

## An explanation on the methodological techniques used by the DHMIR studies

### Introduction

This methodological explanation illustrates the research process and techniques used in the surveys on the hate crimes against Muslims by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) in four western European and American countries: *Getting the Message: The Recurrence of Hate Crimes in the UK* (Ameli, Mohseni Ahooei, Shaghasemi, and Rahimpour, 2011), *France and the Hated Society: Muslim Experiences* (Ameli, Shahghasemi and Merali 2012), *Once Upon a Hatred: Anti-Muslim Experiences in the USA* (Ameli, Mohseni Ahooei, Merali, 2013), *Only Canadian: The Experience of Hate Moderated Differential Citizenship for Muslims* (Ameli and Merali, 2014), and *Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK* (Ameli and Merali, 2015).

All studies are conducted by using a mixed method approach. Mixed methods research is a systematic approach to addressing research questions that involve collecting, analysing and synthesising both quantitative and qualitative data in a single research project. The success of the mixed methods approach in addressing complex study questions has led to increasing interest and adaptation of these methods. In parallel to the increased usage has also been the increasing refinement of methodological and pragmatic issues (Andrew and Halcomb, 2009).

Greene (2008) lists five specific reasons that researchers should consider using mixed methods: Triangulation, Complementarity, Development, Initiation, and Expansion (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Striving to bridge the chasm between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, mixed methods research has developed to become a rational and conceptually congruent method to explain phenomena that are complex and

multifaceted. Research problems faced by researchers in the modern world often require qualitative and quantitative methods to not only explore and describe but also assess and evaluate (Andrew and Halcomb, 2009).

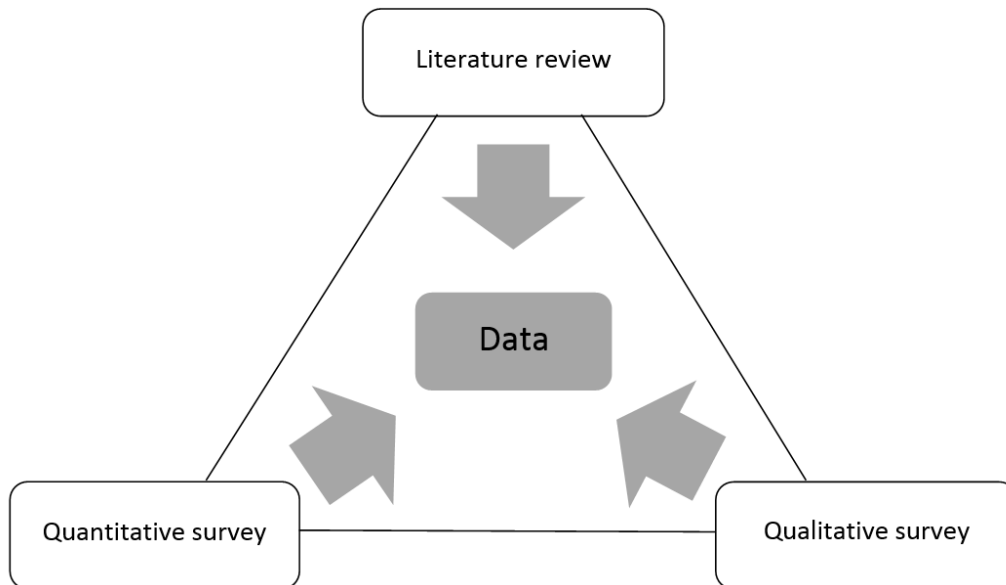
Mixed methods research, especially in the field of social issues like the studies conducted by IHRC, offers great promise for practicing researchers who would like to see methodologists describe and develop techniques that are closer to what researchers actually use in practice (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It involves the planned mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods at a predetermined stage of the research process, during the initial study planning, the process of data collection, data analysis or reporting, in order to better answer the research question (Thilo and Neri, 2009).

### **Data Collection**

The data collection in all these research projects are conducted based on “data triangulation” (Denzin, 2006). Denzin (2006) defines four different types of triangulation: Data, investigator, theory and methodological triangulation. In these studies, data triangulation is used to provide efficient material. The first source of the research data collection includes a historical review of the subject as well as the review of all the research conducted in this area. This is the first step in the research, which shows information on important and significant areas of the research. The results of this phase of study have also been used to design the questions of the surveys questionnaires.

The second and the third sources in access to the data are quantitative and qualitative surveys that are guided in a seamless and parallel way. These surveys cover a wide range of demographics including gender, areas of the countries with a high Muslim population, as well as areas with a significantly low Muslim population and in between gender, a variety of ages, ethnic backgrounds, marital statuses, work statuses, employment sector, levels of education, categories of

income groups, countries of birth and citizenship, self-deemed levels of religious practice and of course visibility of 'Muslimness'.



