

Qualitative Research: Analyzing Life

Chapter 6

Analyzing Qualitative Methodologies

Hello everyone, this is the first “real” chapter in this course. In this chapter you will learn the origin of the qualitative research, how it was made, and how researchers understand it. Also, it is worthful to mention that there are many philosophical theories in this chapter, and this is so logical since the origin of the qualitative research is philosophy. However, understanding these philosophical aspects is important to understand how the researchers think while doing a qualitative research. Also, we are going to talk about the main methodologies in qualitative research, Let’s start. ^_^

(Note: Things between brackets some paragraphs are my own explanations, I hope they help!)

(Note: I have added some sentences from the book to clarify thing)

Ps. You might need a cup of coffee or some Panadol bills in order to finish this lecture.

A-Theories of qualitative research:

1- Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology refers to the nature of being; **epistemology** refers to ways of knowing. (the idea is that, we, as humans, started to search for answers for some question about the nature, about our life, about the human actions and reactions ... etc, and we started to look for a way or method to find answers so we know more about thing we are questioning about and understand it. One way found to satisfy the researchers to find answers is the qualitative research). Researchers who focus primarily on the philosophical domains of inquiry attend to its ontological implications, such as how humans conceptualize their existence or their being in the world. Our minds have the capacity to not just experience life but to wonder what it is and what it all means. And when we experience life, we come to know, and understand it.

Epistemology

Epistemologies are multiple. (there are many way to understand or to know, one of them is qualitative research). There is not just one way of knowing but many. We liken the process of coming to know the world as if each person is a camera, experiencing life through different and unique lenses, filters, and angles. We recommend that researchers reflect on how the multiple identities they bring to the research enterprise influence and affect how they perceive and construct one's knowledge about life—that is, how they interpret it.

2- Interpretation (the way of understanding things)

Interpretation is the personal (we all may see one thing -action or a reaction or ...- but each one of us will understand and justify it by his/her own), subjective way people perceive and respond to social experiences. **Interpretation is the signature way a researcher's unique mind constructs the meanings of action, reaction, and interaction.** We believe that it is ontologically and epistemologically impossible to perceive the world in neutral, nonbiased, and objective ways. **Thus, qualitative inquiry is an interpretive act.** Researchers bring who they are to the project, balancing their values-laden impressions and emotional responses with the evidentiary necessities of what makes for rigorously investigated work.

As part of **interpretation**, qualitative researchers preface their reportage with what the reader or listener needs to know about where they're coming from. A researcher's positionality or standpoint in terms of the research agenda informs audiences about the background experiences she brought to the project, the possible connections and conflicts of interest that arose throughout the study, her personal investment, or stakes in the study, and how her positioning or standpoint works to the report's advantage. **"All research is interpretive" suggests that each individual brings a unique read or take on social life, personal epistemological constructions,** and hence the analysis of data's meanings.

3- Constructivism nature of qualitative research:

Constructivist and *constructivism* refer to the **cumulative processes of knowledge building within one's mind**. (this principle gives the structure of any qualitative research). **We consider social reality subjective, meaning that each individual person understands the world differently because people possess a range of different experiences and perspectives**. A constructivist's **ontological premise (فرضية) is that knowledge does not exist "out there," independently of human beings**. (which means that the answers you are looking for are NOT waiting for you outside there, you have to do investigate in order to find them, and since they are caused by the human beings, you have to do your investigation on the human being in order to find the answers). The constructivist's **epistemological premise is that humans must interact with and reflect on social life in order to know and understand it**. (so, it suggests that your investigation must interact with the human being in order to know, and knowing is the final goal of epistemology. -by knowing we mean finding answers-)

Listen guys, I know this is too much philosophy, and for me I like philosophy, but if you don't like it, you still have to go over it at least while studying this course, so keep it up, and continue your reading.

