Introduction to social science research methods

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Aims

• How can social sciences type methods be used in practice-based / practice-led research?

• Observation

• Interviewing

• Diaries

• Questionnaires

(Slides 3-10 with acknowledgements to Jane Ginsborg, RNCM)
Practice-led research

• What is practice-led research? (as opposed to…)

• Performance practice research

• Performative research – in music: composition (as / is) research vs. music performance

• Artistic research / practice-based ( -as) research
Practice as research / research into practice

• Research into practice (outsider perspective)

• Practice as research (insider perspective)

• To qualify as research, any practice-based approach must elucidate the processes involved (Schippers, 2007)

• Practice-based research doesn’t necessarily involve the production of an artistic work…
Artistic research

“I use the term ‘artistic research’ to refer to research activities that are methodologically integrated with an artistic creation and cannot be pursued without art-making. In this sense, the domain of artistic research does not necessarily overlap with that of ‘practice-based’ research where the practice involved does not always result in an art-product” (Dogantan-Dack, 2012, p. 36)
Understanding Poltimore
Read this case study to find out how researchers are engaging with the public.

Funding Opportunity
Research Grants - Practice Led and Applied Route

Summary

Important Information for AHRC grant applicants
Please read this important announcement regarding applications for grants.

What's New
Find out more about our latest competitions including:
- Centre for Copyright and New Business Models in the Creative Economy - Call for Expressions of interest
- Digital Research & Development Fund for Arts and Culture
- Fellowships
- Fellowships - early career researchers
- Follow-on Funding
AHRC guidelines

The Practice-Led and Applied route provides funding for research:

• where practice is an integral component

• where it is specifically undertaken with a view to generating outputs and outcomes with a defined application beyond the education sector; and/or

• where it theorises contemporary practice in order to inform the Principal Investigator’s own individual practice.
Practice-led research should...

• Be rigorous and systematic in terms of
  1. data-gathering
  2. analysis
  3. interpretation of findings

• Music psychology and performance science are good models because context usually theoretical

• Methods are empirical e.g.

• Quantitative – deductive – tests hypotheses

• Qualitative – inductive (interview, focus group)

• Mixed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Performance practice research</th>
<th>Performative research</th>
<th>Performance/artistic research</th>
<th>Music psychology / education research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>Enhance performers’ understanding of composers’ intentions</td>
<td>Produce work of art</td>
<td>Investigate process of producing art (for self and others)</td>
<td>Investigate questions arising from literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Musicological: scores, recordings, contemporary sources etc.</td>
<td>Performance, composition, recording etc</td>
<td>(+others); documentation of and reflection on process and product</td>
<td>Qualitative and/or quantitative analyses of data from interviews, observations, experiments etc.</td>
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Research examples

Performance practice/ practice-based research: theoretically driven interrogation and reflection (non-empirical)


Performance practice in another culture: ethnographic/sociological approach (interviews, observations)

• The role of listening in the development of improvisatory expertise in the Karnatic singing of South India (Grimmer, 2012, *MPR*).

Practice-led research: psychological approach (observation; annotated scores)


• Researcher taking an outsider perspective on own practice in order to a) test existing theory and b) learn about process for self and others.
Observation
Uses of observation

• Allows researcher direct access to people’s behaviours *in situ*

• Adaptable to a number of different research designs and approaches e.g:
  • Ethnographic research
  • Case studies
  • Action research

• For exploratory phase: ‘find out what is going on’

• As supportive/supplementary method: corroborate or validate main data

• As primary method: supported by/validated with e.g. interviews

• Or as one method in a multi-method design
Types of observation (Robson, 2011)

- Participant observation
  - essentially qualitative; rooted in anthropology, sociology

- Structured observation
  - quantitative style; e.g. social psychology

- Unobtrusive observation
  - usually unstructured and informal
Advantages of observation

- Directness - no need to task people about their views, feelings etc
- Complements and contrasts with data obtained by other means: what people do often contrasts with what they say they do
- Self-report data subject to distortions of memory, or self-presentation (social desirability response bias), or gap between ideal and reality, or lack of awareness (e.g. of automatic or habitual behaviour)
- Lack of artificiality; situated in ‘real world’
Disadvantages of observation

