



Session 10. Rigour & Ethical Issues

Health Systems Research Course

Western China School of Public Health

7-11 December 2015



西部农村卫生发展研究中心

WEST CHINA RESEARCH CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (WCRC-RHD)

Four key steps in HSR



1. Identify research focus (problem/ concern/ opportunity) *and* question
2. Design study
- 3. Ensure quality and rigour**
4. Apply ethical principles

Rigour in HSR



- Health systems are complex phenomena
 - They include multiple & overlapping institutions, process & practices
- Consequently, HSR demands:
 - An active process of questioning and checking during the research process
 - A constant process of conceptualising and reconceptualising
 - Crafting interpretive judgements
 - Researcher reflexivity

Key concepts



- Validity
 - does the study *actually* measure what it aims to measure?
 - Internal v external validity
- Internal validity (cause-effect relationships)
 - Threats to validity: selection bias, measurement bias, confounding
- External validity (generalizability)
 - representative sample
 - valid and reliable methods
- Reliability
 - "consistency" or "repeatability" of your measurements

The researcher...

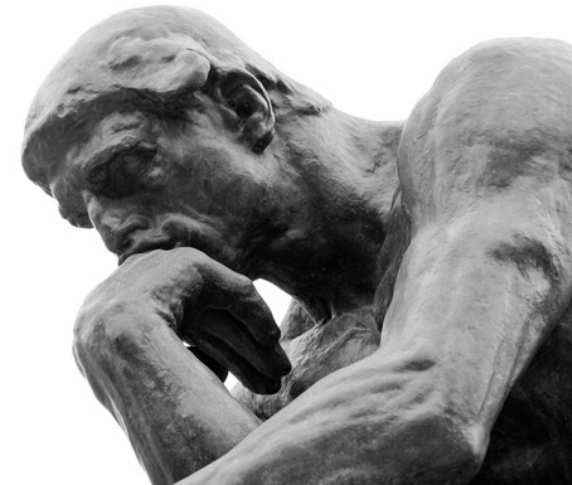


- Needs an enquiring mind
- Must be good at seeing/ hearing the world around
- Adaptiveness and flexibility
- Understanding the key issues
- Be aware of potential sources of bias
 - Need for researcher reflexivity

Reflexivity



Self- reflection on your
role as a researcher



Becoming reflexive



- Identify your personal standpoint in relation to the topic
- Clarify your own value system
- Identify areas of possible role conflict
- Identify other sources of personal bias
- Identify gatekeepers/ respondents and how they will (seek to) influence you
 - Adapted from Robson (2002)

Reflexivity exercise

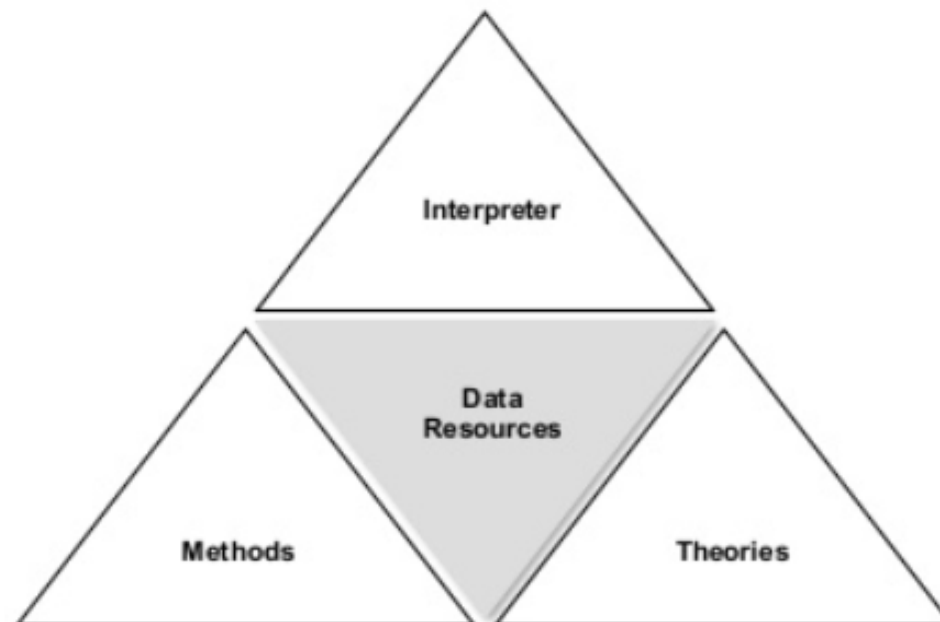


- What are your key characteristics as a researcher?
- What aspects of your character may influence the way you see the world or conduct research?
- What things do you need to be aware of when you are designing research and/ or collecting data?
- Write this down; you have 5 minutes

Triangulation



- Use of multiple data sources and methods
- Uses of multiple theories (where appropriate)
- Use of multiple Cross-checking between researchers



Fixed/ flexible research



Fixed designs

- Are the findings valid?
- Are the findings statistically generalisable?

