



TMSL  
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# Definition



- Qualitative Research is collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. Qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things.
- Qualitative research is subjective and uses very different methods of collecting information, including individual, in-depth interviews and focus groups. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended.

# Strengths



- **Good for examining feelings and motivations**
- **Allows for complexity and depth of issues**
- **Provides insights into the real life situations**

# Weaknesses



- **Can't extrapolate to the whole population**
- **Volume of data**
- **Complexity of analysis**
- **Time-consuming nature of the clerical efforts required in this method of research**

# Qualitative Methods



When should I use qualitative methods?

- When variables cannot be quantified;
- When variables are best understood in their natural settings;
- When variables are studied over real time;
- When studying intimate details of roles, processes, and groups;
- When the paramount objective is “understanding”.



# Qualitative Methods



## What skills do I need?

- Must have requisite knowledge and skills about methodology, setting and nature of the issue.
- Must be familiar with own biases, assumptions, expectations, and values.
- Must be empathic, intelligent, energetic, and interested in listening
- Must be open to embracing multiple realities.
- Must be prepared to produce detailed, comprehensive, and sometimes lengthy reports.

# Qualitative Methods



- Qualitative research *quickly* exhausts resources and time.
- Therefore, it is ideal to limit the amount of data collected.
- *It's not the size that matters, it's what you do with the data.*
- Be very clear about the research focus.
- Write down your foggy ideas and then get more specific.
- Concentrate on most important issues and not others.
- Start writing specific questions you want to answer.
- Now get even more specific, reduce the additional info.

# What is an In-depth Interview?



- **A conversation on a given topic between a respondent and an interviewer**
- **Used to obtain detailed insights and personal thoughts**
- **Flexible and unstructured, but usually with an interview guide**
- **Purpose: to probe informants' motivations, feelings, beliefs**
- **Lasts about an hour**
- **Interviewer creates relaxed, open environment**
- **Wording of questions and order are determined by flow of conversation**
- **Interview transcripts are analyzed for themes and connections between themes**



# Types of Qualitative Research



- I. Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study**
- II. Phenomenological Study**
- III. Grounded Theory Study**
- IV. Case Studies**
- V. Ethnographic Study**
- VI. Narrative Analysis**

# Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study



- Can be used when an instructor is interested in how students make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. It uses an inductive strategy, collecting data from interviews, observations, or document analysis (e.g., students' written work). Analysis is of patterns or common themes and the outcome is a rich descriptive account that makes reference to the literature that helped frame the study.

**Example:** An interview of 45 women from varying backgrounds and a comparison of the developmental patterns discerned with earlier findings on male development. They found women's lives evolved through periods of tumultuous, structure-building phases that alternated with stable periods.



# Phenomenological Study



- Aims to find the essence or structure of an experience by explaining how complex meanings are built out of simple units of inner experience, for example, the essence of being a participant in a particular program or the essence of understanding a subject. The method involves temporarily putting aside or “bracketing” personal attitudes and beliefs regarding the phenomenon, thereby heightening consciousness and allowing the researcher to intuit or see the phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it. All collected data is laid out and treated as equal, clustered into themes, examined from multiple perspectives, and descriptions of the phenomena (how and what) are constructed.
- **Example:** Eight clinical psychology practicum-level trainees were interviewed to obtain experience of good supervision. Meaning units were identified from these and a meaning structure was identified and refined into the essence or essential elements of good supervisory experiences shared by a majority in this context.

# Grounded Theory Study



- Derives from collected data a theory that is “grounded” in the data, but therefore localized, dealing with a specific situation like how students handle multiple responsibilities or what constitutes an effective lesson plan. The method involves comparing collected units of data against one another until categories, properties, and hypotheses that state relations between these categories and properties emerge. These hypotheses are tentative and suggestive, not tested in the study.
- **Example:** Ten school counselors were given structured interviews to help determine how their professional identity is formed. This data was coded first to form concepts and then to form connections between concepts. A core concept emerged and its process and implications were discussed. School counselors’ professional interactions were identified as defining experiences in their identity formation.