- Complex and time consuming
  - e.g. classic participant observation requires several years’ immersion in ‘the field’
  - all forms of observation require extensive preparation and decisions about what to record and how
  - structured observation schedules are hard to develop from scratch and require practice to use well and reliably
- Reactivity - extent to which observer influences events being observed (but some well-evidenced ways of mitigating this)
Researcher roles in observation

On two continua:

• extent to which researcher participates in the environment/activities being observed

• extent to which participants know of researcher’s presence and purpose

Methodological and ethical implications with respect to each of these
Researcher roles in participant observation

• **Complete participant**
  • Researcher seeks to become a full member of group; conceals researcher role

• **Participant-as-observer**
  • Researcher participates in activities of group; researcher role known from the start

• **Marginal participant**
  • Researcher participates to a lesser degree and is largely passive; researcher role known

• **Observer-as-participant**
  • Researcher aspires to take no part in activities; researcher role known
Discussion

• What are the ethical and methodological concerns for each of the researcher roles described on the previous slide?

• Most of the textbook advice assumes you are going into a new situation as a participant observer.

• What if you are already part of the group you wish to observe?

• What issues might you have to think about?
INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEWS

➤ First-hand accounts

➤ Most common method in qualitative research
  ➤ demand for rich, idiographic, participant-centred data

➤ Can be used with a variety of research approaches and paradigms
  ➤ but less well suited to positivist/quantitative approaches

➤ Group interviews are called ‘focus groups’

➤ Focus groups useful when the interaction is of interest
CHARACTERISTICS

➤ Good for in-depth understanding of individuals

➤ Mutual discoveries, understanding, reflections; conversations are created between interviewer and interviewee

➤ Can be flexible and adaptive

➤ e.g. allow researcher to come across previously hidden, complex phenomena

➤ Useful for exploring issues that cannot be easily observed

➤ Useful for strengthening and complicating other data
TYPES OF RESEARCH QUESTION

➤ Questions concerned with people’s lived experiences and perspectives
➤ Understanding social processes in their settings
➤ Understanding change
➤ Understanding identities and self-concepts
➤ Exploring previously unresearched areas
  ➤ As study methods in their own right
  ➤ To build theories that may be used for hypothesis testing / fixed designs
INTERVIEW APPROACHES

➤ Vary widely depending on purpose and situation of research

➤ Different perspectives - e.g. phenomenological, social constructionist, ethnographic

➤ Different types of structure/format - structured, semi-structured (most common), unstructured, informal, narrative

➤ Different types of analysis - e.g. content, thematic, discourse, IPA

➤ For a great explanation of qualitative approaches to research and interviewing within those, see Tracy, 2013
EXAMPLE STUDIES

Interview studies


Focus groups

DIARIES
USEFUL FOR...

➤ Longitudinal studies
➤ Especially tracking processes/experiences/change/events over time
➤ As an alternative to observation
➤ As a supplement to observation
➤ Bringing aspects of behaviour to participants’ conscious awareness to enable deeper reflection
➤ As a basis for in-depth interviews
  ➤ Mitigates against disadvantages of retrospective interviewing (biases, reframing of experiences in retrospect, lapses of memory)
ISSUES TO CONSIDER

➤ Attrition
  ➤ Dropout, losing touch, losing motivation

➤ Materials and presentation need careful design and piloting
  ➤ Making sure structure, instructions and questions are unambiguous and give you what you need
  ➤ Talk through diary with participants

➤ Avoiding data overload and overburdening participants
  ➤ What is the minimum time period for useful data?
  ➤ Find ways of being selective

➤ Extent to which completing the diary changes the experiences recorded

➤ Plan the analysis from the start
  ➤ What data will you get from each question and what will you do with it?
  ➤ If including quantitative, how much data do you need? What statistical tests?
The relationship between a performer’s experienced emotions and the construction of an expressive musical performance

8 participants (music students)

Interview → Diary period → Interview

1st interview; general conceptions of expressivity in musical performance

Diary: 1 week at ‘beginning stage’ OR ‘final stage’

2nd interview: deeper investigation of diary content; identify any changes in concepts/opinions since 1st interview

3 qualitative analysis strategies:

Content (diaries)

Thematic (interviews)

Constructionist (diaries + interviews)
Four research questions:

➤ How do performers (i.e., music students) describe ‘emotional playing’ and a ‘musically expressive performance’?

