Qualitative methodology

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Examples of research suitable for qualitative methods

☑ Research that delves in depth into complexities and processes
☑ Research on little-known phenomena or innovative systems
☑ Research that seeks to explore how and why policy and local knowledge and practice are at odds
☑ Research on informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organizations
☑ Research on real, as opposed to stated, organizational goals
Qualitative research

1. **Capture** and **discover meaning** once the researcher becomes **immersed** in the data
2. Concepts are in the form of **themes, motifs, synthesis, taxonomies**
3. ‘Measures’ are created specific to the **individual setting**
4. Data are often in the form of **words** such as narratives, observations, notes, interview transcripts (or other expressions of meaning – film, pictures, body language, etc.)
5. Research procedures are **specific (particular)** and **replication** is difficult
6. **Analysis** proceeds by **identifying patterns** and **extracting themes** and relating findings to **theories** of culture and society

The qualitative research process

![Qualitative research process diagram]

Qualitative research: Circular( iterative) process
J-curve of qualitative research

Note: In case of relatively homogenous study group

Closed versus open design

- Open-ended exploratory approach versus project description
- Foreshadowed problems versus preconceived ideas
- Secondary data precedes primary data (!)
- Research design must be sufficiently precise to delineate focus and guide research process, and at the same time sufficiently open to be adapted to ongoing changes in knowledge base. Such changes must be monitored in the research records.
Research questions and data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION METHOD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerning events or patterns of actual behaviour</td>
<td>PRIM: Direct observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relating to people’s beliefs and attitudes</td>
<td>SEC: Group or individual interviews</td>
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<td>Unstructured of semi-structured interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Free listing, pile sorts, paired comparisons</td>
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<td>Focus Groups Discussion</td>
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<td>Relating to distribution of beliefs and behaviour in a population</td>
<td>Structured observation</td>
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<td>Relating to reasons for observed patterns of behaviour</td>
<td>Structured interviewing</td>
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<td>Concerning knowledge or particular skills</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
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<td>FGDs</td>
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<td>Semi-structured interviewing</td>
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<td>Demonstration (please show how you...)</td>
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Data Collection Methods

- Participation
- Observation
- Interviewing, e.g.:
  - In-Depth/ Ethnographic Interviewing
  - Key informant Interviewing
  - Elite Interviewing
  - Focus-group Interviewing
- Review of Documents
Data Collection Methods cont.

- Narratives & Life Histories
- Historical Analysis
- Films, Videos and Photographs
- Kinesics ("body language")
- Proxemics (study of the use of space)
- Unobtrusive Methods (used for triangulation)
- Questionnaires and Surveys

The importance of theory for health research

- All social science research involves explicit or implicit theoretical perspectives on the study object
- Theoretical positions determine the framing of the research question and thereby choice of methods
- Good qualitative research is characterized (among others) by an explicit and well reflected theoretical position
The emic and etic approaches

- Etic approach - based on a pre-conceived framework of understanding
- Emic approach - emphasis on concepts and world views of the group under study

The concept of context

- Most sciences attempt to understand phenomena by isolating them from their context. That is the reductionist approach.
- Humanities and social sciences often attempt to understand the meaning of phenomena. Meaning can only be understood in context. Language is the paradigmatic example of this.
Drawing out context

WHO is

thinking  saying  doing

WHAT
to
WHOM
and
WHY?