# Case Studies



- A descriptive intensive analysis of an individual, unit, or phenomena selected for its typicality or uniqueness. Different methods could be used to conduct this analysis (like ethnography) but the focus is on the unit of analysis, like an individual student's experiences.
- **Example:** The faculty of a small Southern Historically Black College was examined in order to examine concerns of a digital divide between predominantly White colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The study reports on technology familiarity and use scores of these faculties and what was done by college administrators in the three years following the collection of these scores. Recommendations on how to close this divide are shared.

# Ethnographic Study



- Traditional in anthropology for studying human society and culture. It is less a method of data collection and more the use of a socio-cultural lens through which the data are interpreted. Extensive fieldwork is usually required in order to give a cultural interpretation of the data and immersion in the culture is common, but a description of the culture (the beliefs, traditions, practices, and behaviors of a group of individuals) and an interpretation of the culture through the point of view of an insider to that culture are necessary components of ethnographies.
- **Example:** Native American students training to be teachers were followed through interviews over a five year period to chart the progress towards a goal of facilitating the development of Native American teachers and to better understand and address their unique problems. Their beliefs, views about self, and concerns were presented.




# Narrative Analysis



- This involves the use of stories or life narratives, first person accounts of experiences. These stories are used as data, taking the perspective of the storyteller, as opposed to the larger society, with the goal of extracting meaning from the text. The most common types of narrative analysis are psychological, biographical, and discourse analysis. The former involves analyzing the story in terms of internal thoughts and motivations and the latter analyzes the written text or spoken words for its component parts or patterns. Biographical analysis takes the individual's society and factors like gender and class into account.
- **Example:** Oral narratives were collected from three social studies teachers' lectures, conversations with students, and student interactions over a 14 month period. These narratives were coded and analyzed and used to argue that storytelling or the use of oral history was well received by students and provided richer data than more traditional teaching methods.

# Methods of Qualitative Data Collection

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1. Face to Face Interview
  2. Telephonic/ Video Conference Interview
  3. Focus Group Discussion
  4. Observations



# 1. Face to Face interview

## 2. Telephonic/Video Conference interview

### Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Mode of data collection	Advantages	Disadvantages
Personal or face-to-face interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can establish rapport and motivate respondents.</li> <li>Can clarify the questions, clear doubts, add new questions.</li> <li>Can read nonverbal cues.</li> <li>Can use visual aids to clarify points.</li> <li>Rich data can be obtained.</li> <li>CAPI can be used and responses entered in a portable computer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takes personal time.</li> <li>Costs more when a wide geographic region is covered.</li> <li>Respondents may be concerned about confidentiality of information given.</li> <li>Interviewers need to be trained.</li> <li>Can introduce interviewer bias.</li> </ul>
Telephone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less costly and speedier than personal interviews.</li> <li>Can reach a wide geographic area.</li> <li>Greater anonymity than personal interviews.</li> <li>Can be done using CATI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nonverbal cues cannot be read.</li> <li>Interviews will have to be kept short.</li> <li>Obsolete telephone numbers could be contacted, and unlisted ones omitted from the sample.</li> <li>Respondents can terminate the interview at any time.</li> </ul>

### 3. Focus Group Discussion

1. A focus group typically consists of eight to ten members, with a moderator leading the discussions on a particular topic, concept, or product.
2. Members are generally chosen on the basis of their familiarity with the topic on which information is sought
3. The focus sessions aim to obtain respondents' impressions, interpretations, and opinions as they discuss.
4. The ***moderator*** plays a vital role in steering the discussions in a manner that draws out the information sought and keeps the members on track.
5. The unstructured and spontaneous responses are expected to reflect the members' genuine opinions, ideas, and feelings about the topic under discussion.
6. Focus groups are relatively cheap and can provide fairly dependable data within a short time frame.

