

## CSS 506 - RESEARCH QUESTION WORK SHEET Fall 2008

Research questions and corollary objectives and/or hypotheses often vary in style and format. This variance usually is a reflection of the paradigm a researcher selects, the methodology or design they use and the discipline or field in which a researcher receives training.

### SOME GUIDELINES

#### Criteria for Research Questions

1. They should clearly identify the nature of the phenomenon to be described, the context, and/or the population under study.
2. Whenever possible they should indicate the variable(s) or contingency(ies) of interest, and/or the relationship between variable(s) proposed for testing.
3. They should be stated clearly and unambiguously, and presented in question format.
4. They should be at a level, which implies possibilities of qualitative or quantitative measurement.

#### Criteria for Research Objectives

1. They should address the focus of the proposed research in terms of identifying variables or contingencies, or further describing variables or contingencies of interest. Generally the focus is on single variables or contingencies.
2. They should be stated clearly and unambiguously, and presented in a declarative format.
3. They should provide clear insights into how you will describe and/or use qualitative or quantitative measurement.

**Note** research objectives are often used when a study is interested in simply identifying variables or contingencies of interest or in situations where the focus of the study is on describing (measuring) one or more unrelated variables.

#### Criteria for Research Hypotheses (Remember research, rival/alternative, and statistical hypotheses can be written)

1. Hypotheses are statements about relationships between two or more variables stated in a declarative format.
2. They should carry clear implications for testing the stated relationship.
3. They should be written at the conceptual (research hypothesis) and empirical levels (statistical hypothesis). The latter often includes reference to the level of statistical significance and in some cases the statistical test that is proposed for use.

**Note** hypotheses are not only used to imply cause and affect relationships, but rather are used when we are interested in at least two variables and a relationship between them.

## **SOME ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES IN QUALITATIVE STUDIES**

### **Research Question Approach – Ecotourism Study Example**

#### **Central Question:**

What meanings do various individuals and groups living in rural communities nearby protected areas hold in relationship to protected area-based tourism?

#### **Sub-questions:**

1. What kind of words, symbols, images, feelings, and behaviors do community residents assign to protected area-based tourism?
2. What do community residents describe as protected area-based tourism?
3. What individuals or groups (e.g. households, tourists, local tour service providers) do community residents describe as being involved in protected area-based tourism?
4. What do community residents describe as their role and the role of their extended family in protected area-based tourism?
5. What change (e.g. social, culture, economic, political) if any, do community residents describe in their community since the introduction of protected area-based tourism?
6. How, if at all, have community residents' feelings about protected area-based tourism changed over time?
7. Do community residents envision that protected area-based tourism itself has changed over time?
8. Do community residents see any problems or benefits with how protected area-based tourism is going and are they satisfied? What changes would they like to see?
9. Do similarities, differences and/or uniquenesses exist across the cases studied (Protected area, tourism, and rural community systems in Guatemala, Ecuador and Thailand)?

### **Research Objective Approach – Organizational Change Study Example**

#### **Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of this research were to:

- a. Describe and understand the organizational change experienced by natural resource management agencies in Costa Rica from the mid-1980s to 2000;

- b. Identify the organizational processes involved in that change; and to
- c. Explore the role of democratization, deconcentration, and decentralization in the organizational transformation.

## **Purpose & Research Objective Approach – Conflict Study on the Lower Salmon**

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the nature of conflict between motorized and non-motorized boaters on the LSR. I believed that knowledge about conflict between these river user groups would enable the river manager to initiate strategies to mediate conflicts.

### **Research Objectives**

Specific research objectives were to:

1. Refine my conception and definition of boater conflict.
2. Identify what type of direct and indirect social contact situations influence non-motorized and motorized boaters' conflict towards one another.
3. Identify any reaction filters that influence conflict non-motorized and motorized boaters have for one another.
4. Identify the personal beliefs and stereotypes non-motorized and motorized boaters have for one another.
5. Identify what types of personal beliefs and stereotypes influence non-motorized and motorized boaters conflict towards one another.
6. Identify what motorized and non-motorized boaters feel are appropriate management practices to help mediate the conflicts between one another.

## **SOME ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES IN QUANTITATIVE STUDIES**

### **Research Question & Hypothesis Approach**

#### **Research Question**

Do hunters who differ on levels of importance for specific harvest and non-harvest hunting goals (reasons why they hunt) use different hunting strategies (ways of hunting)?

#### **Research Hypothesis**

Hunters who use similar hunting strategies will have the same non-harvest and harvest hunting goal importance scores.

### **A Naturalistic Design Example**

#### **Research Question:**

How do women utilize forest resources in Mali?

#### **Research Objective:**

Determine the ways women of Mali utilize forest resources in their daily lives.

### **A Correlational Design Example**

#### **Research Question:**

Is the practice of slash and burn agriculture in Bolivia related to the level of education of farmers?

#### **Research Hypothesis:**

As Bolivian farmers level of education increases the use of slash and burn agriculture practices decrease.

### **A Differential Design Example (Compare groups on the same variable or set of variables)**

#### **Research Question**

Do preferences for attributes of the physical, social and managerial setting of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area differ significantly across distinct user groups?

#### **Research Question:**

Are rural and non-rural dwellers visitation rates influenced differently by TV advertisements that encourage them to visit national parks?

#### **Research Hypothesis:**

Visitation rates of rural and non-rural dwellers that see TV advertisements that encourage them to visit national parks are different.

### **Quasi-experimental Design Example**

#### **Research Question:**

Does river guide training affect the knowledge level of guests about the environmental setting, which they experienced?

#### **Research Hypothesis:**

Commercial guests of river trips having at least one guide who participated in a training workshop will show more knowledge of select river resource information than commercial guests of trips where none of the guides participated in a training workshop.