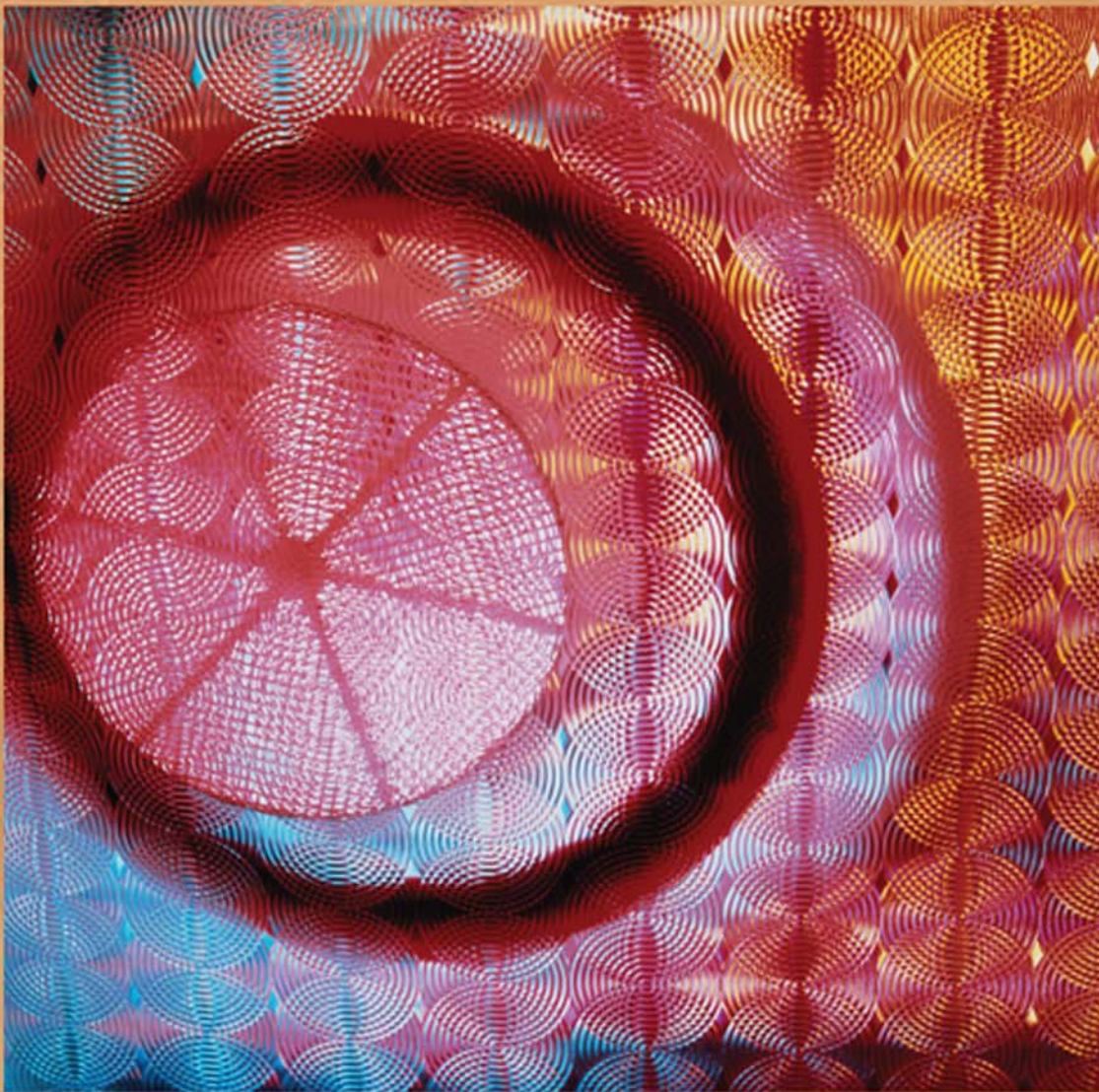


LISA M. GIVEN EDITOR

The SAGE Encyclopedia of
**QUALITATIVE
RESEARCH METHODS**



VOLUMES 1 & 2

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RESEARCH METHODS

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VOLUMES 1 & 2



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Interdisciplinary Qualitative
 Studies Conference

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| International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry | Memoirs | Open-Ended Question |
| International Human Science Research Conference | Memos and Memoing | Oral History |
| International Institute for Qualitative Methodology | Meta-Analysis | <i>Oral History Review</i> (Journal) |
| <i>International Journal of Qualitative Methods</i> | Meta-Ethnography | Oriental Perspective |
| Internet in Qualitative Research | Meta-Narrative | Otherness |
| Interpretation | Metaphor | Over-Rapport |
| Interpretive Inquiry | Meta-Synthesis | Paradigm |
| Interpretive Phenomenology | Methodological Holism Versus Individualism | Para-Ethnography |
| Interpretive Research | Methodology | Participant |
| Intersubjectivity | Methods | Participant Observation |
| Intertextuality | Mixed Methods Research | Participants as Co-Researchers |
| Interview Guide | Multicultural Research | Participatory Action Research (PAR) |
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| | | Perception |
| | Narrative Analysis | Performance Ethnography |
| | Narrative Genre Analysis | Phenomenography |
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| <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i> | <i>Narrative Inquiry</i> (Journal) | Photographs in Qualitative Research |
| <i>Journal of Mixed Methods Research</i> | Narrative Interview | Photonovella and Photovoice |
| | Narrative Texts | Pilot Study |
| | Naturalistic Data | Place/Space in Qualitative Research |
| Key Informant | Naturalistic Inquiry | Plastic Arts in Qualitative Research. <i>See</i> Arts-Based Research |
| Knowledge | Naturalistic Observation | |
| | Natural Setting | Playbuilding |
| Leaving the Field | Negative Case Analysis | Pluralism |
| Life Stories | Negotiating Exit | Poetry in Qualitative Research |
| Liminal Perspective | Neutrality in Qualitative Research | Politics of Qualitative Research |
| Literature in Qualitative Research | Neutral Question | Population |
| Literature Review | Nonessentialism | Portraiture |
| Lived Experience | Nonparticipant Observation | Positivism |
| | Nonprobability Sampling | Postcolonialism |
| | Nonverbal Communication | Postmodernism |
| | Nud*ist/N6 (Software). <i>See</i> NVivo (Software) | Postpositivism |
| Marginalization | NVivo (Software) | Postrepresentation |
| Marginalized Populations | | Poststructuralism |
| Market Research | Objectivism | Power |
| Maximum Variation Sampling. <i>See</i> Purposeful Sampling | Objectivity | Pragmatism |
| MAXqda (Software) | Observational Research | Praxis |
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| Member Check | Observer Bias | |

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| Probability Sampling | Reductionism | Secondary Participants |
| Probes and Probing | Reflexivity | Selective Coding |
| Program Evaluation | Relational Ethics | Semiotics |
| Projective Techniques | Relativism | Semi-Structured Interview |
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| Prolonged Engagement | Replication | Sensitizing Concepts |
| Pseudonym | Representation | Serendipity |
| Psychoanalytically Informed
Observation | Representational Forms of
Dissemination | Situatedness |
| Psychological Generalization | Research Design | Snowball Sampling |
| Publishing and Publication | Research Diaries and Journals | Social Constructionism |
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| | Researcher as Instrument | Social Justice |
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Research in |
| Qualitative Health Research
Conference | Researcher Safety | Statistics |
| <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> (Journal) | Researcher Sensitivity | Storytelling |
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| | Respondent | Systemic Inquiry |
| | Response Groups | |
| | Results. <i>See</i> Findings | Tacit Knowledge |
| Random Sampling | Rhetoric | Telephone Interview |
| Rapid Assessment Process | Rhythmanalysis | Text |
| Rapport | Rich Data | TextQuest (Software) |
| Raw Data | Rigor in Qualitative Research | Textual Analysis |
| Reactivity | Risk | Theatre of the Oppressed |
| Readers Theater | | Thematic Coding and Analysis |
| Realism | Sample | Themes |
| Reality and Multiple Realities | Sample Size | Theoretical Frameworks |
| Reciprocity | Sampling | Theoretical Memoing |
| Reconstructive Analysis | Sampling Frame | Theoretical Sampling |
| Recruiting Participants | Secondary Analysis | Theoretical Saturation |
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Translatability	Value-Free Inquiry	Visual Research
Transparency	Verification	Voice
Triangulation	Video Intervention/	Vulnerability
Trust	Prevention Assessment	
Trustworthiness	Videorecording	Writing Process

Reader's Guide

The Reader's Guide is designed to help you find specific entries in general subject areas in the encyclopedia, as well as to identify related entries that may interest you. The main headings (e.g., "Data Analysis") provide quick snapshots of the range of categories covered in this volume, while the individual entries listed under each heading show the range of topics within those categories. Some topics (e.g., "Music in Qualitative Research") are listed only once in the guide; others (e.g., "Diaries and Journals") fall into more than one category. You are encouraged to scan through this list to get a clear sense of the scope of the volume, as well as the labels used for specific topics. As all of the entries are listed in alphabetical order, you can move quite quickly between this listing and the entries themselves in the body of the encyclopedia.

The Reader's Guide classifies entries into 16 general topical categories: Approaches and Methodologies; Arts-Based Research, Ties to; Associations, Centers, and Institutes; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Data Analysis; Data Collection; Dissemination and Writing; History of Qualitative Research; Participants; Quantitative Research, Ties to; Research Design and Planning; Research Ethics; Rigor; Textual Analysis, Ties to; and Theoretical and Philosophical Frameworks.

Approaches and Methodologies

Action Research
Advocacy Research
Aesthetics
Applied Research
Appreciative Inquiry
Artifact Analysis
A/r/tography
Arts-Based Research
Arts-Informed Research
Autobiography
Autoethnography
Basic Research
Biography
Case Study
Clinical Research
Collaborative Research
Community-Based Research
Comparative Research
Content Analysis

Conversation Analysis
Covert Research
Critical Action Research
Critical Arts-Based Inquiry
Critical Discourse Analysis
Critical Ethnography
Critical Hermeneutics
Critical Research
Cross-Cultural Research
Discourse Analysis
Document Analysis
Duoethnography
Ecological Research
Emergent Design
Empirical Research
Empowerment Evaluation
Ethnodrama
Ethnography
Ethnomethodology
Evaluation Research
Evidence-Based Practice
Explanatory Research

Exploratory Data Analysis
Feminist Research
Field Research
Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
Genealogical Approach
Grounded Theory
Hermeneutics
Heuristic Inquiry
Historical Discourse Analysis
Historical Research
Historiography
Indigenous Research
Institutional Ethnography
Institutional Research
Interdisciplinary Research
Internet in Qualitative Research
Interpretive Inquiry
Interpretive Phenomenology
Interpretive Research
Market Research
Meta-Analysis
Meta-Ethnography

Meta-Synthesis
 Methodological Holism Versus Individualism
 Methodology
 Methods
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 Phenomenography
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 Playbuilding
 Portraiture
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 Q Methodology
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 Social Justice
 Social Network Analysis
 Survey Research
 Systemic Inquiry
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 Transformational Methods
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 Visual Ethnography
 Visual Narrative Inquiry

Arts-Based Research, Ties to

Aesthetics
 Artifact Analysis
 A/r/tography
 Arts-Based Research

Arts-Informed Research
 Audience
 Autobiography
 Bricolage and Bricoleur
 Collage
 Connoisseurship
 Critical Arts-Based Inquiry
 Dance in Qualitative Research
 Dramaturgy
 Ethnodrama
 Ethnopoetics
 Fictional Writing
 Film and Video in Qualitative Research
 Literature in Qualitative Research
 Memoirs
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 Music in Qualitative Research
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 Photonovella and Photovoice
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 Playbuilding
 Poetry in Qualitative Research
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 Readers Theater
 Researcher as Artist
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Associations, Centers, and Institutes

Association for Qualitative Research (AQR)
 Center for Interpretive and Qualitative Research

International Association of Qualitative Inquiry
 International Institute for Qualitative Methodology
 ResearchTalk, Inc.