Qualitative research is known primarily as an **emergent, inductive, and evolutionary form of inquiry (a new inductive way of investigation)**. A researcher's knowledge of people, field sites, and social phenomena accumulate as the investigation proceeds. This learn-as-you-go approach is likened to on-the-job training, in which understanding and mastery of something comes with time and from experiences. Our stance on **constructivism** means we have adopted a particular model or **paradigm (templates)** of experiencing and thus coming to know the social world. (simply, we have template(s) to follow in order to conduct a QR)

3-Paradigm النماذج

A **paradigm (QR templates)** in qualitative inquiry is "a **set of assumptions and perceptual orientations shared by members of a research community**. Paradigms determine how members of research communities view both the phenomena their particular community studies and the research methods that should be employed to study those phenomena" (Donmoyer, 2008, p. 591).

Eg. On research paradigms:

a- Quantitative Research (البحث الكمي)

Quantitative research in the **experimental tradition** (template) either attempts to gather data through survey research or to test a proposed **hypothesis**—a prediction of outcome—by administering a **treatment** of some kind to human subjects, then measuring and comparing their outcomes statistically to assess whether any significant differences exist before and after the experiment, or between one group receiving the treatment and another group not receiving it (generally referred to as a **control group**). Many refer to this research paradigm as **positivist**. (positivism, since you as a research do an action on the subjects (the participants) and then waiting for results, it is positive bcz you do something not just watching from far away as we will see in qualitative research).

b- Qualitative Research (البحث النوعي)

Qualitative research depends primarily on words and images as empirical materials for reflection and analysis. Qualitative inquiry mostly **examines natural social life** as it is lived in the world. It examines **what people say, do, feel, and create**. Analyses of data can vary from straightforward descriptive accounts of human action to critical commentary on social injustices observed. If researchers wish to understand the human condition deeply, words and images rather than numbers may be more revealing forms for collection and analysis.

Rationale for Qualitative Research (reasons to choose the qualitative research paradigm)

Qualitative research is chosen when insight into people's personal and social lives is necessary to answer the research questions of interest. If the goal for inquiry is to **learn about people's histories, experiences, motivations, opinions, perspectives, values, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, feelings**, and the like, then interviews, observations, and participants' own writings may reveal deep meanings and interpretations. Qualitative research is also chosen when one or more of its established canon of methodologies harmonizes with the research study's goals and questions.

B- Qualitative Methodologies (also called the genre in QR)

Remember that a method is *how* you go about doing something. A methodology is *why* you're going about it in a particular way. A **genre** in literature refers to its form and format; examples include the short story, novel, essay, drama, poetry, and so on. Likewise, qualitative research has its own canon of genres or **methodologies** that has evolved over the past few decades.

Qualitative research methodologies: (we gonna explain and give one example on each one of them)

1- Ethnography

Ethnographic methods study and document the **culture of a group of people and how they live their everyday lives**. Some projects assume critical or action-oriented perspectives with their participants—not just documenting a culture but, with the participants' consent, jointly changing it for the better. (when the assumption of your research is that the CULTURE of the population drive the action you are investigating, then, you choose this methodology/genre)

The **ethnographic method** is selected as a research genre when an extended narrative about a culture is necessary for the goals of the study. **The unit of study can range from a single classroom of children to an entire nation**. It traditionally requires a minimum of nine to twelve months of fieldwork and the systematic **collection of both qualitative and quantitative data**, though more contemporary ethnographies have challenged the established standards of method and created hybrid forms of research representation and presentation.

Ps. : you have to understand every single example in this course, since the questions in the exam gonna be in such a format that test your understanding.

Ethnography Example

Rebekah Nathan (2005), a pseudonym for a university anthropologist, took a sabbatical from her tenured faculty position and enrolled as a nontraditional returning student at the pseudonymous “AnyU.” *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student* is her first-hand, systematic account of classes, dining halls, dorm life, work ethics, peer relationships, and other aspects of higher education. Nathan employed traditional methods of data collection (participant observation, interviewing, and document review) as a covert and complete participant in the setting.

2- Case Study

A **case study** focuses on a **single unit—one person, one group, one organization, one event, and so on**. The case merits examination for a full study because it is either a unique individual or opportunity; it represents a typical instance of other comparable cases; it is one of several other cases that will be combined with or compared to others; or it serves as a standalone study that addresses the research questions of interest. (so, when you want to investigate a phenomenon, and you think that it is related to a single unit, for whatever reason, then you consider this phenomena as a case, and you apply a case study methodology. Note: Don’t confuse the case report in quantitative research-which considers the **individual case** as a single case report- with the qualitative research case report which consider the **single phenomena in a group of individuals** as a single case report.)

