

The Center for Statistics Education of Villanova University presents

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis: Is there a False Dichotomy?

Len Shyles, Associate Professor of Communication

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Bartley Hall, Room 1010

Quantitative and qualitative methods are both important to the research process. Both can be compared and contrasted from separate meta-theoretical perspectives, but *in practice*, it benefits knowledge creation to fuse the two. When conducting research, or when teaching research methods, employing either one of these approaches without the other is a false dichotomy that may be misleading to novice researchers, or, worse, destructive to the research enterprise.

Qualitative and quantitative ways of thinking about the world should not be mutually exclusive; in fact, separately tracking majors along such lines can harm pedagogical objectives. By contrast, when properly featured in the curriculum, each approach can enlighten the other. Unfortunately, in cases where institutions have decided to structure programs into exclusive, separate qualitative and quantitative course requirements, it is inevitable that some severe problems are bound to develop. Offering degrees that enable students to study one or the other approach without requiring both conveys wrongheaded views of the entire process of inquiry, and that is a detriment to students.

Examples, definitions, and descriptions of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the research process (and the fusion of them in situ) are described, with some reference to the writings of Max Weber and Alfred Schutz, two leading thinkers in the philosophy and social science of critical research methods.

The Center for Statistics Education is a Center of Excellence in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Villanova University. The goals of the Center include promoting quality research among faculty and working to improve statistics education in the curricula across disciplines at Villanova University, creating programs in statistics education for current students at Villanova University, providing professional development for statistics teachers in the Greater Philadelphia region at the K-16 levels, and conducting research on effective methods in statistics instruction and pedagogy.

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