Computer-Assisted Data Analysis

ATLAS.ti (Software)
 Computer-Assisted Data Analysis
 Diction (Software)
 Ethnograph (Software)
 Framework (Software)
 HyperRESEARCH (Software)
 MAXqda (Software)
 NVivo (Software)
 Qualrus (Software)
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Data Analysis

Abduction
 Analytic Induction
 Artifact Analysis
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 Categories
 Categorization
 Co-Constructed Narrative
 Codes and Coding
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 Negative Case Analysis
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Introduction

The Field

Qualitative research is designed to explore the human elements of a given topic, where specific methods are used to examine how individuals see and experience the world. Although qualitative research is often described in opposition to quantitative research, many scholars and practitioners are now using mixed methods and interdisciplinary approaches in their projects. Understanding the goals, intentions, and implications of these different research paradigms is vital to developing and assessing appropriate research designs. Qualitative methods are best for addressing many of the *why* questions that researchers have in mind when they develop their projects. Where quantitative approaches are appropriate for examining *who* has engaged in a behavior or *what* has happened and while experiments can test particular interventions, these techniques are not designed to explain why certain behaviors occur. Qualitative approaches are typically used to explore new phenomena and to capture individuals' thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process.

Qualitative methods are central to research conducted in education, nursing, sociology, anthropology, information studies, and other disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and health sciences. The range of methods available is very broad (e.g., in-person interviews, observation, diaries and journals) and projects are informed by various methodologies (e.g., phenomenology, discourse analysis) and theoretical frameworks (e.g., feminist epistemology). However, students, scholars, and professionals who are new to qualitative research typically need guidance in defining the boundaries of this type of work, including guidance in selecting specific methods, knowing what types of data are appropriate for qualitative studies, identifying theoretical frameworks for particular projects, and so on. It is important that both

novice and established scholars understand the language, culture, and paradigmatic approaches used in qualitative research, especially as interdisciplinary projects increasingly link researchers across varied fields of study. Researchers and practitioners at all levels, and across disciplines, will benefit from this encyclopedia, as it defines and explains core concepts, describes the techniques involved in the implementation of qualitative methods, and presents an overview of qualitative approaches to research.

Rationale for This Encyclopedia

The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods presents current and complete information, as well as ready-to-use techniques, facts, and examples from the field of qualitative research in a very accessible style. The volume is designed to appeal to undergraduate and graduate students, practitioners, researchers, consultants, and consumers of information across the social sciences, humanities, and health sciences. The encyclopedia provides a much more comprehensive examination of qualitative methods than is found in other published texts, as it is designed to appeal to readers across disciplines. In taking an interdisciplinary approach, this encyclopedia targets a much broader audience than other texts; it fills a gap in the existing reference literature for a general, interdisciplinary guide to the core concepts that inform qualitative research practices.

The entries cover every major facet of qualitative methods, including gaining access to research participants, data coding, research ethics, the role of theory in qualitative research, and much more—all without overwhelming the informed reader. Although the range of topics is intended to be comprehensive, each individual entry is designed to provide only an introduction to the topic at hand. Each entry is following by a

list of key readings on the topic. In addition, entries may also contain the first and last names of scholars or mention key works that are not included in the Further Readings. These names and resources provide additional starting points for readers who want to identify additional sources on the material discussed in the entry by searching for these people and materials on the internet or in library collections.

To provide quick access to the diversity of topics in the encyclopedia, a “Reader’s Guide” groups the entries into 16 subject categories: Approaches and Methodologies; Arts-Based Research, Ties to; Associations, Centers, and Institutes; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Data Analysis; Data Collection; Dissemination and Writing; History of Qualitative Research; Participants; Quantitative Research, Ties to; Research Design and Planning; Research Ethics; Rigor; Textual Analysis, Ties to; and Theoretical and Philosophical Frameworks.

Content and Organization

There was a concerted effort made in the design of the encyclopedia to cover every topic that informs qualitative research methods practice and development. This is easier said than done! Certainly, a volume like this will never be fully complete, as qualitative methods are in constant evolution—being recrafted and reshaped within and between disciplines. New methods and techniques, new journals, and new software packages are created every year. At the same time, existing approaches are often reframed, particularly as new theoretical frameworks inform thinking on qualitative methods design. The richness and vibrancy of the qualitative paradigm is exciting for researchers and often what draws us to this type of work; and yet, this makes the development of a comprehensive encyclopedia a challenging end goal indeed. We have tried our best to be comprehensive and complete while keeping redundancies to a minimum and while respecting disciplinary differences. Indeed, the political landscape surrounding the value of “scientific” research and the place of qualitative methods within that landscape is a recurring theme in many of the entries. Despite the ubiquitous nature of qualitative methods, for decades, across dozens of disciplines, qualitative methods remain a contested and controversial area of work for many scholars and practitioners. Their voices—and those for whom this area of work is well regarded—ring through this volume.

However, it is also important to note that the language of qualitative methods is difficult to formalize. Whether we refer to a study as using a “discourse analysis” approach, a “meta-analysis” approach, or whether we label it as “content analysis” may be a question of interpretation informed by one’s own disciplinary background and training. Indeed, many of the entries point to substantive debates among qualitative researchers regarding how concepts are labeled and the implications for how qualitative research is valued.

In some cases (as with this discourse analysis example), we have included separate entries on related concepts where we felt that a single entry alone could not represent the nuances of these different, yet connected, terms. In other cases, we have included “see also” references to point readers to a single, preferred term to represent a concept. The authors of the entries have also identified see also terms to point readers to additional, related topics. All of these techniques are designed to guide readers through the complex landscape of the language of qualitative inquiry. However, there may well be a few terms where we have inadvertently omitted a linking term or where we have made a difficult decision in choosing one term over another. The “Reader’s Guide” will therefore serve as an invaluable resource for individuals who need some guidance in locating specific topics.

How the Encyclopedia Was Created

The encyclopedia was developed in six steps:

Step 1: Qualitative methods experts from around the world and representing various disciplines were invited to serve on the editorial board. The board includes individuals who have published widely in the area of qualitative methods and who advise students, practitioners, and faculty members on the use and development of qualitative research approaches. Our Managing Editor, Kristie Saumure, was recruited at this stage to oversee the day-to-day progress of our work.

Step 2: We created a list of terms to be included in the volume, which involved two major phases of work. First, an initial list was crafted by the Editor and Managing Editor, based on a review of published qualitative methods texts, journals specializing in

qualitative methods development, qualitative conference proceedings, and other relevant research literature. Then, this list was circulated to the editorial board for their feedback and suggestions. The board's review identified gaps in the list, as well as areas where the terminology should be updated, refined, or altered to reflect disciplinary differences and preferences. For example, although some qualitative researchers use terms for rigor that reflect a quantitative or experimental paradigm (e.g., validity and reliability), others prefer terminology that is specific to qualitative work (e.g., credibility and dependability). Overall, the design of the encyclopedia has taken the latter approach and reflects an inherently qualitative language. In some cases (as with rigor), entries are included that reflect both ends of this language spectrum; in other cases, readers will find appropriate see also references throughout the text to guide them through this complex landscape of terminology.

Step 3: At this stage, we identified and invited contributors to write entries for the nearly 500 terms that are included in this two-volume set. The editorial board was asked to nominate individuals to serve as authors, and we also searched the published literature, consulted with colleagues, and reviewed individuals' personal websites to identify potential contributors. Our goal was to reflect a range of disciplinary and global voices in these contributions. To that end, the authors hail from various countries and disciplines, and the entries reflect a diverse spectrum of research approaches (from more traditional, positivist approaches through postmodern, constructionist ones).

The contributors include junior scholars and senior experts, as well as individuals working outside of academe in qualitative methods training and consulting. Readers will, no doubt, recognize a number of key figures in this volume, who have shaped qualitative methods work for decades, as well as some up-and-coming names in the field. This richness of perspectives may well introduce some areas of conflict and contradiction between the entries; however, such diversity—like qualitative research itself—is vital to energizing our work and moving methods development forward in the future. The contributors share a passion for qualitative research that is reflected in their writing and in their willingness to write for this encyclopedia. Although some individuals we approached could not participate (often due to illness or time commitments), those who did really

took ownership of the text as a whole, in addition to their individual entries. Many of the contributors volunteered to write on more than one topic, suggested new terminology for certain concepts, or asked us to include additional entries, particularly where they were dabbling with new approaches and techniques. This depth of commitment on the part of our contributors has made the encyclopedia far richer and more comprehensive than it would have been without their caring and concern.

Step 4: Contributors were provided with instructions for the creation of their entries, as well as a few samples to guide their writing and research. In particular, we encouraged them to be as descriptive and comprehensive as possible while writing for the educated, yet unknowing reader. Although we have tried to maintain a degree of similarity in the look and feel of the entries, the authors were also encouraged to find their own voice in these texts and write in a way that suited the content of their contributions. For example, although the publisher's style guidelines encourage the use of the third-person voice for encyclopedia entries, the first-person voice is one that resonates strongly in qualitative research and writing. Readers will note that some authors have chosen to write in the first-person voice (including, most appropriately, the entry on the use of first-person voice), while others have chosen to write in the third-person. Such stylistic differences are purposeful in this volume, so should not be read as inconsistent, per se. Rather, these examples speak to the diversity of approaches that define qualitative work and serve as illustrative markers of the various ways that scholars and practitioners approach qualitative work.

Step 5: The Editor and Managing Editor reviewed all of the entries and asked the authors for revisions, as necessary. At times, we also relied on the expertise of members of the editorial board to ensure a high level of quality and comprehensiveness in the entries included.

Step 6: We finalized the entries, compiled the Reader's Guide, and compiled all supplementary materials (such as this introduction).

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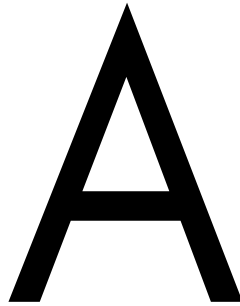
This encyclopedia would not have been possible without the guidance and support of a number of amazing

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ABDUCTION

Abduction is the least familiar mode of reasoning and the mode that was systematized most recently. In conjunction with deduction and induction, abduction is used to make logical inferences about the world. Furthermore, abduction offers great promise as a potential primary mode of reasoning for qualitative research.

The nature of abduction was first systematized during the late 19th century by the American philosopher and logician Charles Peirce. His form of an abductive inference is as follows:

Some event, X, is surprising to us.

But if some explanation, Y, were in place, then X would be ordinary.

Therefore, it is plausible that X is actually a case of Y.

Another way to look at this inference is to suggest that it is, in fact, reasoning toward meaning. This means that abductive inferences are valid in different ways from the other two modes of reasoning. Whereas deductive inferences are certain (so long as their premises are true) and inductive inferences are probable, abductive inferences are merely plausible. Therefore, abductive inferences are weaker by nature than the other two sorts of inferences.

Even though abductive inferences are weaker, they can be extremely useful. When we reason to meaning, we are expanding the realm of plausible explanations. We are giving ourselves a chance to see things that we

might otherwise miss by staying with tried-and-true explanations. This is what Russell Hanson called the “logic of discovery.”

Although there has been relatively little work done with using abduction, some of it has been quite fruitful. For instance, Gilbert Harman characterized abduction as “reasoning to the best explanation.” This notion of abduction has been incorporated into both expert systems research and artificial intelligence research. In addition, abduction has played an important role in semiotics.

Other work in abductive theory and practice has likened abductive researchers to detectives. In particular, Sherlock Holmes has been identified as an abductive thinker par excellence. That is, his so-called deductions are, in fact, abductions. In a famous case, Holmes infers, from the surprising fact that the watchdog did not bark, the abductive conclusion that the dog knew the kidnapper. Umberto Eco has looked at this aspect of abduction in both his theoretical work and his novels.

Following the work of Peirce, Gary Shank has looked at the application of abductive reasoning directly to qualitative research. In this work, Shank argued that there are actually six modes of abductive inferences that all researchers use. These types of inferences lead to hunches, omens, clues, metaphors, patterns, and explanations. In fact, Shank went on to argue that abduction is actually the ground state, or default mode, of cognition in general. Furthermore, by using the formal structures of abduction per se, these six modes of inferences can be related to each other systematically. In this fashion, the power of abduction as a way to reason to meaning can be employed by

qualitative research, which is the systematic empirical inquiry to meaning.