Case Study Example

Marisol Clark-Ibáñez studied inner-city children labeled by their teachers as “bad.” The ethnographic project included a multicase study of two fourth-grade children: Dante, an African American boy, and Pati, a Latina. Clark-Ibáñez noticed that masculinity was compatible for “bad boys” who broke the rules in school settings. But for “bad girls” like Pati, breaking rules meant deviating from gender expectations. Since her study focused on the dynamics of gender inequality, the choice of two contrasting case studies was a wise move to place them in context.

3- Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a **systematic**, methodological approach to qualitative research and analysis that constructs a theory “from the ground up.” (when there is no hypothesis at all in your mind about a specific phenomena that you noticed and want to investigate) It is an inductive and iterative process of data collection, coding, categorization, and analytic memo writing in order to arrive at a central or core category that **helps formulate a theory to explain the phenomenon** (so as we said you don’t have a theory or hypothesis, and after you collected the data and analyze it, theories start to come to your mind. So you started from the ground with no hypothesis and you go up to reach the hypothesis and maybe the definitive truth) under investigation. The methodology was developed by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss and profiled in their germinal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.

Grounded theory relies primarily but not exclusively on separate interview with a minimum of 10 participants to gather sufficient data to assess their variability and to build theories.

Grounded Theory Example

Saldaña’s analysis of adolescent friendships generated the core category *discriminating*. The grounded theory—a one sentence statement with an accompanying narrative—that explains how teenagers discriminate is: “*An adolescent’s inclusion and exclusion criteria for friendships are determined by the young person’s ability to discriminate both positively and negatively among socially constructed peer stereotypes.*”

Data from young people about social dynamics with their friends and classmates suggested a developmental attunement to the stereotyped categories of cliques and types (e.g., cheerleaders, geeks, jocks, goths, and so on). But they were also able to discriminate—that is, to break through the stereotypes and acknowledge that not everyone perfectly fits a particular peer-attributed social category. Discriminating included a dimension that ranged from *accepting* to *excepting*.

4- Phenomenology

Phenomenology, as it has evolved in qualitative inquiry, **is the study of the nature and states of lived experiences**. This approach distills primarily interview data to their essences and essentials to determine what something “is” or “means” to a collective body of participants. (in more simpler way, you want to know about the phenomena by knowing how it affects people minds, and you can know that by knowing what it means to them after they experienced it, bcz it’s meaning to them depend on how they think about it). **Most phenomenological inquiries are framed with research questions that begin with “What is/are . . . ?,” such as “What is the nature of ’belonging’?” “What does it mean ’to belong’?” and “What are the lived experiences of ’belonging’?”**

Phenomenologists are encouraged as much as possible to **bracket or to set aside their own assumptions about the phenomenon so as not to influence the constructions by participants and the analysis of their responses**. (because we want to investigate the participants experience about it, not the researcher own experience) Priority is given to the experiences themselves as shared by participants for answering the primary research question. Phenomenology is a genre that taps into the **ontological nature of the human condition and analyzes the meaningful wholes of often elusive, taken-for-granted states of being**.

Phenomenology Example

Hlava and Elfers (2014) explored “The Lived Experience of Gratitude” by interviewing 51 individuals. Participants shared their stories, experiences, and understandings of the phenomenon, and the co-researchers analyzed transcripts first through In Vivo Coding to remain close to people’s constructions of gratitude, and then generated major categories and themes of meaning.

Hlava and Elfers learned that the primary reported feature of gratitude was *self-other relatedness*, “an altered or enhanced feeling of connectedness. . . . Boundaries between self and other were reduced, softened, or attenuated” (p. 438). Gratitude is dynamic, meaning that it ranges in intensity from low to overwhelming, and even stimulates physical effects on one’s body such as sensations in the heart and chest, warmth, and a sense of cathartic release.

Emotional affects include responses such as comfort, joy, thankfulness, and a sense of feeling “blessed.”

