.	Needs enough cases to generate convincing relationships. Moderate detail for internal validity. Key anchor: Processes. Sense making: Predictions.	Modest accuracy. Can produce simple and moderately general theories.

Source: Langley, 1999.

wherein the conduct of research and drawing of theoretical propositions was categorized into three major activity groups, referred to as grounding, organizing and replicating. The methodological design as the combination of these strategies was linked to the objective of this study.

Grounding Strategy

Study of processes in organizations needs to be grounded or situated within the context and the background of relevant actors and artefacts. According to Langley (1999), such study can be made in two different ways. One following *a priori* theories, called as the template approach, while the other taking on a grounded approach. While the former brings into consideration existing theories and frameworks to inform the study, the latter served as a useful guide for developing the study in a naturalistic mode.

The key anchors of grounded theory are events and incidents. Research involving revelation of organizational dynamics are broadly termed as process research, defined by Ferlie and McNulty (1997, p. 368) as 'dynamic study of behavior in organizations, focusing on organizational context, sequence of incidents, activities and actions, which unfold over time'. A study of processes underlying knowledge creation could be anchored to events of new knowledge, which could be the unit of analysis.

Although several definitions of knowledge were available (Blackler, 1993, p. 864), a working definition for knowledge creation was needed to be adopted to situate the study. In this regard, knowledge defined as the capacity to perform was considered to be consistent with interpretive philosophy. It implies knowledge to be emerging and becoming visible in behaviour and practical outcomes of actions taken. Accordingly, a set of definitions was adopted from criterion suggested by Winch and Schneider (1993), which viewed knowledge creation in both material and conceptual forms:

- Contribution to a core body of scientific knowledge by securing a patent through creation of new product or process improvements
- Increasing intangible values in the output beyond functional and cost requirements through customization and providing novel solutions to customer needs and problems
- Creating new markets through redefining and modifying existing products and designs

- Evolving new business concepts and competitive paradigms through activities redefining industry norms and structural patterns

The 'activity system' framework (Figure 6.2) was used to situate and describe the context of events of knowledge creation. The framework enabled situating the relevant actors and artefacts within the organization together with their mutual interactions, inter-relationships and interdependencies. It provided a way to study equilibrium as well as breakdown conditions that lead to undermining of existing linkages and creation of new knowledge.

Identification and description of 'activity systems' required tracing back the structure of the activity from visible outcomes and observations at work place, identifying the subject whose interpretation formed the dominant description of the system, as well as the collective including the artefacts, social rules and divisions of labour, within which the subject performs. This approach to modelling follows the description by Blackler, Crump and McDonald (2003) shown in Table 6.2.

The framework of the SECI model was used in a positivistic sense, as template of knowledge-creation process model. Comparison with the epistemological and ontological bases of

Figure 6.2 Representation of an Activity System

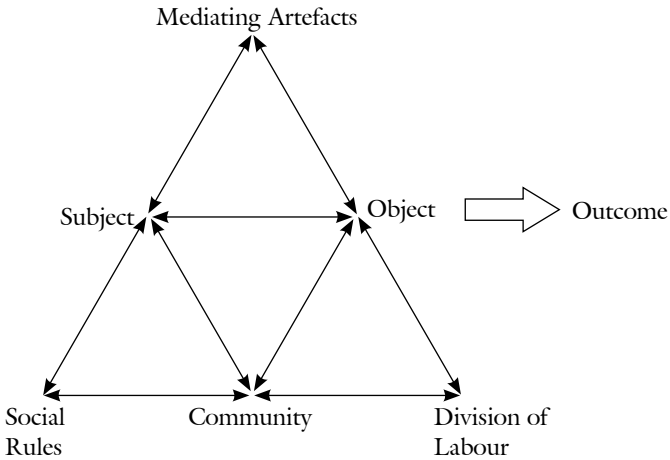

Table 6.2 Activity Theory and Organizational Analysis

An Activity Theory Approach to Organization Research	*(a) What Are People Doing?*	*(b) How Are They Doing It and with Whom?*	*(c) How Do They Relate to Others Schooled in Different Communities of Activity?*	*(d) What Is the Nature of Collective Learning?*
(i) Study of detailed practices	The object of activity is fundamental to activity–theoretical analysis of practices. Objects of activity are partly given and partly anticipated. They are intimately related to the mediating factors through which they are constructed.	Activities are culturally situated and linguistically and technologically mediated. They are enacted in communities and involve a division of labour. Such factors and their interactions are described as activity systems. This is the unit of analysis used in activity–theoretical research.	A degree of internal differentiation is inevitable in activity systems of any size, but complex organizations can easily become segmented and fragmented. Rather than analysing organizations as single activity systems, it is more satisfactory to analyse them as networks of overlapping activity systems.	Activity systems are tension-producing systems. Disturbances within and between activity systems provide the driving force for their development.

(ii) Study practices in the context of their historical development	Actions are discrete, have clear beginnings and endings, and exist over short time scales. They are goal oriented. Activities on the other hand are complex patterns of practice that endure over long time periods. Activities suggest goals and provide motive.	Activities develop over time. As a general trend, activity systems in work organization appear to be becoming more complex and interdependent, objects of activity more abstract and emergent and communities of activity more transient.	Expertise in complex activity networks is (necessarily) distributed, emergent and decentred, that is, the course of its development is not and cannot be only controlled from the centre. Organizing processes in activity networks can be described as perspective making, perspective taking and perspective shaping.	When activity systems become more improvised and fluid established priorities and power relationships are loosened and may be reformed. Shifting boundaries in activity networks may produce anxiety and defensiveness.
	(e) How Can People Shape the Contexts that Shape Their Practices?			
(iii) Support the development of practices that are being studied	Research can help people become aware of the object of their activity and of the process of object construction.	Research can explore the origins and dynamics of particular activity systems and networks and the trajectory of their development.	Research can explore the varied nature of activities (and the priorities they imply) in an activity network and the dynamics of perspective making, taking and shaping	Research can support a review of current patterns of activity and the infrastructures that support them, and a search for alternatives.

Source: Blackler, Crump & McDonald, 2003.

this model could enable revealing specific aspects about the tacit-explicit conversion processes expected to occur in the present organizational setting.

Selection of Study Organization

The selection of the study organization was made from the set of manufacturing firms as the sector then involved new product and process activities. Firms having dominant local ownership were extracted from CMIE database of companies. The suitable ones were selected based on demonstration of leadership through sustained above average performance over a period of 10 years on several criteria, such as profitability, export orientation and R&D propensity, simultaneously. Export orientation was used as an indicator of a firm's efforts to match its competitiveness at the product level in international markets. Higher profitability indicated the significant value positioning of the firm's products while the focus on research indicate the firm's efforts towards being competitive on the basis of technology and knowledge. Sustained performance over the long term indicated systemic and institutionalized capabilities.

As it was necessary to have in-depth access into the organizations and their work places, many in the list of selected firms could not be chosen. Communication was established with the highest executive authority to explain the research, the methodology and the relevance. A family-owned and managed firm in the steel casting industry emerged to be a willing participant from the list of firms. The organization culture in family-owned firms reflect the ethnic heritage and social culture (Ward, 2000). In this regard, the selected organization provided the unique context of an indigenous firm.

Organizing Strategy

Having situated the study using the previously mentioned strategies, an organizing strategy was required to detail out the context and report observation and data.

Narrative Strategy: Case Method

Narratives are considered to be useful in organizing data of situations where boundaries of the studied phenomena are ambiguous, process events have a temporal nature and an eclectic approach need to be taken (Langley, 1999). Poole et al. (2000) have strongly recommended the use of narrative and story-based descriptions of process phenomenon to present the contextual details of the research setting in all its variety and richness. Sequence of events can be described such that probable causal links between incidents are indicated. Narratives can also clarify the basic structure of meanings to make experience more meaningful.

The case method as a research strategy was deployed to build the narrative of studied phenomena. It provided a research design having multidisciplinary character. Yin (1984) viewed the case method to be appropriate when the research objective was to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; or when boundaries between the phenomenon and the context were not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidences could be used.

Narration of Field Data

The experiences and observations from field visits were therefore structured into a case narrative. The narrative included sections on first visit when introductory formalities were completed, and discussions were held with key management personnel regarding their expectations. Other sections included organizational history, business philosophy, product markets, industry and environmental challenges.

During subsequent phases of field visits, observations from various cycles of new product development were introduced. The narration informed the day-to-day business routine in the organization, what the actors actually did at their workplaces and how they interacted amongst themselves. As many as 25-day visits were made leading to 17 formal interviews apart from several other informal discussions made in the shop floor, design office,

production and control office, etc. Interviews were given loose structures and based upon certain guiding questions formulated to address aspects from theory. Notes were taken during interviews, which were transcribed as soon as possible. Transcripts were returned to the respondents to ensure whether their responses had been represented correctly. Although there were certain restriction on access to other stakeholders of the firm such as the suppliers and customers, some information regarding technology suppliers could be accessed from company documents.

Data collected therefore comprised transcripts of informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, observations and company documents, including brochures, annual reports, production reports, sample reports, method sheets, etc.

Replication Strategy

Replication is considered to be one of the major parameters for informing rigour in the positivistic case study method (Yin, 1984). Replication is to build a more accurate picture of reality through tests of validity, reliability, objectivity and generality. In interpretive studies replication is to demonstrate that the knowledge claims are defensible and researchers recognize and address implications of their own subjectivity (Weber, 2004). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria to assess the rigour of qualitative research as well as Klien and Myers's (1999) principles relating to contextualization and negotiation of meanings between the actors were used to guide the study.

Using Langley's (1999) framework, replication logic was applied across different events of new knowledge creation to discern if there were any repeated patterns of process observations. The organization's history was charted by identifying and sequencing various events, including those of new knowledge. The key activity systems in the organization were examined to identify and describe their core knowledge bases and the limits to their knowledge. Contradictions and conflicts within the systems were found to be the driving forces behind disturbance and change. As the systems could be temporally bracketed or placed in the context of time periods around each event of innovation, the

behaviours and responses of the constituents that established the leads to creation of knowledge could be revealed.

Building Theory

The process of building theory was guided by Pentland (1999), who laid out levels of structures in narratives and described the heuristics of moving from layers of text to stories and to the generating mechanisms, which lay under the surface observations. While the schema summarized in Table 6.3 describes the movement across the first three layers, that is, from text to the fabula ending in the description of process patterns observed across instances of the knowledge creation into an empirical model, the last step is detailed now to enumerate the abstraction of the deeper structures from this mid-level empirical model.

The text-based narrative for each event of knowledge creation was examined to discover whether any persistent pattern of other events existed, which was summarized into a mid-level model. The mid-level model represented the activity system, its state of equilibrium, the received stimuli from external events, its behavioural response, outcomes and mode of sense making. This model was thereafter compared and contrasted with the processes in Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model for any significant similarities or differences in epistemology and ontology. An abstracted model with knowledge processes described as *enculturation*, *enactment*, *experimentation* and *embedment* could be derived. The context of

Table 6.3 Process of Building Theory

Level	*Definition*
Text	Particular telling of a story by a specific narrator
Story	Version of a fabula from a specific point of view
Fabula	Generic description of a particular set of events and their relationship
Generating mechanisms	Underlying structures that enable or constrain the fabula

Source: Pentland, 1999, p. 719.

community, as embedding the tacit knowledge, and activity, as shaping the explicit knowledge was recognized. A new model of knowledge creation could thus be conceptualized.

Conclusion

Doing process and qualitative research that involves interpretation of meanings leads to severe challenges for methodological design. Although systematic conduct is the first of such challenges, there are challenges beyond the operational. They refer to inherent conflicts between approaches to knowing and doing research. Consequently, certain researches that do not follow the traditions of the more accepted positivist orientation are likely to be rejected. As this chapter illustrates, there may be certain meeting grounds of different traditions and aspects of positive research, which may help resolving the methodological dilemmas of interpretive approaches.

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7

Single Case Study: A Promenade Down the Memory Boulevard

Shalini Rahul Tiwari

Editors' note: Shalini narrates how she has arrived at the topic of network for her research. Shalini studied knowledge integration in business networks using a single case study method (which actually involved nine organizations as nodes in the network). She used *memos* to arrive at her research question. She did single case study with embedded design. Within that single case, it was studied at different levels—the host case constituted the context of study, which is the business network level. Within this, knowledge integration was understood among three subnets comprising the actor and its co-actors. She discusses the challenges of gaining access to a large multi-actor network and her experiences in this journey. Her case study is an interesting example when the anticipated phenomenon was found to be absent and it had to be re-conceptualized as a previously unidentified case of knowledge dynamics in networks.

February 2001: Sowing the Seeds for Future

There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.

Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)

In a second-floor classroom at IIM Ahmedabad, a class is in progress for the course—Foundations in Management. The course is being taught by Professor M. R. Dixit and I am one of the participants. So far, we have studied and discussed evolution of management discipline, the contributions made by other disciplines, what theories emerged and the lenses one could use to study the field. On this last day, we are given a futuristic assignment—how do you see the management discipline growing and which phenomena would be gaining significance in the next 10 years? 'So submit this assignment in a week's time' said Professor Dixit, 'and also mark the date somewhere in your diaries; I expect a call or an email from all of you exactly 10 years from now. Tell me then whatever you had foreseen as of 2001, did it happen in 2010'?

I took to writing this assignment very seriously (as I always do), searched primitive search engines like Lycos and AltaVista, bored through the books in the vast library and after a week of hard work and toil, I came up with a descent piece of work. Other than the writing style, which the Professor observed as very creative, he liked the two phenomena that I foresaw as emerging—innovation and networks. I then completely forgot about this until three years later…

February 2004: Beginning of a Journey

Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.
Will Durant

I was facing an interview panel at the Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurgaon, for the Fellow Programme in Management (FPM is equivalent to doctoral programme). I was the second last candidate for the day and the panel comprised nine professors. Fifteen minutes into the interview, I was asked what would you like to do research on? Though I wanted to say either innovation or networks (thinking that future lies in these two areas), I blurted out—innovation. I was thoroughly grilled for the next 20 minutes on innovation. I didn't know whether I could convince the panellists of my choice, but I was certainly

convinced about one thing—there was to innovation than I knew of and hence became unsure about my selection.

Nevertheless, the enlightened panellists saw *that sliver of a researcher* in me and thus I was selected to the prestigious FPM of MDI. A momentous day in my life and a fateful journey was about to begin.

June 2004 to 2007: Of Thoughts, Beliefs, Actions and Reactions

It's not the events of our lives that shape us, but our beliefs as to what those events mean.

Tony Robbins

Towards the end of the first year of coursework during the FPM, I recollected about the interview and realized that it was time that I started collecting my thoughts for searching a suitable research idea. One day, I began with the simplest form of inquiry—a Google search. Searching for the word innovation, the search engine spewed half a billion results in 18 seconds. With the aim of managing the volumes, I tried various combinations and permutations, albeit without success. Results were always in thousands. Besides, my colleagues were doing a good job of supporting me … whatever they suggested me to read, I continued to add to the already downloaded material. The folder titled 'Research idea—innovation' was getting fatter and fatter feeding on the material that I religiously stored in it, with the intention of reading and sorting it out even more religiously. On the other hand, my mind was slowly reaching a state of perplexity. How people can write so much on a topic, I wondered. Research is a process to discovering an ultimate truth about the phenomenon … it seems to be a never ending journey. All human beings are researchers in one way or the other because they are searching for some truth. Using different means and based on their own experiences, they construct unique realities. Hence, whatever one discovers as a researcher, one wants to share with the entire world. I could only

come up with this philosophical solution to my confusion, and I decided not to lose hope and keep on searching.

While my search was on, I came across an article, 'The power of 7'. The opening sentence read, 'do you wish to reach the President of America or even the Pope; it just needs 7 persons to connect to them. This is the power of a "network"'. The words hit me hard as suddenly I remembered my assignment that networks would be the future. I had no idea about networks at all at that point in time, yet my intrigue set me on to do my research in networks. The search on networks was no less challenging as compared to innovation, but my curiosity to understand it better forced me to undertake this painstaking journey. It took me quite a few months to get a hang of what exactly I would pursue in research. During this entire period, I received tremendous support from my professors: all reading I did were bounced off them, they listened patiently, helped me develop linkages and motivated me to go on reading and reflecting further. Along with the course (which was going on during this time), I read a lot and developed quite a few memos trying to ground my idea in theory and to generate relevant research questions (I wonder why did not get them published as articles). I developed memos on typologies, methodologies, contexts, etc. This pre-proposal phase continued with searching, reading, thinking, discussing and developing. While it was fraught with frustration, disbelief, demotivation, there were intermittent phases of happiness, disbelief (here I mean in a positive way) and confidence.

These trials and tribulations finally led me to decide my research problem. I wanted to understand how knowledge is integrated among the organizations in a network. I narrowed down on this idea while reading Grant's (1996a, 1996b) work on resource and capability integration in a firm and how it leads to a superior performance. It is already established in literature that firms in a network setting (i.e., engaged in collaborative and cooperative relationships) display better performance as compared to isolated firms (for detailed references refer to my thesis). Therefore, a network which is able to integrate capabilities and resources will demonstrate better performance as compared to a network that

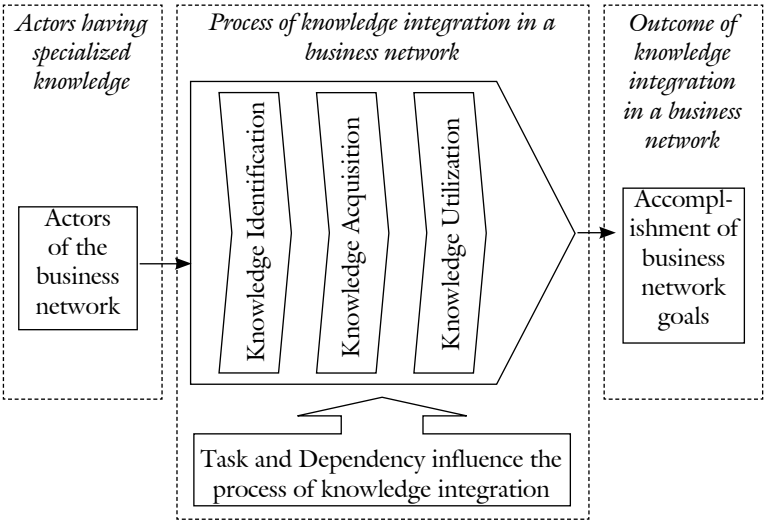
does not possess this characteristic. Besides, we are aware of a number of high-performing networks which are a result of the actors in that network capable of integrating resources in a manner that the overall learning for the network goes up, lesser mistakes are committed and projects are completed on time (Grant and Baden-Fuller, 2004). Now knowledge being a critical resource for an organization, and the fact that it has been defined by authors in different ways and that it has issues related to transferability and appropriability, which makes it difficult to integrate. Yet networks are able to integrate and perform as per the goals. However, in this entire phenomenon, the process of integrating knowledge is not clear; it is a black box. One might question, why is the understanding of the process so necessary? It is, because, first, we are talking about differential resources spread across organizations; second, organizations have differential capabilities for utilizing these resources; and third, a network formation allows firms to access these resources for a specific purpose. Hence, even if the strategic direction is clear among the actors of the network, the operational or the implementation issues will necessarily create hurdles for achieving a good performance. Moreover, through this network experience, firms will learn and develop dynamic capabilities and will demonstrate superior performance, be it in a network or otherwise.

With this research idea, I developed a set of research questions and a model of knowledge integration in a business network, based on extensive literature review (as shown in Figure 7.1).

An important decision needs to be discussed before I close this phase of my life as a researcher—the choice of methodology. The researcher's perception of reality lays the foundation for designing the research strategy. It is a reflection of how a researcher creates a worldview of this phenomenon and through which lens she would observe and study it, that is, the research design. Thus, a research design comprises research approach and research methodology. The research approach describes the philosophy and logic behind the research and the research methodology focuses on the actual process and its different stages (Lambert, 2008).

Given the nature of research questions, I decided for a qualitative approach. This research was exploratory in nature, since

Figure 7.1 Conceptual Model of Knowledge Integration in a Business Network



knowledge integration in context of business networks has not been studied before. Moreover, the study sought to understand the phenomenon in the context of business networks, which required that the researcher understands the unit of analysis in its natural setting and grasps the meaning that people attach to their everyday business experiences (Poggenpoel et al., 2001). This research approach also suited me as I wanted concepts to emerge from raw data and to understand the reality as perceived by the participants (Creswell, 2003).

I also decided to adopt a case study method (single case study with embedded design) to study this phenomenon. Cepeda and Martin (2005) have stressed upon the fact that case studies offer valuable and valid insights from qualitative data, provided they have been designed to satisfy the criteria laid down by a particular philosophical stance. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that a paradigm comprises three elements: epistemology, ontology and methodology. Each element has an important bearing on the way in which the researcher attempts to investigate and obtain knowledge about the social world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979;

Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Hence, as my aim was to understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subjects under investigation, getting close to the phenomenon was necessary for me.

