Thinking Qualitatively

Introduction to Qualitative Research
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Qualitative-Quantitative Dichotomy

**Quantitative**
- scientific method
- deductive reasoning
- biomedical
- person as object
- quasi-experiments
- statistical techniques
- control

**Qualitative**
- alternative paradigm
- inductive reasoning
- holistic
- person as subject
- discovery
- description
- mutual interaction

Symbolic Interaction

**Theory about human behavior & inquiry into human conduct**

**Mead(1962)**
- one is defined through societal social roles, expectations, and perspectives

**Blumer(1969)**
- interactive, interpretive, reciprocal relationship between human beings
Tenets of SI (Blumer 1969)

- Human beings react toward things on the basis of the meaning things have for them
- The meaning of things in life arises out of social interactions with others
- An interpretive process is used by the person to handle and modify these meanings in an encounter

What is Qualitative Research?

- A holistic approach to questions
- The focus is on human experience
- Research strategies generally feature sustained contact with people in settings where their time is usually spent
- High level of researcher involvement with subjects
- Data provide a narrative description of people living through events in situations

Characteristics of QR

- Exploratory & descriptive focus
- Emergent design
- Purposive sample
- Data collection in natural setting
- Words considered the elements of data
- Inductive approach to data analysis
- Narrative approach to reporting outcomes
### Objectives of QR

- Instrumentation
- Illustration
- Sensitization
- Conceptualization

Knafl & Howard (1986)

### When To Do Qualitative Research?

- Emic (insider) point of view
- Identify important variables before doing an experimental design
- Study an occurring phenomena

### Research Question vs. Research Method

Research question should dictate the method
The Research Question

- Seeks to explain, describe, or explore a phenomena
- Observations in the real world raise questions
- Take form of wide-ranging inquiries
- Focus on interactions & processes
- Contributes to body of knowledge; meaningful & useful to discipline (nsg.)

Generating Ideas/Focus of Inquiry

- Brainstorming
- Concept maps
- Paradigm fit
  - exploratory
  - descriptive
- I would like to know more about...
- I would like to understand about...

Researcher’s Role in QR

- Researcher becomes intentionally immersed in group’s environment
  - How is world constructed & experienced?
- One foot in the world of the subject & one foot in outside world
- Enhanced through theoretical sensitivity
  - Creative use of knowledge & experience
5 Traditions of QR

- Grounded Theory
- Ethnography
- Phenomenology
- Case study
- Biographical

Grounded Theory

- Social problem resolved by a social process
- Data:
  - Interviews
- Analysis:
  - Coding, matrices, central category
- Narrative form:
  - Theory or theoretical model

Grounded Theory

- Glaser & Strauss, 1967
- Roots in symbolic interactionism
- Search for social processes in human interaction
- Process articulates the discovery of theory induced from qualitative data
  - Social processes derived from/ground in the empirical data
- Studies have emergent research design
**GT**

- Formal or substantive theory generation
- Drawn from data obtained from a theoretical sample
- Constant comparative analysis
  - Data analyzed as they are collected by coding
  - Codes/categories examined for relationships
- Integration & interrelationships of the categories form basis of the GT

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**Assumptions of GT**

- People order and make sense of their world
- People sharing common circumstances share common meanings
- A group has a social psychological problem resolved by means of a social psychological process
  - May be unarticulated

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**Ethnography**

- Study of cultural/social group or system
- Data: P-O, interviews, artifacts
  - Prolonged engagement in field
- Analysis:
  - Descriptive, interpretive
- Narrative form
  - Description of cultural behavior of group/indiv
Phenomenology

- Meaning of life as lived (not as theorized)
- Data:
  - long, multiple interviews
- Analysis:
  - Statements, meaning themes
- Narrative form:
  - Description of “essence” of experience

Case Study

- In-depth study of 1/multiple case(s)
- Data:
  - Interviews, documents, archives, observation
- Analysis:
  - Themes, assertions
- Narrative Form:
  - In-depth description