➤ By means of what ‘strategies’ do performers construct an expressive performance? (For example, do they base their interpretation on emotion; intellectual considerations; musical structure ...)

➤ What kinds of ‘inner techniques’ (if any) do performers use in order to construct an expressive performance? (For example, mood induction; visualization; thoughts; imitation ...)

➤ How do the felt emotions of the performer (if any) relate to the perceived emotions in the music (if any)?
VAN ZIJL & SLOBODA (2011)

- Structured diary design
- Based on a previous study, plus author carrying out a self-observation study

Appendix B. Individual Playing Diary sheet

Individual Playing Diary Sheet (double sided) (please complete one diary for each session in which you play or practice your chosen piece)

Date of playing session ____________ Time session started ____________ Time spent on playing/ practicing your chosen piece ____________

Try to list the activities in order that they occurred in the session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Technical Issues</th>
<th>Inner Techniques</th>
<th>Musical Emotion</th>
<th>Your Own Emotion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the section of the music you were playing/ working on (e.g., page; bars; line; passage; whole piece; playing through; ...): Describe your interpretational decisions with regard to the musical expressivity you wanted to bring to the fore (if any) at this location (e.g., particular character, particular contrast; building up or release of tension; ...): Describe the technical aspects you used/worked on in particular (if any) in order to perform the desired interpretation/ expressivity (e.g., phrasing; tempo; timing; dynamics; articulation; timbre; vibrato; bowing; finger technique; breathing; ...): Describe the 'inner techniques' you used (if any) in order to perform the desired interpretation/ expressivity (e.g., think about something in particular (if so, please indicate what you were thinking): imagination of something visual or audible (please indicate what you imagined); tried to get yourself in a particular mood (please indicate what mood and how you tried to achieve this); ...): Describe the emotion present in the music (if any) at this location (e.g., happiness; joy; love; desire; surprise; humour; calm; tension; sadness; anger; fear; pain; loneliness; nostalgia; ...)</td>
<td>Describe your own emotions involved (if any) during your playing of the indicated section (e.g., happiness; joy; love; desire; surprise; humour; calm; tension; sadness; anger; fear; pain; loneliness; nostalgia; frustration; ...)</td>
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Comments: Please write here any general comments about the overall session, for instance about its aims, and the extent to which you felt it achieved its aims:
QUESTIONNAIRES AND SURVEYS
USES OF QUESTIONNAIRES

➤ Self-report data
➤ Can yield quantitative or qualitative data depending on items
➤ Often used for measuring (quantitatively) psychological constructs e.g.
  ➤ Attitudes and opinions
  ➤ Self-esteem, self-efficacy, happiness, depression, anxiety etc....
  ➤ Personality traits (e.g. extraversion; neuroticism; openness to experience)
  ➤ Some forms of aptitude or ability
➤ To collect data on behaviour when more direct investigation would be impractical (e.g. frequency of attending concerts)
➤ For retrospective data (e.g. life experiences)
➤ For investigating the structure of concepts (e.g. ‘creativity’)

➤ A survey is a questionnaire study designed to gather a large and representative set of data on behaviours and/or opinions (not a psychometric measure)
ADVANTAGES

➤ Can be used to collect a large amount of data relatively quickly and cheaply

➤ Useful to investigate relationships among a number of variables (experiments usually have to be limited to 2 or 3)
➤ e.g. factors involved in whether a student continues learning an instrument

➤ Often used in non-experimental or quasi-experimental research, but can be used experimentally when the dependent variable is e.g. a score on an attitude measure
➤ e.g. vignette studies of prejudice

➤ Can be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data
PITFALLS

➤ You have to rely on what participants tell you!

➤ Your participants have to rely on what they read

➤ Your questionnaire items are only an indirect measure

➤ So the questions you ask, the way you ask them and the precise wording are crucial

➤ Constructing a questionnaire well is not a simple task
References and further reading