The logic governing the case study was abductive, which allows more dynamic interaction between data and theory as compared to inductive or deductive logics. To counter the low statistical representativeness of a single case study, I decided to collect data from multiple sources of evidence; a single case study thus allowed for a more in-depth investigation. Within that single case, it was studied at different levels—the host case constituted the context of study, which is the business network level. Within this, knowledge integration was understood among three subnets comprising the actor and its co-actors. Meanwhile, constructs were defined and an inventory of questions (the interview protocol) on the process, its phases and sub-phases were also formulated. I then did a pilot on a very small network.

Armed with the final interview protocol, I was ready to take on the world … well, … I mean the network.

Years 2008–2010: End in Sight, But There Yet!

Even if you are going through hell, keep on going.

Winston Churchill

My biggest challenge in this phase was to gain access to a large multi-actor network. I had to make sure that *all* actors in that network allow me to interact with them; otherwise I would not be able to gain a complete understanding of the phenomenon. Such large networks are usually very difficult to locate since the complete formation is not reported in news. However, I carried on with my search to locate one such network and I was engaged in corresponding with a number of persons for quite a few months. And at last—Halleluiah! I got an access to TAXNET, a network comprising nine firms (or actors), namely, EIL, AES, IBM, ALDS, ABTS, GTL, TVS, DIT and MTS, as shown in

Figure 7.2 The TAXNET Network with Three Subnets and Nine Firms

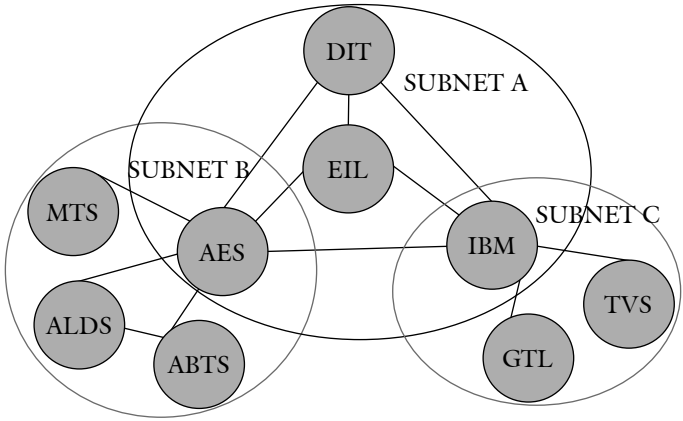


Figure 7.2. These actors were involved in a large-scale project for establishing IT and communication infrastructure in India.

The IT and Communication (IT&C) network was to be established for DIT for all its offices in India by AES and IBM. Both AES and IBM were being assisted by their respective co-actors as shown in subnets B and C. EIL was the monitoring and audit organization for this project. The IT&C network had to be established for all 752 offices and approximately 15,000 employees of DIT were to be provided connectivity. The project commenced in August 2007 and would end in 2009. I began collecting data in 2008; and I started by making a list of persons involved in this huge project. A challenge soon appeared—since it was a project-based structure for this network, people would come into the picture when required and leave when their task ended. Hence, tapping these individuals became a challenge as they could be working on different projects at different locations. The only way I could communicate with them was through phone, chat or emails. I decided to use all of them, but the response rate was not very good. Then I discovered another challenge that GTL was acquired by another firm in that industry. Some reorganization exercise was being carried out in that firm, and therefore the individuals were being extremely cautious and giving no time. Moreover, I came to realize that the menial work

is further being outsourced to other small local firms or agencies, which meant that the network boundaries were always in a state of flux.

However, people in the key roles such as National Project Managers, Regional Project Managers, etc., were looking after the project until the completion and their experience with the project gave me immense insights on the aspects of knowledge integration. Still, in their respective teams, a few had quit their jobs and had joined elsewhere. So I had to reach them in their current settings, which many of them did not encourage.

I collected data from the following sample:

National Project Managers	9 (interview all)
Regional Project Managers	20 (interview 10)
Engineers and other functional support staff	80 approx. (interview 30)
Number of persons located in far off locations or other organizations	20

My biggest challenge during the data collection phase was to reach the right person, and then persuade him/her to give a time of around two hours for an extensive interaction (this is just not possible in the corporate world, managers are forever busy). People who had left the organization and had joined elsewhere were the most difficult ones to reach and convince! Nevertheless, without losing hope and motivation I continued to collect data through interviews, observing the ongoing site preparations, sitting through a few of their meetings, company documents such as minutes of the meeting, copies of tenders, dashboards, emails, etc.

I also realized that sometimes it was difficult for me to really grasp the meaning of what an interviewee was saying as he was using a lot of technical words. I shared this observation with a Regional Project Manager at AES, who had been quite helpful during data collection. The very next week, he called me up to have an interaction with their technology expert (a great scientist!). I spent around three hours with him familiarizing myself with the domain knowledge. At the end of the data collection phase, I had generated more than 250 pages of material for analysis.

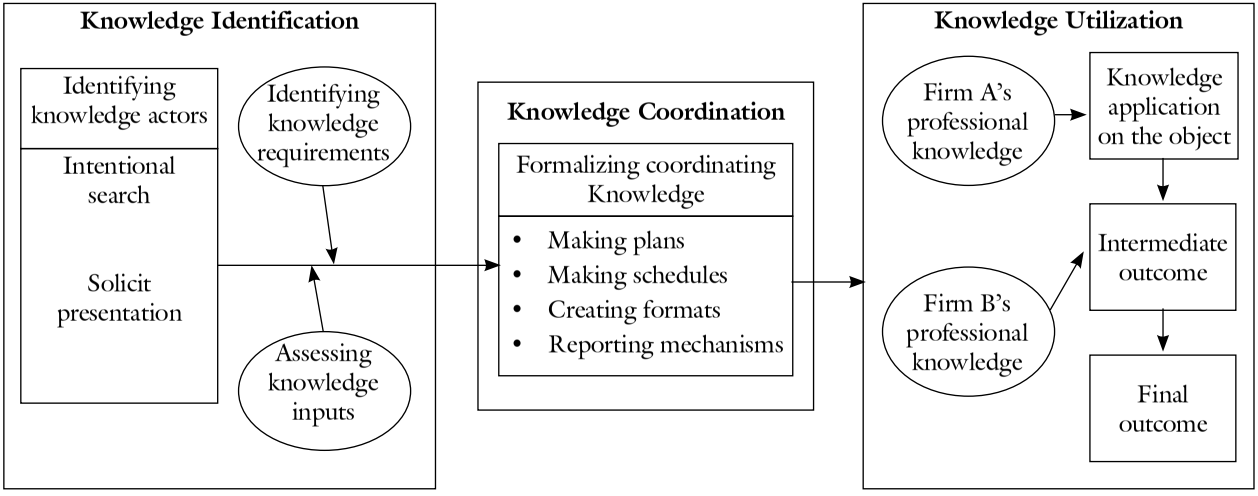
An important and interesting insight that was developing all through the data collection phase was that the already existing and well-known knowledge typologies were just not working in this case. While I was pondering on this, I had already purchased Atlas.ti—the software to help me analyse data by categorizing meaningfully and for deriving relationships among these categories. As I was feeding in data to this software in the form of codes, I discovered that none of the existing classifications of knowledge (the ones that I had covered during literature review) could clearly contain or categorize the emerging categories.

Therefore, I had to revert to literature once again and dig deeper and find whether other classifications existed. With a fresh insight on the existing literature and the categories that emerged, I developed another classification of knowledge, to suit knowledge types required for integration in a business network. This in turn also influenced the understanding of the process of knowledge integration in a network. And Bingo! The existing model of knowledge integration had evolved to the next level. I was not sure whether it was complete, but yes, it could be explained a lot more about integration of knowledge among various actors of a network. Besides this, I also developed the stages and sub-stages of knowledge integration and thereby coined the term *knowledge coordination*. Another important outcome of this discovery was that more interesting questions emerged such as what characteristics of network would impact the process of knowledge integration? Will the process change over the lifetime of a network, if the network grows or shrinks in size? And so on and so forth. But, given the time and resource constraints, I did what all good researchers do—push all such questions to the directions of future research, thereby proving that one is capable of thinking wide and deep; but one should give an opportunity to future researchers to join this network and contribute .

Finally, I named the evolved model of knowledge integration as Type B model, which is shown in Figure 7.3.

By this stage, many readers would be jumping up and down with a whole lot of questions to throw at me; as many of my critics were doing back in 2009–2010 (each thesis based on qualitative

Figure 7.3 Type B Model of Knowledge Integration in a Business Network



perspective has to undertake trial by fire, I think). These questions have always been there and will always be there like:

- Was your sample enough?
- How can you generalize the findings?
- Can a case study research meet the criteria of validity?
- Why didn't you do multiple cases?
- How will you prove it? And so on and so forth.

Now only two things matter during such times, a researcher's belief in his/her work and Thesis Advisory Committee's (TAC) belief in the researcher. As for the former, my belief did fail me sometimes, but for the latter, my TAC's belief continued in me unwaveringly and wholeheartedly.

I did give answers during those years and a good amount of content can be found in my thesis which is helpful in answering such questions, I would not do so here. I believe that our professors did a wonderful job when they engaged us in interactive sessions on knowledge, philosophy and methodology—our beliefs were strengthened. Albeit, I would like to make an observation on this.

There are many countries all over the world including India where fascination with numerical data exists and theses carrying loads of statistical techniques and numerical data are perceived superior. People practising this ideology refuse to see and believe that multiple worldviews exist of the same phenomenon. Maybe, their fear arises from not being trained in a manner in which they can perceive this or not having the desire to perceive a different reality. Their guides/mentors did not persuade them to seek truth and knowledge for themselves but simply led them to a completion of their thesis (doctorate awarded!). Ability to perceive, understand, acknowledge and discuss comes through undergoing a well-structured and rigorous programme in research, which many of the traditional educational set-ups are unable to provide. Also one has to be a part of a pool of scholars and professor who can help a researcher in shaping her inspiration, discussing ideas, engaging in discourse and developing perspectives. Hence, if a thesis is resting on pillars of robustness and rigour, it will be extremely difficult to challenge it and give it less importance than it demands.

Reflections

Research is what I'm doing when I don't know what I'm doing.
Wernher Von Braun (1912–1977)

This has been quite an important journey of my life. I have spent a few years doing what I really wanted to do. Away from the stress and ordeal of an ordinary life, I spent an extraordinary time doing research. I had my share of exciting moments and also of pensive days. There were happy days as well as sad and tearful days, but they all made me really proud of myself of having undertaken this decision. I cherish them all. Happy days made me confident and sad days gave me invaluable lessons and insights. Overall, they made me think critically, ask relevant questions, and become more insightful and rational. I would end this piece by summarizing my reflections through these nuggets:

1. In the research journey, the first-hand experience enlightens and the second-hand experience supports—first-hand experience is what the researcher goes through himself/herself and second-hand experience is what the researcher gathers by interacting with other researchers. The journey to enlightenment is very demanding and the fellow researchers make this journey tolerable and enjoyable.
2. The importance of self, intuition, cognition and independent thinking is a crucial part of learning. You should be able to reflect on your own experiences as well as those of your respondents. Be ready to face multiple worldviews and these would in turn influence the way you would conceptualize your research problem and its design.
3. Read a lot, write regularly and discuss with everyone. Repeat this cycle as often as possible and you are on your way to becoming a scholar.
4. Enjoy little pleasures of life—research is not an end all and be all. You don't have to become a hermit to acquire knowledge. Research is a part of your life, not your life.
5. A good guide should ask you tough and critical questions like—what do you want to do, why you want to do it, and

how will you do it? Be happy to face these questions—and you won't regret pursuing a PhD programme, however demanding it may be.

I would like to close this with these few lines by Robert Frost:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

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8

Single Case Study: Exploring Organizational Ambidexterity—My Journey as a Qualitative Researcher

Margie Parikh

Editors' note: Margie's narrative is a single case study on presence/absence of ambidexterity in a public transport system. She describes how her research questions evolved over a period of time. A mix of methods of data collection was selected to comprise interviews, observation of managers in meetings, field visits, focus groups, document analysis and newspaper articles. She used intensive interviews and observations to collect her data. To get a deeper understanding of a case, she collected both primary and secondary data. She elucidates the muddy process of data collection and analysis, which most of the writing on research approaches ignore. On one hand she highlights the value of intuition in her research, and on another side she uses software Evernote to manage data. She actually immersed herself in her research so much that she began to see parallels of ambidexterity in her own life between *Sannyasa* and *Samsara*.

I received my PhD on 2 March 2013—but does anyone ever get through research, once initiated? This question reminds me of the higher needs in Maslow's hierarchy, which once awakened never go back to sleep. When I look back, my blurred vision cannot

distinguish whether I carried on the research or the research carried me on. It was like the experience of a Himalayan trek—a lot of beauty and joy strewn along the way, but at the day's end one comes to camp dead tired. The trek continues in the dreams and one wakes up totally fresh in the mountain air, ready to meet one more leg of the journey. One might stumble or lose the way, but the trek master, volunteers and fellow trekkers help keep one's self on course.

This was my second attempt at a doctoral research project. The first one began in 1999, but many things did not feel quite right about it. I also wanted to be enthusiastic and energetic, and not exhausted, go-through-the-motion, preoccupied when with my children day after day of full-time teaching and the new research work. I let my first registration expire.

Choosing the Topic, Approach and Design for Research

- *Approach*: Qualitative (enables study of phenomena in the environments in which they naturally occur—suitable for the research questions raised).
- *Stance*: Interpretive (data as own constructions of other people's constructions).
- *Design:* Case study (logical sampling, analytical generalization).

I did not consider joining a full-time PhD course. I wanted to continue working while I studied, as that is a valid option in India. As an external faculty, I taught a course in 2009 at the CEPT University, which is both a government contractor and consultant in different areas of urban planning and development. In the course of my work there and interaction with other fellow faculty and jury members, I got the idea of working on organization design in public urban transport (PUT) sector. Indeed, interesting phenomena were unfolding before me: the city of Ahmedabad had the most successful Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) in the country, hugely popular with

commuters. It had won prestigious national and international awards. This service was managed by a newly created subunit of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). AMC also had another subunit offering traditional bus service to the existing commuters of the city. Apparently, the AMC had attempted structural ambidexterity[1] through provision of two subunits for two types of bus services: the existing traditional one offered a low-cost bus service and the new BRTS offered faster, more environment-friendly and comfortable commute to the emerging commuters who could afford higher fares. Similar efforts in some other cities like Delhi, Indore and Pune were less successful. What had clicked for Ahmedabad? How did the AMC design the organizations for managing PUT and what were its implications? Questions like these promised to make a case very similar to Stake's 'unusual case [that] helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases' (1995: 4). I wondered if mine would be a case study. However, before I thought about case as a method of study, I needed to understand whether an appropriate approach to my study would be qualitative or quantitative. According to Creswell (1998), the approach to research is not about choosing between the qualitative and quantitative ones, and is not restricted to methods of data collection. Each involves a set of assumptions (Table 8.1).

I remember my instant agreement with and inner approval of the table (Table 8.1). Not only to me alone but around me also, there is no single, concrete, context-independent reality. On the other hand, the issues of interest are also not entirely subjective so as to generate a unique, personal reality for every single individual. Considering the phenomenon before me, the relatively middle path seemed very meaningful—as highlighted in Table 8.1, with the basic assumption of socially constructed reality—for the interpretive study of organizations and people within.

[1] The ability of an organization to simultaneously pursue two contradictory goals and activities (Tushman & O'Reilley, 1996).

Table 8.1 Approaches to Research within Social Sciences

	← *Continuum of Subjectivist to Objectivist Approaches to* →			
How they differ	*Subjectivist*	*Research within Social Sciences*		*Objectivist*
Assumptions about the nature of what is to be known	Reality is a projection of human imagination.	Reality is what people construct socially.	Reality is a concrete process.	Reality is a concrete structure.
Assumptions about human nature	Man as a pure consciousness, spirit, being	Man as a social entity	Man as an adapter	Man as a responder
Epistemological stance	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation	To understand how social reality is created	To study systems, process, change	To construct a science
Methods of research	Exploration of pure subjectivity	Interpretive	Historical analysis	Lab experiments, surveys

Source: Morgan & Smircich (1980).

Refinement in Research Questions

Qualitative study allows research questions to evolve, and mine did too. Adopting qualitative approach to research allowed me to explore the actions of managers within organizations that were themselves evolving, and gave me an opportunity to access the experience of the managers as they dealt with the challenges and opportunities unfolding before them for the first time in the history of their organizations as well as their careers. In effect, since the time I registered as a doctoral scholar, my research questions evolved as shown in Table 8.2.

Methods and Technique

Designing the research was the most difficult part of my study. Following Yin (2009), I first defined the case, set its boundaries and defined the unit of analysis. The next task was to decide data collection procedure. As guided by the research questions, the mix of methods of data collection was selected to comprise interviews, observation of managers in meetings, field visits, focus groups, document and news analysis. Interviews were considered the primary method. Observation and field visits were used for clarifying and confirming the perspective and enriching the understanding. Specific details were added from the documents and news.

Given the type of research questions, the respondents of the interview questions were identified as the top and middle managers of AMC, AMTS and AJL, and later expanded to include an ex-manager, a design consultant, a component supplier, and a manager of the bus operator for clarity and verification. All interviews were recorded and transcribed barring a handful occasions where the respondent requested some segments of the interview not to be recorded. Those inputs were not noted or used for data analysis. Interview questions were sent to the respondent ahead of the interview at the time of seeking appointment. Twenty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted. Necessary permission and schedules of meetings were obtained from the AMC and

Table 8.2 From Research Intent to Objective to Questions: How My Study Evolved?

Major Study	
Research intent at the time of application (21 September 2009)	*Research intent post-review (8 February 2010)*
Organizational design for integrated urban transport in Gujarat Study the organization design elements for the integrated urban transport in Gujarat, if Unified Metro Transport Authority were to be created for integrated planning and management of urban transport. The proposed authority is required to operate at city level, but integrated transport services to urban passengers is made possible only through coordinated contribution and impact of various national, state and local bodies. Thus, in order to draw meaningful conclusions, this study focuses at the state level integration of urban transport. Experiences of other bodies with integrated urban transport within and outside the country would be studied in order to develop insights into organization design challenges.	Ambidexterity in the organization design: a case study of twin organizations in the public urban transport in Ahmedabad Objective: • Explore how AJL (Ahmedabad Janmarg Limited) and AMTS (Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Services) are configured. • Explore how the central tensions of design ambidexterity are recognized and managed at AMTS and AJL, namely: 1. Explore the proportion of differentiation and integration expected to lead to ambidextrous behaviour through structural arrangements within and between the organizations. 2. Explore the levels at which the ambidexterity expected—the organization and/or individual. 3. Explore whether the view of ambidexterity is static or dynamic. 4. Explore how the ambidexterity is managed through external sources (e.g., alliances) or internally (e.g., development). • Explore the nature and process of ambidexterity and the organizational objectives and performance measures at AMTS and AJL.

(Table 8.2 Contd)

(Table 8.2 Contd)

Major Study	
Proposal as on 15 December 2011	*Research agenda finalized before entering the field*
Ambidextrous organization design and its influence on effectiveness: A case study of AJL Objective: • Study the contextual dynamics that spur ambidextrous design response and how the same affect the organizational effectiveness as well as stakeholder expectations. • Explore the role of leadership in managing culture and its impact of ambidexterity. Also, identify differences and linkages between adhocracy and ambidexterity. Research Questions: • How do the changes in the context of an organization manifest as opposing tensions and paradoxes that demand top management attention? • How do the leaders create, maintain and change the organizational culture in response to the opposing forces? • How is ambidexterity different from adhocracy? • How do managers experience the paradoxes and respond to them? • How does ambidextrous design affect the effectiveness of the organization?	Organizational ambidexterity and effectiveness: a case study of public urban transport at AMC Purpose: To explore the nature of organizational ambidexterity and its links with organizational effectiveness. Research Questions: 1. How do the top managers respond to tensions? 2. How do top managers manage the organizational culture in response to the tensions? 3. How do the middle managers experience the tensions and respond to the same? 4. How is organizational ambidexterity linked to organizational effectiveness?

subunit managers in order to observe managers in their meetings. Meetings were attended as non-participant observer. Four field visits were made and three focus groups were conducted.

Case study protocol by Yin (2009) also advises construction of table shells for specific array of needed data, their sources and the questions to be asked in order to obtain the needed data.

Collecting and Analysing Data

Opportunistic eye: Conducting one focus group before I approached the field was particularly helpful as it prepared me for the encounter and pushed me to take one hard look at the literature. This focus group occurred between the last two versions of my research questions and objectives, and is pretty much responsible for the refinement. I could engage a group of about 30 participants of a management development programme on urban transport, being conducted at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. These participants were middle-level managers in various organizations concerned directly or indirectly (such as research and finance) with public urban transport across India. One of my advisors was the programme coordinator, and I asked him whether I could interact with the participants. The programme schedule ruled out one-to-one interaction. Hence, in exchange of some assignment supervision help, I received the permission to interact with the entire group on their last day. This focus group helped me refine my research questions, case questions as well as interview questions, and it was in many ways a forerunner to several of my findings concerning the nature of organizational tensions that managers experienced.

Prior research and multiple advisors: I had three chosen advisors who constituted my student advisory committee. CEPT University had its thesis committee. Together, both these committees reviewed my work every six months. My course structure required me to carry out two minor studies and one major study, which was immensely helpful. The minor studies forewarned me

about the challenges involved, the gap between skills required and the skills I possessed helped me familiarize myself with the PUT context and initiated me into the life-long discipline of research. Research workshops and doctoral institutes were of little direct help.

