QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

UGA SEER CENTER - 2016

Jennifer Jo Thompson
University of Georgia

INTRODUCTIONS

- Name
- Department
- Experience with qualitative research?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the rationale for using qualitative methods (in education research)
- Understand the kinds of research questions qualitative methods can successfully address
- Identify major data collection and analysis methods used in qualitative research
- Gain a basic understanding of how to analyze qualitative data through coding

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- "The goal of qualitative research is the development of concepts which help us understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meaning, experiences, and views of all the participants." (Pope & Mays, 1995)
- "Qualitative methods can help bridge the gap between [experimental] evidence and [real world] practice" (Green & Britten, 1998)

WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

- Focuses on validity of findings
  - Credibility of findings to participants
- Attentive to context
  - Describe in detail.
  - How is this case typical and/or unique?
  - ** Crucial for understanding it's contribution **
- Uses inductive reasoning:
  - Generating – not testing – hypotheses
  - Discovering meaningful categories in data, rather than imposing *a priori* categories on data.
  - Iterative process between data collection, analysis, and theory development

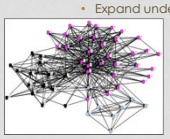
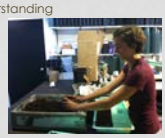
RELATIONSHIP TO QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

1. Formative research -- necessary for good quantitative research
   - Provide a description and understanding of the issue
   - Generate hypotheses
   - Contribute to developing valid measures & programs


Arabidopsisunpak.org - Photo Credit: Anna Matthews

RELATIONSHIP TO QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

2. SUPPLEMENT to quantitative research
   - Compare data collected through multiple methods to corroborate or interrogate findings ("triangulation")
     - Identify areas of convergence
       - Validates findings
     - Identify areas of divergence
       - Interrogate findings
       - Identify issues in need of further research
       - Expand understanding


RELATIONSHIP TO QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

3. EXPLORE issues that cannot be studied well with quantitative research
   - Examine unfolding policies & processes
   - Understand the 'lived-experience' of participants
   - Examine complex behaviors & attitudes
   - Identify issues that are hidden in quantitative studies

Transitioning from learner to teacher

"Sometimes we'll have new people come into the lab and…they'll ask questions and [my advisor will] be like [he] should be able to answer that."

BREAKOUT #1

- Identify areas of your research that would be best investigated through qualitative research?
  - Understand phenomenon in it's natural setting
  - Bridge the implementation gap
- Articulate the rationale for using qualitative methods in this project.
  - Formative research? Supplement? Examine?
  - (Discover… Identify… Develop… Characterize…)

REPORT OUT

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RIGOR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

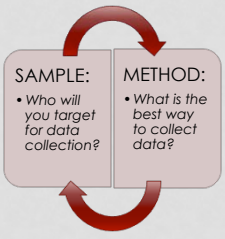
COMMON CRITIQUES:
- Findings are anecdotal, personal, ungeneralizable
- Findings lack reproducibility

OVERCOMING THESE CRITIQUES requires:
- Systematic process in study design, sampling, data collection, analysis & interpretation, and communication
- Reflexivity: meticulous documentation, awareness of researcher's position and potential bias, recognizing limitations

Let's look at this in more detail…

COLLECTING QUALITATIVE DATA

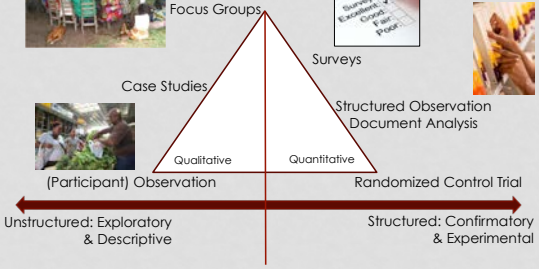
Based on your research question…



QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

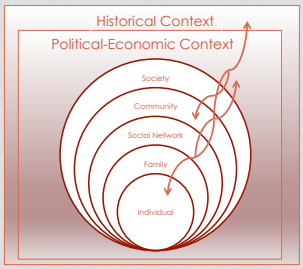
- Choosing the right tool(s) for the job:
  - Observation
  - Document analysis
  - Interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Participatory methods:
    - Photovoice
    - Mapping

CHOOSING & TRIANGULATING METHODS



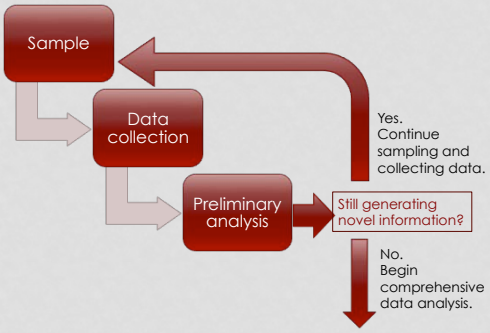
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