Gary Shank

See also Deduction; Induction; Semiotics

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ACCESS

Consistent with qualitative epistemologies, the researcher needs to view a broad dynamic of the participants as they interact in professional and/or personal environments. It is a close look at the lived experiences of the participants. Because qualitative research typically involves working with human subjects in media such as face-to-face interviews, on-site observations, and written communications, it is essential that the researcher understand how to appropriately gain access to the intended participants. Access can be defined as the appropriate ethical and academic practices used to gain entry to a given community for the purposes of conducting formal research. This entry explores the key issues related to gaining access to participants in qualitative research.

The first and most important consideration in gaining access to research participants in qualitative research is to do no harm. It is essential that any intended qualitative research receive the appropriate formal research ethics clearance from the researcher's home institutional review board or research ethics board. While reviewing the proposal, this board will make sure that access to participants includes a review of considerations such as estimation of risk/harm, sites of data collection, recruitment of participants, benefits to participants, confidentiality, consent process, and procedures for participant withdrawal. In most cases, the consent form (if appropriate for a particular study) that is derived from this review process is the first and most direct line of access to participants, as it is used to request formally their involvement in the study. Following these

formal procedures ensures that access to the participants is ethically sound and protects their psychological, physical, and/or professional welfare.

Another process that may be involved in gaining access to some participants is to go through the proper community or organizational lines of authority. For example, when working with public schools, clearance can come from the district's central administration. In these cases, most districts will allow only a certain number of research studies to be conducted in their area per year. Similar research access models exist in the health care industry as well. Cultural factors also need to be considered. For example, when conducting research on Aboriginal communities, the researcher can consider speaking with tribal elders to gain access to members of the community. When conducting research on religious issues, access to participants may be granted only through leaders, whose attendance may be required during some research, for example, when women are being interviewed. Another consideration for access is related to conducting research in foreign territories. If research is being conducted on participants such as military personnel or government representatives in politically unstable countries, it is essential that the researcher acquire the appropriate government clearance prior to conducting the research. Gaining access through organizational or governmental lines of authority should be a matter of consideration in the research design.

Gatekeepers are another means of access in qualitative research. Gatekeepers are individuals who can be used as an entry point to a specific community. Gatekeepers will have "inside" information that can help the researcher in determining who are the best participants to access in the given community or organization. Gatekeepers can also help the researcher to access the community through introductions and by establishing a relaxed or appropriate environment for the research process. For example, a gatekeeper who chairs a geology department composed of 10 professors can help the researcher to narrow the participant list to 3 people who are most appropriate for the goals of the study. This chair can also introduce the researcher to the participants and then provide access to a comfortable and private room where the interviews can be conducted. Another example is an internet chat room moderator, who will have knowledge about the privacy level of the site and how best to obtain consent from the participants.

A newer dynamic related to access is related to internet participants. There are a whole host of access

issues pertaining to this type of research that both the researcher and ethics review boards need to consider. Participants in this category can be found on the internet in areas such as listservs, chat rooms, course discussion postings, blogs, mailing lists, and newsgroups. Prior to gaining access to the participants, the researcher needs to determine whether the communications on the site are public or private. Public sites do not require consent to access the participants and their communications, whereas private sites typically do. A researcher on a private site, for example, may need to obtain a subscription or registration. In most instances, researchers should avoid hiding on the internet to monitor communications that were intended only for the direct users of the site.

The researcher of an internet community can also gauge privacy by considering the purposes of the site and the number of participants. For example, some chat rooms are only for people suffering from alcoholism, and their guidelines stipulate that professionals should not engage in the communications. Sites that have 5 members are more private than sites that have 1,500 members. If there is any possibility that research conducted in a private internet space could create a potential hazard to the participants or harm the group, it is essential that informed consent be sought.

Once it is determined that formal consent is required, the researcher has two options for gaining consent and access to an internet community. The first is to make a posting or send an email to the internet community describing the research and asking for access to the members' communications. The second approach is to determine the communications (or future communications) needed for the research and then to contact the individuals who made the submissions and ask them whether they would like to be involved in the study. In all cases, the researcher should work closely with the ethics review board to make sure that access to internet communities is handled in ethically sound ways.

By working closely with an institutional review board and one's colleagues, the researcher can make sure that access to participants is academically and ethically sound.

Devon Jensen

See also Confidentiality; Ethics; Harm; Institutional Review Boards; Internet in Qualitative Research; Participant

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability refers to the obligations the researcher has to the various stakeholders in the research process such as the research participants, the funding body, and the researcher's employing organization. Accountability is an important concept in qualitative research because when it is addressed and made explicit, it can suggest standards of research practice against which the researcher can be judged to determine whether he or she has acted in an appropriate and ethical fashion.

Examples of practices that attempt to address accountability to these different stakeholders include the following:

- *To research participants:* an explanation about how they have been identified and why they have been approached about participating in the research project (usually explained within the participant information sheet); clarification about the nature and extent of participation so that potential participants can provide informed consent (information detailing involvement should be included in the participant information sheet, and potential participants should have an opportunity to ask questions directly of the researcher); assurance that withdrawal from a research study will not adversely affect participants (by including a statement to this effect in the participant information sheet and verbally reinforcing this with participants)
- *To funding bodies:* completion of the research project within the timeframe identified and within budget (the use of project management tools such as computer software and Gantt charts may help to prevent time slippage, and careful planning at the grant submission stage with a regular review of expenditures can help to prevent overspending)
- *To employing organizations:* conduct of research in a manner consistent with governance arrangements (this necessitates familiarity with governance policies and possible liaison with officers of the organizations)

responsible for formalizing and monitoring such arrangements); appropriate costing of overhead such as use of space and resources (discussion with financial officers from the employing organizations and often the inclusion of their signatures as part of a grant application)

The nature of accountability—to whom a researcher is accountable—and the research practices that address this responsibility are matters of some debate. Qualitative researchers, for example, sometimes assume some obligation for involving their participants in the interpretive process. This can often take the form of “member checking,” where the written transcripts of interviews are returned to participants prior to further analysis so that they may check the accuracy of the transcriptions. However, in some instances this is the extent of participant involvement. Within other approaches, such as participatory action research, research participants and researchers may be equally responsible for all aspects of the project, from the original framing of the research question to interpretation of the data.

Claire Ballinger

See also Ethics; Participants as Co-Researchers; Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is a flexible research methodology uniquely suited to researching and supporting change. It integrates social research with exploratory action to promote development. In its classic form, action research involves fluid and overlapping cycles of investigation, action planning, piloting of new practices, and

evaluation of outcomes, incorporating at all stages the collection and analysis of data and the generation of knowledge (Figure 1). The outcomes of action research are both practical and theoretical: The knowledge it generates has a direct and ongoing impact on changing practice for participants and on a wider audience through its publications. This entry describes the origins of action research and its use in a variety of fields throughout the world.

Action research is often used in fields such as education, social and health services, and community development, where there is a long history of difficulties in successfully transferring research knowledge into changes in practice. It offers a means of combining the generation of knowledge with professional development of practitioners through their participation as co-researchers. Collaborative action research can also break down the separation between policymakers and practitioners, giving the former richer insights into practice and giving the latter an active role in policy development as well as its implementation.

The first person to use the term *action research* was probably Kurt Lewin, a psychologist who went to the United States from Germany during the 1940s and worked with immigrant groups to promote their better integration into U.S. society. Lewin, like others at the time, was seeking to explain human behavior so as to enable improvement, and his work was closely related to the sociotechnical research tradition developed by

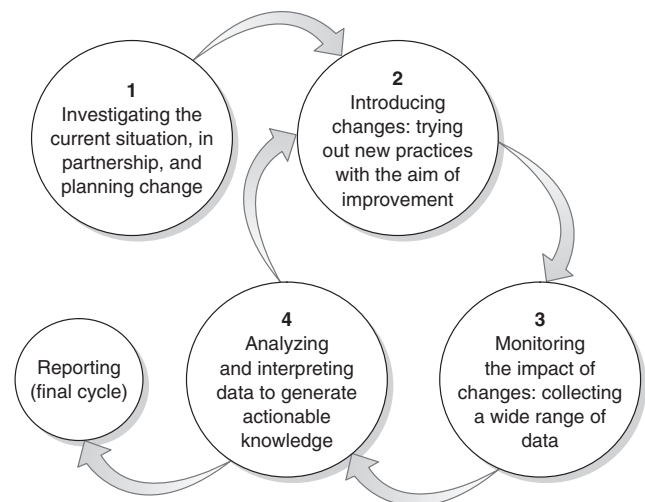


Figure 1 Model of Action Research

Eric Trist and others at the Tavistock Institute in London. The early work at the Tavistock Institute built on a method of group therapy developed in working with shell-shocked military personnel during World War II. In postwar society on both sides of the Atlantic, this innovative new movement in social psychology research pursued a vision of betterment for individuals and increased organizational efficiency through community participation in research and development.

Lewin was familiar with Lev Vygotsky's work in the Soviet Union, and there are a number of similarities between their approaches; for example, Vygotsky was interested in researching the impact of intervention studies, such as the literacy program for peasants in Uzbekistan during the 1920s, on the development of the human mind. It is interesting to note the overlaps between action research and post-Vygotskian activity theory, which sees human activity as mediated by cultural tools and social contexts, particularly as they are regulated by rules governing behavior and divisions of labor according to organizational roles. Lewin believed that human behavior was always a function of the situation at the time it occurred; therefore, he did not believe it was ever possible to make generalizations about human behavior that would apply to all contexts. Action research generates knowledge about the interrelationship between human behavior and sociocultural situations rather than generalizable truths, and it is important that it be reported in a form that includes narrative accounts and rich description as well as analysis and interpretation so that readers can make comparisons with their own situations.

Lewin developed action research as a radical move away from traditional research methodologies, so it was not surprising that, after a brief flowering in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s and in France and Germany during the 1950s and 1960s, action research became discredited as insufficiently "objective" and was marginalized. It enjoyed a resurgence, however, in the United Kingdom during the 1970s through the growth of the teacher-as-researcher movement that sprang from Lawrence Stenhouse's insight that curriculum reform in education depended for its success on the active participation of teachers in researching the purposes and pedagogical practices of reform. This approach was developed by John Elliott, a colleague of Stenhouse at the University of East Anglia, who drew for inspiration on innovative curriculum movements in the United States, such as Jerome Bruner's "Man: A Course of Study" program,

and gained financial support from the Ford Foundation for co-research with teachers into teaching that enabled "discovery learning." With a background in philosophy, Elliott drew on Aristotle's theories of practical wisdom and Hans-Georg Gadamer's reflective hermeneutics to develop a vision of action research grounded in practical reflection akin to the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey.

This work in the United Kingdom within the field of education was influential in generating new interest in action research both in Austria, through close links with Peter Posch's group at the University of Klagenfurt, and in Spain, where it was used to support educational reform in some of the autonomous regions during the immediate post-Franco era. During the 1980s, Stephen Kemmis (a former colleague of Stenhouse by then working in Australia) and Wilf Carr established a significant new direction for action research by recasting it within Jürgen Habermas's critical theory as a means of empowerment for practitioners and an instrument for promoting social justice in education systems and organizations. Building on the earlier work of Shirley Grundy, they distinguished three types of action research—technical, practical, and critical—and focused on critical action research as a means of emancipating participants by giving them access to knowledge and the power to resist oppressive institutional practices.

By the mid-1980s, a new tradition of action research had been established in the United States, grounded in teacher education rather than curriculum reform. The emphasis was on merging teaching and research and on reconceptualizing the knowledge base of teaching as grounded in teachers' inquiry into their own practice rather than in predetermined decontextualized knowledge developed outside of schools. In the United States, as well as in many other countries, there has been a blurring of the boundaries between action research and practitioner research in which the purpose of inquiry is to deepen understanding and enrich teacher learning rather than to bring about intentional change. Leading figures in establishing a tradition of teacher research and building a corpus of teachers' research studies in the United States have been Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Susan Lytle, and Ken Zeichner.