Gains from the Research

Improved clarity in thought before improved clarity of writing: Each of the reviews used to give me tremors—they still do as I think of them, but I grew more and more open about the process of collective critiquing of my work. Having lived through my final defence, I know that learning and refinement remain life-long processes. I may not be the best judge on the extent of improvement in my mindfulness as a consequence of exchanges such as these, but I like to believe that I am no longer the same after such exchanges.

'Staring' at data before intuition can be loaded: Of my two minor research projects first was based on primary data and the second was based on secondary data studies. Each of my studies found me sitting in front of a load of data in increasing complexity. In my first study, I had the performance data of a subunit of AMC from 1947 to 2010. For my second study, I had a theme on which perspectives about a business system came from the fields of economics, social science, business history, national culture and organization studies over several decades or even centuries. And finally, for the major study I had data collected from more than 200 news items and tens of internal reports, 23 interviews averaging nearly 50 minutes in length, 14 meeting observations averaging more than an hour and a half in length, four field visits and three focus groups.

All three studies had unique datasets, but one key worked for me in analysis as I determined what data was useful and how best it could be dissembled and then reassembled in order to make sense. That clue originated from the turning kaleidoscope of intuition. Of course, the output of that intuition would later

bake in the fire of questioning, examining and doubting; and stand against its rival explanations. If it stood, then it might stand little longer.

Intuition at play: The first step of the major research project was easy in terms of listing the tensions as experienced by the managers at the top and the middle level. The interview data also indicated how the managers were responding to those tensions. Some were already dealt with, and responses to some tensions were still evolving. I thought it could be wonderful if I could graphically present in one place how the tensions arose and how they were responded to. This was not mandated by the protocol that I had prepared, but somehow an admonition had remained with me ever since I had read it in a group post from the originator of the concept of Drama Triangle, Steve Karpman, 'Eric Berne taught us theory-making in our seminars … and next to the Occam's Razor mandate, the next rule was this exact quote "Don't say anything you can't diagram"'. So, here I was eliminating rival explanations (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) on one hand, and sketching how to present them through a figure on the other. It must have been quite enjoyable, as I also have my notes on field notes sprinkled with doodles and other non-verbal presentations and representations. Some of those notes and draft diagrams are on the back of envelopes, other on papers and letters, even bills and paper napkins. They are not anywhere in my dissertation, but they surely are an important part of my doctoral experience.

The fun of the qualitative, exploratory study was that it appeared alive to what was being added to it, and in turn it directed what I did in the field. It was not all wearing a fun tag when it was unfolding, but the challenge, the dynamism and the tension between what was expected and what the field returned to me was all very exciting. My first such challenge occurred at my very first approach of the field.

Learning to be open-minded about dynamics in the field: As per my research protocol, I needed to interview the top and middle managers of the organization and its two subunits. I had the appointment of the municipal commissioner whom I was going to meet

in order to formalize my approach and permission for collection of data through interviews, non-participant observation of managers in their meetings, field visits and document analysis. The commissioner listened to me as I shared with him the details of my research topic, the purpose of research and my needs. He agreed to grant me access so as to collect data using all of the above methods. He then asked me to also meet the concerned managers to work out the operational details. It was at this time that I realized the complexity of the underlying management structure of the organization and its subunits. The commissioner was the executive head of the organization, but the mayor headed the deliberating (policy formulating) wing consisting of elected members, and the office-bearers from this wing did not consider it feasible to let me attend their meetings. Some of those meetings were statutory, to which outsiders were not permitted. But even internal, non-statutory meetings were beyond my access. According to my advisors, even this no permission was data to me. I was learning to truly observe, explore and interpret what was out there and not be preoccupied with what I expected to see. Consequently, I modified my design and moved on.

Close connect—my lifeline: One of my advisors was far off north and my usual opening line, 'Can I talk to you briefly?' changed to just 'Can we talk?' because it was hardly ever brief. So much of richness would drip from those conversations that I never, even today, dial his number without a pen in hand and paper before me.

I was glad that I had access to my advisors through multiple media—email, meetings and then phone call conversations for those moments filled with excitement when mostly I was returning from the field. I was exploring ambidexterity and was also experiencing approvals and restrictions, possibilities and constraints, bumping into go- and no-go areas, exhilaration and disappointment. Somewhere, those threads were connecting who I was and what I researched. As Patton (2002: 14) said it, 'I became the instrument of data collection, and as an instrument I was calibrating myself'.

Questioning skills: My second challenge involved my questioning skills. In my own assessment, I was better at observation than at questioning, especially asking probing questions. I believe I sometimes get carried away by the flow of empathy and begin to see the picture from the eyes of the interviewee which might crowd out critical thinking. Empathy is useful, but as a researcher, if I did that, how would I remain alert to the slices of reality together to create a pattern that held my interpretive experience together?

I made it a routine to keep the case study questions before me all the time. They reminded me of not what I needed to ask the respondents—there are so many questions to ask in a semi-structured interview, apart from the planned ones. The case questions helped me remain focused on what I needed to know from this case study—at various levels.

Software savvy: The free software Evernote was of great use to me. It allowed me to record, write, draw, clip and save—all in one place, share the entries with advisors, and sort all of that according to dates, tags and notebooks. I could synchronize all my devices, so that whatever I recorded on the field did not have to be transferred and on the field I could switch between my interview questions and case study questions smoothly while the interview was being recorded. I could draw the layouts of sitting arrangements at meetings, draw organization charts and other figures during discussions and have instant playback and confirmation from the respondents.

Facing the field: That said, did not make the analysis of data and interpretation any easier by these helping features. On an average, I had visited the field for data collection on three days every week, and this phase lasted 33 weeks. These visits exclude the ones I made purely for data verification, confirmation and validation, follow-up visits aimed at collecting documents, and on a few occasions field visits did not materialize due to some urgent events that occupied my informants. Then followed a phase when interviews and observations rendered nothing new.

Yin's (2009: 87) higher-level questions seemed to press me for answers all the time:

Level 1: Questions asked of specific interviewees
Level 2: Questions asked of the individual case
Level 3: Questions asked of the pattern of findings across multiple cases
Level 4: Questions asked of the entire study; for example, calling on information beyond the case study evidence and including other literature or published data that might have been reviewed
Level 5: Normative questions about policy recommendations and conclusions, going beyond the narrow scope of the study

When it came to discerning patterns, linking my findings with other literature and coming to conclusion, for days I seemed to be moving and relapsing, because the patterns did not make sense. I started full steam once I ruled out rival explanations. So, for me, working on the levels 3, 4 and 5 of questions in parallel helped.

During this phase of research, I experienced the need for ambidexterity for myself. My work and social lives were going on as I needed my reflective, working-and-un-working-and-reworking space. I shifted to my unused suburban apartment with the consent from the family. I visited home on weekends, selectively participated in social events and went to work as usual, but living at my apartment in near-seclusion for the rest of the time gave me the feeling of an *ashram*. That was the time of personally straddling *Sannyasa* and *Samsara*. One day I was talking to my elder son. 'The end of the tunnel is visible', I told him over phone. 'But do you see the light at the end?' There was no light. Several days and nights later, I dreamed of respondents and their words, and my sketches and doodles merged into them as the tunnel lights flashed by over my head. I woke up and drew what was the precursor of the model of organizational ambidexterity I later refined. It was this period that was the most creative for me. While I trudged my tunnel, the conversations with my advisors kept me on course and my family and friends kept me warm.

Several conference papers, paper presentations and talks have sprung out of this work. I carefully kept some ideas for research at a later date. I will let them mature. My dissertation concluded with several more specific research possibilities and it seems pretty exciting work to do for immediate future.

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9

Multiple Case Study: From Research Problem to Research Design in a Doctoral Setting—A Student's Experiential Musings

Swanand J. Deodhar

Editors' note: Swanand's study falls in the domains of strategic management and information sciences. He did multiple case study of organizations involved in the development of open-source software (OSS) products. He narrates his personal journey of doing doctoral research involving ups and downs, confusions and clarity. He tells the importance of writing down one's thoughts during the journey. He found qualitative approach suitable to answer his research questions starting with *what* and *how* to understand the phenomenon of OSS. His chapter also discusses the challenging aspects of achieving rigour in the qualitative case study research.

Formulating the Research Problem

The term PhD rings apprehension mixed with curiosity. However, as one progresses, one's emotion takes over the other. Fortunately, in my case, curiosity overshadowed the anxiety. In this chapter, I will narrate the story of my doctoral work. I am

grateful to the editors for providing me with this opportunity to reflect upon my journey. I am sure many doctoral candidates neither get the opportunity nor the time to do so.

My primary research interest lies in understanding the phenomenon of OSS. It is a philosophy and the complementary set of legal frameworks that advocate the democratic use of software applications.

My first step to understand OSS from a management researcher's perspective was to read latest developments in the world of OSS. As I went through the *blogposts* and industry articles, a particular issue was repeatedly mentioned. The list of the *successful* OS software (the ones that had large user and developer base) was strikingly small. It included applications such as Linux, Apache, Eclipse and MySQL. On the other hand, the total list of software released under open-source license ran in thousands. The obvious question was why only so few OS software tools have succeeded, while most have failed to gather users and developers? This question was simple yet intriguing. I immediately decided to make it the starting point of my research enquiry.

The next step was to assess the conceptual foundations for the question. As I reviewed scholarly literature, I found considerable interest in this problem. Several studies had identified the need to understand, from managerial perspective, what separates a successful OSS project from a failed one. I believed that answering this question will indeed create a major impact in the discipline. But, before I could approach my professors, I wanted to be sure.

At that point, I luckily encountered a book titled as *Engaged Scholarship*. It was written by a celebrated organizational theorist, Dr Andrew van de Ven (2007). The book was specifically targeted at doctoral students. It asked an important question. It suggested that a researcher can undertake a wider examination of reality before adoption of a suitable theory. In other words, the book asked: *Is the reality what you think it is? Or has the reality changed?*

Honestly, this question sounded weird. I had spent several sleepless nights trying to identify possible answers to my research question. While doing so, I had developed some perceptions about the OS phenomenon itself. Now the book was questioning these perceptions. While I deliberated the importance of undertaking

such a task, it occurred to me that most phenomena (especially those related to technology industry) are subject to rapid changes. The articles that I was reading were published in 2005–2006. So, they must have been written in 2003–2004. Is it possible that in three to four years, the OS phenomenon had undergone substantial changes? I now decided to widen the scope of my examination. I not only searched the literature but also started to engage with the practitioners from the software industry. I was almost shameless in sending emails and having video chats with them in the middle of the night, while each one of them was great enough to grant me an audience. In these interactions, I repeatedly heard them say that some of the most prominent OS papers had become irrelevant.

I grew curious. If these research articles had become irrelevant then what were the relevant issues? What had changed from the OS described in these articles and the OS as it existed in 2009. Answers came to me slowly. I gradually realized that OS was not merely about communities of voluntary contributors. Several commercial software organizations were selling the OS software. This was hard to believe because OS was conceptualized as the anti-proprietary paradigm. Yet the reality was in front of me. Several organizations were successfully combining the OS paradigm with the proprietary/closed-source norms. Indeed, the reality had changed.

Enlightened, I decided to explore this change in greater detail. I found that the phenomenon was universal. Such companies were present across continents; from South America to far East, from US to Europe. I had come across something that was happening globally and was contradicting the existing OS literature. However, before I could go to the professors, I had to be sure. I started searching the literature for some traces of these changes. To my amazement, I found two articles published in *MIS Quarterly* and one in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, two of the most reputed journals in management research. These articles had not only echoed my interpretations but also called for new research efforts to incorporate the changing nature of OS.

I once again modified my research question: What factors influence the success of commercial OS products? And how

these factors influence the success of commercial OS products? The term *commercial* introduced the necessary impact. The software products that I was talking about were no longer confined to the hacker sphere. These products had substantial monetary involvement. Thus, their failure would have probably meant a lot more in monetary sense. Conceptually, however, the change in the research question meant that I was now investigating the phenomenon by challenging the established literature. I was no longer constrained by the theories of knowledge sharing. I knew that, if attempted, the answers of these questions would provide me with a concrete positioning and identity. Finally, the resulting knowledge would also contribute to the discipline. In the words of my professor 'it would create the impact'.

Before I move on to the process of designing my research methodology, let me summarize the learning. First, it is natural for a doctoral student to get confused as he/she reads more and more literature. The confusion shows that the student is trying to assimilate new knowledge and the mind is struggling to give a shape to it. This is indeed a good thing. Second, the best way to come out of this confusion is to think about the evolution of the phenomenon. Can you develop a time map as to how the phenomenon has changed over past few years/decades? At least information systems (IS) researchers should incorporate industry dynamics as part of their research (Chiasson & Davidson, 2004). Finally, it is always a good idea to write your thoughts. They may seem extremely primitive at first but in the end they would be the building blocks of your thesis. In the words of my professor, as a doctoral student you must read, think and write. Unless you continuously engage in the three things, it may be difficult to sustain the scholarly pressures.

Designing the Research Methodology

Paradigm Biases

In a simple term, research methodology refers to the set of activities that a researcher would undertake to carry out the proposed

research. Most doctoral programmes have a dedicated course on research methodologies. In my first year, I had undergone a course called philosophy and methodology of creating knowledge (PMCK). PMCK was my first systematic introduction to the intricacies of research methodology. The main contribution of the course was the introduction of the competing paradigms in management research. For me, the paradigmatic choice was decided by my cognitive biases and the research questions at hand. I was much less comfortable in accepting the findings of the positivistic studies.

I do not mean to undermine positivistic paradigm.[1] In fact, I had already come across several purely positivistic studies on OS that were of considerable value. I always felt that equally valuable work could be done with other methodologies. In your respective doctoral studies, if you sense such predispositions, you must understand that your subconscious is more comfortable with one paradigm over the others. I would strongly advise you that if you want to make your doctoral work a fulfilling experience, do not to shy away from your intuitions.

Selecting the Methodology

The obvious question was what approach to take. As I have already stated, the decision was a function of my cognitive biases. This however was not sufficient. Choice of research methodology was also the function of my research question. It is very often that researchers choose a methodology that does not fit well with their research objectives. There is a whole array of articles that would guide you in selecting your research methodology. I found the following test to be the simplest one in deciding the paradigm. If your research questions begin with how and why, then you are trying to find something that solely cannot be answered by a positivistic design. In such cases, you may need to employ either

[1] The summary of research paradigms is beyond the scope of this chapter. Several researchers have provided excellent insights into the matter. I would particularly suggest van der Ven (2008) as an important read.

mixed or qualitative methodology. On the other hand, if your research questions are of the form what is the impact of X on Y, then perhaps a simple positivistic design may suffice.

In my case, the first question represented an exploratory what. I did not identify a specific set of factors to assess impact on OSS product success. So a simple hypothesis predicting the impact of factor X on OS product success could not be developed. The second question began with *how*. So, even for the second question, I could not formulate specific hypotheses. Thus, a typical quantitative research methodology was not applicable. So, I had to incorporate some form of qualitative approach.

In my interactions with the seniors, I understood that qualitative methodology was much less structured than quantitative research design. On a positive side, qualitative or mixed design opened several avenues for conducting research. I could move away from the confines of surveys and pseudo-experiments. The applicable techniques included common ones such as case study and ethnography along with the uncommon ones such as action research and design research.

During the research methodology course, one of the senior professors from my area of specialization taught us case study research. He had a strong bias towards use of qualitative approach. I had discussed my topic with him and he had provided methodological as well as domain-specific insights. Consequently, I wanted to work with him. This was the first push towards the selecting a case study method. The methodological expertise of your prospective thesis advisor often spill over to your work.

As I gradually realized, it was also fairly useful approach for the type of questions I was focusing. In my research questions, the focus was on the instances of software products. Using the case study methodology, I could conceptualize each product as a case, collect data about it, and draw inference (see Box 9.1). More the number of similar products I could study, more refined would my findings be. When I was tending towards case study research, I also started to read specific literature on the methodology. My second prospective thesis committee member was an expert in the area of qualitative research. In fact, he was regarded as arguably

Box 9.1: Key Strengths of Case Study as a Research Methodology

- Studying a phenomenon in its natural setting
- Capturing data from several sources for better triangulation
- Grounded, contextual nature of findings
- Useful in process research in which the focus is on the *mechanics* of a phenomenon
- Contrasting findings with several theoretical templates
- Usage of novel analysis techniques

the best in the country. Much like my main advisor, he had also taken majority of the sessions in the PMCK course. These two professors pointed out ample resources to read on case study methodology. Some of the classic resources were Yin (2009), Eisenhardt (1989), Lee (1989), and Dubé and Pare (2003).

Interestingly, a case study research is not confined to qualitative data. There were some advises on conducting mixed method research. Some peers suggested that mixed method is better accepted. Others also proclaimed that it is less risky. However, there was no scholarly argument for choosing mixed method research over pure qualitative approach or vice versa. Luckily, I came across an article by Lee and Hubona (2009) that provided an acceptable argument. According to the article, a piece of knowledge (for example, a theory) has *formative* and *summative* validity.

Formative validity refers to the process of creation of that knowledge (theory building), while summative validity refers to the process of evaluating that knowledge in different contexts (theory testing). According to the article, if a research piece creates knowledge with formative validity, then it is a contribution in itself. Based on this argument, I decided to only identify the factors that would influence the success of commercial OS products instead of checking the statistical generalization of these factors. Thus, my research scope was to propose a theorization of commercial OS software product success with formative validity. Because this could be achieved purely with qualitative data, I decided to exclude the quantitative approach.

Rigour Concerns in Handling Qualitative Data

Once I had decided on case study research with qualitative flavour, the next challenge was demonstrating the rigour. I found that similar concerns were raised in most debates about paradigms. So, I decided to undertake my own assessment of rigour in qualitative research. In a qualitative research, the data is open to interpretation and comes from several sources (such as interview transcripts, observation notes, and secondary documents). Consequently, there are lesser universally accepted benchmarks.

When faced with challenges related to methodology (such as demonstrating rigour), I resorted to articles published in journals such as *Organizational Research Methods* (ORM) and *Academy of Management Review* (AMR). ORM in particular publishes articles on usage of emergent and classical methodologies. One can surely find several tips on maintaining rigour in qualitative approaches. As stated earlier, I also read classic literature on case study research. These sources together provided enough help in developing a rigorous research design.

In case study research, rigour is often demonstrated through mechanisms such as creation of a protocol, identifying case selection criteria, and describing the analysis process. Out of the whole range of literature, I found one article from ORM to be particularly useful (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). This article was pointed out to me by these committee members. The authors' definition of rigour could be summarized as detailed description of steps taken to ensure validity issues and the necessary accommodations made to incorporate the emergent serendipities. To match this criterion, I used some simple practices (in addition to those prescribed in the literature such as detailed protocol comprising of case selection criteria and interview guide). The principle behind these practices was to provide as many details as possible about the whole endeavour.

My data collection was largely through interviews. Because the products I studied were being developed by organizations based out of United States, Europe and South America, most of my respondents were interviewed over video chats. However, before

I could interview these respondents, I had to get formal access permissions from the competent authorities in each case. I maintained logs of most email interactions with the respondents. For each case I studied, I also maintained the designation list of the employees who were interviewed and also of the person who had granted me the access. I also kept the list of organizations that refused me the access along with the contact dates. Also, in each case, there were some unique scenarios. I kept a separate log of such case-specific questions. I appended these questions at the end of the protocol. I believe these little things demonstrate your sincerity and commitment.

Formulating Analysis Process

The next important step was identifying analysis process. In quantitative research, the analysis process is extremely structured and is less dependent on researcher's interpretation. I realized that exact opposite is true for research designs involving qualitative data. Even the most sophisticated set of software tools for qualitative data analysis does not analyse the data for you. In my case, I learnt this the hard way. It was the day of my proposal defence. One of the professors asked me whether whatever I was proposing to do was worth a doctoral degree. For him, my study was simply reading the text and deriving findings as per my own whims and fancies. The problem was that I never outlined the analysis process in great detail to convince him that I am actually doing a rigorous work.

When you are designing the analysis techniques for qualitative data, you must remember some important things. First, the interpretation of whatever data you collect would be very intuitive and simplistic for you. This is largely because you would have read a lot of background literature. You must understand that others may not be equally aware of your domain. So a detailed description of the analysis is very important. You may not be able to describe every possible step. Some of the intermittent steps may be too abstract and cognitive to describe. However, I strongly suggest that an attempt should be made to be as explicit as possible about your analysis process. Some common starting

points include Miles and Huberman (1999), Yin (2009), Langley (1999), and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Let me give a brief as to how I analysed the data. First stage was *open coding*. In this phase, I assigned the meaning to collections of sentences. You can be as granular as you can in assigning these meanings; from a word to several sentences. I chose not to constraint myself by defining this unit. After the open coding was done, the data now were divided into more than 200 codes. Some of these codes were actually sentences. Once I finished doing open coding, I then identified similarities between the codes. If the codes were similar, then they were grouped. One may ask how similarity is determined. For me, if the code referred to the same set of activity, I treated them as similar. For example, there were more than 18 codes on use of discussion forums. Once I combined the codes, the list was now considerably smaller.