- Mixed-methods toolkit
- Context-driven
- Flexible & Iterative
  - Follows the data
  - Responds to unexpected findings



PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

- Systematic, but not probabilistic
  - Identify groups whose experience/characteristics are relevant to the phenomenon of interest
  - GOAL: Access full range of perspectives or experiences
  - Purposively select for:
    - Typical and/or extreme cases
    - Maximum variation (range of experiences/perspectives)
    - Snow-ball sample (in hard to ID populations)
    - Avoid a 'convenience sample' whenever possible
    - **May be guided by developing theory (iterative process)**
  - *N* is not predetermined -- Continues to 'saturation'
    - Interviews no longer generate novel information



BREAKOUT #2

- Using your response to Breakout #1, identify the methods that would be most appropriate for your qualitative research study.
  1. Who are the subjects of this study?
     - This study aims to understand X about Y.
  2. What methods are most appropriate?
     - Consider triangulating more than one method.
  3. How might you purposively sample?
     - Relevance, Range, Saturation

REPORT OUT

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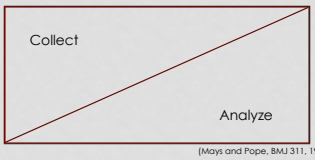
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS

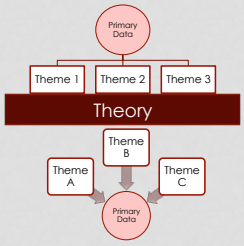
- Analysis starts before all data is collected



(Mays and Pope, BMJ 311, 1995)

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

- Research isn't done once the data is collected!
- *How do you make sense of your data?*
  - *Familiarization*
  - *Identifying themes*
    - *Building preliminary theory*
  - *Indexing data (coding)*
  - *Charting*
    - *Organizing & summarizing*
    - *Refining theory*
  - *Interpretation & Validation*



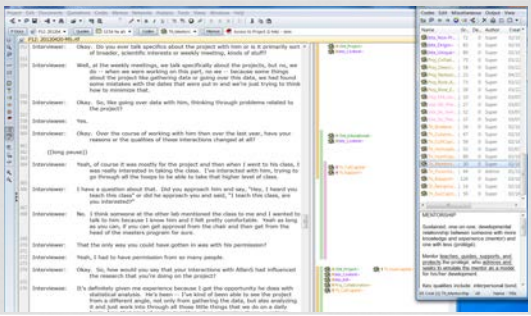
THEMATIC CODING

- Inductive Coding: Data-driven coding; Open-Coding
  - Identifying themes in data – "intensive reading" (Charmaz 2003)
  - Stabilizing code definitions
  - Organizing themes into a theoretical framework
- Deductive Coding: Concept-driven coding
  - Looking for predetermined themes in data (your *codebook*)
    - Identified through the literature, theory, or inductive coding process
  - Organizing data according to themes
    - Qualitative findings: Identify the range of ways in which the theme is expressed; analyze relationships between codes; case comparisons
    - Quasi-Quant findings: Examine the prevalence of themes – within and across participants. USE WITH EXTREME CAUTION!!!
- Often an iterative process

CHALLENGES

- Preparing the data and checking it for accuracy
- Lumping v. Splitting
- Too many codes
- Shifting definitions
- "Interrater reliability" or agreement between coders

QUALITATIVE DATA MANAGEMENT



VALIDATION STRATEGIES

- Examining deviant/negative cases
  - *Does my theoretical framework account for these cases?*
- Theoretical plausibility
  - *Does it make sense?*
- Triangulation
  - Interrogating and corroborating findings by comparing across:
    - Methods
    - Sets of participants
- Presenting findings to participants
  - Face validity: *Do my findings accurately reflect your experience?*

WRAP UP

- Why you might use qualitative research?
  - Formative research: Hypothesis generation
    - How might this data help you design what you'd do quantitatively?
  - Supplement quantitative research:
    - Corroborate or interrogate findings
  - Complement quantitative research
    - Examine processes, multiple stakeholders, etc. (issues not well-suited for quantitative research)

QUESTIONS?

- Thank you!
  - Sonya Pritzker, UCLA
  - Paula Lemons, UGA
- Contact me: jjthomp@uga.edu
- Great resource: BMJ series from 1995
  - Pope, C. and N. Mays (1995). "Reaching the parts other methods cannot reach: an introduction to qualitative methods in health and health services research." BMJ: British Medical Journal **311**(6996): 42.
  - Mays, N. and C. Pope (1995). "Qualitative research: Observational methods in health care settings." BMJ: British Medical Journal **311**(6998): 182.
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  - Britten, N. (1995). "Qualitative Research: Qualitative interviews in medical research." Bmj **311**(6999): 251-253.