

The slide features decorative curved lines in shades of blue and green. One line starts at the top right and curves downwards. Another line starts at the bottom left and curves upwards. A third line starts at the bottom left and curves more sharply upwards.

# What is Qualitative Research?

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# Qualitative Inquiry

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- Aims to *better understand*
  - Gain deeper insights & local meanings
  - ‘How’ and ‘why’ explanations
  - Multivocal points and meaning-making
  - Non-numerical representations
- Three core qualitative concepts
  1. Self-reflexivity
  2. Context
  3. Thick description
- The researcher is the instrument

# Characteristics of Qualitative Researchers

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- Like ambiguity and complexity
- Like to ask questions
- Like to interact/be with people
- Like to analyze immediate experience
- Fantasizes about what goes on behind people's windows/phone calls
- Concentrates on episodic, emotional aspects of social life
- Authority is open to question

# Characteristics of the Qualitative Research Process

- Gestalt: form or shape
  - The perceived whole is more than a sum of its parts
  - Aspects of research topic are best understood in relation to others
- Bricolage
  - Weaving together representations that are fitted within the specifics of a complex context
  - Like quilting
  - Multiple perspectives
  - Requires flexibility and creativity
- Sensitizing concepts
  - Starting 'lenses' for qualitative research
  - A guide as to where to start
  - Perception deepens along the way
  - May need to revisit literature during research process



# Deductive & Inductive

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- 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 Theoretical Approaches

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- Interpretivism / thick description
- Ethnography (of communication)
- Participatory action research (PAR)
- Sensemaking
- And many, many others

# Qualitative Tools of the Trade

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- Ask people; watch people
- Try to live in the world they live in; immersion
- Observe
- Participate
- Interview
- Review documents
- Gather life histories
- Field notes
- Transcripts
- Narrative forms of coding (and writing) data

# Methodological Choices to Consider

- Analysis software
  - ATLAS.ti
  - NVivo
- Transcription
  - Manually? Plan accordingly!
  - REV.com / paid-for-services
- Negotiating access to your research scene / participants
- What is “data” (text, observation, photo, drawing, dance, etc.)
- Self-reflexivity practices





# ORS Resources to Learn More

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

Questions?

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