Once the open coding was concluded, I then proceeded to development of code families. I had used a particular model of organizational practices. This model had four constructs: *action, history, interest* and *people* (Kostova, 1999). I classified the open codes into these categories. For classification, once again, I used heuristics. For example, codes that referred to past experiences or past events (indicated by the verb tense) were categorized as *history*. Once the code families were developed, I used the linkages in the model to develop relationship between codes from different families. What emerged was a collection of organizational practices. Once again, I emphasize the use of software for such process. I had used Atlas.ti. It certainly helps in code organization, management of code families and network diagram development.

Concluding Your Work

The next step is to culminate into your work. If I am to rank the phases of doctoral work in order of their importance and their ability to enrich the researcher, I would unquestionably put the culmination step at the top. This is where the grand scheme comes together and it is up to you to provide a coherent meaning to it.

In a qualitative research design, the task of aptly concluding one's work is complex yet enriching. While reading the literature on case study research, I came across a term called *theoretical templates*. It simply meant that a single situation could be explained by several theories. Although I did not understand the meaning entirely then, I found the use of such theoretical templates to be extremely useful for providing a meaningful outcome. I would strongly advise you to also develop the taxonomy of different theories that are being used in your respective fields. This is particularly important if you are dealing with the so-called soft data.

An important challenge was to link the findings with the existing literature. I had sent a paper for review to a reputed journal. The reviewers asked me to link the findings back to the literature. It is a simple suggestion with immense implications. One must understand that one's findings contribute to a discipline. Thus, a research study builds on to the existing knowledge base.

Lastly, there are some softer issues that most literature on research methodology will not include. PhD is a personal journey. The statement may sound rhetorical but it is very true. You will often encounter moments where you would second guess your decision to join a doctoral programme. I had several such moments. In such moments, I just moved away from my work. I did something else. At times, I feared for the time lapsed but when I finally completed the task, I realized how important those breaks really were. Indeed, the feeling of completion makes it up more than for all the hard work.

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10

Multiple Case Study: My Journey—From Pure Quantitative Research to Mixed Research, and Then from Mixed Research to Pure Qualitative Research

Devendra Kumar Punia

Editors' note: Devendra Punia's contribution describes his journey from pure quantitative research to mixed research, and then from mixed research to pure qualitative research. His study focused on knowledge sharing and transfer processes in software teams. An exploratory study of four IT software development teams was done to get grounding in the practices of the knowledge processes in such teams. Later, data collection was done using intensive participant observation with two teams. The data analysis was done using grounded theory: open, axial and selective coding. A cross-case comparison was undertaken and a model of experiential knowledge processes, its management and its impact on IT project teams' outcomes was developed. Strength of this chapter lies in detailed step-by-step process of data analysis and use of qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. This software is used for qualitative data management and model building.

I started my fellow programme (equivalent to doctoral programme) in July 2002 as a full-time scholar at the Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurgaon, with a very vague idea of doing research and writing thesis. The proposal I wrote for my admission formalities talked about evaluating the impact of e-governance on citizens and how to design e-governance initiatives for the benefit of citizens. I had done my bachelor of engineering in electronics and telecommunications in 1995 and then started a small information technology enabled services (ITES) firm and worked in different technical roles until 2001. Repetitive and administrative nature of work made me shift to academics. I taught at a leading management school in Delhi for a year and realized the importance of doctorate for academics. This chapter articulates my research journey spread over four and half years.

Selection of Topic

In the second year of doctorate programme, while doing the course work and writing case, the search for the research problem was a persistent endeavour. My experience in information technology (IT) industry made it a natural choice for my domain. But what in IT industry remained a big question mark. I took a course on knowledge management as part of my course work, and studied a number of research papers in this area, which made me interested in this field and led me into the area of tacit knowledge and implicit knowledge. Associated readings on organizational learning led me to Kolb's learning cycle. Merging these two distinct ideas led me to my topic of experiential knowledge. An extensive search on leading bibliographic databases produced no results for any study that has looked into experiential knowledge processes within IT project teams. This led me to focus my research on IT project teams, and experiential knowledge processes in these teams in Indian IT industry context.

Research Objectives and Questions

A few studies on the role of knowledge management in project teams had established the impact of knowledge management on project teams' outcomes, but there were no studies done on how knowledge management influences the project teams' outcomes. It led me to explore process theories rather than variance theories for my research. The research objective that I finalized for my research was: to understand and model the processes of experiential knowledge management in IT project teams and their relationship with project teams' outcomes.

The overall research question then was: how does management of experiential knowledge impact the outcomes of project teams?

As there was no earlier work done, the research question was mainly exploratory in nature, and sought to understand and define the nature of experiential knowledge processes in IT project teams. Last part of the research question was explanatory in nature and sought to understand the pattern of relationship between experiential knowledge management processes and project teams' outcomes. The temporal orientation of my study was current projects, which were being executed during my research as I was keen to understand the phenomenon in live settings.

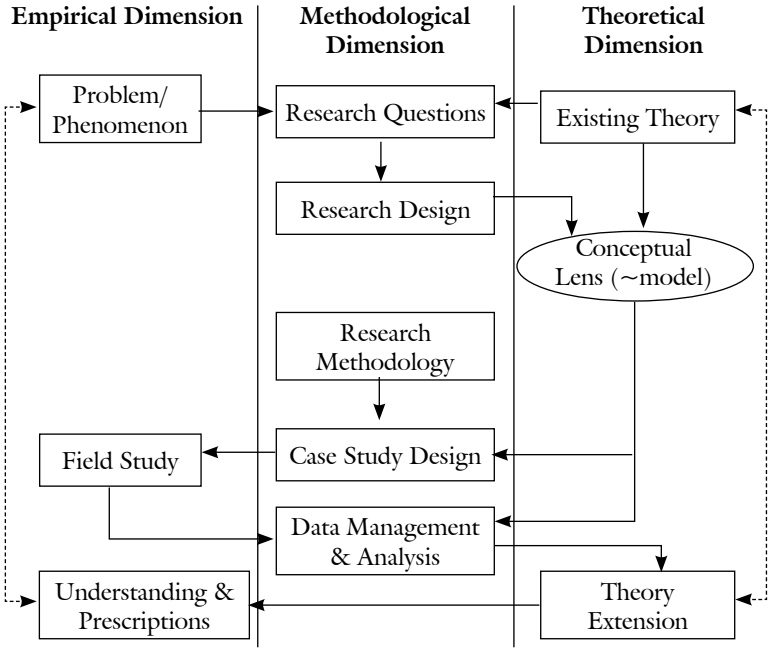
Overall Approach and Rationale

Most of the studies on knowledge and project team outcomes at that time had largely been variance studies, which were weak in providing insights on intervening process variables and how did these impact the project teams' outcomes. With this background, and keeping in view the research questions, I decided to undertake a process study of experiential knowledge and its management in IT project teams. This was in contrast to a typical variance study (Crowston, 1997) and implied focus on how events, organizational members and context interact and unfold (Pettigrew, 1997) rather than on the relationship between dependent and independent variables and subsequent results.

The overall research design of my work is depicted in Figure 10.1. In management research, the researcher is intrigued with a problem or phenomenon in practice, which he/she wants to explore and understand (Maxwell, 1996). After my topic was finalized, I developed research questions and a research design to systematically understand this problem/phenomenon.

Next, existing theory was explored and integrated using the theory development methodology to develop the conceptual lens to study the problem. This conceptual lens along with the research questions led to the development of empirical research design and data analysis approach. Then, I entered the empirical world and made my observations there and collected data. This data was managed and analysed in accordance with the conceptual lens and empirical research design that led to findings. These findings might possibly lead to existing theory extension and help understand and prescribe the problem.

Figure 10.1 Research Process



Qualitative Study

Qualitative research approach was selected for my study for the following reasons. First, the nature of research questions suggests a qualitative approach. These are more of *how* and *what* types rather than *how many* or *how much* or *why* types.

Second, my aim was to present a detailed understanding of experiential knowledge processes in project teams, requiring a focus on team members' perspective and their meaning. Without getting involved, from a distance this detailed understanding was difficult to come by. This became evident during the first case study where interviews and secondary data were used for data collection, and I failed to get the interviewees explain tacit and implicit aspects of experiential knowledge management. This led me to have participant observation as an additional technique for collecting data for the remaining two case studies.

Third, experiential knowledge in IT project teams needed to be studied in natural settings, rather than in controlled experimental settings.

Interpretive Research

Interpretive studies typically attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them and interpretive methods of research are aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the problem, and the process whereby the problem influences and is influenced by the context (Walsham, 1995). Moreover, my study adopted a social constructivist view of reality, implying that reality is socially constructed by the observer (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Specifically, my study used an adapted version of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), also referred to as constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Its two processes, discovering and emerging, are understood as covering a meticulous interpretative process in which the resulting concepts, and eventually theory, are constructed. For my research, case study method was chosen because it best matched with the requirements of the research and my ability (see Box 10.1).

Box 10.1: Case Study Research

Case study method is preferred when *how* or *why* questions are posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomenon within some real life context (Yin, 2003). The primary research questions of this study were *what* and *how*, there was no control feasible over the IT project teams, and my focus was at the current practices of the IT project teams. Further, the case study method allowed studying both the phenomenon of interest and context, producing a large number of potentially relevant variables (Yin, 2003).

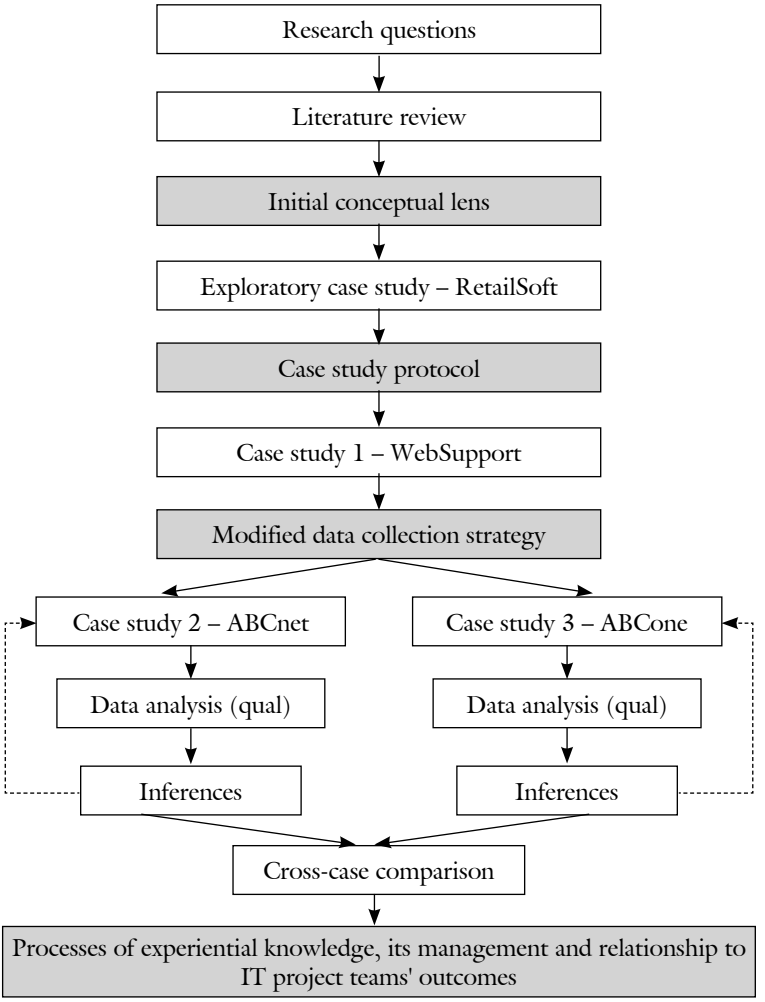
Case Study Design

Figure 10.2 describes the case study design taken up in my research. I started with an extensive literature review of knowledge management practices in project environment and IT projects to develop a pre-understanding of the phenomenon, which resulted in the initial conceptual lens.

Then an exploratory case study was done with an IT software development project team to get grounding in the practice. This also helped in developing the case study protocol for remaining case studies. With the case study protocol and the initial conceptual lens, the second case study was done with an IT support project team. Here, the limitations of positivist case study approach were exposed. The responses received from the participants to the case study questionnaire failed to explain or provide any meaningful insights on the tacit and implicit nature of experiential knowledge management. Therefore, it was decided to include participant observation as additional data collection technique for the next two IT project teams for a longer duration.

After the data collection was over, the two case studies were analysed and within-case inferences were made for these two cases separately. Then cross-case comparison was undertaken and a model of experiential knowledge processes, its management and its impact on IT project teams' outcomes was developed.

Figure 10.2 Case Study Design



Unit of Analysis

This case study method research focused on a project team as a single holistic unit of analysis. The project teams are a small number of people with complementary skills assembled together for completing a project.

Number of Cases

Multiple case study design was chosen for my research as there was no unique case to be studied. As the objective of my research was to develop thick description of experiential knowledge and its management in IT project teams, a limited number of well-elaborated cases were targeted. In total, four cases were studied. First two cases were done in series, one after the other. The data collection strategy was revised after second case. Remaining two cases were done simultaneously. For one case, I was a participant observer, and for the other case, I was a non-participant observer. In multiple case studies, each case serves a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry and to be able to compare findings from multiple cases, the selection of case studies should follow a replication logic which aims to show or predict similar results, and explain contrasting results (giving predictable reasons) (Yin, 2003).

Selection of Cases

The selection of the four cases depended upon theoretical and pragmatic considerations. The first theoretical consideration was type of IT project team: IT software development teams and IT support teams. The literature has identified these two types of IT projects and there is a difference in the type of work done in these project teams. The second theoretical consideration was the choice of cases with minimum and maximum variation. My focus in this research was on intra-project team knowledge processes. My exploratory case and the first case study showed that knowledge processes within a team were impacted by contextual factors, such as organizational culture, structure, infrastructure etc. This led me to seek two types of IT project teams in a single organization preferably reporting to the same manager.

Based on these theoretical considerations, many organizations could have been included in my research. The final selection of the four cases was made on practical considerations. In order to describe experiential knowledge in project teams, access to all project team members was needed, and in the last two cases, I needed permissions to sit and work with the project teams.

Willingness on the part of the organizations was essential to carry out my research. RetailSoft, WebSupport and ABC Limited met these criteria and allowed me to collect empirical material.

Data Collection Methods

The primary activities in the data collection stage were conducting the site visits for the case studies and collecting data as needed before and after a visit. The empirical investigation included collecting data from three companies: RetailSoft, WebSupport and ABC Limited. Based on the companies' requests, names have been disguised in my discussions. For the exploratory case of RetailSoft, I visited the company for two days and conducted semi-structured interviews of five team members and collected documents related to the project. For case study 2 of WebSupport, I visited the company for three days, conducted semi-structured interviews of four team members, observed the team for half a day, had informal discussions with team members during tea and lunch and collected documents related to the project.

For case studies 3 and 4 at ABC Limited, I visited the company for six weeks, five days a week. I was provided with a separate work desk and access to company's intranet. During first five weeks, I was working with the ABC-1 team and was assigned tasks related to software design as I had earlier experience of working in software development. In these five weeks, I had ample opportunity to interact informally with the all eight team members of two teams. Data at ABC Limited was collected from four sources: participant observation, interviews, informal discussions and archival documents. The observation focused on the process elements of context, actors and actions (Pettigrew, 1997). I made detailed field notes and noted down the interactions taking place among and across the teams, at the company whenever possible, or at my institute in the evening. I also made note of incidences that were related to knowledge processes. In the last week of the field visit, I carried out semi-structured interviews with all the eight team members and the project manager. Semi-structured interviews provided for focus, reliability and increased validity

(Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003), without passing by the opportunity 'to let people speak for themselves' in the shaping of our perceptions (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Typed interview scripts were shown to the interviewees, along with follow-up questions.

The data collection posed interesting challenges, I was recording my interviews with team members, one of the team members was chewing *paan masala* (a kind of mouth freshener). I had much difficulty in understanding his sentences while transcribing these later, as the voice was not very clear. Transcribing interviews took a much longer than expected. The field notes and my observations proved another challenge for recording and transcribing, I used pocked diary on site to make note of these, and then in the evening I would transcribe these.

Data Analysis Strategy

Acknowledging the positivist leanings of the original authors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), my study uses a later adoption of the theory by interpretive researchers which stresses that theory does not emerge from data, but data is constructed from the many events observed, read about or heard about (Strauss & Corbin 1990; Locke, 2001; Charmaz, 2006). The interpretation and recasting of the data in analytical and new terms involve the actors' as well as the researcher's interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The term emergence therefore more appropriately represents the process of data analysis, including the construction of concepts from an interpretive perspective for this study.

There were two major steps involved in data analysis: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Once the data collection and analysis for each case were completed, the search for cross-case patterns was done. Patterns in qualitative data can be represented as dimensions, categories, classification schemes and themes (Patton, 1990). Conceptual lens construct were used as the basis for categories to look for within-case similarities and between-case differences.

Data Analysis Using Grounded Theory

The data analysis using grounded theory is a highly iterative process involving moving between interview data, existing theory and observation data (Charmaz, 2006). Following three steps were used iteratively for conducting data analysis:

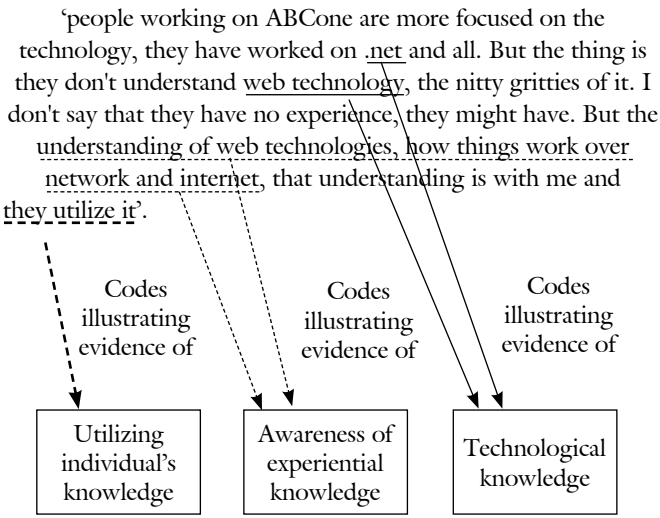
1. Open coding
2. Focused/selective coding
3. Identifying patterns of relationships among conceptual categories.

The first two steps helped in exploring and understanding the nature of experiential knowledge processes and their management in project teams by developing the codes, categories and concepts of experiential knowledge management. The last step helped in understanding the relationship of experiential knowledge management with project teams' outcomes. Details of these activities follow.

Step I: Open Coding

Parts of text, sentences or paragraphs (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) describing (i) experiential knowledge, (ii) experiential knowledge processes and activities and (iii) project teams' outcomes were coded (assigned labels) for easy retrieval and categorization (Miles et al., 1998) using open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). Open coding is a process where 'the investigator identifies potential themes by pulling together real examples from the text' (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), which implies that codes are discovered from the empirical data. New codes are created as new evidence (for example, issues, themes) emerges from data. The open coding is used to investigate a new phenomenon, and the focus of research is on the emergence of theoretical categories from empirical evidence (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). Figure 10.3 illustrates how the open coding was done, based on a statement from an interview.

Figure 10.3 Examples of Codes



In the example statement, the words .net and web technology illustrate technological knowledge (a type of experiential knowledge); therefore, in open coding step they were marked as codes. Similarly, phrases like understanding of web technology and how things work over network and internet illustrate awareness of self-experiential knowledge and therefore marked as codes. Phrase such as they utilize it illustrates the utilization of individual's knowledge (sharing and application of experiential knowledge), and accordingly marked as code. The same statement is used further to illustrate the data analysis techniques used in this research.

The coding of interview scripts was done in qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. This software is used for qualitative data management and model building. This software facilitated the analysis process by helping with coding, linking codes and text segments, creating memos, searching, editing and reorganizing, and for visual display of data and findings (Miles et al., 1998; Weitzman, 2000; Creswell, 2007).

Step II: Focused/Selective Coding

In focused/selective coding, similar codes, codes with some common attributes were merged together to create conceptual categories from the empirical data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This consolidation of cases made possible the reduction of number of units the researcher is working with (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and clarified the main themes emerging from the data. Codes were grouped into categories using a bottom-up approach as shown in Figure 10.4.

Codes discovered from the empirical data during the open coding were consolidated into broader categories and these categories were classified into concepts. Concepts/themes are the basic units of analysis in grounded theory, because these are from conceptualizations of data. Figure 10.5 shows this categorization and linking process with the help of an example.

Conceptual lens served as the basis for identifying concepts. Statements illustrating different types of experiential knowledge were coded first. Then codes were consolidated into categories: each category represented a different type of experiential knowledge. Finally, each category was linked to one of the experiential knowledge. If a category of experiential knowledge could not be associated with any of the existing five categories, then a new factor was identified (a new concept emerged). Figure 10.5 describes this categorizing and linking process in detail.