*Figure 1. The methodological triangulation used in the studies*

The qualitative survey questions sought to elicit the respondents' views as well as lived experiences (Jansen, 2010) on Muslims' perceptions of society and government, feelings on whether acts of hate are dealt with adequately, causes of racist/Islamophobic culture, if institutions such as the media contribute to such cultures, the effects on the behaviour of Muslims etc. In contrast, the quantitative surveys categorised experiences into five sections: Being a Member of a Hated Society, Ideology, Discrimination and Double Discrimination, Cross Cultural Schemata and Intercultural Sensitivity and Policy.

### **Sampling**

In all surveys, three sampling methods of snowball (Goodman, 1961; Salganik and Heckathorn, 2004; Browne, 2005), clustering (Kerry and Bland, 1998), and simple random (Yates, et. al., 2008; Meng, 2013) have been used in combination. The fieldwork consists of a collection of qualitative and quantitative surveys, among hard copies and the surveys that were conducted online.

The snowball method is a way of reaching Muslim populations in each country and building confidence in the research process so that individuals can express their real experiences easily. On the other hand, since research on all individuals of Islamic populations is not possible, the cluster sampling method has been used. In this way, we have reached groups of Islamic populations in each country.

In the third step and in each cluster, a simple random sampling method was used to reach the homogeneous collection sample of the Muslim community in each country. In this way, by comparing the characteristics of the sample population with the research community, it can be assured that the research generalisability is possible.

Besides the used sampling methods, the number of samples per survey is matched according to the population of the survey's community. This is done by using the Cochran's sample size formula (Cochran, 1953). With results from the United Kingdom Census (2011), for example, giving the UK Muslim population in 2011 as 2,786,635, 4.4% of the total population, thus for the last survey, *Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK* (Ameli and Merali, 2015), the Cochran's sample size formula suggests 384 cases as the minimum number of samples needed for generalizing the results to such a community. However, the number of samples for this survey is 1,800 cases. Such a rule is applied to all other surveys.

## Analysis

The basis for analysis in the collection of hate crimes surveys was the use of the median, mean, and mode. In other words, the main part of the analyses was descriptive and based on three simple statistical tests. The convenience of analysis, the simplicity of understanding the statistics and the maximum clarity are the main reasons for using descriptive analyses (Trochim, 2006; Babbie, 2009).

In addition, whenever there is a significant relationship between demographic variables and studying variables, the correlation tests have also been used to determine the impact of demographic variables on the experience of hate crimes. Since all the measures were at the nominal or sequential level, all correlation tests are performed based on the Chi-square or its related tests (Ryabko, Stognienko and Shokin, 2004). In many cases, the impact of specific variables such as gender, age, and the level of education was evident in the experience of hate crimes, which are reflected in the analyses. In addition, the ability of this test in 'normalizing' (Nikulin, 1973) is used for cases where the data ratio in the sample was different from the actual proportion in the community of survey.

Since many of the Muslim experiences were not transferable through multiple closed-ended questions, in all cases, a part of the survey was devoted to open-ended and qualitative questions (Ackley, 2010) that contributors could describe their experiences as victims of hate crimes and other anti-Muslim experiences. These text narratives then turned into codified themes that were analysed and illustrated other aspects of the experience of hate crimes and anti-Muslim experience. Also, people were asked to give directions or policies to help reduce hate crimes and levels of anti-Muslim hatred and racism. These findings are presented at the end of each report as the recommendations.

Regarding the qualitative content analysis, initial open coding involves the generation of largely descriptive labels and concepts for the phenomena. Such labels give rise to low-level categories. To make relations between these categories and to integrate them into high-level analytic categories, the axial coding was used. The axial coding enables the researcher to make the linkage between categories. This linkage should be in a meaningful way. For example, a hierarchical relation between categories or a core-periphery relation can help to establish the primary relations.

There are some key strategies on how to identify categories, how to make links between categories and how to establish relationships between them. These strategies include constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and theoretical coding. The constant comparative analysis ensures that the coding process maintains its mobility by moving back and forth between the identification of similarities among and differences between emerging categories. Having identified a common feature that unites instances of a phenomenon, the researcher needs to refocus on differences within a category in order to be able to identify any emerging subcategories (Willig, 2013).

It is worth mentioning that, in the research process it was found that Muslims are reticent to narrate their very acute experiences for reasons such as privacy (Babbie, 2009), so although effort was made to achieve full disclosure, ultimately ethical and professional constraints and concerns mean that some experiences were left unrecorded. In other words, only the tip of the iceberg has been shown, and the full extent of negative experiences and their degree of deterioration have not been fully presented.

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