Flexible designs

- Are the findings plausible?
- Do the findings provide theoretical insights that can be projected to other contexts?
 - analytic generalisability
- 'Short cuts' or starting points for future research

Bias



- Potential sources of bias include:
 - reactivity (e.g. Hawthorne effect)
 - respondent (e.g. social desirability bias)
 - researcher (e.g. preconceived ideas)
- This underlines the need for good research design & researcher reflexivity
 - Adapted from Robson (2002)

Strategies to enhance rigor



- Reflexivity & triangulation
- Use theory
- Use literature and a carefully designed study protocol
- Careful choice of methods to fit your research questions
- Prolonged involvement with subjects
- Negative/'deviant' case analysis
- Counterfactuals (rival explanations)
- Member checking (respondent validation)
- Peer debriefing/support

Case studies



Validity in case study work
requires paying attention to the
trustworthiness of the interpretive
analysis and the resulting
generalisable claim

Issues with case studies



- Case selection and sampling
- Data collection approach and procedures
 - prolonged engagement with cases
- Analytic procedures:
 - respondent validation (member checking)
 - triangulation across data sets and with theory
 - negative case analysis
 - peer debriefing and support
- Clear report of methods of data collection and analysis (audit trail)

Generalisation



- Analytical versus theoretical generalisation
- Develop ‘theoretical’ insights’ (generalisable claims) by:
 - building or testing theory and/or
 - comparative analysis across multiple cases
- These insights are universal enough to have relevance in other settings

Interpretive analysis in HSR



- Keep focus on your research questions
- Analysis begins during data collection
 - looking for patterns and possible explanations
- Always need to reduce and display data
 - narratives, examples of broader phenomena, diagrams, figures, pictures, tables

Interpretive analysis in HSR



- Ask questions of the data:
 - Is explanation plausible?
 - Can you find evidence confirming it?
 - Can a finding be replicated in another data set?
 - Be reflective!
- Contextualise in analysis
 - think about relevant features of the specific social & physical setting including historical factors, that support explanation
 - Identify from theory and *in* analysis

Four key steps in HSR



1. Identify research focus (problem/ concern/ opportunity) *and* question
2. Design study
3. Ensure quality and rigour
- 4. Apply ethical principles**

Research ethics



- How can we protect those involved in research & affected by it?
 - What harms may come from the research?
 - Who may this affect?
 - What could be the unintended consequences?
- What can we do to avoid/ mitigate this?
- Social value and risk benefit ratios
- Informed consent and respect for participants and communities
- Independent review

Ethics approval



- What are the rules covering the conduct of research in your university?
 - Which body gives ethical approval
 - What are the procedures
 - How long does this take?
- Where else do you need ethical approval from?
 - Funder, local government, professional bodies
- Are there other relevant codes and guidelines which may help you?

Informed consent



- You must tell participants what the study is about
- Why is their participation needed
- What will happen in the study (interview, focus group etc)
- What will happen to their data (storage, use)
- What their rights are, and your responsibilities as a researcher
- Information sheets and consent forms
- Is informed consent always possible?

Ethical issues in HSR



- Involving people without consent
- Coercing them to participate
- Withholding information about true nature of research
- Deceiving participants
- Inducing participants to commit acts diminishing of their self-esteem
- Exposing participants to physical or mental stress
- Withholding benefits from some participants
- Not treating participants fairly or with respect
- Violating confidentiality and anonymity

Other ethical challenges



- What should you do if you informed about or observe unethical behaviour of providers, managers, community members?
 - What might the implications of this be for you and for the participants?
- What are the implications of working with vulnerable groups
 - Children, elderly, people suffering from shock/trauma, with health conditions
 - What are the implications for gaining informed consent

Things to consider



- Gaining consent and relative power:
 - from policy makers to marginalised groups
- Anonymity and small sample sizes
 - How do you attribute results anonymously?
- Acting ethically towards field workers
- Recognising researchers' privilege and power
- Where does the researcher's role end?

Researcher safety



- It is essential to consider not just the situation of the respondent but of the researcher to
- What are the potential sources of danger for you in doing the research
- Are you required to do a risk assessment by your ethics body
- What things would you consider in doing a risk assessment?

Risk assessment



- Location and environment
- Who will you be working with/ coming into contact with?
- Your property
- Equipment
- Will you be working alone?
- Working after dark/ in unfamiliar surroundings
- What's your plan in an emergency? Key contacts?



西部农村卫生发展研究中心
WEST CHINA RESEARCH CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (WCRC-RHD)

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



Acknowledgements

Some of the material in this presentation is drawn from:

*Introduction to Health Policy and Systems Research, course presentation,
Presentation 8.*

Copyright CHEPSAA (Consortium for Health Policy & Systems Analysis in Africa)
2014

www.hpsa-africa.org

www.slideshare.net/hpsa_africa

Exercise



- In your groups, think about the HSR study you are designing
- Consider what are the main ethical considerations regarding your project and the study design you are using
- Complete the ethics approval application form for your project
- Prepare a short (5 min) presentation on the ethical issues raised by your project
- You have 25 minutes to complete the task



Copyright



You are free:

To Share – to copy, distribute and transmit the work

To Remix – to adapt the work

Under the following conditions:

Attribution You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).

Non-commercial You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

Share Alike If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work but only under the same or similar license to this one.

Other conditions

For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.

Nothing in this license impairs or restricts the authors' moral rights.

Nothing in this license impairs or restricts the rights of authors whose work is referenced in this document.

Cited works used in this document must be cited following usual academic conventions.

Citation of this work must follow normal academic conventions.

The CHEPSAA partners



University of Dar Es Salaam
Institute of Development Studies



University of the Witwatersrand
Centre for Health Policy



University of Ghana
School of Public Health, Department of Health Policy, Planning and Management



University of Leeds
Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development



University of Nigeria Enugu
Health Policy Research Group & the Department of Health Administration and Management



London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Health Economics and Systems Analysis Group, Department of Global Health & Dev.



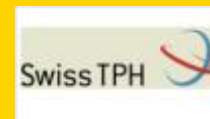
Great Lakes University of Kisumu
Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development



Karolinska Institutet
Health Systems and Policy Group, Department of Public Health Sciences



University of Cape Town
Health Policy and Systems Programme, Health Economics Unit



Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute
Health Systems Research Group



University of the Western Cape
School of Public Health

