An Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry

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Qualitative Inquiry

- Aims to ‘better understand’
  - Gain deeper insights, meaning-making, multifaceted interpretations
  - ‘How’ and ‘why’ explanations
  - Non-numerical representations *
  - Sample size & sampling techniques vary
  - Illuminate multiple perspectives
  - Interactive (researcher-participant)
Qualitative Inquiry

- Three core qualitative concepts
  1. Self-reflexivity
  2. Context
  3. Thick description
- "The researcher is the instrument"
Popular Paradigm

- Interpretivist
  - Ontology: socially constructed
  - Epistemology: produced, value-laden, subjective, co-created
  - Inductive nature

- Other paradigms are applicable, too
  - Postpositivist, critical, etc.

- Generalization is not the goal
  - Rather, better understanding & “making sense”
  - Can have “transferability” across studies
    - Remember, context is a core feature of qualitative inquiry...
    - Data must stay grounded in the context it emerged from
Characteristics of the Qualitative Research Process

• Bricolage
  • Weaving together representations that are fitted within the specifics of a complex context
  • Like quilting
  • Multiple perspectives
  • Requires flexibility and creativity
  • Time consuming – don’t underestimate this!
    • “How long does it take?”
    • It depends...

• Sensitizing concepts
  • Starting ‘lenses’ for qualitative research
  • A guide as to where to start; not strict a priori
  • Perception deepens along the way
  • May need to revisit literature during research process
Deductive & Inductive

• Deductive reasoning
  • Begin with theory > develop RQs/Hs > conduct research > evidence to (dis)confirm theory
  • *Etic* understandings

• Inductive reasoning
  • Observe > contextualize patterns > make tentative claims > draw conclusions to build theory
  • *Emic* understandings

• Qualitative research *can* work with both
  • However, inductive/emic is often more prevalent
Common Approaches

- Ethnography
- Case Studies
- Phenomenology
- Grounded Theory
- Conversation Analysis (“interaction analysis”)
- Discourse Analysis
- Qualitative Content Analysis
- General multi-method studies (e.g., interview, observation, follow ups)
Choices to Consider

- What are your “data”? (text, observation, photo, drawing, dance, etc.)
- Negotiating access to your research scene / participants
- Sampling & sample size
  - n=1 vs. n=30
- Appropriate method/ology
- Analysis software
  - ATLAS.ti, NVivo, etc.
  - Does not ‘analyze’ for you (remember, the ‘researcher is the instrument’)"},
- Recording (audio vs. video) & transcription
  - Manually? Plan accordingly...
  - REV.com (paid-for-services)
  - Otter.ai app/software
- Self-reflexivity practices
Resources

- Research Design & Data Analysis Lab: https://www.uttyler.edu/research/ors-research-design-data-analysis-lab/

- Schedule a consultant appointment with me for qualitative questions: https://www.uttyler.edu/research/ors-research-design-data-analysis-lab/ors-research-design-data-analysis-lab-consultants/

- Others: Quantitative, academic writing, surveys, etc.
References