Action research in other fields, such as health and community care, has been influenced by these developing traditions within education. There has not, however, been a simple development of one action research tradition; rather, there have been several strands of

development drawing, for example, on the civil rights movement in the United States through the work of Miles Horton at the Highlander Center, the liberation pedagogy of Paulo Freire in Latin America, and the tradition of workplace learning originating in the work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön in the United States. Because action research is grounded in the values and practices of its participant communities, action researchers focus on understanding their own subjectivities and how they affect the research process rather than on trying to eliminate them. Reflexivity, where researchers continuously explore their own assumptions and how these shape their research activities, their interpretations, and the generation of knowledge, is centrally important. The self is understood to be a research instrument bringing the researcher's situational understanding, developed through previous action research, to bear on the analysis of social data. Attempting to be "objective" or to distance the self from the research (e.g., by writing research reports in the third person or using a passive voice) is seen as a futile and, therefore, potentially fraudulent stance. Action research is normally written in the first-person singular as a reflexive account that incorporates a critique of the research process with the generation of knowledge. Action research is often seen as primarily a qualitative methodology, but in fact it is eclectic, using all of the main methods of data collection, including questionnaires and statistical analysis where studies are on a scale, to make these appropriate as a means of enabling interpretation (rather than objective measurement).

Action research is always grounded in the values and culture of the participant researchers who engage in it and, as a result, is a fluid methodology that adapts to fit different social contexts. For example, in developing countries where there is huge social inequality perhaps deriving from a colonial past, or in developed countries among groups concerned with issues of race or gender, action research is focused primarily on promoting social justice, whereas in the context of the British health service it is focused more strongly on improving treatment for patients and ensuring that the underpinning vision behind new policies is fully embedded. Susan Noffke, a historian of action research, developed a useful framework for understanding the variations in approach, dividing them into three broad types that lean more toward "professional," "personal," or "political" orientations. This allows action research to adapt to suit the shifting stances of different communities or professional groups.

An important feature of action research is that it is carried out by a partnership of participants who are "insiders" to the situation under research and external facilitators/researchers/consultants. This makes research ethics extremely important, requiring continuous sensitivity to how power relations may be shaping the partnership and continuous inquiry into the process of collaboration as well. The nature of partnerships varies. Those who work within a tradition of teacher-as-researcher sometimes question the authenticity of action research led by external consultants, but in professions such as nursing, social care, and community care the external consultant often takes on a leadership role. In the tradition of participatory action research, whole community development often starts with an external intervention, and the direction of the research and action is negotiated with participants so that control shifts away from experts toward community members over time. Some of this participatory action research work with strong external facilitation or leadership can be large scale and have a major impact on community development, whereas studies by individual teachers of their own classrooms are necessarily small scale.

One of the most important contributions of action research as a methodology for building understanding of change and development is its unique access to insider knowledge. Through adopting the role of researchers, practitioners are able to reflect on and make explicit the tacit knowledge that guides their practice, and their involvement as co-researchers ensures that the knowledge generated by action research incorporates this unique—and often neglected—component. Thus, action research forms a bridge between practitioner understanding and the generation of theoretical knowledge to inform action. For example, drawing on Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (knowledge that combines reason and moral understanding as the basis for action), Elliott developed a theory of practitioner knowledge that includes theoretical work as a form of practical activity. Thus, knowledge generation and the development of new practices are integrated and theorized.

Bridget Somekh

See also Critical Theory; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Rapid Assessment Process; Reflexivity; Subjectivity; Tacit Knowledge

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- Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN): <http://www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/carnnew>
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ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening describes a set of techniques designed to focus the attention of the interviewer or observer on the speaker. The goal of active listening is to attend entirely to the speaker, not to oneself or one's own inner dialogue, with the goal of accurately hearing and interpreting the speaker's verbal and nonverbal communication. Active listening skills are useful not

only in research but also in any area where accurate communication and mutual understanding are useful. In addition, active listening skills are often included in curricula for health care providers as a means to facilitate therapeutic interactions. Examples of strategies often recommended in qualitative research, as opposed to therapeutic communication or conflict resolution, are described in this entry.

Active listening strategies use both verbal and nonverbal communication channels. Nonverbal active listening strategies establish and maintain rapport and also serve to focus the attention of the interviewer or observer. Nonverbal strategies that foster rapport include focusing the face and orienting the body toward the speaker, maintaining an attentive demeanor with an open posture, and staying relaxed. Strategies that focus the listener take place within the mind of the researcher. Active listening requires that the researcher attend purposefully to the speaker with attention focused on the communication being sent, not on the researcher's responses to that communication. Active listening demands a neutral open attitude toward the speaker so that even remarks that are shocking or distressing are understood—not judged—by the listener. The goal of the active listener is to receive information—not to give it—and to be a witness—not a critic.

Verbal active listening strategies familiar to qualitative researchers include paraphrasing, reflecting, interpreting, summarizing, and checking perceptions. In paraphrasing, the interviewer restates the content of the communication in slightly different words, for example, "So you are saying that you are not as satisfied with your son's teacher this year as you were last year." Reflecting, in contrast, identifies content perceived through nonverbal channels, for example, "It sounds like you are pretty angry with that teacher." Summarizing provides an opportunity for transitions in interviews between one topic and the next and is a useful way to check perceptions. Both interpreting and checking perceptions can be used to test developing analytic insights. For example, the researcher might ask, "Would you say that you think a good teacher should be able to manage disagreement without confrontation?" All of these strategies demonstrate that the interviewer not only has paid close attention to the speaker but also has been actively processing the speaker's remarks, and these two characteristics are the hallmark of active listening. In addition, neutral probes, such as, "And then what happened?" and "Can you tell me more about that?" and

even neutral encouraging noises, such as “Mmhm,” all serve to enhance communication.

A final active listening strategy is the use of silence. Although silence is by definition a nonverbal strategy, it is used as a part of the interview. When used carefully, silence can communicate respect, empathy, and interest to the speaker while at the same time demonstrating the interviewer’s own calm and patience.

Lioness Ayres

See also Empathy; Interviewing; Neutrality in Qualitative Research; Rapport

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ADVANCES IN QUALITATIVE METHODS CONFERENCE

The Advances in Qualitative Methods (AQM) conferences are planned to enhance the development of qualitative methods. The first AQM conference was held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in February 1999 to celebrate the first year of operation of the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM). Subsequent conferences have been hosted by the University of Alberta IIQM (Banff, Alberta, Canada), the Africa Institute for Qualitative Methodology (Sun City, South Africa), and the Australian IIQM (Surfer’s Paradise, Australia).

These conferences hold the dual mission of dissemination and training. Dissemination focuses largely on the latest developments in qualitative methods and descriptions of how qualitative methods were used in particular research contexts. Scholarly presentations and refereed papers focus mainly on the application of qualitative methods, problems encountered, and adaptations required when conducting research with different populations.

Panel discussions on basic and advanced topics and keynote addresses by international researchers challenge the more advanced participants. For instance, at the second AQM conference, an ethnographic performance by Johnny Saldana—“Finding My Place: The

Brad Trilogy,” a play depicting a case study of Harry Woolcott—produced an additional discussion session on ethics and responsibility. This was later published (in 2003) as a book, *Sneaky Kid and Its Aftermath: Ethics and Intimacy in Fieldwork*, by Woolcott. Other keynote speakers have included leaders in qualitative inquiry such as Norman Denzin (in 2003), Margaret Sandelowski (in 2001), Carolyn Ellis (in 1999), and Elliot Eisner (in 1999).

Training consists of pre- and postconference workshops that are targeted to new researchers and graduate students; these address various aspects of methods and strategies for conducting research. The selection of full-day workshops is broad and may include topics such as qualitative writing, ethnography, grounded theory, use of video, focus groups, various qualitative software packages, arts-based research, narrative inquiry, concept and theory development, and mixed-methods design.

Abstracts are published following the conference in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods (IJQM)*, providing a permanent record of the event. Full-length articles are developed from the presentation, and session and symposia papers are often published in *IJQM*.

Information regarding the forthcoming AQM conferences may be found on the IIQM website or by searching the internet using the conference name.

Janice M. Morse

See also International Institute for Qualitative Methodology; *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (Journal)

Websites

International Institute for Qualitative Methodology:
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/iiqm>

ADVOCACY RESEARCH

Advocacy research is intended to assist in advocacy, that is, efforts to assemble and use information and resources to bring about improvements in people’s lives. As such, it shares with some other research approaches (e.g., action research) an allegiance to the values of social responsibility and community empowerment. Common advocacy outcomes to which research may contribute include lobbying, testifying,

pursuing a lawsuit, and seeking media coverage to raise public awareness. Nonadvocacy research may also produce findings useful to advocates, but advocacy research has this goal as its *raison d'être*.

This entry focuses on advocacy at the organizational level and on the role of qualitative research in furthering this effort. Advocacy groups typically address concerns about public health, social welfare, and public safety. Their size and scope of interest can range from a neighborhood group protesting the closure of a local playground to multinational coalitions organized to fight for the rights of the disabled. The goals may be immediate and time focused (e.g., closing a nuclear power plant) or diffuse and ongoing (e.g., monitoring child welfare agencies).

Given the relative scarcity of finances and expertise, few advocacy groups engage in empirical research, instead getting their information through informal interviews, documents and records, legal action, and previous research. The distinction between information gathering and research can be blurry, but the latter refers to the deployment of systematic methods using extant research designs and modes of data collection and analysis. Pursuing formal research can also entail the involvement of research ethics or other institutional committees having jurisdiction over the researcher, the study sites, and/or the study populations.

The following sections provide an overview of advocacy research, including the stakeholders involved and the role of the researcher, useful applications of qualitative methods, strategies to increase trustworthiness and rigor, and ethical issues.

Stakeholders and the Role of Research in Advocacy

The stakeholders in advocacy include three interrelated groups or entities: (1) those being advocated for, (2) those doing the advocating, and (3) those being advocated against. The latter are often represented by entrenched vested interests such as large corporations and governments. Such powerful entities may be the direct target of advocacy, or they may exist as obstacles to achieving desired goals, for example, providing low-cost medications for AIDS patients or saving the earth's environment from the effects of global warming. In instances where the first two stakeholder groups (a and b) overlap, affected communities or groups have organized to advocate for themselves.

At other times, professional advocacy organizations may act on behalf of vulnerable groups such as abused children and the homeless mentally ill.

In this context, advocacy researchers may already be members of stakeholder groups, but they more often come from the "outside" (e.g., academic settings, professional research organizations). Usually part of a team effort, researchers contribute methodological expertise and produce findings that can be used by advocacy groups and their allies, with the latter including attorneys, politicians, scientific experts, and public relations representatives.

Like other forms of applied research, advocacy research is best viewed as a means to an end. Issues of public interest are paramount, including environmental hazards, inadequate services (e.g., health care, social services, sanitation, affordable housing), and corruption or mishandling of public resources.

Qualitative Methods in Advocacy Research

Although the goals of advocacy research may be furthered using a variety of methods, some qualitative approaches are a better fit than are others. With ethnography, the researcher observes organizations and/or communities to understand the behaviors, interactions, and tacit understandings that shed light on the problem being advocated against (or the goal being advocated for) as well as potential solutions. For example, an ethnographer might work with epidemiologists to find patterns of exposure to groundwater contamination among residents in a neighborhood located near a toxic waste dumping ground. Similar to ethnography, qualitative case studies offer in-depth examples of individuals, groups, neighborhoods, organizations, and so on. Qualitative evaluation examines the process and outcomes of a program or an initiative to assess its effectiveness (e.g., a new model of violence prevention for adolescents). When advocacy research is carried out in partnership with the affected community or group, it may overlap with participatory action research and community-based research.

Among types of qualitative data collection, focus groups and individual interviews provide valuable opportunities for individuals to be heard in their own words, and observation and fieldnotes capture events in vivo. Documents, whether official records or personal diaries and journals, are also a valuable data resource, as are photographs and videorecordings.

Recent innovations, such as photovoice techniques and use of online web-based technologies, introduce new and often more accessible means of qualitative data collection. Photovoice typically involves community members documenting environmental, public health, or other neighborhood concerns, a low-cost undertaking when using disposable cameras. Although personal computers are not always available in less advantaged populations, online communication can significantly enhance community involvement through email, listservs, and blogs.

Because it is almost always conducted under pressures of time and with limited resources, qualitative advocacy research calls for rapid assessment procedures designed to produce results as soon as possible. These can include targeted sampling of affected stakeholder groups, focused interview questions (including use of some standardized measures), and structured note taking in lieu of verbatim transcription. Similarly, ethnography works best when carried out by someone who already has field experience and familiarity with the setting.

