

Chapter One Summary

Chapter one starts by trying to define research and introducing its categories and some sub-types. For the definition, the chapter claims the common aspect is being a **systematic inquiry** method. We are then introduced to its categories, **basic research** which focuses mostly on expanding knowledge and **applied research** whose main objective is to improve practice. We also talk about two forms of applied research, **evaluation studies** that seem to be about creating a basis for decision making and **action research** which addresses a specific problem prioritizing practical solutions.

We then change our scope and look specifically at Qualitative Research. **Qualitative Research** is unique because instead of just measuring the frequency and identifying causes (like Quantitative Research) it explores the meaning of the experiences it studies.

This type of research originates from anthropology and sociology since they also focused on people's lives or perspectives. This chapter also points out some key publications for the process of the "creation" of Qualitative Research as we know it today, namely being *Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and *Toward a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation* by Egon Guba. The book claims that through the massive impact of these studies Qualitative Research saw a growing number of publications in the following years.

Then we are introduced to the **Epistemological Perspectives**. **Positivism**, that assumes reality is observable, stable and measurable, and aims to create "laws" (sometimes judged to be too rigid). PostPositivism exists as a less rigid alternative. **Interpretive** treats reality as a social construct and claims there isn't only one real perspective. **Critical** aims to critique and bring about powerful questions, putting into question things such as the power structure of society. **Postmodern** that rejects the idea of a single truth, being highly experimental and looks to celebrate diversity among people, ideas and institutions. These 4 perspectives are very diverse not only in perspective but also in the techniques they use and the results they plan to reach. So choosing which one would be most appropriate for your perspective and study is a crucial factor for success.

We finished this chapter by restating in a more specific way **the qualities of Qualitative Research**. We are reminded that it aims to understand on a deeper level aspects that are not numerical, it aims to keep in consideration the context, the perspectives and the unique experiences that it will study. In Qualitative Research the **Researcher** is the main instrument for data collection and analysis, being able to be more immediate in its interactions with the study, whilst always keeping in mind the need to acknowledge the personal biases and only let them influence the study in a constructive manner. We should also keep in mind that Qualitative Research is an **Inductive Process** gathering data to inductively build their theories and hypotheses instead of testing them deductively, gathering as much relevant information to try and create new meaning and a deeper understanding instead of trying to find something already present in the data. In nature the product of

Qualitative Research is **extremely descriptive**, aiming to richly use words, images, quotes or other methods to try and create the most appropriate and detailed picture possible.

Chapter Two Summary

This chapter starts by discussing the existence of a big variety in qualification for the different possible approaches that can be found within the umbrella term "Qualitative Research". The author then explains that these specifications are important because although most share some characteristics they are still very different, having each their own focuses, data related techniques, question creating methods and so on. The author explains to us that we will be taking a look into the following **list of 6 approaches: Basic Qualitative Research, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography, Narrative Analysis and Critical Qualitative Research.**

Basic Qualitative Research focuses on the fundamental concepts of Qualitative research, taking as its point of interest people's interpretation of their own experiences, what they take from them and how these interpretations are used to create their reality. Since it lacks a specific Theoretical framework it's more dependent on the researcher's framework and perspectives.

Phenomenology makes the star of its studies the experience in itself. It aims to find the essence of shared experiences, ignoring possible preconceived notions to find the true core behind these experiences. For such effect there are 3 key methods. **Phenomenological reduction** is the process of repeatedly returning to the essence of the experience, isolating it to comprehend its core. **Horizontalization** is a process that starts by giving the same weight to all data collected, given the possibility of all information being relevant. **Imaginative variation** consists of trying to look at the data from as many perspectives as possible, taking different conclusions from different angles.

Grounded Theory differs from other approaches aiming to create theories rather than descriptions, developing theories that have practical application, like coping mechanisms and educational programs. Its method of data collection is **Theoretical Sampling** in which the researchers after collecting data from their first sample, analyse it in order to understand how and what they should be looking for in the creation of a new sample. Afterwards the **constant comparative method** of data analysis is used trying to find similarities among the collected pieces of data and separating them into categories. Through the use of these methods researchers aim to identify the **Core Category** being the *main conceptual element through which all other categories and properties are connected*.

Ethnography differentiates itself by its need for a **high level of immersion**, focussing particularly on the effects of the culture on the actions and relations of its members. Researchers bring a big focus to the insider's perspective believing the data should only be collected after a full incorporation into the culture, using the

language spoken in that setting, first-hand participation in activities of the setting. Their studies rely on **Thick Descriptions** to be able to properly understand and explain these cultural contexts being extremely careful not to undermine any part of the experience taking place.

