

KIN250 – Research Methods
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DESIGNING A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

What is Qualitative Research? (Creswell, 2007)

- Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns and themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. (p. 37)

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

- Natural setting
- Researcher as key instrument
- Multiple sources of data
- Inductive data analysis (“bottom-up”)
- Participants’ meanings (learn meaning)
- Emergent design (phases of project may shift)
- Theoretical lens
- Interpretive inquiry (multiple views)
- Holistic account (capture complexity)

Qualitative Research: Essential Characteristics

- **Key philosophical assumption** - understanding how people make sense of their worlds and the experiences people have
- **Key concern** - knowing or understanding from the participants perspective
- **Key focus** - understanding (rather than predicting or controlling) social settings or social phenomena

Essential Characteristics (cont)

- Relies on the researcher as the primary research instrument for data collection and analysis
 - Incorporates a complete description researcher's role
- Fieldwork
 - Naturalistic, real world settings;
 - participant perspectives, attitudes, attributions
 - Does not limit outcomes
 - Equal time in the field and in analysis
- Employs inductive strategies
 - Immersion in details and specifics of the data to discover important categories
 - Exploring open ?'s; not testing theoretically-derived hypotheses
 - Looking for a theory to fit the data

Essential Characteristics (cont)

- Findings are descriptive
 - Detailed, thick description;
 - In-depth questions; direct quotes capturing participant perspectives and experience
 - Words and pictures rather than numbers
- Sample selection is not random or based on convenience
 - Purposeful; based on criteria
 - Sample sizes typically small
- Holistic - seeks to understand the whole picture of the social context under investigation;
 - Sum is greater than the parts;
 - Focus on complex interdependencies

Essential Characteristics (cont)

- Context sensitive
 - Places findings in social, historical, and temporal context; context; relationships within a system or subculture
- Personal, direct, face-to-face, immediate interactions in a given setting
- Researcher insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon

When to Use Qualitative Research

- Problem or issue needs to be explored
- Often to hear “silenced” or muted voices
- Need complex understanding of issue
- Talking and/or observing people directly
- Allowing for one’s story to be “told”
 - Minimize power relationships between researcher and participant

When to Use Qualitative Research

- Rhetorical style is more flexible
- Can not separate what people say from the context that they say it in
- Follow up on quantitative research and expand on meaning
- Often other methods do not “fit” the problem
- Develop theories of action, behavior, and meaning

What Does it Take to DO Qualitative Research? (Creswell, 2007, p. 41)

- Commit extensive time in the field
- Engage in complex, time-consuming, data analysis
- Write! Evidence is often embedded in lengthy participant responses.
- Participate in a form of human and social science research that does not have firm guidelines or specific procedures.

Designing a Qualitative Study

- Start with an issue or problem!
- No hypothesis; rather, research questions that you want to answer instead.
- Opinions differ about the extent of literature needed before a study begins.
 - But it can't hurt to gather preliminary literature
- Identify the gaps in knowledge about the topic.
- "Grounded theory" or theoretical lens?

Qualitative Study Design (cont.)

- *Structure* is not a dirty word...
- Problems can span the social and human sciences (often on historically marginalized groups)
 - Creswell advocates doing leg work ahead of research
- Capture meaning in at least four ways
 - Interviews
 - Observations
 - Documents
 - Audiovisual materials
- Extensive collection of data!

Qualitative Study Design (cont.)

- Methods often come after problem is identified
- Organize, store, and analyze data
 - Can be a tedious process
 - Move from the particular to the more general
 - Working “through multiple levels of abstraction” (p. 43)
- Must be aware of ethical issues

Qualitative Methods:

- Interviews
- Ethnography (observation)
 - Embodied or sensuous ethnography
- Participant observation
- Phenomenological Research
- Case Study
- Narrative Research
- Content analysis
- Focus group

What is a “good” study?

- Creswell, 2007. pp 45-47
 - (presents nine characteristics)
- Generally must focus on rigor!
 - From data collection and storage, to analysis, to write-up

In-Class exercise

In groups of no more than 3:

Outline a qualitative study that you would like to conduct in the realm of Kinesiology

- Please address the following:
 1. What is the problem or issue?
 2. What is the central research question you are asking?
 3. What data will you collect (and how).
 4. Articulate the significance/importance of the study
 5. What is your relationship to the topic and/or participants under investigation?
