**Major Assignment 1: Overview: Developing a Research Topic for a Qualitative Study**

Developing an idea for a research study is a process, where a topic of interest or social problem gets translated into a research problem that can be explored using accepted systematic procedures for recruiting participants, collecting data, and analyzing and interpreting results.

In this week’s Discussion, you considered what you might want to study. In your first Major Assignment, you will have the first-hand experience of translating that idea into a viable research problem that is a good fit for a qualitative approach. But, before you begin this Assignment, please consider the following concepts:

1. ***Ontology*** is defined as the assumptions one makes about the nature of reality. In qualitative studies, researchers assume that “reality” is constructed from personal experience and context.

Example: If four people see a car accident from different points of view, they will see it differently depending on their position (context) and personal experience.

So consider a topic where the experiences of participants will be one of your primary sources of data, and your “job” as a qualitative researcher is to do your best to ***understand*** your sources’ unique experiences.
2. ***Epistemology*** is defined as the assumptions one makes about the relationship between the researcher and the object of study.

Example: If the researcher collects survey data from an accident witness, it is different than if the researcher engages with the witness in person using an open-ended interview format.

So, consider a topic where you will be able to be ***part*** of the data gathering experience, and that your “job” as a qualitative researcher is to ***distinguish*** your experience from your sources.
3. **A research problem** emerges from an understanding of what prior research studies have found, and what, according to that body of literature, needs to be done next.

Thus, before you commit to a topic for this Assignment, it is essential to review published research studies on your topic.

**OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this Major Assignment is for you to gain experience in taking a topic of your interest and considering it as a possibility for a qualitative research study.

Major Assignment 1 is composed of three parts, as described further in the Overview and Assignment Guidelines document. You will work on one part each week, so that you can submit your Assignment at the end of Week 4. Your Instructor will provide feedback by Week 6. By Week 8, you will revise your Assignment based on the feedback from your Instructor, and you will also submit the revised Assignment.

**For this week’s Assignment:**

* Review the expectations of the Major Assignment 1: Developing a Research Topic for a Qualitative Study Overview and Guidelines. (**Note:** Make sure you review it in its entirety before you begin.)
* Review Discussion 2 to explore possible topics for this Major Assignment.

*No Assignment submission due this week.*

**Submit** your Major Assignment 1: Developing a Research Topic for a Qualitative Study **by Day 7 of Week 4**.

**Major Assignment 2: The Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data**

**OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the Major Assignment is to immerse you in the qualitative research process. The process includes hands-on opportunities for you to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret qualitative data. This qualitative research process begins with some items that have already been identified for you:

1. The research topic for this effort is the meaning of social change for Walden graduate students. You have been examining videos and reading about social change as part of the course study.
2. The knowledge you have gained plus your reflections on the meaning of social change will form the beginning of the inquiry. That is, the research question you will explore is “What is the meaning of social change for Walden graduate students?”
3. The description of your efforts of gathering, organizing, and analyzing data will form the basis of your methods section. And, the results of those efforts—the analysis and interpretation of those data—will be summarized.

This Major Assignment 2 is composed of four parts, each of which will be completed over six weeks**beginning in Week 5.** These parts include: Part 1: Introduction; Part 2: Role of the Researcher; Part 3: Results; and Part 4: Trustworthiness and Summary.

**In preparation for Major Assignment 2, please review the following:**

* Review the “What Kind of Social Change Agent Are You?” webpage and take the social change quiz. Consider how this quiz will inform your Assignment.
* Review the expectations of The Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data Overview and Guidelines for this Major Assignment 2.
* Review the Yob and Brewer (2015) article related to social change found in this week’s Learning Resources and consider how you can prepare yourself for social change through your research.
* Consider the research topic of the meaning of social change for Walden graduate students as well as the research question for this Major Assignment, “What is the meaning of social change for Walden graduate students?”