Qualitative Research Methods for Policy, Practice, and Research

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Agenda

Things to think about before getting started:

1. Assumptions undergirding qualitative research
2. Characteristics of qualitative research
3. Ethical issues

Conducting research:

4. Selecting a sample
5. Interviewing basics
6. Enhancing validity
Qualitative vs Quantitative Inquiry
Assumptions undergirding qualitative research

We can understand reality, but multiple realities exist
  ◦ Reality is socially constructed
  ◦ We want to understand our participants’ perspective on particular events and experiences

To understand others’ realities, we need to interact with them directly
  ◦ We usually do this through observations, interviews, and focus groups
Characteristics of qualitative inquiry

- Qualitative research:
  1. Attempts to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them
  2. Findings are specific to particular individuals in a particular time, at a particular place
  3. Findings are interpreted by the researcher(s)
  4. Often includes multiple data sources
  5. Enables study designs to emerge or change
Considering ethical issues

- Gain informed consent
- Get permission from gatekeepers
- Avoid deceiving participants
- Have a plan in place in case you witness something illegal
- Avoid stereotypes or labels
- Respect participants’ privacy
Selecting a sample

- Purposeful sampling approaches include:
  
  ◦ Maximum variation sampling
  ◦ Homogenous sampling
  ◦ Extreme case sampling
  ◦ Total population sampling
  ◦ Criterion sampling
Determining sample size

- Inverse relationship between amount of information participants can provide and amount of participants needed (Patton, 2015)
Interview basics

- Interview types:
  - Unstructured
  - Semi-structured
  - Structured

- Semi-structured interview protocol construction
  - Warm-up questions
  - Grand tour questions
  - Pointed questions
  - Probe throughout
Establishing validity

“Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques.”

Brinberg & McGrath, 1985, p. 13)
Further reading


Thank you!

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