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Qualitative Research: Introduction, Sampling and Approaches
Part I

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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

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

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 exists 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