Because the study's results are intended for a nonacademic audience, writing up the findings requires brevity and clarity; for example, an executive summary typically begins the report. Including diagrams, graphs, and photographs helps to explain complex issues in a visually accessible format.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

With its avowed commitment to social, economic, and political change, advocacy research has been accused of placing values ahead of scientific neutrality. However, its defenders argue that research is never truly value free and that advocacy research can also be rigorous. Academic researchers usually have an advantage in this regard because they are less vulnerable to pressure from sponsors or other vested interests outside of the academy.

Ensuring the study's trustworthiness entails many of the strategies used in qualitative research in general. These may include data triangulation (drawing on multiple sources of data), prolonged engagement in the community or study setting, member checking (consulting with study participants on the accuracy and validity of the data and the study findings), and maintaining an audit trail (documenting analytic decisions during the study). Although strategies for rigor are time-consuming

and not always feasible, their deployment enhances the study's credibility.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are of vital concern whether or not the study falls under the jurisdiction of a human subjects committee. The involvement of such a committee is typically due to legal requirements governing the researcher's home institution, the sponsoring organizations, and/or the agencies or programs cooperating with the study. When community members are actively involved in data collection and analysis, their training in research ethics is important because they are unlikely to be familiar with the basic premises of human subjects protections.

Recruitment, sampling, and data collection require careful attention to ensuring voluntary informed consent and to protecting the confidentiality and privacy of all parties involved. The use of photographs or video requires signed releases and full disclosure of their purpose. All data must be kept secured under lock and key and preferably retained without identifying information. Given the political sensitivity of most advocacy efforts, honoring protections of privacy and confidentiality is essential for the integrity of the study. Qualitative data and findings carry a particular risk because they include descriptive details that individuals may view as too exposing even when their identities are kept secret.

Ethical issues also arise when producing and disseminating the findings. Advocacy researchers have a vested interest in the study's results as well as how those results are used and by whom. They usually do not embark on such research unless they have anecdotal or other evidence supporting the projected outcome. Yet studies can (and do) produce findings that provide only weak support or even run counter to the advocacy agenda. Although ethical researchers do not distort or alter disappointing findings, they are not obliged to publicize them beyond the required venues.

However, research findings can be valuable for future endeavors and alternative goals even when they are disappointing or unexpected. An example of this comes from Long Island, New York, where concerned citizens organized during the early 1990s to identify environmental causes of the higher rates of breast cancer in the area. The Long Island Breast Cancer Action Coalition pushed for federally funded research on the effects of electromagnetic fields as

well as agricultural pesticides. In a remarkable success story, the coalition was able to lobby and convince the U.S. Congress and the National Institutes of Health to appropriate more than \$26 million in funds for research. Although the subsequent studies did not find that electromagnetic fields or pesticides were linked to breast cancer, the coalition's political clout and organizational effectiveness yielded community benefits in the form of resource centers and support groups for women with breast cancer.

The preceding example points to potential benefits of advocacy research that go beyond the production of study findings. These include increasing group cohesion and cooperation, enhancing the visibility and accessibility of research, and laying the groundwork for future cooperation in advocacy efforts.

The primary purpose of advocacy research is to empirically substantiate the case being made by advocates. Its ultimate success can vary considerably depending on the study's results but also on the power of countervailing forces—whether these forces are large corporations, deadly diseases, or entrenched social problems. Although rigorous advocacy research is more laborious and resource-consuming than are other forms of information gathering, its impact is stronger and longer lasting. In this regard, advocacy research can be a powerful means of advancing a change-oriented agenda.

Deborah K. Padgett

See also Action Research; Applied Research; Community-Based Research; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Rapid Assessment Process

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AESTHETICS

Aesthetics, a term coined in 1735 by Alexander Baumgarten to denote a theoretical and practical discipline aimed at the perfection of sensory cognition, was derived from the Greek *aisthanomai*, meaning perception by means of the senses. Aesthetics has since evolved to refer to two interrelated areas: the philosophy of art and the philosophy of aesthetic experience. The philosophy of art grapples with the question of what constitutes art. Answers from theorists differ widely. Some adhere to the impossibility of defining art given varying focuses on art movements, theoretical foundations, and social contexts, whereas others attend to the creative impulse that undergirds all human activity. The philosophy of aesthetic experience grapples with the nature of encounters with the arts, including artifacts and phenomena (e.g., nature) that possess aspects susceptible to aesthetic appreciation. Some theorists attend to appreciation and enjoyment, whereas others find the aesthetic to be a way of knowing and experiencing the world.

In the context of qualitative inquiry, aesthetics can refer to qualitative studies that attend to the philosophical concepts and considerations of the arts and of aesthetic experiences. Increasingly, aesthetics is understood as attention to the act of creating meaning from within the act of creating itself. Aspects of this fundamental human encounter between subject and other (world) can be traced historically, with a cross section of thinkers addressing varying perspectives. The sensory cognition required and the perceptual reciprocity assumed are at the core of contemporary qualitative research. This entry focuses on the latter.

Qualitative Research on Aesthetics

Margaret Eaton traced research on aesthetic concepts to the 18th-century philosophers Edmund Burke and David Hume, who attempted to explain empirically aesthetic concepts such as beauty by connecting them with physical and psychological responses that typify individuals' experiences of different kinds of objects and events. These philosophers sought an objective

basis for personal reactions. Immanuel Kant argued that aesthetic concepts are essentially rooted in personal feelings of pleasure and pain and, therefore, are subjective, but he suggested that they have a kind of objectivity on the grounds that, at the purely aesthetic level, feelings of pleasure and pain are universal responses. During the 20th century, philosophers sometimes returned to a Humean analysis of aesthetic concepts via the human faculty of taste and extended this psychological account to try to establish an epistemological or logical uniqueness for aesthetic concepts.

As a result of both philosophical writings and extensive empirical work in psychology and biology, we are now wiser and more sophisticated about the cognitive dimensions of aesthetics, dimensions that can be applied to the aesthetic dimensions of scientific inquiry. Age-old questions, raised by scholars from Pythagoras and Aristotle to Hegel and Nietzsche and later to the cognitive revolution of the late 1950s concerning the type of cognition involved in the arts, are now reemerging within the context of the social sciences and the humanities, discussing the contributions of aesthetics to scholarship. Following John Dewey's work during the early 20th century and scholars such as Suzanne Langer, Nelson Goodman, and Harry Broudy, who contributed to the cognitive revolution of the late 1950s and the 1960s, aesthetics pointed to the interconnectedness of perception, thinking, and feeling.

The interconnections of perception, thinking, and feeling entailed within the act of creating draw attention to the role and place of cognitive aesthetic dimensions revealed through inquiry such as assimilation, internalization, and integration. Aesthetic dimensions challenge traditional disciplinary and institutional structures that compartmentalize knowledge, separating content into distinct pieces, knowledge from interests, and theory from practice. Rather, the aesthetic offers a philosophical approach for inquiry of all kinds, striving for connections between and among disciplines, demanding continuous engagement in reflection and deliberation, and honoring all forms of inquiry as complex, creative, and developmental in nature.

An example of the aesthetic dimensions prompted through qualitative methods can be found in the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Robinson on viewers' perception in museums. George Willis and William Schubert's *Reflections From the Heart of Educational Inquiry* (in 1991) included essays by prominent scholars, from Ted Aoki to Harry Broudy,

discussing the power of the aesthetic as a way of being in learning, teaching, and living. Recent examples that purposefully transcend disciplinary boundaries include Mieke Bal's *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (in 2002) and Edith Wyschogrod's *Crossover Queries: Dwelling With Negatives, Embodying Philosophy's Others* (in 2006). Dissertations that examine aesthetic sensibilities include, for example, Boo Euyun Lim's study of aesthetic education for young children in various early childhood settings and Yu-Ting Chen's study of Taiwanese and Aboriginal aesthetics in elementary schools in Taiwan.

Aesthetic-Based Research

Aesthetic-based inquiry, a genre that is based on the contributions that the processes and products of aesthetics can make to research, is grounded within a complex, traditionally antagonistic relationship between the two constructs of aesthetics and research. These relationships go back at least two and a half millennia, long before the coining of the term *aesthetic*. The dichotomous view of knowledge/truth versus perception, a legacy of Plato, was maintained and developed by some of the most important philosophers of the Western world, including René Descartes and Immanuel Kant. According to this dichotomy, aesthetic-based research is an oxymoron, that is, an impossibility.

These traditional dichotomies were eroded by the postmodern worldview of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The emphasis on crossing intellectual and disciplinary boundaries proved to be a fertile ground for aesthetic-based research. A harbinger of crossing boundaries was the work of John Dewey, relating aesthetic theories to cognition and arguing that art and science share the same features with respect to the process of inquiry.

In the postmodern paradigm of the late 20th century, aesthetic concepts were commonly acknowledged to be context dependent and relationally embedded. The notion of aesthetic universality, along with all other universals, has been deconstructed as contextual and social. Accordingly, research turned to examine the nature of the aesthetic in specific personal and cultural contexts.

Elliot Eisner was pivotal in highlighting attention on the central role of the senses in research. In his conceptualization of research as connoisseurship and educational criticism, and in his notion of the

“enlightened eye,” Eisner expanded the modes and expressions of inquiry from the verbal and numerical to the senses. Maxine Greene’s call for “wide-awakeness” served as a reminder to qualitative researchers of attending to qualities present in situations alongside the capacity to see the potential connections and relations. In so doing, she pointed out the importance of “releasing the imagination” toward cultivating new visions for living and being as the means to change and transformation across all forms of inquiry.

The field of aesthetic-based inquiry has grown tremendously during the past 15 years, and with it has come a proliferation of “genres” reflecting different purposes and commitments. One major area is that of arts-based research. Within the field of education, we note this burgeoning in meetings of the American Education Research Association and its special interest group of arts-based research featuring presentations, performances, and exhibits of research through dance, drama, literature/poetry, and the visual arts; in the popularity of the Winter Institute on Arts-Based Approaches to Educational Research taught annually by Elliot Eisner and Tom Barone; in arts-based inquiry publications in various prominent journals, including *Educational Researcher*, *Curriculum Inquiry*, *Studies in Art Education*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, and *International Journal for Education and the Arts* as well as in publications such as the *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Inquiry* and the current *SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*.

Within aesthetic-based inquiry, Graeme Sullivan framed arts-based research as the imaginative and intellectual work undertaken by artists as a form of research within areas of individual, social, and cultural inquiry. Here the critical and creative investigations of visual arts practice is regarded as a form of inquiry into the conceptualizations and practices of artists in varied contexts such as studios, galleries, community spaces, and the internet. A related approach, generated by Rita Irwin and her colleagues, highlights seamless connections among art making, research, and teaching—*a/r/tography*. As a form of scholarly inquiry, *a/r/tography* demands that participants invest in the ensuing connections and relations and document these using artistic practices. Arts-based researchers, such as Margaret Macintyre Latta, Melissa Cahnman Taylor, and Liora Bresler, embrace their practices as inquiry-guided methodologies in the making, necessitating artistic ways of knowing and

operating across disciplines and contexts. A complementary tack, held by scholars such as Liora Bresler, places the perceivers at the center (fitting with the distinction between art and aesthetics suggested by Dewey), keeping a (soft) distinction between works of art and qualitative research. The multiple forms and directions that all of these inquiries can (and do) take are integral to the nature of the aesthetic as the capacity to perceive.

The Senses as Central Research Medium

Aesthetic-based research, grounded in perceptual awareness, turns to the significant role of the body as a reciprocal medium for negotiating understandings. The literature on the body as a key research medium and the investigation of ways of knowing through the senses are relatively new areas of scholarship advocated by Liora Bresler, Marjorie O’Loughlin, and Margaret Macintyre Latta. Framing somatic ways of knowing, anthropologist Tom Csordas examined “somatic modes of attention,” which he regarded as culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others. Extended to research, aesthetic-based inquiry attends to how the body forms and informs the processes of data collecting (e.g., interviewing, observing), interpreting, and analyzing.

Communication to and engagement of audiences is a key concern of aesthetic-based researchers. Positioning audiences to respond in ways that are integral to the reciprocal participation required of aesthetic experience has led to artist/researcher performance inquiries in the works of Donald Blumenfeld-Jones, Melissa Cahnmann Taylor, Norman Denzin, James Sanders, Celeste Snowber, and Susan Stinson, among others. Auditory and gustatory senses—hearing and taste—practiced by individuals contemplating the social meanings attached to creative production, provide ways to reveal and experience aesthetic significances.

