Qualitative Research: The Interplay of Theory and Method

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Series offered by The Office of Research, Scholarship, and Sponsored Programs (ORSSP)
Qualitative Research Focus…. (a reminder)

- Focused on meaning; lived experiences of the participants

  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

- **Theory:** An account of social reality; provides a framework for analyzing data collected from the social world
This workshop will explore how....

Selection of theoretical frame and method matter in qualitative research.

This workshop will explore.....

The interplay between selected frames and methods

The impact on the outcome of a given study as reported in three given articles.
Overview

Geographies of Qualitative Research

Theory
- Theory as a lens to view problem & findings

Methodology
- The system of what you actually do

Design
- The metamethod

A system

Theory
- The system of what you actually do
Three Common Qualitative Design & Methods

*Will take you through three studies’ use of theory*...

**Ethnographic**

- **Data Sources**
  - Observations
    - Insider ←→ Outsider
    - Participant observations
  - Interviews > Transcripts
    - Loosely structured
    - Unstructured
  - Field notes

**Narrative**

- **Document/content analysis**
  - Film, audio recordings, transcripts

- **Discourse Analysis**
  - Conversation Analysis (the study of turn-taking)
  - Non-verbals

**Qualitative**

- **Researcher log** to support an Audit Trail and “thick description”

- **Memo writing**: Methodological, theoretical, early hunches

- **Noting frequency**

- **Open coding > refined codes > Themes**

- **Open-ended survey**

- **Focus group interviews**

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*Worthy et al. “We know for a fact”… “authoritative discourse”*

*Cluader et al. “How practitioners learn in practice” “Ecological systems theory”*
Narrative qualitative study:

Example #1
Loosely structured interviews
Bahktin’s “authoritative discourse”.

A. Authoritative Discourse:
“By authoritative discourse we understand that monologic discourse that seeks to impose itself in relation to others, without openness to questioning, negotiation of meanings, with well-demarcated hierarchical characteristics.”
(Magalhães, Ninin, & Lessa, 2014, p. 144)
Ethnography qualitative study:

Example #2
Observations, interviews, video/audio tape records. Bourdieu’s “capital”

THE FORMS OF CAPITAL

Pierre Bourdieu

Qualitative study:
Example #3
Qualitative semi-structured interviews
Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory

Figure 1. The social ecological model (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Desperately Seeking Theories

What now?
So you need a theory for a research proposal

- Theory: An account of social reality; provides a framework for analyzing data collected from the social world
A starting point: Ask yourself

- Am I interested in how this **culture** shapes life in this **site**?
- Am I interested in **relationships**?
- Am I interested in how **people learn**? Adults? Children and youth? As groups? As individuals? As dyads?
- Am I interested in how **individuals** make decisions and choices?
For example...

Look up “Relationship theories”

- Or Culture Building Theories
- Or any of the others
- See what you find. Then look for an article or two that USE those theories and read that section of the article. You can cite those (as long as they fit) with what you are contemplating.

Good place to start is Google Scholar
Many theoretical frameworks – these are just three Interpretive lenses.....

One theory of learning

A theory of culture building

A theory about how people make decisions
Many theoretical frameworks – three more Interpretive lens.....

A theory of learning and of culture building
Funds of Knowledge

One theory of relationships
Social Exchange Theory

A theory about how people make decisions
Self-Determination Theory

According to the Social Exchange Theory, humans weigh the costs against benefits while forming relationships.

@ValentineESL

Students don't come to class with empty slates.

First Language Traditions
Life experiences
Culture
Beliefs
Background knowledge

How can we leverage their funds of knowledge?
A few more....

- Nel Noddings – a theory of care
- Louise Rosenblatt – reading as a transactional process
- Norman Fairclough – the “crise” or crisis as the way IN
- Holland – figured worlds (identity building)
- Vygotsky – learning is socially constructed (zone of proximal development)
Selected references

- Gee, J. P. (Discourse) many many here
- Lave, J., & Wegner, E. Legitimate Peripheral Participation resources HERE
- Maslow, A. Hierarchy of Needs resources here
- Moll, L. C. et al. Funds of knowledge. PDF HERE
Questions?

Thank you for attending. I am happy to talk with you on an individual basis.

You can schedule a meeting HERE or email me at aconsalvo@uttyler.edu

Visit the resources bank of the ORSS. See especially several excellent recorded webinars on Qualitative Research.