Narrative Analysis is a unique approach to research using as its data **complete Stories or Narratives**, usually from a first person perspective. This approach has 3 main methodologies. **Biographical analysis** that focuses on the impact of factors such as gender, race and turning point experiences. **Psychological approach** that concentrates more on the personal, including thoughts and motivations. **Linguistic approach** that focuses on the language specifically used, speaker's intonation, pitch and pauses.

Critical Qualitative Research centers itself around the word **Power**. It tries to understand how power is negotiated and distributed in social contexts, hoping to understand their power structures and imbalances. A main tone of this approach is the **critique** not focusing only on creating descriptions but putting them in question and understanding how and why the unfairnesses in these systems are created. Given this nature, critical research has a heavy presence of topics related with Feminism and Race, looking to understand the many ways in which these factors create injustice in our systems. An important category to note is **Participatory action research (PAR)** that looks to empower people through their involvement in the research and as a result create collective action against the possible oppression taking place in the studied environment.

Chapter Nine Summary

This chapter will revolve around validity, reliability, and ethics in research. Detailing how to assure these characteristics and their particular behaviours in Qualitative research having an emphasis in the importance of trustworthy results.

Maintaining **Validity and Reliability** are key challenges of research, behaving differently in qualitative and quantitative research. While quantitative researchers emphasize fidelity in their procedures, qualitative researchers will focus on detailed descriptions to guarantee credibility. Qualitative researchers often forego these notions in favor of concepts such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability more appropriate to the philosophical aspects and questions of qualitative research. It is also important to note that different qualitative research types may use different criteria even for these more specific concepts.

We are then introduced to **internal validity** which, in research, focuses on how appropriate findings are as a reflection of reality. This is a challenging aspect since qualitative research often sees reality as ever-changing and dependent on perspective. These subjective aspects that are integral to many qualitative research paradigms clash with this notion creating some conflicts, some researchers claim it's non applicability to their work.

While qualitative research cannot create objective truth it does have strategies that can be used to increase credibility. **Triangulation** is the first mentioned portraying mostly the idea of cross checking information. Using methods such as comparing information obtained in interviews with behaviours observed on site or other forms of documentation. Using multiple sources of data, comparing data collected at different times, from different perspectives and even having follow up interviews to confirm previous statements. Investigator triangulation occurs when there are multiple investigators collecting and analyzing the data. Finally there can even be triangulation in theories to confirm the findings.

Other strategies may involve **member checks** which consist of getting feedback on your findings from the participants related to them. **Adequate engagement in data collection** simply reflects the need to keep on collecting data until you are faced with no new developments in your conclusions. **Researcher's position** is the label for the strategy that recommends reflecting properly not only on the data but the influence of the researcher on the results being aware that it might

come from biases, moods or previous assumptions. Lastly we have **peer reviews** that simply entails guaranteeing that others with the appropriate knowledge confirm your logic and give you input on your work.

Usually **Reliability** refers to replicability of findings, however as previously stated that is not the strong suit of qualitative research. Unlike traditional studies, qualitative research aims to describe experiences instead of isolation of laws of behavior. In place of traditional reliability we search for **Consistency**, in particular between the findings and the collected data, the idea that with access to the data the results should always appear reasonable to their audience. To achieve this we can use many tactics such as triangulation, peer examination and **audit trails**. An audit trail is a detailed account of data collection, analysis, and decision-making with the purpose of serving as an authentication method for the findings.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (how generalizable they are). However this seems to be a limiting approach when aiming to identify the worth of qualitative studies, since they prioritize giving in-depth understanding of specific cases. This preference leads to the use of the term **transferability**, the idea that a study should be as descriptive as possible so the reader can more easily understand if the study applies to their particular situation, and in the case it does it should be as easy to apply as possible. Ways to improve this particular aspect would be **thick descriptions**. Another strategy is maximum **variation** within the sample, meaning to find the widest variety of people possible that fit within the relevant terms of your study.

Finally we explored the **ethical considerations** an essential part of qualitative studies, this is one of the most important factors in maintaining credibility. Although it is widely acknowledged that there aren't proper guidelines on how to preserve this aspect, since it is highly subjective and mostly dictated by the researcher's personal and unique moral compass, there still exist a couple of pillars that should always be prioritized. **Participant protection** from harm, not letting the participation in this study affect the subject negatively. **Informed consent** is the idea that the participant should always give proper consent, be aware of what he is consenting to and be allowed to withdraw said consent anytime. Lastly the right to **privacy** guaranteeing that no participants will be exposed or identifiable for their participation. All of these work toward avoiding the **possible exploitation** of innocent people that might not be aware that they might be deceived by researchers claiming to only have good intentions. This particular dimension is completely essential for the creation of trustworthy results but more importantly for the existence of a healthy and safe scientific space and community.