All of these different ways of thinking about aesthetic-based inquiry establish and promote innovative ways to conceptualize and understand aesthetics as disciplined, imaginative critical inquiry, privileging imagination and intellect in constructing knowledge that not only is new but also has the capacity to transform human understanding and ways to live with others.

Timely Questions and Concerns

Questions and concerns surface through aesthetic researchers' attention to process, placing value on experimentation, observation, deliberation, dialogue, and interaction. What sensitivities are useful in the training of researchers in general education and the social sciences? What are the conditions and features that must be understood by researchers? How might researchers grow their efforts and articulate the significances given the dominant global concerns for outcomes with little concern for processes? Aesthetic research attends primarily to the given particularities within any situation as the necessary place to begin. Inquiry orients toward an ongoing forming/informing/reforming search. These givens comprise the raw materials of inquiry alive in the situation itself. Recognition of these raw materials and purposeful search for relationships and connections is the work of inquiry. Discerning these relationships is the indispensable condition of attending to the inquiry process.

Inquiry, then, becomes a movement of thinking, a medium in which meaning is not applied or imposed but rather manifested and could never be fully anticipated. In so doing, aesthetic researchers are drawing attention to the role and integral place of aesthetic considerations such as attentiveness to the personal and particular, participatory thinking, emotional commitment, felt freedom, dialogue and interaction, speculation, and greater consciousness within all meaning-making. These significances are often characterized by aesthetic researchers as neglected epistemological assumptions elemental to humans and the human condition. Aesthetic researchers are documenting and addressing the underestimated consequences that these pose to the ethical realm, to the possibility of genuine concerted action, to the growth of self-understanding in relation to others, and to the development of contextually sensitive practices. Thus, aesthetic research and researchers have important educative and leadership roles to assume in making visible and tangible the significances to be found through attunement to process manifesting outcomes not yet imaginable.

Liora Bresler and Margaret Macintyre Latta

See also A/r/tography; Arts-Based Research; Humanities, Qualitative Research in; Music in Qualitative Research; Visual Research

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AGENCY

The modern notion of democracy is founded on the concept of free will or the idea that individuals are ultimately the arbiters of their own destiny. Human agency is very similar to the notion of free will in that agency may be understood as the capacity to exercise creative control over individual-level thoughts and actions. In keeping with the ideals of Western democracy, there is a widespread assumption that humans are imbued with free will and, as such, routinely exercise agency within the domain of their personal choices as well as in the social and political realm.

Nevertheless, social scientists have demonstrated that unique individual attributes are contingent on extensive social organization of the psyche. In other words, the process of developing basic human potentialities (e.g., walking, talking, learning, loving) is predicated on an elaborate socialization regime: Nurturing healthy, happy humans can be brought about only through a long-term process of intensive social training. This has led numerous social scientists to conclude that, because “individuality” is irretrievably dependent on elaborate social indoctrination regimes, there is in reality no such thing as agency; that is, if every key attribute on which unique human

personalities are based emerges only as a result of social indoctrination, then one can argue that all human creativity and potential are largely (or even wholly) determined by social influences.

Nevertheless, Timothy McGettigan argued that, despite the inescapable impact of societal influences on human psychosocial development, it remains possible to locate agency within the coercive context of social reality. McGettigan argued that actors demonstrate a capacity for agency when, on perceiving evidence that is in discord with their understanding of reality, they refashion their comprehension of reality to facilitate an understanding of that discordant evidence. Acquiring knowledge that might conflict with views that are already present in the minds of agents can be accomplished by participation in communication environments, through solitary reflection, or through various encounters with the empirical world (e.g., having an apple fall on one's head). The impetus (communication, reflection, or encounters with the physical universe) that impels actors to redefine reality is not as critical to the process of generating agency as is the ability of actors to perceive phenomena of which they had no prior conception and then to reconstruct their view of reality to accommodate their newly realized perceptions.

The existence of a capacity for redefining reality establishes that individuals who are situated within rigid contexts of social control can emancipate themselves sufficiently to think and act in a self-determined manner, that is, to exercise agency. Of course, the range of such emancipation is substantially constrained. Once again, just because individuals can conjure novel ideas does not mean that oppressive ideological superstructures will blow away like dust in the wind. However, the capacity for redefining reality implies not only that agents may produce novel ideas but also that agents can translate their groundbreaking ideas into action—and, in so doing, initiate social change at the individual, organizational, and sometimes even societal levels.

Timothy McGettigan

See also Power; Truth

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ANALYTIC INDUCTION

Rather than beginning with a theory, an explanation, or an interpretation and then seeking evidence to confirm, disconfirm, or otherwise test it in a deductive mode, inductive thinking starts with evidence—the particulars—and builds theories, explanations, and interpretations to reflect or represent those particulars. The close relationship between empirical observation and conceptual formulation guides most inductive approaches.

Analytic induction is the process of developing constructs such as categories, statements of relationship, and generalizations as well as the theory resulting from integrating categories and generalizations by examining incidents, events, and other information relevant to a topic. Abstraction from the concrete to a more inclusive formulation is a key task in analytic induction. Analytic induction asks the following of any event, activity, situation, or attribute: What kind of event, activity, situation, or attribute is this particular one? Classification is another central feature of analytic induction. From a close analysis of an initial case, constructs are generated and are refined through consideration of succeeding instances.

Most important to the developing category system and generalizations are succeeding instances contrary to initial instances, called *negative cases*. Negative cases may delimit a theory, indicating the boundaries of the theory's applicability, or they may compel a revision of a theory so that it will account for the variation. Analytic induction is an iterative process, a kind of recursive thinking from instances to idea to a search for negative cases to be added to the initial instances to refined idea and so forth until a construct is devised to adequately represent all relevant known phenomena.

Arguably one of the first formally named methods for analyzing qualitative data, analytic induction was formulated during the 1930s by Florian Znaniecki to describe how he and W. I. Thomas examined, explained, and interpreted the materials they collected for their magisterial work, *The Polish Peasant in America*. Alfred Lindesmith further developed the method of analytic induction in his study of addiction during the 1940s, and successive generations of

qualitative researchers have adopted and adapted what these scholars explored.

Znaniecki's vision of analytic induction has been criticized by some methodologists as seeking universal certainties, but this interpretation is debatable because Znaniecki disparaged efforts of others to use induction to arrive at absolutely true generalizations. He emphasized that, so long as human life continued, theories would need to change to reflect changing human conditions, changing human experiences, and (especially) changing human knowledge and understanding of the world.

Judith Preissle

See also Data Analysis; Empiricism; Induction; Negative Case Analysis; Recursivity

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ANONYMITY

Anonymity means that a research participant's identity and responses cannot be identified. Most ethical and professional codes of conduct require that researchers protect participant privacy through strategies that safeguard anonymity and confidentiality. A consequence of such codes is that researchers often assume anonymity must always be protected; they sometimes forget that participants might not share the same privacy concerns and would like to be acknowledged for their contributions.

The anonymity of participants can be full or partial. Full anonymity exists when even a researcher does not know the identity of participants and the participants are unable to identify their own responses. For example, a postal survey with no

identifiers and a questionnaire design that eliminates unique responses is completely anonymous. Such anonymity, however, raises validity concerns because it is also impossible to know whether the survey was completed by the desired participants. Partial anonymity exists when participants' identities are disguised with pseudonyms but their true identities could still be discovered. For example, pseudonymous internet chat room users may be traced to their personal computers. Identities may also be discovered if a researcher discloses unique characteristics about participants that are later recognized by alert readers.

Anonymity is most desirable to protect participants from harms that arise from the disclosure of their identities. For example, participants who are reporting human rights abuses under an oppressive regime benefit from anonymity. When investigating sensitive topics, anonymity can help to increase the likelihood that participants will give more candid information. Moreover, if a researcher does not know the names of interviewees, law enforcement authorities and other interested parties are unlikely to attempt to access confidential research files.

For some participants, a benefit of taking part in a study is the opportunity to publicly express their experiences and beliefs. They may desire acknowledgment of this and seek ownership of their contributions to a study. Indeed, they may even want readers to be able to contact them. Canada's national tri-council policy statement, *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, recommends a participant-centered perspective that encourages researchers to collaborate with participants and to ensure consideration of their interests. The participant-centered approach suggests that anonymity should not be imposed on participants who wish to be named.

In qualitative research, anonymity can facilitate candid disclosure of sensitive information while also protecting the privacy and safety interests of participants. At the same time, if a source is completely anonymous, it is also impossible for researchers to account for the authenticity of their data. Finally, many research participants do not seek the privacy often imposed by researchers and ethics boards. Their wish to have ownership of their contributions to research—to be seen—should be given as much consideration as their concerns for privacy.

Russel Ogden

See also Confidentiality; Privacy; Pseudonym; Sensitive Topics

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APPLIED RESEARCH

Applied qualitative research is concerned, first and foremost, with the usefulness and application of knowledge. Its primary focus is on the production of knowledge that is practical and has immediate application to pressing problems of concern to society at large or to specific public or private research clients. It is research that is designed to engage with people, organizations, and interests and is aimed to inform human services, public policy, and other local, national, and international decision makers. This entry reviews the origins of the distinction, describes types and uses of applied research, discusses methodological issues related to applied research, and examines some of the ethical issues that arise in connection with such research.

Historical Context

Prior to World War I, sociology, psychology, and other social sciences were focused primarily on basic research in an attempt to gain status as pure and objective scientific disciplines. However, by the end of World War I in 1918, more opportunities and needs for applied and action-oriented research began to emerge. These served to legitimize this pursuit as multiple examples of social progress and reform established the utility of applied research. At the University of Chicago, where early sociologists focused their attention largely on applied problems and dedicated their efforts to social improvement, community agencies began to partner with sociological researchers in the development of scientifically based human services. In the midst of the Great Depression (1929–1939) and with the onset of

World War II (1939), both the public and scientific communities strengthened their calls for researchers to participate in social and community action. Although the conservative atmosphere that permeated the late 1940s and 1950s shifted the scientific focus away from social reform and back to the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of science and theoretical advancement, the pervasive activism of the 1960s and 1970s led to a resurgence in attention to applied research. This has resulted in a large body of literature on strategies for effective social change. Today numerous researchers in the social sciences remain dedicated to addressing national crises and social concerns, and the National Science Foundation in the United States has prioritized many applied research initiatives.

Over time, the term *applied research* has evolved to include many diverse forms of research. William Whyte proposed the terms *action research* (research that leads to action objectives), *participatory research* (research that involves the participation of organizations or citizens without action objectives), and *participatory action research* (research that fully includes participation of organization members or citizens throughout the entire research process and in the development of action steps) to further delineate various forms of applied research. Kurt Lewin's writings and work are also crucial to applied research. He first proposed the term *action research* to represent a form of applied research in which phenomena are changed so as to observe the subsequent effects of that change. Thus, he called for real-life experiments to be done within natural settings. His famous words, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory," were said in support of applied work in a paper that advocated active cooperation between theoretical and applied research, but these words are often taken out of context and misunderstood as a criticism of applied research. Although Lewin challenged applied researchers to recognize the practicality of theory, he equally challenged basic researchers to remove their aversion to real-life problems and applied research questions. Lewin believed that if active cooperation between basic and applied research could be achieved, it would simultaneously answer theoretical problems and provide rational approaches to practical problems.

Applied Versus Basic Research

Since the inception of applied research, there has been much conversation, across various fields of social science,

about the distinctions, relative strengths, and even relative value of applied versus basic research. These distinctions were historically presented in stark contrast, with basic research being portrayed as pure, highly controlled, bias-free research often done in the lab for the sake of knowledge alone and unchallenged by practical, real social problems. Meanwhile, applied research was described as field based and designed to solve problems, often at the behest of nonscientists; thus, it was viewed as nonacademic, less controlled, less rigorous, potentially biased, and atheoretical in its orientation to outcomes rather than concepts. As various fields in the social sciences sought to distance themselves from their roots in philosophy and align themselves with the so-called hard sciences, whose bailiwick was in lab research, applied social science became undervalued when the fields attempted to emulate the methods and approaches of the flourishing physical sciences.