Experiential knowledge is one of the concepts, technological knowledge is one of the categories that represents experiential

Figure 10.4 Codes, Categories and Concepts

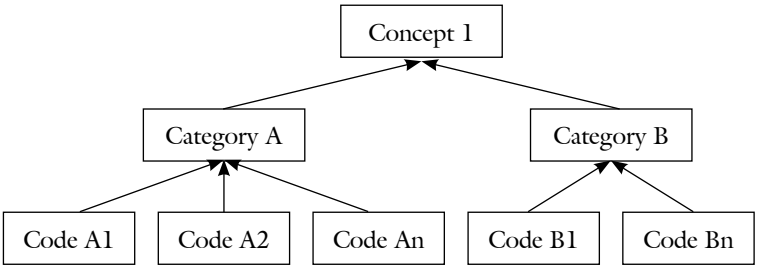
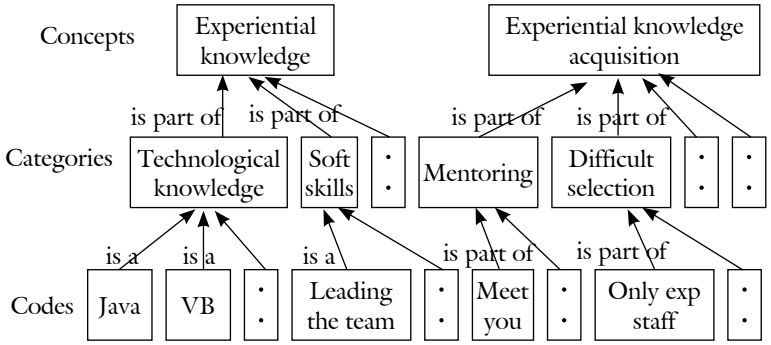


Figure 10.5 Categorization and Linking of Codes, Categories and Concepts



knowledge, and Java and VB are two of the codes that represent technological knowledge. The codes and categories depicted in the figure are not exhaustive and are representative of the codes and categories used in data analysis.

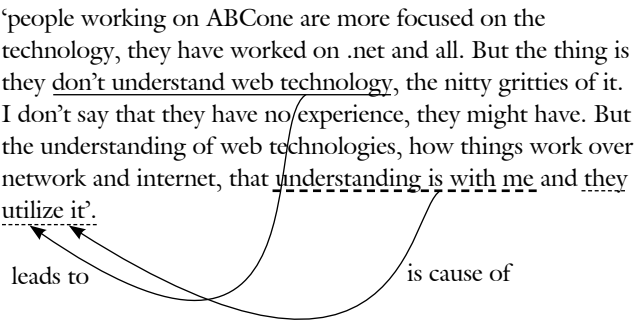
Open and focused coding resulted in labelling of all the interview data in codes, categories and concepts. Here the relationship between codes and categories were compositional in nature, that is, the relationship between codes, categories and concepts identified and defined the composition of a particular concept or category and were generally of *is type of*, *is part of*, *is a kind*.

Step III: Identifying Patterns of Relationship among Conceptual Categories

In this step, an effort was made to identify the underlying relationship between codes, categories and concepts. Here the relationship identified are casual (is cause of, lead to) and associative (is associated with) in nature. Activities mentioned by interviewees leading to one of the experiential knowledge management processes were identified by creating appropriate codes in Atlas.ti software as shown in Figure 10.6.

As shown in Figure 10.6, *don't understand web technology* leads to utilization of other individual's experiential knowledge. Knowing that understanding is with [a person] is cause of utilizing that experiential knowledge. Accordingly, these codes were

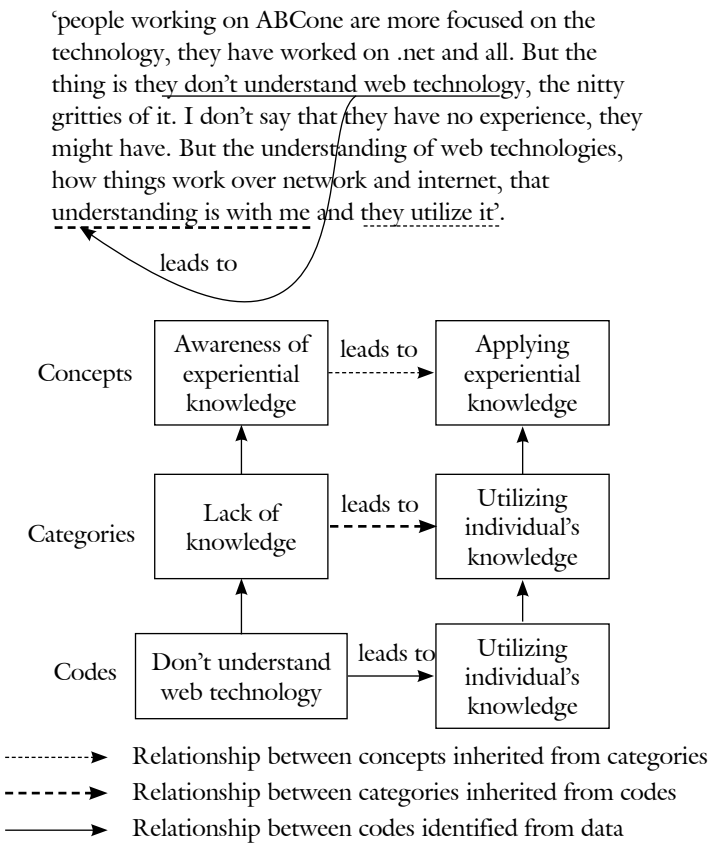
Figure 10.6 Causal Relationship Identified from Interview Statements



linked by *leads to* and *is cause of* relations as shown in Figure 10.6. Abstraction of these codes into categories and categories into concepts lead to inheritance of relationship between codes already identified from the data by the categories and codes. Continuing with the above example, code 'don't understand web technology' is associated with lack of knowledge category, which in turn is part of awareness of experiential knowledge concept. Similarly, code 'they utilize it' is associated with the category utilizing of individual's knowledge, which is part of the concept applying experiential knowledge.

The causal relationship leads to between the codes is inherited in turn by respective categories and codes as shown in Figure 10.7. So, the relationship between concepts *awareness of experiential knowledge* and *applying experiential knowledge* is a causal leads to relationship, which is inherited from the similar relationship between lack of knowledge and utilizing of individual's knowledge categories, which in turn was inherited from the similar relationship between codes don't understand web technology and they utilize it. This inheritance of relationship is depicted in Figure 10.7. The causal relationship between categories representing experiential knowledge processes helped in identifying the processes of its management, and the relationship between experiential knowledge management processes and project teams' outcomes helped in identifying the relationship between these. The next section describes this process as applied to this particular study.

Figure 10.7 Relationship between Concepts/Categories Inherited from Codes



Within-case Data Analysis

The within-case data analysis was undertaken keeping in mind the research question. This led to the identification of various types of experiential knowledge in IT project teams and the project teams' outcomes. Then, the experiential knowledge management processes and activities were identified. Finally, the relationship between experiential knowledge management processes and the

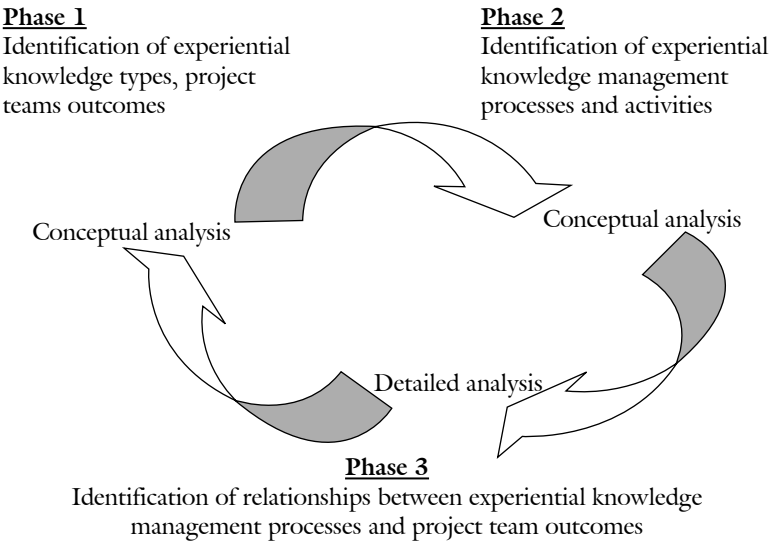
project teams' outcomes was analysed. Figure 10.8 shows the phases of within-case analysis.

The data analysis was done at two levels, conceptual and detailed. The findings from the conceptual analysis were descriptive, they described the nature of experiential knowledge, its management processes and activities and nature of project teams' outcomes. The findings from the detailed analysis were prescriptive (Tsang, 1997); they described the relationship between experiential knowledge management processes and project teams' outcomes. This two-level analysis also helped increasing the internal validity of the research by triangulation of perspectives on the same dataset (theory triangulation) (Patton, 1990).

Phase 1: Identification of Experiential Knowledge Types and Project Teams' Outcomes

In this phase, an effort was made to identify the types of experiential knowledge and project teams' outcomes. Open coding and focused coding, as described in the earlier section, were used to

Figure 10.8 Phases of Within-case Analysis



identify categories and concepts from the data. Codes illustrating (i) experiential knowledge and (ii) project teams' outcomes were discovered from the empirical data during the open coding, and they were consolidated into broader categories and these categories were classified into concepts. This phase resulted in the description of experiential knowledge types and project teams' outcomes. The categories and concepts identified in this phase were used in next two phases.

Phase 2: Identification of Experiential Knowledge Management Processes and Activities

In this phase, open and focused coding were used to identify the experiential knowledge management processes and activities. Codes illustrating activities for managing experiential knowledge were discovered from the empirical data during the open coding, and they were consolidated into broader categories and these categories were classified into concepts. The relationship between specific activities and experiential knowledge types and between specific activities and experiential knowledge processes were also identified. These relationships are associative relationships as specific activities are associated with specific experiential knowledge type and specific experiential knowledge process. These relationships were identified and labelled in Atlas.ti software with *is associated with* relations.

Phase 3: Identification of Relationship between Experiential Knowledge Management and Project Teams' Outcomes

In this phase, a detailed analysis of the interview data was undertaken to identify the underlying patterns of relationship between experiential knowledge management activities and project teams' outcomes. The results of each phase were compared and contrasted with the existing literature to identify emerging new ideas and concepts. This process was continued until no more concepts and categories were forthcoming. At this stage, any new cases did not add any new concept to the findings.

Within-case Display

The results of within-case analysis are displayed in the form of qualitative associative networks, process maps and conceptually clustered matrix (Miles et al., 1998). Associative networks have nodes linked to each other by association and allows for fuzzy, intuitive and subconscious relations between concepts to be presented visually as shown in Figure 10.9.

The qualitative associative networks created in this study showed experiential knowledge and its processes for different cases. A conceptually clustered matrix is constructed by bringing together concepts that belong together by arranging its rows and columns. Concepts in rows and columns are arranged in a way that facilitates to observe relationship between variables (by reading across the rows) and to make comparison (by reading down the columns) (Miles et al., 1998). An example of conceptually clustered matrix is shown in Table 10.1. In this study, conceptually clustered matrix combines concepts emerged from data as experiential knowledge processes with the concepts emerged from data for project teams' outcomes. This matrix illustrated the relationship of these experiential knowledge processes with the project teams' outcomes in WebSupport, ABCnet and ABCone cases.

The strength of relationship was assessed based on the frequency of instances in which these processes were linked by interviewees with project team's outcomes. The value in matrix represented the number of instances in which causal/associative relationship between experiential knowledge processes and project teams' outcomes was expressed by an interviewee. The number gave some indication of the strength of each relationship: greater the number, the stronger the relationship. Further, the matrix also showed the causal relationship between the experiential knowledge processes and project teams' outcomes. Rows with entries depict relationship of experiential knowledge process with the project teams' outcomes. These causal relationships were inherited from the corresponding relationships in the categories and codes.

Figure 10.9 Qualitative Associative Network of Experiential Knowledge

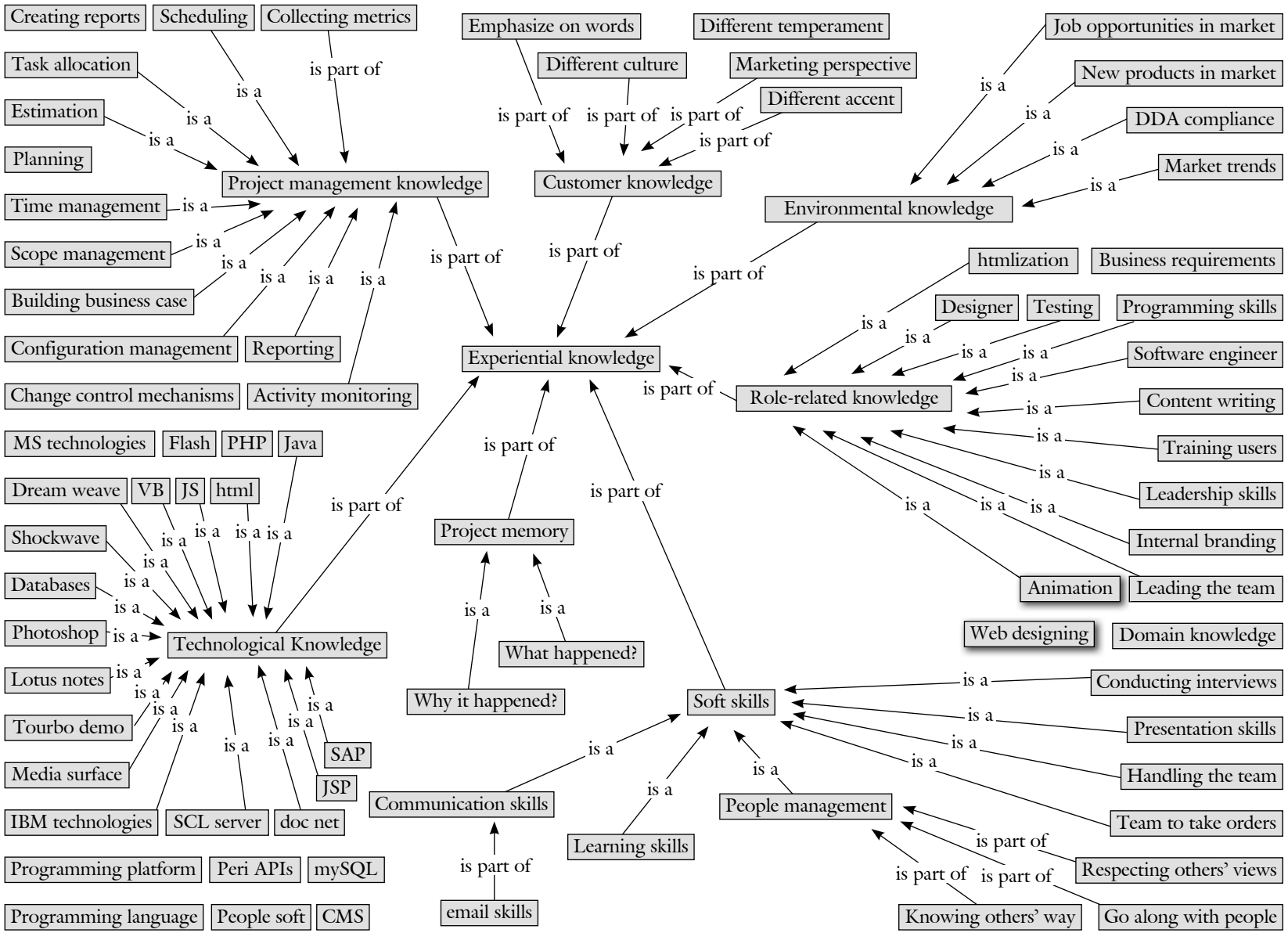


Table 10.1 Conceptually Clustered Matrix for Awareness and Acquisition Knowledge Processes

Experiential Knowledge Management Processes	*Project Team's Outcomes*			
	Task Related		*Social*	*Individual*
	Quality	*Adherence to Schedule*		
Awareness				
Ind-Being there		|		
Ind-Exploring		|		
Ind-Internal networking				
Ind-Learning on the job				
Ind-Utilizing individual's knowledge		|		
Team-Opportunity to work			|	|
Team-Working together				
Team-Helping others				
Team-Exchanging information				
Team-Meetings				
Org-Providing training			||	||
Org-Using tools and facilities provided by org				
Org-Working policy				
Acquisition	𝍸 ||	𝍸	|||	||
Ind-Being there		||		|
Ind-Exploring	||	||		|
Ind-Internal networking				

(Table 10.1 Contd)

(Table 10.1 Contd)

Ind-Learning on the job	|||	𝍸 ||		|||
Ind-Utilizing individual's knowledge		|		
Team-Opportunity to work		𝍸 |||	|	𝍸
Team-Working together				
Team-Helping others		|		
Team-Exchanging information				
Team-Meetings				
Org-Using tools and facilities provided by org				

Note: Ind: Individual; Org: Organization

Cross-case Data Analysis

A cross-case analysis was undertaken by replication logic and strived to compare and explain (a) similarities, (b) contradictions and (c) complementary findings in the studied project teams. Comparison was done by listing similarities and differences between the cases (Eisenhardt, 1989), and included the comparison of findings and contextual factors across cases.

Cross-case Display

The results of cross-case analysis are displayed in the form of a content analytic summary table, which focuses primarily on content, without referring to which case it comes from (Miles et al., 1998). In my research, a content analytic summary was presented in the form of qualitative associative network that integrates findings across cases. Similarly, a conceptually clustered matrix was also prepared to compare results across cases for experiential knowledge processes, its management and project teams' outcomes.

The use of software helped immensely in data analysis. After every new document, all three phases were reiterated. If any new codes were found, all the earlier documents were scanned again to find and assign these new codes. The data analysis is the key phase and the most time-consuming phase in qualitative research. I knew by heart, every sentence of all the team members in last two cases. Atlas.ti software helped in presenting the analysis in meaningful ways as well. The network diagrams, counts, code trees helped immensely in presenting the findings.

Conclusions

My experience of my research journey had been wonderful, I was blessed to get the three of the finest researchers on campus in my thesis committee, who spent as much time as I requested with me helping and guiding me in this amazing journey. My research methods allowed me sufficient time to spend with two teams and know these individuals at more personal and intimate level. I had very superficial ideas about research while starting my journey, like research means identifying a problem, designing a questionnaire, collecting and analysing data and writing report. All these ideas proved incorrect as I proceeded in my journey. The overall journey remained more or less in the same sequence, but the beauty and struggle of each phase taught much more. The difficult times during this journey were when companies refused to allow access for data collection, and then personal contacts from faculty came handy. Sitting long hours, analysing interviews after interviews, and there is nothing to show in the next weekly progress meeting, were other common difficult times. I struggled a lot initially for maintaining references and bibliography, and then I was introduced to EndNote software and that made life a lot easier. Similarly, the software for data analysis, Atlas.ti and the way it represented the results was a moment of joy.

My research journey helped me in growing as a human being. I learnt to see the reality as much more subjective, socially constructed rather than an objective reality, taught to me during

my science and engineering days. The experience of doing pure qualitative research made me more sensitive towards other's viewpoints, helped me grow personally, assisted me to become a better communicator. My advice to fresh researchers can be summed up in a quote by Francis Bacon:

> 'If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties'.

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11

Mixed Methodology: Researching at Any Cost—Restorying My Journey into the 'Unknown'

Abinash Panda

Editors' note: Abinash Panda's research design was a sequential mixed methodology to study the impact of cultural differences in the culture of the same organization operating in two different states of India. In the qualitative phase he used quasi-ethnography in a number of branches of the same bank. He presents his personal journey of doing doctoral research from course work to thesis defence. Qualitative approach helps him in identifying the presence or absence of something, whereas quantitative approach helps him to assess/measure the degree to which some features exist. Quasi-ethnographic approach in qualitative phase seems apt to capture the essence of cultural values at workplace. He travelled six branches located at different locations for data collection. Triangulation of findings of both qualitative and quantitative data helped him to have a holistic and context-sensitive (grounded) understanding of how the societal culture influences employees' attitudes.

Like any other journey, the beginning of my research journey was loaded with excitement, challenges and apprehensions. I was both apprehensive and excited about this journey, which would take me into the world of unknown.

When I was asked to contribute a paper detailing my research experience for this edited volume, I felt excited. I debated with myself and decided to narrate the story as it unfolded, of how I evolved into a researcher.

Doctoral Research: A Fascinating Journey

Doctoral research can be one of the most fascinating and exciting learning experience available to any research scholar. It can also be extremely challenging, demanding much hard work and a sustained personal commitment. Researcher, like an auteur, creates her/his narratives. A peep into the journey I undertook in the year 2000 gives me goose bumps literally even today. Restorying the same, I believe, would be cathartic in a way. It began with discovering my ignorance!

Discovering Ignorance

As a part of coursework, each of us had to write a *teaching case*. I was keen to understand how culture gets shaped in a business organization. When Professor Rajen K. Gupta (RG) advised me to take anthropological approach to study the process, I was taken aback and gawked at him, while trying to decipher the so-called anthropological approach. Understanding my plight, RG handed me over a book titled *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This interaction was pivotal, as it made me realize how much ignorant I was. It also gave me the confidence that I was on the right track—*discovering own ignorance is the first step towards learning!*

Getting Past the Comprehensive Examination

The next hurdle was to get past the comprehensive examination (CE). No one of us was sure about the nature of the examination as it was being conducted for the first time in the Management Development Institute (MDI).