Biography

- Exploring life of an individual
  - Bio/autobio, life/oral hx
- Data:
  - Interviews & documents
- Analysis:
  - Stories, epiphanies, historical content
- Narrative form:
  - Detailed picture of person’s life
Generating Research Questions in QR

- Research question
  - General (theory generating)
  - Specific (theory testing)
- Open approach to the informant
- Informants are experts in their own situations

Qualitative Research Process

- Primary literature review
- Theoretical sampling
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Theoretical saturation
- Scientific adequacy
- Secondary literature review
- Writing it up

Sampling in QR

- Purposeful, theoretical
- Within same group, diversity in:
  - Age, SES, education, ethnicity, gender
- Driven by the emerging design
- Theoretical saturation
Principles of Sampling

- Purposive sampling
  - Who's on 1st?
- Theoretical sampling
  - Who's on 2nd?
- Theoretical purpose & relevance
  - Why?
- Theoretical saturation
  - The game is over.

Theoretical Sampling: Who & Why?

- Comparison Groups
  - Same
  - Same but different
  - Same but different... and then some

Theoretical Sampling: Who & Why?

- Similarities & differences
  - range of properties
  - minimize and maximize
- Categories & conditions
  - degree and diversity
“Now, I’ve heard it all!”
Theoretical Saturation

- Redundancy of data
- Categories become saturated
- Achieved through constant comparative analysis

Beginning guide for sample selection

- Focus of inquiry
- What broadly defined sample is indicated by your focus of inquiry?
- What important differences exist among the sample/setting?
- Identify 3-5 key variables that:
  - provide max. contrast among participants
  - yield widest range of info on topic

Sample Size

- Not an *a priori* decision
- Lincoln & Guba (1985)
  - 12-20 participants
- Theoretical saturation & practicality
- Aim & type of purposeful sampling
- Research method
Data Collection in QR

- Field research
  - Participant-observation
    - Interactions, behavior patterns, describe social structure
  - Interviews
- Slices of data
  - Field journals, memos, focus groups, virtual data
  - Archives, popular press, anecdotes, contextual info
- Dense data, thick description
  - Numerous examples of incidents, behaviors, settings

Interviews in QR

- Single, multiple
- Formal unstructured
- Questions:
  - Open-ended; funnel approach
  - Each interview represents that interview & others
  - Analagous questions to various group members
  - Continues throughout data analysis until researcher discerns data saturation

Journals/Memos/Field Notes

- Journals
  - Reflexivity; post-interview thoughts
- Memos
  - Code notes-properties/dimensions of a code
  - Theoretical-ongoing theory development
  - Operational-methodologic decisions, reminders
- Field notes
  - Observing without interpreting
**Data Recording in QR**

- Taped interviews
- Transcripts
- Field notes
- Computer software programs

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

- Continuum of abstraction & interpretation
  - Data presented without analysis
  - Descriptive-interpretive analysis
  - Inductively derived theory

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

- Analysis focuses on meaning in interactions, patterns of interactions, and consequences
- Constant comparative analysis
- Starts with first interview/observation
- Analysis of transcripts/notes/documents
Constant Comparative Analysis

- Recursive, iterative process
- Continuous refinement of data
- Joint coding and analysis of data
- Hallmark of Grounded Theory

Analysis: Getting Started

- Conditions
- Interactions among actors
- Strategies & tactics
- Consequences
- Process
- Definition/perspective of situation
- Ways of thinking
- Activities/events

Climbing the Coding/Analysis Ladder

Levels

1. Summarizing and packaging the data
   - Creating text to work on
   - Trying out coding categories to find fit

2. Repackaging & aggregating data
   - Interpreting themes & trends in data overall
   - Searching for relationships
   - Synthesizing data into explanatory framework
   - Cross-checking findings
   - Synopses of individual interviews
   - Tapes into transcripts

3. Developing & testing propositions to construct an explanatory framework
   - Synthesizing into deep structure
   - Cross-checking findings
   - Analysis of major findings
   - Analysis of trends
   - Searching for relationships
   - Synopses of individual interviews
Data Analysis in GT

