What is Qualitative Research?

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Qualitative Inquiry

• 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

• 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 of 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

• 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

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

- 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

• Research Design & Data Analysis Lab: 
  https://www.putyler.edu/research/ors-research-design-data-analysis-lab/
Questions?

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References