Many writers, in line with the writings of Lewin, argue against these stark distinctions, viewing the differences between basic and applied social science research as more nuanced and on a continuum rather than dichotomous. Russell Ackoff suggested that it is the researchers' intentions and the audience's use of research data that distinguish the two. Willy Lens showed how B. F. Skinner's basic research had obvious applications, whereas Sigmund Freud's applied work had a clear theoretical basis and outcome. Allan Kimmel further pointed to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, as a clear indication that the knowledge developed through basic science is not ethically neutral.

It has been further reasoned that the merits of applied and basic research should depend entirely on the ways in which any particular research study meets the goals of its research question and that both types of research exist along a continuum, building on each other in synergistic fashion. Furthermore, both may be equally crucial to understanding and improving the human experience. Peter Rossi and William Foote Whyte contended, in a 1983 compendium called *Applied Sociology: Roles and Activities of Sociologists in Diverse Settings*, that attempting to apply theory to an applied problem may result in a much better critique than will any peer-reviewed journal. Robert Hoffman and Kenneth Deffenbacher took this one step farther, arguing not only that a bidirectional relationship exists between applied and basic research but also that applied research can contain multiple

elements of the entire continuum, including its ability to invigorate old theory through application, and lead to the creation of new theory. Hoffman and Deffenbacher further conceptualized an alternative way in which to identify research type, rating the research simultaneously on two dimensions: one ecological and focused on external criteria and the other epistemological and focused on internal criteria. The ecological dimensions include validity (are research conditions close to real life?), relevance (are research tasks and materials close to what people actually do?), salience (is the focus of the research important to real people?), and representativeness (do people in the real world often come across the conditions or demands of the research?). The epistemological dimensions are parallel: validity (does the design fit the available theories and accepted research methods?), relevance (are the research hypotheses based on concepts from available theories?), salience (does the research rely on theoretical concepts that are regarded as important?), and representativeness (is the research based on concepts that other scientists use frequently?). Thus, in Hoffman and Deffenbacher's conceptualization, what is often called basic research might be more correctly characterized as research that is high in multiple dimensions of epistemological validity but may or not be high in ecological validity. What is often referred to as applied research would be more properly identified as that which is high in some or all of the four dimensions of ecological validity, whether or not it is high in epistemological relevance.

Types and Uses of Applied Research

An increasing number of academic disciplines and occupational fields use applied research as their primary means of investigating and addressing social problems. Applied foci of some existing fields of study have also emerged to become independent disciplines (e.g., applied physics, applied developmental psychology). Although many would argue that applied research has the most utility when done in consort with decision makers and stakeholders, some applied researchers remain in the more traditional role of academic or professional expert. In this type of approach, sometimes called *action research*, the researcher is largely or entirely responsible for choosing the objective and methods. In contrast, *participant action research* and what the field of public health refers to as *community-based*

participant research both are types of applied research with strong emphases on the full participation of community members at all stages of the research process.

Applied research spans many substantive areas of interdisciplinary research and human services to address a wide range of persistent social problems as well as theoretical questions. Because applied research is so relevant to the general public, it is often used to inform governmental policy and legislation, educational reform, and public health as well as to address pressing social issues such as immigration, environmental planning, and the HIV/AIDs epidemic. It can be used throughout all stages of human services planning—from design and implementation, to needs and resource analysis, to resource allocation and decision making, to the insurance of citizen participation. Applied research is also employed by community-based researchers, such as community psychologists, for community analysis and development, program evaluation and/or planning, prevention research (e.g., substance abuse prevention, violence prevention), and the empowerment of vulnerable populations. The flexibility, versatility, and utility of applied research ensure that it can be conducted within a variety of settings (both domestically and internationally), including social services, educational settings, governmental agencies, business and consumer sites, and rural and urban communities. Other common forms of applied research include demography and survey research, which are often requested and used by marketing or advertising firms, opinion organizations, and government agencies.

Applied Research Methods

Russel Ackoff, in a classic 1962 text, outlined methodological and design issues for optimizing applied research. He delineated six research phases:

1. Formulating the problem
2. Constructing the model
3. Testing the model
4. Deriving a solution from the model
5. Testing and controlling the solution
6. Implementing the solution

Put more simply, Max Elden and Rupert Chisholm suggested the following three stages of applied research:

1. Diagnosing the problem
2. Planning action
3. Implementing and evaluating

In either conceptualization, the first and last phases may be considered the most unique to applied research and the most important to describe in some detail. Recall that applied research is, first and foremost, concerned with the usefulness, practicality, and immediate applicability of knowledge. Thus, the problem formulation is among the most crucial components of applied research and by definition should ideally involve community members, decision makers, stakeholders, and applied experts in addition to the researcher. As Ackoff pointed out, the purpose of applied research is to answer some question, and it is the researcher's job to translate a decision maker's problem into a research question. He suggested that this translation involves identification of four key components of the problem. First, who is (are) the decision maker(s)? Second, what are their related objectives? Third, what are the possible courses of action for the decision maker(s)? Fourth, what is the environmental context that may be out of the control of the decision maker(s)? From a community psychology perspective, it is also crucial to involve not only those with power, such as the decision maker(s) and other direct research clients, but also as many stakeholders and affected community members as possible. Ivan Nye made the point that the utility of a research project may also depend on the choice of problems. He suggested that applied research topics should be selected based on the proportion of the population affected by the problem, the seriousness of the problem, and the suspected amenability of the problem to change.

The translation of community concerns into a research model also involves creating a conceptual context or framework. This framework is essentially a theory that tentatively suggests the problem process and, thus, informs the design of research. Joseph Maxwell wrote about how this conceptual context is "constructed" from four sources: (1) experiential knowledge, which many would argue should include not only researcher knowledge but also that of stakeholders and other native experts in the field; (2) existing

theory and research, what is traditionally considered the literature review; (3) pilot studies; and (4) thought experiments that seek to answer “what if” questions prior to the start of research. Terry Hendrick and colleagues stressed that ethical and accurate research planning involves not only talking to research clients, sponsors, and issue experts but also reviewing reports, statistics, media reports, and position papers from stakeholders on all sides of the problem debate as well as spending time in the settings of interest to gather real-world data and talk with people currently engaged in those settings.

It is also crucial to ensure that, from the very start, one is thinking about the applied audience to whom results will be disseminated. Keeping this in mind will ensure that the research question(s), design, and solution are appropriate, meaningful, and useful to an applied audience.

It is the dissemination of useful knowledge for the purposes of implementation that is the *raison d'être* and hallmark of applied research. Writers such as Nye have argued that one of the basic problems in modern societies is the lack of information necessary to make important and complex decisions. Thus, the dissemination of information gained through applied research is crucial, and Nye argued that it is the researcher's responsibility to make sure that stakeholders receive information and that it is provided in an understandable form. He suggested that researchers should plan for three publications: those aimed at scholarly audiences, those written for practitioners, and those aimed at lay people. Whereas dissemination is the responsibility of the researcher, decision making and implementation are seen by most as the ultimate responsibility of the decision maker and stakeholders in the field. Ackoff pointed out that when implementation is done by nonscientists, changes may occur, and so he compared an applied researcher to an architect—responsible for creating an implementation plan that is detailed, feasible, and understandable to those who will construct what the researcher has designed.

It is also true that the applied researcher not only may make recommendations but also may be involved in implementation. Ackoff wrote of implementation as not only the intended result of applied research but also the best test of the results derived from that research. This recalls the earlier discussion regarding the fact that not only basic research but also applied research can be used for theory building and theory testing.

Shep Kellam's work in the Baltimore City Schools, testing developmental models of preventive interventions, is an excellent example of this. Kellam has maintained throughout his career that the most appropriate test of developmental intervention models is through rigorous, longitudinal, applied field research.

Ethics

Applied research, like any type of research, presents important ethical challenges. In addition, due to the potential and intent of applied research to quickly and directly affect social policy and programming in real-life settings, great care must be taken to protect all who may be affected. Although it is common to conceptualize ethical problems in research as arising mainly from the methodology, Kimmel and others pointed out that the subject matter itself can present ethical challenges. In addition, ethical reverberations can just as easily arise from the study that is *not* done and the questions that are *not* asked as from the study that is conducted. Ackoff suggested that care should be taken to ascertain the motives of the research sponsor(s) and client(s) in requesting research. Issues of status, prestige, control, and the desire to use research to confirm assumptions or obstruct information transfer can damage research and researcher credibility, rigor, and ethics. Ackoff also suggested that sometimes, particularly when enticing but preliminary results arise, researchers have an ethical responsibility to “unsell” findings, that is, to persuade decision makers that further research is necessary before results are acted on in real-world settings. Because most, if not all, ethical guidelines for the social sciences stress researchers' primary responsibility to protect the most vulnerable populations, applied researchers have a serious charge to attend, first and foremost, to the best interests of those who will be affected by the potential and actual knowledge gained and the policy and interventions that may result from their research. Done properly, applied research is a powerful tool with the potential to contribute to both the growth of science and the amelioration of pressing real-life problems.

Anne E. Brodsky and Elena A. Welsh

See also Action Research; Basic Research; Community-Based Research; Field Research; Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a deliberate search for the positive core of an individual or collective system. It rests on a belief that there is something that works in every system. This goodness can be identified and drawn out. AI, then, is an inquiry into what is valued and good about the individual or collective system. It generally employs a four-phase process of discovery, dream, design, and destiny. The discovery phase is focused on identifying what already exists in the system that is good. Once that is identified, it is possible to imagine an even better system, which is the dream phase. Creating an infrastructure to support this ideal system is the work that takes place during the design phase. As the new system comes into being, it must be maintained and sustained in such a way that its affirmative capacity is continuously strengthened; this is the destiny phase. As the system lives its destiny, a new cycle begins through another inquiry into what makes it good.

The name most closely associated with AI is that of David Cooperrider, a professor of organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University. As a doctoral student, Cooperrider questioned the wisdom of the problem-solving mentality with its focus on diagnosing what is wrong. He proposed a different approach, now referred to as appreciative inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry Described

Foundational to AI is a social construction philosophy. A working assumption of AI is that systems (even individual ones) are socially constructed. They are constructed by and through the influence of people. Thus, they are open to change. What has been constructed can be reconstructed. Regardless of its history, any system can be altered. AI uses the positive past history of the system to direct its future. Images of the future are grounded in the system's past positive history, making the image ideal yet within the realm of possibility.

As an approach to research, AI has been most closely associated with action research, case study, narrative, portraiture, and evaluation methods. In practice, this approach seeks to conduct research that begins with a stance of appreciation yielding useful and provocative data (generating more curiosity) and that is collaborative (recognizing the line between researcher and researched is a fine one). AI relies on collecting data through conducting interviews, making it well suited to qualitative research methods.

Appreciative Inquiry Questions

A hallmark of AI is the positive orientation of the interview questions. The questions asked determine the information received. The information received is used to form conclusions and recommendations. Thus, it could be said that the study is only as good as the questions asked. With its emphasis on the social construction of (individual or collective) systems, the supposition is that the questions asked will effect change in the system. When an inquiry is conducted with a spirit of appreciation, the valued factors and forces in the system are affirmed and illuminated. These factors and forces can be used to guide the future direction of the system.

In AI, a fair amount of time is devoted to crafting “good” questions—those that use positive language,

are posed as an invitation, are phrased in sometimes ambiguous conversational language, and evoke storytelling about peak experiences. There is an assumption that people carry around with them several stories, some of which are positive. Questions are designed to elicit these positive stories. Four primary types of questions are asked: deep story, value, core factors, and future or miracle.

The deep story question is designed to evoke stories about best experiences and to begin to get people thinking appreciatively. People are encouraged to provide rich thick description by talking about who was involved, what made it a peak experience, what they did to make it a peak experience, and what others contributed to make it a peak experience. The value question is crafted to discover what it is that people value about the individual or collective system under inquiry. This begins to personalize the factors mentioned in the deep story response. The third type of question, core factors, is meant to identify what people believe are the core factors that give life—factors that are integral to the system under discussion. This question elicits the specifics about what gives life to the individual or collective and seeks to understand why it gives life. Finally, the future or miracle question is an invitation to dream and imagine the ideal future. What could be is described in detail.

