

***REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
AND
PRINCIPLES OF QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS***

Review of Qualitative Designs

In Qualitative Research:

- *We do not test hypothesis or previous theories.*
- *We may try to develop new theories based on what happens in specific situations.*
- *We do not try to generalize our findings.*
- *We often rely on data collected from interviews, observations, and content analysis of newspapers, books, videos, case records, and other already developed documents.*
- *We usually do not know or try to develop response categories prior to conducting the study.*

Qualitative Research Tends To

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- *Answer research questions rather than test a hypothesis.*
- *Seldom look at the effectiveness of an intervention.*
- *Examine the perceptions, actions, and feelings of participants.*
- *Obtained detailed information from interviews, content analysis, or observations.*

Types of Qualitative Research

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- ***Grounded theory***
- ***Ethnography***
- ***Phenomenology***
- ***Field research***

Strengths and Weaknesses

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➤ *Strengths*

- *Depth of understanding*
- *Flexibility*

➤ *Weaknesses*

- *Subjectivity*
- *Suggestive, not definitive*
- *Limited generalizability*
- ❖ *Mixed methodology is possible*

Qualitative Research Terms

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- **Structured interview**
- **Semi-structured interview**
- **Unstructured interview**
- **Informal conversational interview**
- **Interview protocol (or guide)**
- **Standardized open-ended interview (a.k.a. structured interview)**
- **Closed, fixed response interview**
- **Thick description**
- **Field Notes**
- **Self reflective comments (respondent's as well as researcher's)**

Qualitative Data Collection Methods

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- *Observations in Ethnographic Research*
- *Choosing What to Observe & Your Observer Role*
- *Role of Gatekeeper(s)*
- *Obtrusive vs. Unobtrusive Observation*

Ethnographic Data Collection

- ▣ ***Observations are the main form of data collection in ethnographic research.***

- ▣ ***How do you choose what to observe?***
 - **Depends on your overall research question (purpose of study)**
 - **“A single site in which a culture-sharing group has developed shared values, beliefs and assumptions is important.” (Creswell)**
 - **“Researcher needs to identify a group (or individuals representative of a group) to study...”**

- ▣ ***How do you gain access to the site? (role of “gatekeepers”)***
 - **Access usually begins with a “gatekeeper” an individual who is a member of, or has a close connection to the group and the site to be observed. Researcher contacts this initial gatekeeper in order to gain access to the site and other members of the group.**

Information Needed by Gatekeeper

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Creswell recommends six pieces of information to give the gatekeeper when you are trying to gain access to a site:

- 1. Why was the site chosen for the study?**
- 2. What will be done at the site during the observation?**
- 3. How much time will be spent at the site by the researchers?**
- 4. Will the researcher's presence be disruptive?**
- 5. How will the results be reported?**
- 6. What will the gatekeeper, the participants and the site gain from the study**

Using Field Notes

- Creswell recommends using an **observational protocol** in order to record field notes while you are in the field.
- The field notes should include your **descriptive and reflective notes**.
- **Descriptive notes** detail factual information about what is occurring. The focus should be on “thick description” of all aspects of the site and the individuals. This includes a physical description of the site and the individuals, events and activities that are occurring, social interactions between individuals, etc...
- **Reflective notes** describe how you are reacting and feeling about what **you are observing, as well as initial interpretations about what you are observing**.

Class Exercise: Taking Field Notes

- *Take about 5 minutes to write down all of the things that you notice about the **physical aspects of this classroom***
- *Take both **descriptive and reflective notes**—what are the facts, and how do you feel about these facts?*
- *We will discuss responses after this period.*

Issues in Recording Field Notes

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Warren (2000) describes two main tensions in the process of recording field notes:

- **Tension between thick description and not revealing people's identities in the field notes**
- **Tension between the ethnographer revealing or concealing aspects of him/herself that might be relevant in the interpretation of the data.**

Common Challenges in Observation

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- **Deciding on what role the researcher will assume: (participant, unobtrusive or middle-ground observer).**
- **Remembering to take field notes**
- **Recording quotes accurately**
- **Feeling overwhelmed with information and the need to decide what to record in the field notes.**

Decide on Your Observer Role

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Ranges on a spectrum from full participant observer to unobtrusive observer:

- ***Participant Observer:*** *A researcher who participates in a group, while also observing the group.*
 - What are the benefits and drawbacks to using a participant observer approach?

- ***Unobtrusive Observer:*** *Pure observation with no participation*
 - What are the benefits and drawbacks to using an unobtrusive observer approach?

- ***Variations between participant and unobtrusive observer:*** *not full participant, but participates at times and is an unobtrusive observer at times.*
 - What are the benefits and drawbacks to moving between participant and unobtrusive observer?

- ***Your presence as an observer in the group/setting will be obvious to the people in the setting -- make sure to introduce yourself and your role, or have the gatekeeper introduce you, and explain your role.***

Principles of Qualitative Analysis

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Steps in Analyzing Qualitative Data:

- *Preparing & organizing the data (transcripts, field notes, etc.)*
- *Reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes*
- *Representing the data in figures, tables or a narrative*

- ◆ *A theme is a category of information that you as the researcher identify and name and that may include a variety of coded information. This involves a process of “coding” the data and then condensing or classifying the codes into larger families of themes.*

- ◆ *Qualitative analysis is an iterative process—meaning that a final analysis of the data is achieved by repeatedly reading and re-reading the data and repeatedly developing themes and refining themes.*

Steps in Qualitative Analysis (Cont.)

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- ◆ *Developing themes involves a process of classifying, describing and interpreting the data. The data are reduced into meaningful chunks of information. During this process, some information will inevitably not be included in the analysis*
- ◆ *In biography or narrative research, the researcher is typically coding people's stories, life events or life transitions.*
- ◆ *In ethnographic research, the researcher is typically coding the functions of the culture-sharing group, the social norms of the group (interactions between participants).*