An Overview of Qualitative Research: Theory, Design, Methodology

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The University of Texas at Tyler
3:00pm, Friday October 14, 2022

Series offered by The Office of Research, Scholarship, and Sponsored Programs (ORSSP)
An Overview of Qualitative Research
Differences between qualitative and quantitative research..... a quick review

**Qualitative** - refers to lived experiences of people who experience a phenomenon

Qualities of...

Characteristics of...

Leads to more understanding of what it is like for people in a given circumstance

**Quantitative** – refers to investigation of size/impact on large groups of people

Amounts of...

Is the “amount” large enough to “be significant” to many people....

Leads to better understanding of large scale trends.
Qualitative Research Focus....

- Focused on meaning
  
  *Qualitative researchers seek to gather meaningful data*

  *Examine perceptions, motivations, and experiences that are significant (meaningful) to people*

- Rather than focusing on numbers and statistics, qualitative research analyzes texts (written word, images), talk (spoken word, conversations), and interactions (encounters, events)

  *Examines social processes, not probabilities or predictions*

- Qualitative research is an iterative and you could say, creative craft; no single “recipe” for qualitative research
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The word “quality” as in quality of life, quality of a given lived experience.</td>
<td>The word “quantity” as in how much of X that is under study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How, why, what, and in what way</em> kinds of questions.</td>
<td>Asks about <em>intensity of degree</em>; what is the generalizable “truth” in this matter across the board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not seek to assign “truth” to all situations.</td>
<td></td>
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[https://www.diffen.com/difference/Qualitative_vs_Quantitative](https://www.diffen.com/difference/Qualitative_vs_Quantitative)
The purpose is to explain and gain insight and understanding of phenomena through intensive collection of narrative data. Generate hypothesis to be test, inductive.

The purpose is to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena through focused collection of numerical data. Test hypotheses, deductive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to Inquiry</strong></td>
<td>Subjective, holistic, process-oriented</td>
<td>Objective, focused, outcome-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
<td>Tentative, evolving, based on particular study</td>
<td>Specific, testable, stated prior to particular study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research settings</strong></td>
<td>Controlled setting not as important</td>
<td>Controlled to the degree possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purposive:</strong> Intent to select “small” not necessarily representative, sample in order to get in-depth understanding</td>
<td><strong>Random:</strong> Intent to select “large” representative sample in order to generalize results to a population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Take just a couple of moments for this exercise...

Empty your pocket, purse, or wallet, drawer, coin jar, nuts and bolts jar, or junk box or grab a deck of cards....

Sort contents

Now, sort contents ANOTHER way

(lather, rinse repeat)

AND sort contents ONCE AGAIN ...

THEN... ..

Enter into the chat – how many ways did you sort and why? What surprised you about “your findings”?
Design
## Basic Qualitative Research

1) How people interpret their experiences
2) How they construct their worlds
3) What meaning they attribute to their experiences

To understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (p. 24).

## Phenomenology

Both a 20thC philosophy (Husserl, 1970) and a type of qualitative research.

All about the "lived experience"

The task is to depict the essence or basic structure of experiences such as love, anger, betrayal and the like – without judgement – in order to understand the other’s “lived experiences” (p. 26).

## Ethnography

Focus on human society and culture.

* One must spend time with the group being studied (aim for cultural description) (p. 29).

* Immersion in the site for extended periods

* Emic vs etic perspective

* "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) is key

Must use the lens of culture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounded Theory</th>
<th>Narrative Inquiry</th>
<th>Qualitative Case Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus is on building theory FROM the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).</td>
<td>Making sense of stories: “To make sense of and interpret a text, it is important to know what the author wanted to communicate, understand intended meanings and to place documents in a historical and cultural context (Palmer, 1969, pp. 136-137 in M &amp; T, pp. 34-35). Hermeneutics (e.g. interpretation). Different types: Biographical, Psychological, Linguistic</td>
<td>“A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 37) It is “a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from the context (Yin, 2014, in M &amp; T., p. 38) Unit of analysis determines if it is a “case”. Qualitative is determined by methods used. Historical; Biographical; Comparative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterized by: *Theoretical sampling (p. 30) *Constant comparative method</td>
<td>Aim is to identify patterns in the data, then arrange in relation to each other to come up with a theory based on a “core category” through which all others are connected. (pp. 32-33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology
Methodology

Overview

Design

Theory

Methods

Commonly used in Qualitative Research
## Common Qualitative Methods

**Interpretive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnographic</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Sources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Document/content analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Researcher log</strong> to support an Audit Trail and “thick description”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Film, audio recordings, transcripts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Memo writing:</strong> Methodological, theoretical, early hunches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider $\rightarrow$ Outsider</td>
<td><strong>Discourse Analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Noting frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observations</td>
<td><strong>Conversation Analysis (the study of turn-taking)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Open coding $\rightarrow$ refined codes $\rightarrow$ Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews $\rightarrow$ Transcripts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Non-verbals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Open-ended survey</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loosely structured</td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focus group interviews</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theory
Theory as lens in qualitative research

Overview

Design

Methodology

Theory
Basic theoretical approaches in qualitative research

Post-positivist: Social world is patterned; researchers seek to discover causes and effects

Interpretive: Social world is constructed through meaningful action; researchers seek to understand actors’ motivations, perceptions, and experiences

Critical: Social world is constructed through power relations; researcher seeks to unveil, critique power/privilege

Postmodern: Disrupt, problematize, Questions monolithic views of reality
Examples of how approach can vary given one topic

**Interpretive/qualitative**
- Experiences of non-completers
- Factors involved
- Interviews, observations, reports/diaries

**Critical study**
- In what ways are institutions complicit in reproducing negative outcomes such as high schoolers dropping out?

**Postmodern/Poststructural**
- Seeks to question views like completer/noncompleter; successful/unsuccessful
- Multiple perspectives
Many theoretical frameworks – these are just three Interpretive lens.....

Lave & Wenger (1991)

d/Discourse (Gee, 2015)

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943)
Paper sections and how they contribute to coherence
Shape of a qualitative research report:

- **Introduction**
  - Problem Statement > Research Question
- **Perspectives**
  - Theoretical Lens
  - Literature Review
- **Method**
  - Design & Methodology
  - Site
  - Participants
  - Data Sources
  - Data Collection
  - Data Analysis
  - Limitations
- **Findings**
  - Themes: Thick Description
- **Discussion**
- **Implications**
- **Conclusion**
Selected References


From a qualitative study.....

Video and Audio Data
(later, the student was shown this conference and interviewed about it, ("stimulated recall interviews" DiPardo, 1994)

Transcript

Student artifact
Discussion, questions....
Thank you!

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