# Role of the moderator

- The selection and role of the moderator are critical
- The moderator introduces the topic, observes, takes notes, and records the discussions.
- The moderator never becomes an integral part of the discussions but merely steers the group persuasively to obtain all the relevant information and helps the group members get through any possible bottleneck situation.
- The moderator also ensures that all members participate in the discussion and that no member dominates the group.

# Bias in Interviewing

- Interviewees can bias the data when they do not come out with their true opinions but provide information they think is what the interviewer expects or would like to hear.
- They may hesitate to seek clarification if they do not understand the questions. They may then answer questions without knowing their importance and thus introduce bias.
- Some interviewees may be turned off because of personal likes and dislikes, the dress of the interviewer, or the manner in which the questions are asked. They may, therefore, not provide truthful answers but instead deliberately offer incorrect responses.
- Some respondents may also answer questions in a socially acceptable manner rather than indicating their true sentiments



- Nonparticipation or absenteeism can bias data inasmuch as the participants' responses may differ from those of the nonparticipants.
- Bias also occurs when different interviewers establish different levels of trust and rapport with their interviewees, thus eliciting answers of varying degrees of openness.
- The actual setting in which the interview is conducted might sometimes introduce bias. Some individuals, for instance, may not feel quite at ease when interviewed at the workplace and, therefore, may not respond frankly and honestly.
- Biased data will be obtained when respondents are interviewed while they are extremely busy or are not in a good mood.
- Responses to issues such as strikes, layoffs, or the like could also be biased. The interviewer's personality, the introductory sentence, the inflection of the voice, and other aspects could introduce additional bias.

# How to address the bias in interviewing?

1. Rapport building with respondents by spending some time on introduction and achievement of comfort
2. Asking unbiased questions to minimize bias in the responses.  
For example, “Tell me how you experience your job” is a better question than, “The work you do must be really boring; let me hear how you experience it.”
3. Seeking Clarification from respondents by rephrasing or repeating the responses –  
For instance, if the interviewee says, “There is an unfair promotion policy in this organization; seniority does not count at all – it is the juniors who always get promoted,” the researcher might interject, “So you are saying that juniors always get promoted over the heads of even capable seniors.”
4. The interviewer should be sincere, pleasant, and non-evaluative.
5. While interviewing, the researcher has to ask broad questions initially and then narrow them down to specific areas.
6. The responses should be transcribed immediately and not be trusted to memory and later recall.

## 4. Observations

- a) **Non-participant observation** - In the case of non-participant observation, the researcher is never directly involved in the actions of the actors but observes them from outside the actors' visual horizon, for instance, via a one-way mirror or a camera.

It's passive participation allows the researcher to collect the required data without becoming an integral part of the (organizational) system.

- b) **Participant observation** - It is an approach that has frequently been used in case studies, ethnographic studies, and grounded theory studies. The researcher gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization under study.

Moderate participation occurs when the researcher does not actively participate and only occasionally interacts with the group under study.

Active participation is when the researcher actually engages in almost everything that the group under study is doing as a means of trying to learn about their behavior.

In complete participant observation, the researcher becomes a member of the social group under study

# Conducting Observations

1. Be unobtrusive in your actions.
2. Become familiar with the setting before collecting other types of data.
3. Be tolerant of ambiguity: this includes being adaptive and flexible.
4. Pay attention, and alternate between a wide (a view of the overall situation) and a narrow (focusing on a single person, activity, or interaction) perspective.
5. Look at interactions in the setting: who talks to whom, who is respected, and how are decisions made.
6. Listen carefully to conversations, look for keywords in conversations, and write these down to prompt later recollection of the conversation.
7. Concentrate on the first and last remarks of a conversation, as these are most easily remembered.
8. Being attentive for a long time is difficult; pay attention off and on. Capitalize on moments of attention.