Qualitative Research: Introduction, Sampling and Approaches
Part I

Lynn Gertiser
INTRODUCTION

“Those who tell the stories rule the world.”—Hopi American Indian Proverb

“Stories are a communal currency of humanity” –Tahir Shah in Arabian Nights

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” Zora Neale Hurston
What is qualitative research?

- Research that attempts to answer a question
- Uses a pre-defined process for systematically answering questions
- Collects evidence
- Produces new findings
- Produces findings that can be applied outside the limits of the study
Advantages of Qualitative Research

• meaningful and culturally pertinent to the participant
• unanticipated by the researcher
• explanatory in nature
• flexible structure/follow-up
Strengths

• “Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations.”
• How do people experience this research problem
• Describes/informs on behaviors, opinions, emotions, relationships
• Gives an idea of “human” aspect of science: social roles, socioeconomic factors, gender roles, cultural roles - ethnicity & religion
• Can use it in conjunction WITH quantitative research
Flexibility

- Great strengths of Qualitative research
- Capacity of the researchers drives research
- Can change/alter methods and approaches
- Can add/detract from interview, go deeper
## Quantitative vs. Qualitative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Research Aspect</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discover Ideas, with General Research Objects</td>
<td>COMMON PURPOSE</td>
<td>Test Hypotheses or Specific Research Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe and Interpret</td>
<td>APPROACH</td>
<td>Measure and Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured, Free Form</td>
<td>DATA COLLECTION APPROACH</td>
<td>Structured Response Categories Provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research is intimately involved. Results are subjective</td>
<td>RESEARCHER INDEPENDENCE</td>
<td>Researcher uninvolved Observer. Results are Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small samples – Often in Natural setting</td>
<td>SAMPLES</td>
<td>Large samples to Produce Generalizable Results</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>[Results that Apply to Other Situations]</td>
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</tbody>
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Bias.....

- Holding a one-sided viewpoint that lacks neutrality; close-minded.

- Seeing only PART of the truth and acting as if that is the WHOLE truth

- We are ALL biased, we just do not see it, or it would not be bias! We want to prove our beliefs.

- In qualitative research there should be “an explicit acknowledgement of bias”
Decreasing Bias

• If we know it exits what can we do about it?

  Design bias, measurement bias, sampling bias

• Triangulation: helps establish validity, or “truth”
  Do the findings accurately describe or reflect the situation I am studying?

  Analyzes research question from multiple perspectives
Types of Triangulation

• Data Triangulation: using different sources for information

• Investigator Triangulation: several different investigators gather information

• Theory Triangulation: ask colleagues outside of your field to interpret findings (nutritionists, social scientists, psychologists)

• Methodology triangulation: different data collection tools (interviews, focus groups, surveys)

• Environmental triangulation: go to different locations and settings at different times of day and year
How do we evaluate qualitative research?

- Differently than quantitative (validity, reliability)
- Different methods and approaches are used
- Sometimes the goal is to *make* a hypothesis from the research not to test one
Trustworthiness

- “the extent to which something or someone deserves trust, or is dependable”
- What makes someone trustworthy?
Trustworthiness

1. Truth Value
2. Applicability
3. Consistency
4. Neutrality
Truth Value

• Internal Validity—quantitative research
• Subject-oriented
• Is the researcher confident in the findings according to the research design, context, and sources
• Is it credible?
• “a qualitative study is credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions”
  • L. Krefting (1991)
Applicability

• External validity—quantitative research
• Can we expand this to other situations? To larger populations?
• Can this be applied to situations outside of the research setting?
• “Transferability”
• Often depends on which sampling method used
Consistency

- Reliability—quantitative research
- Would the findings be the same if the research were done in a similar situation with similar informants with a different researcher?
Neutrality

- Objectivity—quantitative research
- Free from bias
- “the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives.”
  - Guba, 1981