The cacophonic debate amongst the fellow programme in management (FPM) participants was on whether it should be open book or closed book? Should it be a take-home examination? It was too confusing to my comfort.

Finally, it was an open book and take-home examination, followed by an interview by the examining committee. I was relieved. The CE ceased to be a mystery for others. But, amidst all these hullabaloo, deep inside, I was feeling like a guinea pig!

Learning from Defending Thesis Proposal

I picked up a research idea I was passionate about and presented. Though I defended my thesis proposal successfully, I was handed over some informal feedback that during proposal defence, I conducted myself as if I was facilitating a training session. Walking up to each of the questioners and making eye contact with them may be acceptable in a training session, but not when someone is defending her or his thesis proposal! This was a great learning for me—how to manage the audience, that too those who are evaluating you.

Developing Research Idea

Developing the Research Idea and Deciding on Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

Developing the research idea into a full-fledged research topic is the most challenging task for any researcher. Invariably, the process tends to be stressful. Researchers tend to be overambitious and aspire to develop a grand theory. I was also a victim of such megalomaniac tendency. Like Geert Hofstede, I was keen to explore the cultural diversity within India.

Rounds of discussion with RG, Chairperson of my TAC helped me limiting the scope of the research to exploring the influence of societal culture on an organization located in two culturally distinct societies (states).

Research Questions, Samples and Methodology

Though there are a number of anecdotal evidences on how Indians from different parts of India behave differently, large-scale empirical evidences on the diversity in beliefs, values and behaviour of people across locations/states are non-existent.

This study attempted to address the following two broad questions:

a. understand the nature and extent of cultural differences in two Indian states; and
b. explore and assess how do the cultural differences at societal level impact the culture of the organization located in these two states of India.

The other three ancillary research questions identified in this study were as follows:

1. Is perception about work–family conflict (WFC) influenced by societal culture?
2. Are job-related attitudes influenced by WFC?
3. Are job-related attitudes influenced by leadership or/and organizational culture?

Deciding about the Societies

The two states Gujarat and Odisha were finally identified as they are culturally distinct and located in two unique 'culture zones' (Bose, 1967), 'climatic zones' (Blanford, 1889) and 'linguistic zones' (Richards, 1929). They were also distinctly different with respect to various 'human development parameters' (basis is Human Development Index Report, 2002).

Research Site and Ideal Sample for this Study

Given the nature of research questions and the criteria of an ideal respondent, it was thought to conduct the study in an organization

that has pan-Indian presence and recruits employees from all parts of India. Hence, a public sector bank (PSB) was identified which had enough presence (service branches) in both states. Moreover, because social banking in PSBs tends to be highly susceptible to cultural influences.

The respondents for this study were the employee of the organization, irrespective of designation and rank (a) who had been born, brought up and educated in the identified society; (b) who had been working in the state since the beginning of her/his career; (c) whose mother tongue was one of the dialects spoken in the state; and (d) had not moved out of the state for a long period of time.

Deciding about the Methodology

I decided mixed methodology (see Box 11.1) to address the research questions mentioned in the previous section. The intent was to triangulate findings of both qualitative and quantitative data to have a holistic and context-sensitive (grounded) understanding of how does the societal culture influences employees' attitudes.

Qualitative approach helps identifying the presence or absence of something, whereas quantitative approach helps assess/measure the degree to which some features exist. Use of both methods appropriately helps maximize knowledge yield.

Survey-based culture studies have been criticized for actually assessing climate rather than culture as it captures the attitudes. It is hard and practically impossible to capture values and assumptions through questionnaire. Values and fundamental assumptions are, at best, inferred.

Bargaining and Maintaining Entry into the Research Site

Scholars acknowledge that research bargains (Burgess, 1984) to be the toughest phase in the research process and is often fraught with difficulties and anxieties. It is a socio-political process

Box 11.1: Mixed Methods Research Design

A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem.

To utilize this design effectively, you must understand both quantitative and qualitative research.

Quantitative (mainly deductive) methods are ideal for measuring pervasiveness of known phenomena and central patterns of association, including inferences of causality. Qualitative (mainly inductive) methods allow for identification of previously unknown processes, explanations of why and how phenomena occur, and the range of their effects.

Mixed methods research is more than simply collecting qualitative data from interviews, or collecting multiple forms of qualitative evidence (e.g., observations and interviews) or multiple types of quantitative evidence (e.g., surveys and diagnostic tests).

It involves the intentional collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the combination of the strengths of each to answer research questions.

Both methods, if employed systematically would complement each other.

In mixed methods studies, investigators intentionally combine quantitative and qualitative data to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of each type of data.

Studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods have the potential to make greater contribution through dual emphasis on both discovery (through qualitative data) and justification (through quantitative data).

Problems most suitable for mixed methods are those in which the quantitative approach or the qualitative approach, by itself, is inadequate to develop multiple perspectives and a complete understanding about a research problem or question.

(Beynon, 1988) that needs 'hard work, strategic planning and dumb luck' (Van Mannen & Kolb, 1985, p. 11).

The central office of the bank instructed the zonal office in Delhi and regional offices in Odisha and Anand to cooperate with me during the data collection. The regional office identified and communicated to the branch managers of various service branches through advice letters with a request to cooperate with and help me collect data from those branches.

Though formal permission eased the efforts required for gaining entry into the research sites, it did not however eliminate the hurdles of maintaining entry within the research sites as I often discovered that the permission was ineffective in eliciting cooperation at the individual respondent's level.

The Four Stages of Researching

The research process included the following four stages:

a. Development of working framework and validation of questionnaire;
b. Data collection
c. Data analysis, integration and drawing inferences, and
d. Handling contradictory findings.

Development of Working Framework and Validation of Questionnaire

In this initial phase of this stage, I carried out two pilot studies—the first one to develop a working framework that captures the dynamics of culture evolution in a service branch of the bank, and the second one to validate the questionnaire developed on the basis of qualitative data gathered during the first pilot study.

I spent a fortnight in one of the branches of the bank to have an understanding of the natives' viewpoints on (a) how do they describe the culture of the branch; (b) why is the culture the way they describe it to be. The data gathered through observation, interviews and both formal and informal discussions were content analysed to identify themes inductively. The interrelationships amongst these themes were identified that became the basis for the working framework (for details, see Panda et al., 2012), which was the basic template for developing the questionnaire and exploring culture of other service branches.

The themes identified above became the constructs of the questionnaire, each of which was operationalized taking into account the natives' understanding. The questionnaire was validated

subsequently during the second pilot study, during which it was administered to 97 employees of various nationalized banks. Items under each construct (dimension) were retained or dropped from the final version of the questionnaire depending on the level of statistical significance of *Item-sum correlation* and *Cronbach alpha* values.

The final version of the questionnaire was subjected to back translation technique (Usunier, 1998). It was translated into Gujarati, which was back translated to English by another person. Both versions were checked by a third person. The discrepancies that were discovered in this process were corrected. The English version of the questionnaire was administered in Odisha and the Gujarati version was administered in Gujarat.

Data Collection

I collected qualitative data through non-participant observations, interviews and questionnaires besides formal and informal conversations with the employees of the organization. Each of these interviews on an average lasted for one to one-and-half hour.

I spent a fortnight in each of the six branches (three in Gujarat, two in Odisha and one in Gurgaon during the pilot study) to gather in-depth data. In the process, I interviewed 76 employees from various branches located in Odisha, Gujarat and Gurgaon.

Most of the interviewees were not comfortable with recording of their interviews and discussions. Hence, I had to take extensive field notes of all interviews, besides recording what I observed.

I distributed more than 300 questionnaires. A total of 244 employees filled in their questionnaires from these 22 branches. I identified six of these 22 branches for in-depth observation.

Data Analysis, Integration and Drawing Inferences

Data analysis and integration to draw inferences were done in three stages sequentially with specific purposes.

In the first phase of this stage, I analysed the qualitative data using grounded theory approach. I searched for similarities and

differences amongst the branches located in each state. On the basis of the similarities and differences among branches within each state, I described the general work culture of the branches in each state, which helped me articulate a framework that attempted to link various dimensions of societal cultural and dimensions of prevailing branch culture for both the states. These linkages were conjectural and associative in nature, based on the *analysis of qualitative data*. Comparison of general work culture in each state helped me developing comparative hypotheses. An example of such hypothesis is presented below:

- The perceived WFC is higher amongst the employees in Gujarat than the employees in Odisha.

In the second phase of this stage, hypotheses developed in the previous stage were validated through appropriate quantitative data analysis. The objective was to explore whether there is any causal relationship between any of societal cultural dimensions and cultural dimensions of prevailing work culture of branch.

I decided to analyse qualitative data prior to analysing quantitative data to ensure that the inferences drawn from qualitative data are not contaminated or influenced by the inferences drawn from the quantitative data.

Finally, when both qualitative and quantitative datasets were analysed together through triangulation, I discovered two sets of interpretations: corroborative and contradictory. Contradictory interpretations gave me many sleepless nights, which needed to be resolved. One of such instances is described below.

Handling Contradictory Findings

The analysis of qualitative data indicated the following about the employees in Gujarat:

a. They were generally staying in respective joint families.
b. They were commuting to the place of work on a daily basis for more than decades.
c. The daily commuting time used to be more than two hours.

Daily commuting and limited support from extended family seemed to be contributing to the stress, which was explicitly mentioned by most of the employees during interviews and conversation. They also expressed their guilt pangs tugging at their hearts and regretted not being able to nurture social relationship.

In contrast, the employees from Odisha who participated in this study had the following characteristics:

a. They were staying with their immediate family.
b. They were staying in the same city, and hence spending very little time in commuting.

Very few of them expressed any anxiety related to WFC.

The intensity of perceived WFC, as inferred from the qualitative data, seemed to be higher amongst the employees in Gujarat than employees in Odisha. The related hypothesis was:

Hypothesis: WFC experienced by the employees in Gujarat would be higher than the employees in Odisha.

This hypothesis was to be validated using quantitative data, collected by administering the questionnaire developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996).

Validating with Quantitative Data

The analysis of the quantitative data interestingly revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the intensity level of perceived WFC between the employees in Odisha (mean = 2.97, SD = 0.72) and Gujarat (mean = 3.02, SD = 0.56). Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

It means, had I relied on qualitative data only, I would have concluded with an assertion that 'employees in Gujarat seem to be experiencing higher degree of WFC than employees in Odisha because of daily commute between the place of stay and work and inability to give enough attention to social needs'.

Had I relied on quantitative data only, I would have concluded that there is no significant difference in the degree of WFC as experienced by employees in Gujarat and Odisha.

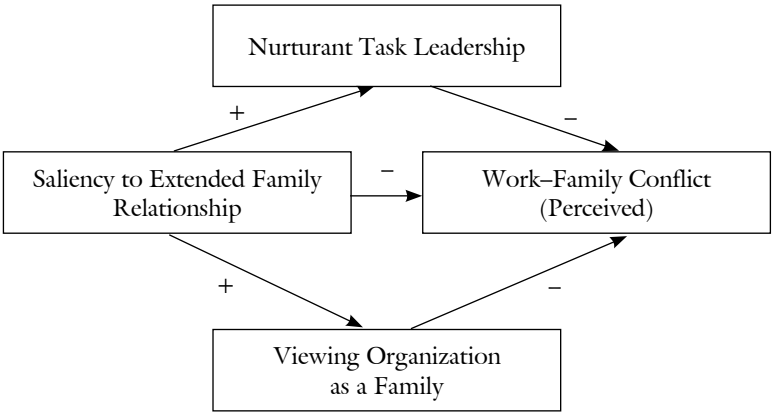
In-depth Analysis of Both Datasets

Given the contradictory nature of findings, I delved into further analysis of quantitative data using AMOS. The path analysis indicated the following set of relationships (see Figure 11.1 for the diagrammatic representation of the relationships).

a. If the employees consider the organization as a family (subtle familism), they tend to experience lesser degree of WFC.
b. If the branch head demonstrates Nurturant task leadership, employees would experience lesser degree of WFC.
c. If the employees attach saliency to the extended family relationship (EFR) available in a joint family, they tend to experience lesser degree of WFC.
d. Branch leaders tend to exhibit Nurturant Task Leadership (NTL) style, if they are socialized to attach saliency to EFR.
e. Employees tend to view employing organization as a family, if they are socialized to attach saliency to EFR.

In-depth analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data aggregated at societal level further indicated that employees in Gujarat are socialized to attach more saliency to EFR, unlike in

Figure 11.1 Diagrammatic Representation of Relationship



Odisha. Hence, the branch leaders in Gujarat branches exhibit NTL and employees in Gujarat generally view branches as family.

The conclusion was that in spite of commuting and not being able to give adequate time to family, the perceived WFC amongst the employees in Gujarat is not significantly different from the employees in Odisha.

My argument here is that I would not have discovered the previously mentioned dynamics had I relied on qualitative or quantitative dataset alone.

Thesis Writing and Submission

Writing is one of the most difficult parts of the research work. Usually most research scholars struggle while writing dissertation for various reasons. Somehow, I have mostly enjoyed articulating my thought in writing. I started writing the thesis immediately after completing data analysis. My intention was to document both the research process along with the research findings. Hence, I included some chapters that are normally not included in a doctoral dissertation. A chapter was devoted to challenges I faced while collecting data from the field, including my feelings that were captured in the field notes (for more details, refer to Panda et al., 2009).

The thesis ran into more than 600 pages, which is really quite much by any stretch of imagination, I admit, for the examiners. The length of the thesis was attributed to the delay in receiving the external examiner's comments, which took more than a year. The institute subsequently decided to limit the length of the thesis. A good move to rein in research scholars like me!

I strongly believe a researcher should maintain a diary documenting one's feelings, thought process, frustrations, angst, pains as well as pleasures while she or he is researching. This process of documenting feelings by itself is cathartic. When I read my field notes today, I experience a sense of satisfaction and achievement.

I also included an epilogue, which focused on the lessons I learnt as a researcher and what I would do differently if I have to redo the research all over again!

For any researcher, dissertation submission is like icing on the cake. You have finished writing your dissertation and the TAC members have put their signature. You would think the rest of the things, such as binding the thesis and submitting the same in the FPM office, would be a ritual. It was not to be in my case.

As there were no guidelines on how the dissertation should be bound and submitted, I took the easy way out and got my dissertation spiral bound and submitted. In fact, it was a cheaper option. The FPM office refused to accept and insisted on hard bound dissertation. It was like putting the cat amongst the pigeons. I was feeling like one of those pigeons. Somehow, I managed to submit the thesis the next day.

Defending the Doctoral Thesis

I had to wait for more than a year for my thesis defence. Late (Professor) Udai Pareek was my examiner. It was a smooth affair, smoother than I had anticipated.

Looking for Nuggets of Achievement in a Minefield of Pains

Researchers are lone warriors and have to traverse the terrains all alone. They are trailblazers and often tend to experience an intense feeling of challenge and excitement throughout. Joseph Campbell used the term 'hero's journey' (Campbell, 2008) to describe such intellectual adventures. Each researcher, without exception, has to traverse from known to unknown outside their comfort zones, dotted with hurdles and roadblocks. They eventually make a heroic return, more evolved and matured.

For me, the doctoral research work has been one of the most fascinating and exciting learning experiences, though it was extremely challenging and demanding in terms of hard work and a sustained personal commitment. That journey is too important to be traded for anything else.

Financial Hardships on the Way

When I was a fellow participant, the institute was not providing financial support for data collection. I had to travel extensively across Gujarat and Odisha for data collection. I had to borrow money from my relatives to bridge the deficits after exhausting my personal savings. Later, part of the money I spent on data collection was reimbursed by the institute, by creating a provision for contingency fund.

Things turned worse when I had to move out of campus and the institute stopped my monthly stipend after a stipulated time of four years and extension of three months. It was really tough. The financial hardship was hugely mitigated when I was invited by IIM Indore to take a course as a visiting faculty. For which, I was remunerated *handsomely*! In the meantime, I was selected as a full-time faculty member in the area of organizational behaviour at XLRI School of Business Management. With this selection, my researching ordeal ended!

Would I Do It Differently Next Time?

Each experience is unique. Researching, to me, is a process of moving from known to unknown and again moving from unknown to a new known. I was passionate about researching, with a deep curiosity to explore the unknown. I also believe in being perfect. Unfortunately, it is a deadly cocktail and quite insinuating. It pushes you to the edge and you are always on the cliff. You never know when to stop!

I should have been more realistic and pragmatic. The research topic I identified was too broad to be a doctoral research work.

Second, when I joined MDI, I was a quantitative purist. By the end of the research work, I could discover the power of qualitative data to explain why aspects of an organizational phenomenon. I am a convert now. If I am asked to redo the research work, I would take an anthropological approach and focus on one branch. This would give us a thick description of the culture.

Final Thought

I feel happy and satisfied with what I could achieve in those four years of researching under the tutelage of a competent team of teachers, mentors and guides. It demanded sacrifices not only from me but also from my family members. Collecting qualitative data from the field requires a lot of patience, endurance and calmness. Though I could not demonstrate any of these qualities while I was researching, I have developed a little bit of each of these in due course of time. It was a great learning experience.

I have attempted to be honest to myself while sharing my feelings. I have done this without any malice towards any person or any organization. Each of us has different perspectives. I have shared mine. I welcome all researchers to share their experiences of researching for posterity.

Researching is an experience by itself, which needs to be enjoyed. The trials and tribulations associated with the research process are absolutely necessary for anyone to evolve into an accomplished researcher, the way a caterpillar goes through the phase of being cocooned before evolving into a beautiful butterfly!

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12

Mixed Methodology: Use of Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research to Understand and Explore Organizational Phenomena in 21st Century—Reflecting on Personal Experience as a 'Research Scholar'

Anita Ollapally

Editors' note: Anita found sequential exploratory mixed methodology as the best option to study team behaviour and person–team fit using interviews and observer-as-participants for data collection. She narrates the challenges of conducting interviews and observations. Both these qualitative techniques helped her in triangulation. Further triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings brings upon new perspectives. She emphasizes how qualitative research journey helped her grow personally and in the subject domain.

The Beginning of My Journey

I started my fellow programme in management journey (FPM) wondering what my philosophical orientation really was. Did I believe in the positivist paradigm or the constructivist one? Was I more inclined towards qualitative research or quantitative research? I struggled with this and it didn't help that there were voices telling you that qualitative research was not as acceptable as quantitative. The individual and his/her reality was important to me and somewhere down the line amidst all the voices, this stand, stood out all the time. My journey began with deciding my topic. Every topic I researched in the domain of organizational behaviour seemed to interest me! The turning point for me was when I wrote a case and discovered that different people had different needs, but organizations didn't really appreciate that and had one-size-fits-all policies. I started getting interested in understanding the differences in values and hence needs among different employees. After a discussion with my guides, we decided that the phenomenon of person–environment fit was closest to my interests. Since a team is the immediate work environment of an employee, in today's business landscape, we decided that we would try and understand the differing needs of team members and the implications of a fit or misfit on certain work-related outcomes.

When we decided on the topic of person–team fit, I was keen on understanding the individual's reality based on personal experiences and what was important for a fit with the team. Since there was relatively less work done in this domain and close to none in India, I decided to embark on an exploratory study. Hence my research question was: What is the nature of dimensions underlying an employee's sense of fit with his team?

At the same time, I wanted to understand the effect of a fit or misfit on these dimensions, on relevant outcomes, for people across organizations. The ultimate purpose was to help managers understand the unique needs and preferences of their subordinates, so that they could customize the help they can render. As a result of my interest and sensitivity to the phenomena of culture

and the characteristics unique to it, I decided to explore the phenomena and develop and test a scale in India specifically for the information technology (IT) sector.

Motive for the Qualitative and the Quantitative Phases

A review of literature indicated that the few questionnaires in this domain of work had limitations with respect to reliability and generalizability, besides having been developed in other contexts. Some authors had used an existing scale pertaining to person–organization fit, to study person–supervisor fit, by substituting the word organization with superior. I felt it was important to understand the issues specific to each unique context. Some questionnaires used the term *values* with no indication of which ones they were talking about, which does not give managers any indication as to what they need to work on. The need for an exploratory study was further reinforced when I realized some items did not apply to everybody, leave alone to other cultures and samples. Some scales used, wanting to spend time outside work with their co-workers as an indication of fit. However, in my preliminary interviews I found that not everybody wanted to do that despite getting along well at work. It was their way of balancing work and family. Thus, I felt the need to conduct interviews to understand the phenomena in greater depth and to identify the specific dimensions underlying fit for my sample. It was also important to capture the items in their own language. As Dawis (1987) maintains 'The interviewee's own words can then be used in writing the items. Such use can provide a degree of authenticity, which in turn can contribute to the scale's validity' (p. 482).

Hence we decided on developing a scale. The scale had to be tested for its reliability and validity. I also decided to test the construct validity to assess whether it had an impact on certain work-related outcomes and to assess whether a fit or misfit with the team could differentiate between team members. Hence, I decided to embark on the quantitative phase.

Choice of Research Methodology

When I read about mixed methods, it seemed like the answer to my confusion. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) define it as

> A research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies.

