Interpreting Qualitative Research Data

KIN 251
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Class Agenda

- What is academic research?
- What is qualitative research?
- How does qualitative research differ from quantitative research?
- Establishing “rigor” in qualitative research
- Analysis & interpretation of qualitative data
- In-class exercise: Analyze & interpret qualitative research articles
What is Academic Research?

In-Class Activity

- What do you think academic research is?
- Are there different paradigms of research?
- What methods do researchers use?
- Does research always test hypotheses?
- What is the value of research?
- How do researchers gather data?
- How do researchers present data?
- Are there assumptions that underlie ones research?
- How do we evaluate research?
What is Qualitative Research?

Definition:

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003)
What is qualitative research?

- Qualitative research involves the systematic use of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals lives.

- Qualitative research deploys a broad spectrum interconnected methods, in an attempt to get a better purchase on the research question under investigation.
Qualitative Research as *Bricolage*

- The *bricoleur* (DIY) understands that research is an interactive process shaped by their own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting.

- The product of the bricoleur’s labour is a *bricolage*, a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researchers images, understanding and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis.

- The *bricolage* will connect the parts to the whole, stressing the meaningful relationships that operate in the situations and social worlds studied.
  
## Qualitative vs. Quantitative

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<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
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<td>&quot;All research ultimately has a qualitative grounding&quot; - Donald Campbell</td>
<td>&quot;There's no such thing as qualitative data.</td>
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<td>Miles &amp; Huberman (1994). <em>Qualitative Data Analysis</em> p. 40</td>
<td>Everything is either 1 or 0“ - Fred Kerling</td>
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<td>The aim of qualitative analysis is a complete, detailed description.</td>
<td>In quantitative research we classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed.</td>
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<td>Researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for.</td>
<td>Researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for.</td>
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<td>The design emerges as the study unfolds.</td>
<td>All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected.</td>
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<td>Researcher is the data gathering instrument.</td>
<td>Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment to collect numerical data.</td>
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<td>Data is in the form of words, pictures or objects.</td>
<td>Data is in the form of numbers and statistics.</td>
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<td>Qualitative data is more 'rich', time consuming, and less able to be generalized.</td>
<td>Quantitative data is more efficient, able to test hypotheses, but may miss contextual detail.</td>
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<td>Researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.</td>
<td>Researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter.</td>
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Establishing “Rigor” in Qualitative Research

1. Bracketing interviews (check biases)
2. Member check (review transcripts)
3. Peer review (look over interpretations)
4. Reflexive journal (ongoing)
5. Software (NVivo, Atlas/TI)
6. Quantification (how many people said what)
7. Triangulation (alternate sources)
8. Cite previous research
9. Link purpose of study to paradigm, methods and findings
10. Looking for things that go against what you think is going on
Analysis & evaluation of qualitative research

- 10 questions to help you make sense of qualitative research (Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust 2002)
  [Primarily applies to human subject research vs. content analysis for example]
- Three broad issues to pay attention to:
  - Rigor
  - Credibility
  - Relevance
10 Questions

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?
5. Were the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?
10 Questions…

6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?

8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?

10. How valuable is the research?
In-Class Exercise

- In groups of 2-3 you will read and evaluate a qualitative research study.
- Using the information from class, make a determination of the “quality” of the study.
- What was “good” and what could have been improved?
- What is the main point of the study?
- How was data collected and analyzed?
- Did the conclusions follow from the data?