



Qualitative methods

BRIC Research Group



Definition

- ☛ “Formal process of inquiry, often conducted within a natural setting and characterized by a flexible, emerging design and the collection of primarily narrative data that provides insight and understanding of the meaning of phenomena from the participant’s perspective.”

☛ Dempsey, P. A., & Dempsey, A. D. (2000). *Using nursing research (5th ed.)*. Philadelphia, Lippincott.

Most Common Types

- ☛ Phenomenology
- ☛ Grounded theory
- ☛ Ethnography
- ☛ Focus Group
- ☛ Historical research

Common Characteristics

- Researcher is often the data gathering instrument
- Researcher keeps detailed notes
- One gathers data in the setting where the activities take place
- Intense focus on a few participants:
Purposive sampling
- Bracket biases
- Do not generalize to a larger population

Comparison: Goals/Purposes

Quantitative

- Test theory
- Show relationships between variables
- Develop generalizations
- Make predictions about phenomena: control phenomena

Qualitative

- Create theory
- Describe multiple realities
- Develop insight and understanding from participant's perspective
- Discover uniqueness of meaning

Comparison

- Deductive reasoning
- Concise and narrow focus
- Structured design, categories isolated before study
- Structured data collection
- Rating scales, questionnaires, etc
- Inductive reasoning
- Complex and broad focus
- Holistic, flexible, evolving design; categories develop during research process
- Researcher is key of data collection
- Field notes, audio/video recorders, film

Comparison

- ☛ Researcher's contact with subjects is short
- ☛ Emphasis on objectivity
- ☛ Researcher is an outsider
- ☛ Numbers are basic element of analysis, statistics
- ☛ Analysis occurs after data collection
- ☛ Report of findings is formal, objective
- ☛ Intense contact, longer
- ☛ Emphasis on trust
- ☛ Researcher may become an insider
- ☛ Words are basic element of analysis
- ☛ Develop themes & concepts
- ☛ Data analysis throughout study
- ☛ Report is rich narrative: expressive

☛ Dempsey & Dempsey (2000), p. 34.

Validity and Reliability

- Validity: The extent to which the findings represent reality. Requires ongoing analysis, comparisons, participant verification, observation to confirm what you are told.
- Reliability: Measure to the extent to which random variation may have impacted consistency of results. Use a variety of informants; another researcher should achieve similar results. *Trustworthiness, Fit.*

Phenomenology: The lived experience

- Husserl & Heidegger, philosophy
- Data collection: written and/or oral, small number of subjects. Verbal and nonverbal responses.
- Analysis: Hermeneutic (interpretive) or Eidetic (descriptive)
- Hermeneutic: interpret meaning through participant's perspective and in context of sociology/history
- Descriptive: Researcher uses own reflection and insight to describe phenomena (bracket)

Grounded theory: generate Theory

- Glaser & Strauss (1967)
- Constant comparative method: concurrent data collection and analysis
- Observation, interviews, records
- Theoretical sampling based on evolving theory
- Coding: open, axial, selective
- Core category, subcore categories, "The story"
- Data saturation

Ethnography: Participant observation

- Anthropology, study of cultures
- Perspective of members: from within group
- Interviews, observations
- Continuous data analysis for common themes
- Etic: outsider looking in. Emic: insider view

Focus Groups

- ✔ Group consensus, common bond among members
- ✔ Interview/question guide
- ✔ Recorded: hand, audio, visual
- ✔ Interviewer and recorder (observations, intonations)
- ✔ Look for themes
- ✔ Excellent facilitation skills are key
- ✔ Participant verification

Techniques

- Sampling: Purposive, Snowball method. Look for variation. Sample until data saturation.
- Researcher: Bracket bias, influences and is influenced by participants.
- Data Collection: Observation, interviews, record review. Interview guide is fluid.
- Data analysis: note cards, computer software to organize data. Concurrent collection and analysis.

Data Analysis

- ✓ Audio recorded, field notes
- ✓ Transcription
- ✓ Description: immersion in the data
- ✓ Coding: indexing, identifying categories
- ✓ What is going on?
- ✓ What form does the phenomenon take?
- ✓ Variations within the phenomenon?
- ✓ Patterns, themes

Rigor

- ☛ Credibility is based on strict adherence to philosophic perspective, thoroughness in collecting data, consideration of all data in the subjective theory development phase.
- ☛ Participant verification
- ☛ Inter-rater reliability
- ☛ Decision trails

☛ Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2003). (3rd ed.). *Understanding nursing research*. Philadelphia: Saunders.

Rigor

- ✓ Confirmability or trustworthiness
 - Credibility: Reported findings true?
 - Auditability: can someone replicate the study
 - Transferability(fitness): Are the results applicable outside the research situation?