Since I wanted to explore the phenomena to first understand the different perspectives that existed and then assess whether the qualitative themes generalize to a population, the sequential exploratory mixed method seemed to be the most appropriate research methodology to follow. A sequential exploratory mixed method is conducted when there is minimum work done in an area, or there is not much pre-knowledge of the phenomena (Cronholm & Hjalmarsson, 2011). It is also used to develop an instrument. Hence this type of mixed method design seemed appropriate for my study. See Box 12.1 for characteristics of the mixed method approach.

Box 12.1: Characteristics of the Method Used in the Study

A mixed method study is one that minimizes the limitations of using only one method. It allows a researcher to use different paradigms in a study and this in turn guides him or her to choose the appropriate mixed method design and in turn the methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed methods research is based on the tenet that there exists multiple perspectives or realities and tries to integrate the 'subjective, intersubjective and objective parts of our world' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010: 72). The traceability is also high in a mixed method study as one can go back to the qualitative data to explain the quantitative results (Cronholm & Hjalmarsson, 2011). This approach not only explores the phenomenon based on the realities of people but also justifies it.

Dilemma's and Challenges Faced during the Study

Qualitative Phase

I conducted 32 interviews and observed two teams as an observer-as-participant who only maintained superficial relations and interacted with the team occasionally (Waddington, 2004). The first challenge was getting an access to the interviewees and requesting them for at least an hour of their time. The second challenge was to convince some interviewees that I'm not going to test their knowledge and therefore they don't have to prepare for the interview (some of them wanted to know that)! The third challenge was to convince them of confidentiality, as they were worried if I will be using their names or that of their organization. I met with all the interviewees at a place and time of their convenience. The interviewees represented multiple IT companies across Gurgaon, Noida and Bangalore. The duration of the interviews ranged from forty minutes to an hour and fifteen minutes.

During the interviews, there were other challenges. Most interviewees agreed for their interviews to be recorded; however, there were a few who didn't want their interviews to be recorded. Listening to the respondents and catching important clues to probe becomes an overwhelming task, when combined with having to make notes. There is always a chance of losing information and the richness of the data captured reduces compared to when you record the interview. The ability to rewind and listen to the interview repeatedly enables you to capture lost information and helps you put things in perspective as you know what was said before and after a particular statement. While conducting interviews, I found that people would give one-word answers, for example 'nice' to questions like 'how has your team experience been?' I had to first develop a rapport and ask questions in ways that would help them open up. Sometimes I would have to ask the same question in different ways. I found that some of these professionals found it a little difficult to articulate their views as I probed deeper. There was a problem of language for some of them, as they were not very articulate in English.

The observation of the teams was an interesting experience as it helped me observe first hand, particularly the team members' behaviour. However, there were issues that I faced which are common in an undisguised form of observation. It began with their distrust in me. They thought I was associated with human resources (HR), this despite my elaborate communication with the HR department of the company, followed by a letter drafted by me, to be sent to the teams. Once the teams realized I was doing a PhD, they slowly started opening up. Some of them were open to talking about their team members but others were wary. In the beginning, I only observed the teams and put down what I saw and my personal views. When I began interacting with them one-on-one and together as a team, I got some information and also asked for some clarification and found that some of my views were refuted and some reinforced. Sometimes I went back a couple of times to some individuals. The cross-checking helped me identify and verify inconsistencies in people's reports and helped remove the influence of my personal biases. While the interviews were sufficient, the observation exercise helped me triangulate information with respect to the phenomena I was studying, the nature of the sample and the concepts that had emerged until then. It was quite exciting to see some of the concepts unearthed in my interviews, occurring live in front of me.

All through this process, I had some personal challenges as well. As I had done some literature review prior to the interviews, I had to make sure I went with an open mind. I had to make sure my questions were not leading (especially if they didn't understand something I had said first). In order to make sure I understood what they said, I would paraphrase. I had to at times steer the interviewee back on track and do it in a way that didn't offend them. I was a little nervous before the start of the exercise as I was meeting a group of strangers (who were equally nervous of me, I realized). I had to be in their office the whole day and try to observe and connect with them. It didn't help that none of them came to talk to me initially. I had to go out of my comfort zone and strike conversations with them. I first approached one

or two of them and slowly they got me introduced to others. One of my proudest moments was when we became really comfortable with each other after only a week, and when I offered a treat to all of them at the end of my session with them, all of them including the manager and the team lead joined me.

My experience with Team 2 was starkly different. Their manager, to begin with, was not very open and he would have a problem any little time I took with the members, as he felt that work was getting affected. So I started speaking and interacting with them on breaks. It could be a problem because this team was only one month old as compared to the other one which was five years old. The latter team was also a development team as compared to the former which was a services one. The camaraderie among the team members in the first team could have been a function of the time spent together as against the second where it was clearly lacking. What was also interesting was that the second team had some diversity in the form of regional differences among the team members. There were people from the north and the south of India and I observed sub-groups, with those from the south feeling a little isolated from the others. Another interesting difference I observed was that the team members shared a common workspace as compared to the latter team. The latter team also had a team lead who had just been promoted to that post and was previously a colleague of some of her current subordinates, as compared to the former team who had a more experienced team lead.

Observing the two teams, the differences and the implications of these differences on the team dynamics was very fascinating and educative. All in all, it was a very enriching experience. From the excitement of having achieved what I wanted from the first team to the feeling of rejection and being told (nicely, however) that I had to stay away from the members of the second team, was quite humbling for me. Discovering the inconsistencies in the perceptions of two people on the team, about each other or a situation was quite interesting, as it made me realize how things could be improved if people were just open with each other and discussed issues, as most often we operate with a coloured lens.

Qualitative Analysis

I transcribed all the interviews line by line and on an average each transcribed document was twelve-pages long. I wrote down over 1000 statements, as I initially retained all statements pertaining to the same concept but worded differently, so as to choose later which would best represent the concept. Using the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), each statement was grouped under representative concepts and categories. Below is a small example (see Table 12.1) of the process followed.

During this process, in order to keep my biases in check, I asked individuals' representatives of my sample to remove items that they felt were repetitive or redundant and would cross-check this with what I had decided to remove. This was done qualitatively. It took much iteration before I came to a manageable number, nevertheless still too large to administer. I felt I was unable to reduce the items further, as I was getting possessive of them! I then asked some experts to do so.

Transforming the Qualitative Data

I kept the language used by the respondents for nearly all the items, as a means of reducing bias and not inserting my interpretation of what was said. I gave this list to four experts who were from both academics and the industry. I asked them to rate on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* whether each of the items were clear and concise, or redundant.

Table 12.1 Process of Coding for Scale Development

Behavioural Indicators	*Concepts*	*Category*
The members of my team have good analytical abilities.	Intellect	
Members of my team are functionally good.	Project expertise	Cognitive resourcefulness
Members of my team have the ability to come up with diverse ideas.	Creative disposition	

Based on their ratings for each item, I calculated the means and standard deviations for each item. In order to choose the most important items and to reduce the number of items, I opted for only those who were rated 6 and above. At all stages I made sure I used experts from the representative sample as well, to keep the items as relevant and close to reality as possible (DeVellis, 2012). The end result was 89 statements, in the form of items for a questionnaire.

The constant challenge was one of brevity. I wanted to be as inclusive as possible and yet I had to be aware of the practical problems, a long questionnaire entails. A dilemma was one of generality versus specificity, should I retain items that were more general and remove specific ones? The other challenge was keeping the items clear and concise, without them being too long or double-barrelled.

I felt that if I used only the quantitative method by using the existing scales, I would not have been able to find nuances particular to my culture and sample. The language used by some scales is not understood by the people in our culture and hence will have no meaning to them, resulting in invalid results. As cultures differ so also the preferences and hence it would have no meaning to just replicate a scale used in a different cultural context.

Quantitative Phase

Once the questionnaire was ready, I embarked on the quantitative phase. The 89-item questionnaire together with scales of the other constructs to be used in the confirmatory factor analysis had to be pretested. In order to control for biases, I was collecting data from two different sources, the team members and the team lead. I was also conducting the study at two points in three weeks apart. The main challenge was getting access into organizations, to give me teams of individuals and their leader. Owing to the nature of my sample, organizations took a very long time to give me permission and there was a large gap between my asking for permission and actually starting the study. There were times when I had to give up on some organizations, as they were taking too long to give me permission despite assuring me that I could

conduct the study. In a sequential exploratory study, the sample in the qualitative phase and that in the quantitative phase has to be different and the researcher has to fulfil the criteria of both in terms of an appropriate sample size. Thus, the requirement in terms of respondents for my study was also large.

The other challenge was to try and convince the respondents to give you honest answers to your statements. In longitudinal studies or studies like mine where one has to go back and give another questionnaire three weeks later, it is important to have some identity of the individual so as to be able to go back to the same one and to make sure all data for that person is entered together. This entails some problems as when some form of identity (even in the form of a number) is required, it compromises anonymity a little and I felt the first few respondents were giving socially desirable answers or some scratched the number, which posed problems for me. Hence I started colour coding the questionnaires. I then put the colour-coded questionnaire in a large envelope which had the individuals name on it, so that it went to that person itself and inside I put a smaller envelope (that had the same colour coding as the questionnaire) with no name. I asked them to put the filled-in questionnaire in the smaller one and seal it. All the questionnaires were collected and then handed over to me. This ensured anonymity.

The other major challenge I faced was the response rate on the second questionnaire, which was quite low. I had to send multiple reminders and this delayed my work a great deal. Since I was assessing person–team fit I needed the whole team or at least a minimum of five team members and if only two responded on a team, I had to pursue others or give up on that team. This led to a lot of time and effort spent and sometimes at the end of it; I didn't have the data from the team.

The other challenge was the lack of sensitivity of practitioners to conducting research, to issues like confidentiality, anonymity, social desirability, etc. The chasm between academics and practitioners is very evident when one goes for data collection. While many forums discuss ways to improve the collaboration, the lack of it is a bane for researchers. If one wants to embark on a field

study, it is important to educate the person helping you coordinate the study, about such issues.

I decided to go with a longer list of items so that I could capture as many concepts as possible. However, this led to other issues like the fact that I needed large sample sizes, which was hard to get. Post the pilot study, factor analysis was conducted and the reliability of the scales was tested and the final study commenced.

Both phases of research put together have taken a lot of time, effort, money and a toll on my sanity! Doing a mixed method study is extremely educative for a young researcher but requires a lot of time and sometimes is not possible in the time frame allotted for your work.

My Learning as a Research Scholar

My learning has been hands on and is an on-going process. The mixed method design has given me a holistic understanding of the qualitative and quantitative approaches, the benefits, limitations and challenges of both. On the other hand, understanding the nuances of each method has been quite a task, nevertheless it has been fulfilling. I understood the importance of using multiple types of data collection methods. It helps in triangulation and gives new perspectives. The importance of becoming aware of one's biases at all stages of the study and keeping a check on it has been a useful and important lesson. My overall experience has been greatly educative and humbling in equal measure.

There have been learnings on the personal front as well. The number of people I have had to meet and request help from has made me more confident as a person. I have never met so many strangers in my life! My ego has taken a bashing at times, but that has kept me grounded. I have also learnt the importance of prioritizing things, as managing the logistics of such a study has been difficult. I realized if I need anything from people in organizations, I need to start talking to them at least 1–2 months before hand, as they would have their deadlines (it doesn't matter to them that I have crossed mine!), on leave or travelling.

I have learnt that a researcher needs to be persistent and pursue what s/he needs to do, as eventually people will get back to you, you will get access to organizations and people will fill your questionnaire. It may take time, periods of frustration and feelings of wanting to give it all up are guaranteed. The thought that gets me through is that every researcher goes through this. This journey helps you discover a strength you thought you never had and gives you the belief that you can handle any situation post this. I have sometimes looked back in disbelief that I got this far! It helps to talk to your guides and other researchers, as no one understands you better than them.

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PART THREE

CONCLUSION

13

The Churning Process: Insights from the Experiences

Richa Awasthy and Rajen K. Gupta

Introduction: Issues in Conducting Qualitative Research

Our contributors' chapters signify the complexity and strength of the qualitative research. They share the muddling process which they went through, along with the challenges and the excitement of doing qualitative research. Data churning, as pointed out in the first chapter, is an important step before synthesizing and identifying themes in qualitative research. The journeys also demonstrate the intertwining of doing qualitative research and becoming a better qualitative researcher. At the end, they not only examined the phenomena of their interest, but they also discovered themselves afresh. They had their 'aha' moments and so did we!

Qualitative research adopts a blend of different tools and methods to acquire multiple perspectives and develop a holistic understanding. It is like a rainbow which is only possible by the combination of different colours. However, deployment of the methods cannot be predetermined as it depends on the nature of the social context. Our *contributors' journey* reiterates the flexibility

inherent in the qualitative research, which poses challenges as well as opportunities for a researcher. In this process, like in *jugal-bandi*, the researcher and the participants co-create reality. Both of them go through the iterative cycle of thoughts, feelings, introspection, reflection and many thoughts churning in their mind. There is a social, emotional and cognitive involvement. It is difficult to separate researcher from what is being researched. Immersion is a crucial aspect of qualitative research. The most unique aspect that emerges while conducting a qualitative research is its emergent nature. It allows absorbing emerging themes, refining your research questions and making them relevant and significant in relation to the given context.

During the process of doing a qualitative study, researchers face many issues. They arise, however, during several phases of the research process, and they are ever expanding in scope as researchers become more sensitive to the needs of participants, sites, stakeholders and publishers of the research. In this book, we have collated the voices of researchers from different qualitative arenas and in this chapter, we are trying to churn their journeys and derive insights from them.

Issues and Challenges Faced by Qualitative Researchers

Our contributors' chapters indicate the depth and complexity of the qualitative research into which a researcher enters. A close reading of their contributions suggest three challenges most of them went through: *thinking* about qualitative research, *doing* qualitative research and achieving *trustworthiness* (see Box 13.1).

Thinking of Qualitative Research

The selection of an appropriate topic is the first major challenge in conducting the research. According to Twisha:

> Finding the right topic was the most confusing phase in my PhD journey. This challenge became even harder because of my keenness to be able to feel strongly connected to my topic. I knew I would feel

extremely motivated and passionate about my research if it was connected to my life experiences.

Box 13.1: The Issues and Challenges Faced by Qualitative Researchers

Thinking of qualitative research

- Studying and writing a comprehensive literature review
- Framing the research questions
- Choosing the appropriate research method
- Selection of naturally occurring data, generated data or secondary data analysis
- Selection of data collection method
- Appropriate sequencing: how to provide scope for iteration and interplay between methods?

Doing qualitative research

- Choosing research sites and participants
- Arrangements for access to organizations or groups
- Arrangements for ethical approval
- Key groups or dimensions to be included in sample
- Selection criteria
- Contacting potential participants
- Managing research relationships
- Assessment of risk to participants and researchers and steps required to avert the risk
- Conduct of fieldwork
- Maintaining contact with participants who have left the organization being researched

Achieving trustworthiness

- Designing research protocols
- Analysis
- Development of analytical or conceptual frameworks
- Development and refinement of frameworks
- Need for rigour

In many academic settings, this task is simplified by working with a faculty mentor who may guide the researcher with an interesting and relevant area of study and may even invoke one or more researchable questions. This was observed in many of our

contributors' journeys that they were not only greatly supported but also influenced by their mentors at this stage of their research. Twisha continues to express:

> My tryst with qualitative research was about to begin. Some baby steps helped me enter the methodology maze. I was scared, unsure, and the prior notions about qualitative methodology being extremely difficult clouded my mind. I shared my inhibitions with my advisor. She advised that I interview and observe some people on campus to get a feel of the process. I followed her advice and it helped me remove most of my apprehensions. I felt more confident.

On the other hand, one may not be blessed with a faculty role model who is actively engaged in a similar area of interest. This absence of a rightful mentor may add to the troubles, ambiguity and a sense of 'being nowhere' at this stage. There are no simple rules for selecting a topic of interest, but there are some considerations for making a decision as to appropriateness. A researcher's choice may be based on curiosity and may involve resolving a problem, explaining a phenomenon, uncovering a process by which something occurs, demonstrating the truth of a hidden fact, building on or re-evaluating other studies or testing some theory in your field. To know whether or not the topic is significant one has to first obtain a broad familiarity with the concerned field.

Many contributors like Tara revealed that the choice of topic of their research was determined by their personal life experiences. Tara felt that doctoral programme is a long journey and requires dedication, interest and hard work. However, at the end there are guaranteed benefits and personal growth. According to Tara also, her choice of topic, that is, intercultural relationship, is inspired by her personal life. She says:

> My mother is from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh and my father hails from the southern part of the country, Tamil Nadu. My upbringing has been rather cosmopolitan, and I do tend to call myself a cultural hybrid but while growing up I realized that there were cultural differences between my parents' families.

The researcher's orientation, his or her ontological and epistemological stance also determine the choice of methodology.

It was also noticed that many researchers had difficulty transforming an interesting idea into a researchable question. The transformation of an interesting idea into a researchable question implies a large amount of exploration of the literature and talking with the experts. Without this initial exploration one can neither know the range of possibilities of interesting topics nor can have a clear idea of what is already known. As Devendra said:

> During the second year of doctorate program … the search for the research problem was a persistent endeavour. My experience with IT industry made it a natural choice for my domain. But what in IT industry, that remained a big question mark. I took a course on knowledge management … that made me interested in knowledge management. What in the field of knowledge management, still remained to be finalized. I started reading articles and research papers on knowledge management. That literature review led me in the area of tacit knowledge and implicit knowledge and to my topic of experiential knowledge.

From researcher's perspective, choosing the literature to read is one of the most challenging things. The guide advises suitable readings and helps novice researchers to connect with the research fraternity. Most of the researchers obtain their research topics from the loose ends they discover in reading within an area, from an interesting observation they have made or from an applied focus in their lives or professional work. Another task is to consult with the leading scholars in an area of interest and ask them for advice on topics of interest. Furthermore, this stage involves critical thinking and allowing new ideas to percolate. It should especially suit our novice researchers, who will find the demand to be expansive in their thinking exciting and creative. Critical thinking helped Swanand to realize that he is facing a unique challenge: 'Is the reality what you think it is? Or has the reality changed?' He further elaborates:

> I had spent several sleepless nights trying to identify possible answers to my research question. While doing so … it occurred to me that most phenomena are subject to rapid changes…. I now decided to widen the scope of my examination. I not only searched the literature but also started to engage with the practitioners from the software industry … Enlightened, I decided to explore this change in greater detail … I once again modified my research question.

The reader should be able to understand what one did and how did he or she think about it in order to appreciate the links among the research problem, the method and the results. Basically, the reader needs to know about one's research strategy and how this data will be generated with as much specificity as one is able to offer at this stage of the project.

Doing of Qualitative Methodology

The next step is the process of doing of qualitative methodology. This process serves to relate the specific topic to the context and begins with some hunches as experienced by many of our contributors. Tara pointed out that

> There is an element of uncertainty that marks qualitative research. At the start of data collection, I did not know how many participants I needed to interview. Qualitative approach also gives a tremendous amount of freedom to the researcher, in conducting interviews and analysing the data and therefore with this freedom comes great responsibility.

Devendra also shared same sentiments about this phase.

> The data collection posed interesting challenges. I was recording my interviews with team members and one of the team members was chewing paan masala (a kind of mouth freshener). I had much difficulty in understanding his sentences while transcribing these later, as the voice was not very clear.... The field notes and my observations proved another challenge for recording and transcribing.... The difficult times during this journey were when companies refused to allow access for data collection, and then personal contacts from faculty came handy.

Issues of identifying and soliciting participants, selecting and preparing research materials and data collection tools, and formulating procedures pertain here as in all studies. Qualitative research adopts views of sampling, instrumentation and data analysis that are often directly, contrary to the views held by those conducting more traditional *rationalistic* inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) called this 'the paradox of designing a naturalistic inquiry' and argued that 'the design specifications of the conventional paradigm form a procrustean bed of such a nature

as to make it impossible for the naturalist to lie in it—not only uncomfortably, but at all'.

A phenomenological study usually involves identifying and locating participants who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon, that is, being explored. Most phenomenological studies engage participants for a relatively long period of time. Because the grounded theory study is inductive and theory evolves as the data is collected and explored, it may not be possible to establish the precise sample size beforehand. Data collection is continued until we arrive at a saturation point and no new themes emerge, that is, the theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Several forms of sampling are appropriate at various stages of the study. The trick is to choose participants who can contribute to an evolving theory, participants whose main credential is experiential relevance. This means selecting participants or observations without prejudice because no concepts have yet proven to be theoretically meaningful. In practice that might mean, systematically choosing every name on a list, staying maximally flexible and open to discovery. Researchers who interview this much amount of participants need a great deal of patience and time. Afterwards he or she needs to process the amount of data accumulated from that many respondents. During the course of study or in the second round of interview, initial respondents may have switched over to another organization. This adds to this cumbersome process and contacting them again and getting relevant information is not at all easy. A similar situation was experienced by Shalini.

> I began collecting data in 2008…. A challenge soon appeared—since it was a project-based structure for this network, people would come into the picture when required and leave when their task ended. Hence tapping these individuals became a challenge as they could be working on different projects at different locations. The only way I could communicate with them was through phone, chat or emails. I decided to use all of them, but the response rate was not very good.

Participants who are different from the initial sample are also to be added if they represent some attribute that emerges as

significant for understanding (and perhaps generalizing) the phenomenon under study.