5- Content Analysis

Content analysis systematically examines primarily print and media materials’ words and images for their topics, themes, concepts, and ideas through quantitative and/or qualitative analysis. (so we go to any source of data, like hospital records, TV’s live shows, And do our research on them -so we don’t do interviews with the participants, we go back to a CONTENT of something and analyze it) **The goal is to examine aspects such as frequency, type, correlation, and absence in a body of data to generate manifest readings which infer latent meanings.** Content analysis colloquially “counts what counts.”

Content Analysis Example

Back, Küfner, and Egloff (2010), in “The Emotional Timeline of September 11, 2001,” examined emotional words transmitted through text pagers (the technology at the time) immediately before and after the U.S. terrorist attack. The data base consisted of an Internet-accessible 6.4 million words from over 85,000 pagers and analyzed “words related to (a) sadness (e.g., *crying, grief*), (b) anxiety (e.g., *worried, fearful*), and (c) anger (e.g., *hate, annoyed*)” two hours before through 18 hours after the first attack (p. 1417).

The most prevalent emotion immediately after the first attack was not sadness but anxiety, which lessened as time went on most likely due to incoming information about the attacks. Anger strongly and steadily increased in the population, reaching a level ten times as high than when the first attack began.

6- Action Research

Action research, also known as participatory action research (PAR), generally includes a change agenda in its fieldwork. Participants are viewed not as research subjects but as empowered collaborators working to make their local conditions better. The researcher and participants work together on a particular problem or issue to diagnose its sources, develop specific action strategies for changing the current conditions, and assess the efficacy of their efforts. Action research is also used by many

practitioners such as classroom teachers for self-reflection on their work and professional development. (simply, we do contact those in a specific action, and ask them about it, what problems they have, and how we can solve them. So the participant gives the idea, the theory, and the solution, bcz he is in the ACTION and can see all of these). Also, it require those who are self-study to be deeply reflexive and honest with themselves.

Action Research Example

Kitchen and Stevens (2008) note: “Simply stated, action research looks for answers to the question, ‘how do I improve my work?’” (p. 12). To do so themselves, they conducted a “meta” action research project by educating pre-service teachers on how to conduct action research in school settings, while Kitchen and Stevens simultaneously analyzed their own work as teacher educators. The positive testimonies provided by 75% of their students suggested: “Many of the pre-service teachers identified reflection as an important part of the process, which suggests that explicitly connecting reflection and action research can be a powerful strategy in teacher education” (p. 21).

But approximately 20% of the students expressed concern over the viability of the project, as in this honest response: “The action research was essentially useless. A research paper would have served us better. We do not have the experience or the time to worry about it in the practicum. I found the research part very helpful, but the action part was not” (p. 21).

7- Evaluation Research

Evaluation research assigns judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy. Program evaluation is “the systematic collection of **information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.** Could be applied on the Policies, organizations, and personnel can also be evaluated” (Patton, 2015, p. 18).

Evaluation data describe, compare, and predict. Patton (2008, p. 478) notes that four distinct processes are used to make sense of evaluation findings: analysis of the data for its patterns; interpretation of their significance; judgment of the results; and recommendations for action. “In the simplest terms, evaluations are said to answer three questions: What? So what? Now what?” (p. 5)

Evaluation Research Example

Santos-Guerra and Fernández-Sierra (1996) were commissioned to conduct a “Qualitative Evaluation of a Program on Self-care and Health Education for Diabetics” in a Spanish hospital. The first stage consisted of four months of participant observation of a nurse’s practice with patients, and interviews with patients, their families, and doctors. Document reviews included information booklets from drug companies which were given to patients. The booklets also served as springboards for interviews with the recipients. The co-evaluators’ preliminary report was critical, yet this first stage of evaluation and its discussion with hospital personnel uncovered the problems observed by the outside reviewers.

The second stage of the evaluation lasted one year. New to this period was the addition of observations of doctors’ medical sessions with patients, and self-development sessions with patients and their families. In the final report, Santos-Guerra and Fernández-Sierra offered 13 different points for the hospital staff to consider which included aspects such as: patient myths and errors about diabetes; differing patient perceptions of doctors’ and nurses’ roles; family members’ involvement in the patients’ diabetes management; and other categories such as patient training for diabetic care.

8- Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a **recently developed genre** of qualitative research that **asks researchers to turn a reflexive gaze toward themselves**. Autoethnography is not just a first-person narrative of one’s life or significant moments from it. **The ethnography part of the methodology suggests that one’s personal ways of living and one’s ethos or value, attitude, and belief systems are critical features of the account**. Autoethnography is the introspective examination of one’s culture through a “**culture-of-one’s**” **experiences**. (Okay, I know that it is hard to understand

this, so I will simplify it as much as I can. Autoethnography, simply is to notice a phenomena and try to know the basis or the cause of it according to your own thoughts, culture, values attitudes and beliefs. So you try to understand it by your own, trying to find the most appropriate explanation according to your own knowledge and your own culture. If you remember, in ethnography genre, you try to understand the phenomena according to the population of the phenomena culture, BUT in AUTOethnography, you try to understand a phenomena according to your own culture and thoughts)

Autoethnography, at its best, blends تجمع بين case study intimacy with ethnographic cultural revelation. **The qualitative researcher becomes her own participant in a naturalistic study of personal life experiences (as we said)**. Self-inquiry can provide not only a deeper understanding of one's self, it generates a first-person, authentic account of a way of life that informs audiences of the diversity of human nature.

Autoethnography Example

Sonny Nordmarken (2014) writes evocatively of his sex transition from female to male in "Becoming Ever More Monstrous: Feeling Transgender In-betweenness." The autoethnography traces the timeline of his testosterone treatments and other medical procedures with life story vignettes and internal monologues about his shifting identity.

"I experience a feeling of inclusion that I have not ever felt, and in others, I feel excluded in ways I have never felt. Yet, at times, the femininity I continue to embody as a transmasculine being leads people to look at me funny. I feel new feelings particular to transness: anxiety, fear, hypervigilance. It can be dangerous to be a transsexual. It can be a lot of emotional work to navigate the cisgender world. I experience sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and White, male, able-bodied privilege." (p. 38)

9- Mixed Methods

Mixed methods research is the **intentional blending of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses** for studies that will benefit from the combined outcomes. The primary purpose is to generate a more substantive data base through different forms of inquiry in order to **capitalize on each paradigm's strengths**.

Mixed methods research is **employed when the researcher determines that both qualitative and quantitative data will better inform the analysis in order to answer the research questions at hand**. At its best, each **paradigm** not only contributes its own strengths, but compensates for the other paradigm's information-generating deficiencies. **Statistics can provide a generally acknowledged robustness to findings, while language offers a more human dimension and texture to the report**. (and by doing both of these designs on a specific topic, we can get the best results from different aspect)

Mixed Methods Example

McCammon et al. administered an online survey with 234 former students responding to "Lifelong Impact: Adult Perceptions of Their High School Speech and/or Theatre Participation." The co-researchers wanted to support the anticipated mass of qualitative respondent testimony with quantitative assessment. Statistical evidence would be gathered to corroborate participants' claims, and to enable the researchers to employ several inferential tests to determine if any significant differences might exist between men and women; between different generational cohorts; and so on.

Quantitative

My participation in high school speech and/or theatre has affected the adult I am now.

- 4 — Strongly Agree
- 3 — Agree
- 2 — Disagree
- 1 — Strongly Disagree

Qualitative

In what ways do you think your participation in speech and/or theatre as a high school student has affected the adult you have become?

One surprising outcome from the study was the subtle differences among the five decades of generations. Survey respondents aged 50 and above placed more value on extrinsic rewards and accomplishments during their high school years, while respondents in their 20s valued intrinsic outcomes such as friendships, personal growth, and identity development. In this case, qualitative analysis revealed what quantitative analysis could not.

Closure

Some disciplines, like health care, seem to restrict themselves to a selected and acceptable canon of **genres** for publication. Other disciplines, like communication, seem open to a range of genres, from the traditional to the arts-based, in their literature. Individual research methods instructors and school faculty may espouse just a narrow band of methodologies as preferred ways of working. Other faculty and perhaps thesis and dissertation chairs may support students' forays into innovative topics, methods, and genres. **Just as there are multiple ways to live a life, there are multiple ways to conduct research into life.**

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