- **Coding**
  - Level I-in vivo/substantive
  - Level II-categories
  - Level III-theoretical constructs

- **Memoing**
- **Theoretical sampling**
- **Sorting**

Core Variable (BSProcess) in GT

- **Core variable - essential**
  - Main theme in data
  - What is going on? (basic social process: BSP)

- **Characteristics**
  - Frequently recurs in the data
  - Links the various data together
  - Centrality-explains much variation in the data
  - Has implications for a more general/formal theory
  - Moves theory forward
  - Permits maximum variation in analysis

Types of Codes

- **Level I**
  - In vivo; substantive
  - Coding, labeling an incident

- **Level II**
  - Categorizing

- **Level III**
  - Identifying concepts/constructs
  - Selective coding
Level I: Open Coding

- Analysis of textual data
  - Line-by-line
  - Whole sentence/paragraph
  - Peruse entire document
- Unrestricted, open coding
- Data are:
  - Broken down into discrete parts
  - Closely examined
  - Compared for similarities & differences

Level II Coding: Categories

- Cluster of similar data incidents
- Depict relationship between data & theory
- Rules of inclusion
  - What are its properties
    - Under what conditions does it occur/not occur
  - How does it happen or not happen
  - Who is involved
  - What are the consequences

Example: Category & Definition

- Category name:
  - Child’s Age
- Rule for Inclusion:
  - A child’s age influences a caregiver’s decision to give him/her information about their illness if they believe the child can maintain secrecy, has some knowledge of their dx, or may be sexually active
Level III Coding: Selective Coding

★ Process of integrating/refining theory
★ Core/central categories emerge
  ▪ Code those data related to them
  ▪ Relating it to other categories
★ Filling in other categories that need refinement

Secondary Analysis

★ Analysis of data gathered for another study
★ Done by original/different researcher
★ Results in useful findings not made explicit in primary studies
★ Essential to make explicit the link between the primary study and all subsequent SAs of the same data set

Types of Secondary Analysis

★ Different unit of analysis from original
★ Extract subset of cases for more focused analysis
★ Focus on a concept that was present but not specifically analyzed primarily
★ Refine the purpose, questions, & data collection process of an existing data set
“Pearls” of SA in QR

- Convenient, cost-effective
- Maximum use of the data
- Reduces respondent burden
- Detached view of the data set by the secondary analyst
- Collaboration
- “Do-able” re: funding agencies

“Perils” of SA in QR

- Finding a data set with potential for SA
- Investigator concerns
- Inability to follow the guidelines of the chosen data analysis method
- Collaboration

Methodologic Challenges to SA in QR

- Amenability of primary data to SA
- Degree of difference between SA research purpose and original study
- The study team
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality
- Evaluating trustworthiness
Scientific Adequacy in QR

Reliability & Validity in QR

Quantitatively Speaking:
- Internal validity
- External validity
- Reliability
- Objectivity

Qualitatively Speaking:
- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

Credibility in QR

- Vivid & faithful description of the phenomenon
- Prolonged engagement
- Persistent observation
- Peer debriefing
- Triangulation
- Member checks
Transferability in QR

- How well the findings fit into another context
  - Theoretical purposive sampling
  - Thick, descriptive data

Dependability in QR

- Ability of another researcher to follow decision trail at every stage of analysis
  - Audit trail
  - External audit

Confirmability in QR

- Data, interpretational confirmability
  - Triangulation
  - Practicing reflexivity
### Utilizing Criteria in the Research Process

- Research proposal
- Conducting the research
- Writing the research report

### QR Journals/Websites

- Western Journal of Nursing Research
- Qualitative Health Research
- Research in Nursing & Health
- Advances in Nursing Science
- Scholarly Inquiry for Nursing Practice
- Social Science Medicine
- [http://www.alberta.ca/~jrnorris/qual.html](http://www.alberta.ca/~jrnorris/qual.html)
- [http://www.oit.pdx.edu/~kerlinb/qualresearch/](http://www.oit.pdx.edu/~kerlinb/qualresearch/)

### QR Texts

- Sage Publications, Inc. [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)