As the study proceeds, the chief criterion for sampling moves towards the theoretical relevance. At this point, the researcher has begun to assimilate some early theoretical hunches and wishes to identify examples that demonstrate the range or variation of a concept in different situations and in relation to other concepts. The sampling is done to saturate a concept, to comprehensively explore it and its relationship to other concepts so that it becomes theoretically meaningful. Because the theory emerges from the data, there is no viable way of determining these sampling dimensions beforehand. The researcher becomes increasingly selective in collecting a sample by adding to it based on the core variables that emerge as important to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study. This process involves choosing persons, sites and documents that enhance the possibility of comparative analysis to saturate categories and complete the study. This might mean returning to the previous interviews or sources of data as well as drawing on new ones. The study proceeds until there is a theoretical saturation achieved—gathering data until no new relevant data is discovered regarding a category and until the categories are well developed and validated. Generally speaking, the longer, more detailed and intensive the transcripts, the thorough is the research. As pointed out by eminent anthropologist, Geertz (1973), qualitative research is about producing thick descriptions.

The ethnographer has different challenges to anticipate. The researcher's relationship with the group to be studied must be fully acknowledged and described. In some ethnographic studies, the researcher may already have membership status. More frequently, there is a gatekeeper or conduit for accessing the group. Swanand in this context says:

> My data collection was largely through interviews … before I could interview these respondents, I had to get formal access permissions from the competent authorities in each case.

Once contact has been established, will everyone be approached to participate? Will sampling take place according to some

thoughtful criteria? Will participants be selected opportunistically, according to convenience or eagerness to participate? The same rules apply in describing the use of artefacts and other sources of data that the ethnographer observes and records.

Many of the researchers felt that participation in research provided an opportunity for some people to be listened to by a person who really did want to hear their story. Qualitative researchers attempt to capture the lived-in experiences and in order to do this it is important to remember the human side of the work. Researchers often referred to the need to be human in order to do this type of research. Our researchers referred to themselves as caring, empathetic, patient and compassionate. They also referred to the value of just being with a participant, especially when the participant was disclosing something particularly intimate to the researcher. Some of the researchers spoke about the value of touching, offering support and showing emotion. When qualitative researchers interact with research participants on a personal level, there is a possibility that the boundaries between the researcher and the research participant can become blur. The fact that qualitative research often requires supportive listening may make researchers ultimately more vulnerable to crossing the boundaries from research into friendship. In the process of undertaking a research interview, researchers are often privy to these stories for a number of reasons. In qualitative research, we often ask people to talk about aspects of their lives that they may not have previously discussed. As part of this process, a researcher may then become a secret-keeper. Researchers listening to those secrets often felt that they were somehow performing a service for the participant, likening the experience to that of hearing a religious confession.

In an examination of the experience of undertaking qualitative research, it is important to first consider what it is that we, as qualitative researchers, actually do. We go into other people's lives, sometimes at the time of crisis and stress, and we ask them to talk in detail about their experiences. Contributing researchers have acknowledged that entering into the lives of others is characteristic challenge of this type of research, suggesting that it is this aspect that makes the research unique. Often researchers

adopt quasi-ethnographic approach. They engage themselves as a non-participant observer and take a note of interactions, informal conversations and observations of the participants in their natural setting.

Qualitative researchers have to initiate a rapport-building process from their first encounter with a participant in order to build a research relationship that will allow the researcher access to that person's story. Researchers have often reported struggling with the level of rapport that they developed. Anita described her experience on the similar lines as:

> The first challenge was getting access to the interviewees and requesting them for at least an hour of their time. The second challenge was convincing them that I am not going to be testing their knowledge and they don't have to prepare for the interview (some of them wanted to know that)! The third challenge was to convince them of confidentiality, as they were worried if I will be using their names or that of their organization.

Part of the role of the qualitative researcher is to facilitate participant disclosure. This disclosure can be heightened if there is a level of rapport between researcher and participant. Concern has been raised by a number of authors regarding the level of disclosure achieved in some research interviews. Many of the researchers have reported feeling quite surprised at the depth of information offered to them by their participants. In addition, some researchers reported feeling a little uneasy about the level of disclosure that occurs in some research interviews, while others felt that the act of listening to the story often validated the experiences of the participants by giving them time to talk about them.

Achieving Trustworthiness

Eisner (1981) argued, 'How meaningful the research outcome is … qualitative research has an artistic mode, which distinguishes it from quantitative research. Each person's experience is interpreted to be unique and truth is believed to be relative. When the researcher communicates a rich, diverse and uniquely human experience, artistic integrity, as opposed to scientific objectivity, is achieved'. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out the ability to

establish trustworthiness as a necessary condition to posit rigour in the qualitative research.

The instrument of choice for the qualitative researcher is the human observer. Typically, our researchers have used interviews to generate discussion surrounding the major research questions. According to Twisha, 'interviewing is like doing a stage play over and again. The more shows one performs, the better one gets at it'. A researcher who intends to take this route needs to obtain ample training in conducting qualitative interviews prior to embarking on a research. People construct meaning out of life events, and good interviewers learn to appreciate how they must listen patiently and sensitively and invite these stories by the way they frame their opening questions and follow-up interventions. Although the interview itself may be quite loosely structured and flexible, phenomenological researchers generally prepare some questions in advance, preferring to alter them if it seems appropriate as the interview progresses. Although the precise wording of questions may vary from time to time, certain types of questions are pro forma. Think of the questions as tools to draw out the participant to reflect on the experience and its implications in his or her life. Thus, one might request that a participant relax and focus on the incident or the phenomenon and 'describe the experience, how you felt, what you did, what you said, what thoughts you have about it'. Further questions serve as probes to encourage the interviewee to dig deeper and reflect on the meaning of the experience: What aspects of the experience stand out for you? How has the experience affected you? What changes have you made in your life since the experience?

There are a number of issues associated with the transcription and analysis of interview data. The goal of transcription is to transform oral speech into a printed copy, accurately capturing the words of the research participant (Sandelowski, 1994). Accurate transcription is a fundamental first step in data analysis. In order to undertake a transcription, researchers often go through the interview manuscripts a number of times, becoming more familiar with the data on each reading.

The process of transcription is often thought of as purely a technical task involving the transformation of the spoken word into

data. The challenges associated with transcription have not been given a great deal of empirical attention. Transcribing a research interview can be an emotional experience for the transcriber who often listens to powerful stories. Many of the researchers spoke about the difficulties associated with undertaking their own transcription of research interviews. Some of these difficulties related directly to the nature of the topic, but for others it was more about their own reactions to the data. Some researchers spoke about feeling quite emotional at the time of the transcription, and for some the transcription process allowed them the freedom to really respond emotionally to the data.

After this whole process of thinking, reading and researching we take for granted the efforts to transform qualitative research efforts into written textual form which is an actual concern of the research process. Composing qualitative research is not a linear process in which we gather 'facts' in the field that speak for themselves and make our contribution apparent to all readers. The major tasks of writing with qualitative data involve connecting the field and academic worlds via literature-based ideas that illuminate insights garnered in the field and produce knowledge claims viewed as unique contributions by the relevant professional community of readers. We do not simply present facts that stand alone, but rather craft arguments intended to persuade readers that we have something new to offer relative to extant literature. At the personal level, the crafting and shaping of the manuscript involves ourselves as authors; the research setting, including members with whom we interacted for longer or shorter periods of time; the arguments we make and how we develop them in the text; and our informal as well as formal interactions with colleagues and members of our communities around our developing stories. At a more general, though nevertheless influential level, our writing task takes into consideration the academic institutional setting, with its associated norms for 'doing science' and journal review processes, and our largely academic community of readers.

Publication appears to be another key aspect of research. It concerns letting other people know about your research endeavours, findings and ideas. This is its prime importance—why go

through all the effort of research if nobody else can learn from it? Research, after all, is about collectively exploring, examining, challenging and advancing knowledge and understanding, building on the work of previous studies and treatises. As a consequence, those who support and fund research expect researchers to engage in such collective practice. Successfully publishing research is, unfortunately, not an inevitable outcome of academic endeavour, however. Just because a project produces exciting results, or a new, groundbreaking theory, does not mean that it will automatically be communicated to the wider world, with recognition and plaudits following. Completing a project or developing an idea or theory simply represents the first phase of research. Publication is the second phase and it requires many specific skills. Without successful dissemination, no one, with the exception of close colleagues, will know about your work. It is vital than that you, as a researcher, know how different forms of publication work and possess the skills to work with and exploit these media. How to effectively and successfully package and present your research for those media involves practical and strategic knowledge about the various means by which researchers can get their work published.

For the uninitiated, the workings of these various media can be fairly opaque. Indeed, if your experiences are the same as ours, most researchers seemingly learn how each form of publication operates through trial and error, slowly gaining an understanding of their practices. That said, individual experiences alone provide only a partial picture because they are limited to just a few aspects of the publication process.

Contributors' Reflections on Becoming a Qualitative Researcher

In the above discussion we have seen how a researcher struggles through every phase of his/her research. Our contributors have tried to give some reflections in this regard. In this section we are summarizing those reflections on becoming a qualitative researcher. They are as follows.

Learning by Doing

Shalini says:

> In the research journey, the first-hand experience enlightens and the second-hand experience supports—first-hand experience is what the researcher goes through herself and the second-hand experience is what the researcher gathers by interacting with other researchers. The journey to enlightenment is very demanding and the fellow researchers make this journey tolerable and enjoyable.

Qualitative research makes one learn through his or her lived-in experiences; this is learning by practicing. This brings about the practical application of skills acquired. Devendra concludes:

> My research journey helped me in growing as a human being. I learnt to see the reality as much more subjective, socially constructed rather than an objective reality, taught to me during my science and engineering days. The experience of doing pure qualitative research made me more sensitive towards others viewpoints, helped me grow personally, assisted me to become a better communicator.

Let Your Beliefs Evolve

The researcher is a learner, continually and consciously making decisions that affect the questions pursued and the direction of the study. Shalini emphasizes:

> The importance of self, intuition, cognition and independent thinking is a crucial aspect of learning. You should be able to reflect on your own experiences as well as your respondents. Be ready to face multiple worldviews and these would in turn influence the way you would conceptualize your research problem and its design.

Margie also pointed out the importance of intuition in her research.

Read, Write, Discuss

Qualitative research is recursive, iterative, messy, tedious, challenging, full of ambiguity and exciting. In order to deal with all

these aspects of qualitative research, one must read a lot, write regularly and discuss again and again. Repeat this cycle as often as possible and you are on your way to becoming a scholar. In order to elicit experiences, this iteration process is of vital importance.

View the Social Context Holistically

Being a qualitative researcher, you must look at your participants as interactive human beings and not as instruments or variables. You are in the field to interpret a social phenomenon and not measure it. Sumita narrated her experience:

> My informal discussions with them were as revealing as the formal interviews. I was constantly soaking up the language that they used. Given my choice of semiotics their words—typical and atypical—became very important for me and my informants were pleased when I spoke and responded in the same lingo.

Detail the Analysis Process

This can be better understood through Swanand's words.

> In my case, I learnt this the hard way. It was the day of my proposal defence. One of the professors asked me whether whatever I was proposing to do was worth a doctoral degree. For him, my study was simply reading the text and deriving findings as per my own whims and fancies. The problem was that I never outlined the analysis process in enough detail to convince him that I am actually doing a 'rigorous' work.

This experience clarifies the need of detailing the analysis process in nut shell.

Develop Linkages with Academicians from Other Countries

You should try to know what others are doing in your area of research, interact with them and engage in a learning process. As Twisha pointed out, upon interaction with some academicians in

the USA, she realized that the ways of data collection in the USA are completely different from those in India.

Enjoy Little Pleasures of Life

Qualitative research should be attempted with conviction but not with pressure. As Swanand stated:

> PhD is a personal journey. The statement may sound rhetorical but it is very true. You will often encounter moments where you would second guess your decision to join a doctoral program. I had several such moments. In such moments, I just moved away from my work. I did something else.

To strike a balance between personal and professional life is very important to enjoy every success, no matter how small or big it is and plan well-deserved breaks.

A Good Guide Should Make You Reflect at Yourself

A good guide should pose you tough and critical questions, such as what do you want to do, why you want to do it, and how will you do it? Be happy to face these questions—and you won't regret pursuing a PhD programme, however demanding it may be. Twisha felt

> I was extremely fortunate to get the most supportive and understanding thesis advisor and other committee members.

Last but not the least, the contributors' experiences of conducting qualitative research supports the way we have discussed the process of conducting qualitative research in the first chapter. We have highlighted the unique aspects of the process such as eliciting experiences, data churning and importance of process of reflection, intuition and metaphorical thinking. Our contributors, like Dr Abinash, have highlighted the integral role of a guide in this heroic journey. The following section elaborates the role and attributes of a guide in the way that he is not just a teacher but a *guru* (teacher), who guides his disciple not for one or two semesters but for life.

The *Guru–Shishya Parampara*

Doing qualitative research is a challenging endeavour, and this is partly due to the lively debates on ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies that make up the field of qualitative inquiry, which expose the diversity of positions, methods and interpretative keys, characteristic of qualitative research. While attesting to the richness of the field, the nature of these debates can also be daunting for students and early researchers, dissuading them from embarking in qualitative research. Furthermore, the emphasis upon dimensions such as evidence based, objectivity, reliability and generalizability seems to grow apace. This is reflected in the guidelines and assessment procedures used by the regulatory and funding bodies to make judgements about acceptable scientific practices, which, among other aspects, often favour quantitative approaches. With this background, theoretical and practical support for students and researchers willing to engage in qualitative research is more important than ever. Through the analysis of our contributors and our own journeys we have come to the conclusion that only the mentor can guide the researcher to exactly how to conduct the research. The mentor or in our Indian analogy, the *guru* can only take you on this long inner journey and this will lead you to yourself. Hence, in qualitative research is an invitation, of course just for those who have a deep longing in their hearts that they are missing something—a deep urge, that unless they find that something, everything else is meaningless. The *guru* can enlighten your path and make your journey—blissful, truthful and ecstatic.

As Sudhir Kakar (1991) stated, the idea of *guru* bridges thousands of years of history and influences the thinking of Indians even today. The principle of the relationship between *guru* and disciple is that knowledge is best transmitted through a strong human relationship based on the ideals of the student's respect, commitment, devotion, and obedience. It is also transmitted on personal instruction by which the student eventually masters the knowledge that the *guru* embodies (Vasavada, 1968).

The *guru–shishya parampara* thrived and flourished for thousands of years in India. In this culture, when there was a need

to convey subtle and powerful knowledge, it was always done in an atmosphere of utter trust, dedication and intimacy between the *guru* and the *shishya* (disciple). *Parampara* means an uninterrupted tradition.

The tradition can be described as: one person realizes something, and he looks for somebody who is truly dedicated, who holds this truth above his life. He looks for such a person and transmits it to him. This person looks for another like that and transmits it to him. This chain continues for thousands of years without a single break. This is known as *guru–shishya parampara*. Only a person who is at a certain kind of disposition deserves to know it; others should not. That is, how it was transmitted.

In Chapter 2, we talked about how some senior researchers can be seen as *karmayogi*s on their journey of qualitative research. In this chapter we want to extend the *guru–shishya parampara* to the manifestation of a *karmayogi*.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says that the disciple or *karmayogi* must have faith in himself and in the words of his *guru*. Such a disciple only can do real and useful service to his country and to the humanity. The *guru* acts as a bridge between the disciple and the knowledge. The *guru* is an effort to evoke the dormant in the disciple, to wake up the asleep. The fire is there, but the disciple is not aware of it. The *guru*'s task is to put the disciple aflame. The *guru* is an invitation for the disciple to take a courageous jump into the ocean of life. A *guru* can help in infusing virtues like the following in his *shishya*.

Engage in Problem-based Learning

A *guru* instils problem-based learning in his *shishya*. He does not provide with the answers of the *shishya*'s problems instead he shows *shishya* the way where he or she can find the answers by him or her. He acts as a sounding board. He poses lots of challenging and thought-provoking questions, which guides disciple through complex situations. The learning here is 'double loop' (Argyris, 1999). Not only does a *shishya* learn about a problem that he is exploring, but also learns how to tackle that problem,

in a manner that will allow him to apply these problem-solving skills to a variety of new challenges. The nature of conducting research (and stumbling along the way) embeds problem-based learning into the research process and hence this learning will prove to be of utmost importance and will be helpful to the *shishya* in the future also.

Engage in 'Action Learning'

A *guru* always insists on the process of reflection and suggests engaging in meditation, thinking and reflecting to ignite oneself with knowledge. Some of the contributors have attended behavioural growth lab to reflect on their own self. He outlines the importance of experiential or action learning, which is dependent on real-life experiences such as thoughtful review and consideration, broader theorizing and attempts to improve action. These processes are not only embedded in various aspects of conducting research but also in one's personal life.

Expect the Unexpected

A *guru* teaches his *shishya* to expect the unexpected. Working with this norm keeps a *shishya* always prepared for any new development. What seems overwhelming and chaotic is often the source of new knowledge for him.

Current Concerns Regarding the Qualitative Research

In addition to the above challenges, there are three more issues that concern us about the research practice currently and looking towards the future of qualitative research: the teaching of the novice qualitative researchers; the impact of a variety of institutional and organizational pressures on the conduct of qualitative research; and the standardization of qualitative research. It is to these issues that we now turn.

Teaching of Novice Qualitative Researchers

In regard to the teaching of the novel qualitative researchers, from our own and our contributors' experience we know what kinds of knowledge and skills are perceived as necessary to conduct good qualitative research. We find it useful for novice researchers that they learn a range of skills, including those of data collection, data analysis, writing and critique and evaluation from the very beginning of their doctoral research. They also need to acquire knowledge about the various methods of qualitative research available and the philosophical foundations that underpin the methods. Finally, we also feel that qualitative researchers need to explore the impact of their research in a problem-solving manner with the intention of generating some form of learning upon which future action can be based. The researcher should be encouraged to understand and make sense of their research by challenging and critiquing their assumptions and research practices throughout the research process. Clearly, this is a somewhat demanding set of requirements, not all of which can be learned in the classroom. The complex nature of the research questions is another dimension that novice researchers face. There still seems to be a need for greater provision to explore this issue for researchers who want to use qualitative methods.

Institutional Concerns

Our experience thus far has been that our academic lives are being increasingly measured and audited in line with the moves towards an audit society. The increased emphasis on research audit means that successful academic careers rely upon publishing in what are considered to be the top journals (*Academy of Management Journal*) in the field. However, it may be difficult for qualitative researchers to publish in those journals. This is despite the attempts by editors of those journals to signify their openness to qualitative research. It would seem therefore that despite our best efforts and those of others, there still seems to be a long way to go before we reach the stage where qualitative methods are accepted as part of the mainstream. Here our key concern is

the implications that such institutional pressures will have upon people's desire to conduct qualitative research. Indeed we have met early-career researchers who have been advised against conducting qualitative research because of the potential career costs in terms of publication.

Publishing Qualitative Research

A further concern is that these kinds of developments lead to an increased standardization in what is viewed as good qualitative research. In seeking to address the difficulties in publishing qualitative research, a number of editors have produced guidelines and editorial advice regarding what it is that makes a piece of qualitative research publishable. Although we recognize that these guides can be valuable to qualitative researchers, more diverse or alternative accounts of qualitative research are potentially marginalized. Perhaps it is not surprising that as Gephart (2004) suggests, a large proportion of the qualitative submissions to the *Academy of Management Journal* have a positivist or neo-positivist orientation and seek to mirror quantitative techniques. We are keen not to engender some self-fulfilling failure prophecy here and would not want to deter our readers from submitting their work to top international outlets.

Rather, our concern is that in what seems to be an increased move towards standardization, the diversity and consequent richness of different qualitative methodological approaches are potentially compromised.

In summary, our key concerns at the current time for the qualitative researchers focus upon the pressures they face from a variety of institutional sources. Having mentioned our concerns, we do not want to leave the impression that we are somewhat depressed about the prospects for qualitative research in this field. As we suggested earlier, the current context seems to be continuously shifting and the history of qualitative research tells us that qualitative researchers have always had to face challenges to the legitimacy of their research along the way. We remain optimistic about the prospects for qualitative research and that the distinctive insights that qualitative research can provide into the organizational arena

are increasingly being recognized. Our intention is that this book covers what we think the qualitative management researcher needs to know regarding some of the issues they may encounter within the contexts in which qualitative research is conducted. Although we can never replace what is gained from the actual experience of doing qualitative research, our contributors generously share the expertise they have gained through doing their own qualitative research and showcase examples of the rich research opportunities offered by qualitative approaches. Gaining insights into organizing and managing through qualitative research methods is something that has inspired us for many years. We hope that we can encourage our readers to be just as enthused as we are about the prospect.

Conclusion

This book was an effort to put together the experiences of Indian qualitative researchers. We have travelled in this journey and mined our own learnings. The eureka experience was when we felt connected with indigenous approaches. We proposed in the first chapter that there is a lot to be learned from the Indian philosophy and we are able to touch the tip of the iceberg with the notion of *karmayogi* and *guru–shishya parampara*. We are optimistic and hope future researchers will uncover the layers of the iceberg with other indigenous perspectives.

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