When an AI approach is used for research, the types of questions are adapted to suit the study. For example, in a study about leadership, the interview questions might be as follows:

- Please tell me about a time when you believed you excelled in a leadership capacity. This could be in your personal or professional life. Who was involved, what were they doing, and what were you doing that made it a memorable experience? (deep story question)
- What do you believe you brought to that experience that made it a high point? What specifically do you value about your past experience and knowledge that prepared you to take on the leadership role described? What was it about the context that helped you to excel? (value question)
- Describe what you believe was unique about this experience. In other words, without these factors, the experience would not have been what it was. (core factors question)
- Considering what you know now and what you have experienced, what words of wisdom do you have for

those aspiring to leadership positions? When thinking about the future, what are your wishes for those who would be leaders? (future or miracle question)

Such questions elicit rich narratives about positive experiences.

Interviews are generally conducted face-to-face. It is critical for the interviewer to suspend his or her assumptions about how people will answer the questions and question the obvious. Probing beyond superficial answers yields a rich complex narrative.

Sometimes people have a difficult time focusing on the positive. It is common for people to report that because they are usually asked about what is wrong, they need to purposely reflect on what is right. Yet once they do, they generally find this to be easy to elaborate and frequently grow visibly excited about the topic. For this reason, it is recommended that the questions be asked in the order just presented. As a specific positive situation is identified and expanded on, by the time the “future” question is asked, the interviewee may well propose possible solutions to current problems.

Relationship to Other Research Methods

AI is most closely related to action research, case study, narrative, portraiture, and evaluation methods. Each of these methods has qualitative applications.

Action research commonly uses qualitative methods. Everyday things in life are unpacked by engaging stakeholders in a deeper understanding of their experience. Experiential knowledge is honored in a collaborative process. There is a fine line between the researcher and the researched. The primary aim is to produce knowledge that can be applied directly. When an appreciative approach is used, the questions asked focus on what is working rather than diagnosing what is wrong.

Although quantitative methods can be used, case study is usually considered to be a qualitative research methodology. The case can be the object of study and/or the product of the inquiry. When the case is the object of study, it is bound to be a single or multiple case study. As a product, a case description is reported. The appreciative case study employs a positive stance and studies what is working in the setting. The themes of the case are centered on what is valued.

With its recognition of and reliance on stories as data, AI has a clear connection to narrative. The

purpose of the appreciative interview is to solicit specific kinds of stories. Although the stories shared may be about an individual or collective system, the intent is for the stories to be directed at the positive core. AI encourages the sharing of positive stories in varied ways and forums. The stories shared reflect how people think about the system and provide leverage for making changes.

Portraiture is a qualitative research method that has inherent in it a focus on the good. It seeks to underscore what is healthy and strong. The method concerns itself with discovering the genesis and illustration of what is considered good from the view of the interviewees. With this orientation already built into it, AI is an unmistakable match.

Evaluation research is used to assess the effectiveness of a program or policy. Often qualitative methods are used. The historical focus in evaluation research has been on identifying areas for improvement. An AI approach switches the focus to the strengths of the program or policy and how to build on them.

An appreciative approach and appreciative questions can be designed for a variety of qualitative studies. The possibilities are not limited to those just discussed.

The Appreciative Approach

A major premise behind AI is that the positive core of individual and collective systems has been neglected. This positive core exists in every individual and collective system. It can be used to reconstruct the system.

Although it is changing, research frequently has a focus on problem solving. After all, the first step in designing a research study is to identify the problem being investigated. An AI approach would change the language to describe the issue or topic, rather than the problem, under investigation. An AI approach to research may show up most clearly in the interview questions; however, it can be infused throughout the design of the study. An example of an appreciative case study is a dissertation written by Ron Prindle, *An Appreciative Case Study of Downsizing Effects on a Shore-Based Department of the Navy Reserve Support Organization*. This dissertation, written in 2005 and available from Gonzaga University, illustrates how adopting an AI approach shaped the entire study.

The profound differentiator of AI compared with other research methods is AI's deliberate focus on the creative, generative, and positive aspects of a system

(individual or collective). This focus may be seen throughout the research process—from the construction of the research question, to the design of the interview guide, to the identification of major themes.

Karen E. Norum

See also Action Research; Case Study; Evaluation Research; *Narrative Inquiry* (Journal); Portraiture

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ARTIFACT ANALYSIS

Artifacts become data through the questions posed about them and the meanings assigned to them by the researcher. There is no one right way to analyze artifacts. A wide range of disciplines informs the analysis of artifacts, including anthropology, archaeology, art history, history, human geography, ethnography, and sociology. In the process of analysis, we are asking the data to tell us something. An artifact has a story to tell about the person who made it, how it was used, who used it, and the beliefs and values associated with it. For example, a quilt made around the time of the U.S. Civil War may have been used to communicate ideas about abolition, to smuggle messages through enemy lines, to raise funds, or to bury a soldier killed while fighting the war. The materials used can provide a glimpse into what resources were available to the quilt maker. Another example of artifacts that have a story to tell would be archival records such as birth, marriage, and death certificates. These records can be examined for their genealogical value and to understand the patterns of life in a culture or society.

Several kinds of analysis are related to artifact analysis. All are described in more detail in separate entries throughout the encyclopedia. Thus, just a brief overview follows here.

Methods of Analysis

Although there is no one correct way to analyze artifacts, several approaches to analysis may be employed depending on the type of artifact being examined. These include content, discourse, document, historical, and narrative analyses as well as semiotics.

Content analysis is a systematic examination of forms of communication used to objectively document patterns. In general, text is broken down into categories and the presence of these categories is often quantified. Discourse analysis also uses written, spoken, or signed language as its object but is concerned with larger units of analysis such as conversations and the interrelationships between language and society. Document analysis is the study of the written text and takes into account the document's physical condition, the handwriting or printing used, and its idiosyncrasies. Historical analysis concerns itself with understanding the state of the times in which an event occurred or a person lived. Narrative analysis examines the internal coherence of a text and investigates the story being told. Semiotics is the systematic study of symbols or signs and includes the study of how meaning is constructed and understood.

Depending on the specific artifact being analyzed, any one of these or a combination of approaches may be useful. This reflects the wide range of disciplines that can be used to inform the analysis of artifacts.

The Analytic Process

The analytic process is iterative in nature. It involves inferring meaning and making judgments on the part of the researcher. Often the researcher works between the past and the present or between different examples of artifacts looking for relationships. Themes, patterns, and refrains are sought.

It is important to remember that it is common for this type of data to be mute in the sense that member checks often cannot be conducted to verify the interpretation. Thus, the researcher must consider several factors. Questions about the nature of the artifact must be asked. Such questions include the following:

Who made it? What materials were used in constructing it? What was the occasion? What was the purpose of the artifact? How public is it? How structured is it? Who was the intended user (an individual or a group)? Who cannot or did not use it? Did different people use it in different ways? What is shown through the artifact? What is absent? Why was it recorded or saved? Considering the artifact's historical context is critical: What was happening in society or in history at the time the artifact was made? What meaning did the artifact have for the users? Has its meaning or use changed over time? Does the meaning differ for different users? If it was created elsewhere, how did this person or group of people acquire it?

Artifacts were created in a context and, thus, must be studied within that context. Just as it is dangerous to take interview and observational data out of context, it is risky to take artifacts out of context.

In addition, researchers must consider the context of their own study. Questions to pose during this phase of the analysis include the following: What is the focus of the research, and how is this artifact related? What categories of information need to be developed? What perspectives need to be developed in light of the research purpose? How do these data fit in with other data?

Both the context of the artifact and the context of the study must be addressed during the analysis phase. Whereas the artifact must be analyzed within its context, the data provided must be considered within the context of the research. By posing the questions mentioned plus others generated by the researcher, artifacts become rich sources of data. The researcher determines exactly what the data mean as the boundaries of the study are defined.

Artifacts as Data

Artifacts provide a rich source of data. They are a source of information not available from interview or observational data. Artifacts can be used to support or challenge other data sources and literature, to generate or confirm hunches, and to help provide thick description of people and/or settings. The story they can tell is valuable.

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See also Content Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Document Analysis; Historical Research; Narrative Analysis

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ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are things that societies and cultures make for their own use. They provide material evidence of the past by documenting and recording the past. Artifacts can provide historical, demographic, and (sometimes) personal information about a culture, society, or people. Insights into how people lived, what they valued and believed, their ideas and assumptions, and their knowledge and opinions are revealed in artifacts.

Examples of artifacts include photographs, memorabilia, tools, buildings, toys, pottery, jewelry, clothing, weapons, gifts, paintings, graffiti, furniture, and tombstones (Figure 1). They can be religious, artistic, technological, or functional in nature. A common type of artifact is written texts such as documents, diaries, journals, memos, meeting minutes, and letters. Archival records are also sources of artifacts and include public records (e.g., birth, marriage, or death certificates), voting records, and newspapers. Artifacts may also be in the form of film, television, and music.

Besides being items that people have created (e.g., notes, diaries, journals, jewelry, pottery), artifacts can also be things that people have worn away. For example, paths created in grass where people commonly walk and the shine worn away from heavily trafficked areas of a floor would be artifacts that reveal how people navigate a space.

Artifacts can also be researcher generated. For example, the researcher may ask participants in the study to keep a journal. The journal would become an artifact of the study.

The term *material culture* is used in association with artifacts. Material culture covers a broad spectrum and refers to the sum of artifacts found in a



Figure 1 Examples of Artifacts

Source: Photo by Karen E. Norum.

Notes: Clockwise from top: baseball cap, newspaper, cowgirl boot, kuksa (Finnish drinking utensil), oxen shoes, and wooden shoe (from France). Center items: passport and baby spoon. All artifacts are displayed on a beaded and sequined patchwork wall tapestry from the United Arab Emirates.

culture or society. In general, these artifacts are everyday objects that have been left behind or made by people to satisfy needs or wants or to express an idea or belief. They are products of a culture or society.

Artifacts are a frequently overlooked source of data. They serve to enrich a study and often provide information not available from interview or observational data. Although not common, it is possible to build an entire study around artifacts. *Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America* by Linda Lawrence Hunt was based almost entirely on artifacts. Helga Estby and her daughter walked from Spokane, Washington, to New York City in 1896. The little evidence that remains of the journey is in the form of diaries, notes, photographs, letters, and newspaper accounts. Relying primarily on these artifacts, supplemented by interviews with living relatives, Hunt was able to piece together the remarkable cross-country adventure.

Artifacts are a unique source of data that often are right in front of us. They shed light on important aspects of a person, society, or culture, enriching any study.

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See also Diaries and Journals; Documents; Memoirs; Narrative Texts; Visual Data

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A/R/TOGRAPHY

A/r/tography is an arts and education practice-based methodology recognizing that the practices of artists and educators are often reflective, reflexive, recursive, and responsive acts of living inquiry. This entry describes these practices in broadly conceptualized forms of inquiry that can be used by scholars, artists, educators, and students.

A/r/tography as a Form of Inquiry

A/r/tography resides in the practices of artists and educators whose forms of inquiry are similar to an understanding of action research that does not follow a prescribed plan or method but rather pursues an ongoing inquiry committed to continuously asking questions, enacting interventions, gathering information, and analyzing that information before asking further questions and enacting more living inquiry. Although these acts might seem to be linear, they are usually intertwined acts of meditative, even contemplative, inquiry. The creative and artistic inquiry practices of poets, dancers, musicians, performers, visual artists, and other artists resonate with these educative acts of inquiry and also inform a/r/tographical practice. A/r/tographers envision artistic and educational practices as enacting dispositions to knowledge creation as they begin to appreciate how inquiry is a commitment to understanding through acts of theorizing. The practices of artists and educators are situated within complex environments. Inquiring in these contexts requires a commitment to an evolution of questions within the living inquiry processes of practitioners. For a/r/tographers, this means an ongoing quest for understanding that is timely, emergent, generative, and responsive for those involved. After all, artists seek challenges that interrupt taken-for-granted ways of knowing so as to see, hear, and experience the world differently. In this way,

a/r/tographical practices are not comfortable habits but rather the challenging practices of learning to question differences and perceive differently in and through time. A/r/tographers understand that who they are is embedded in what they know and do. Theory and practice are no longer divided but rather folded together through lived experiences and lived inquiry.

Methodological Practices of A/r/tography

A/r/tography is different from many other research methodologies that identify specific research problems to be solved through methodological protocols that lead to specific research findings. A/r/tographical inquiry may identify foreshadowed problems, but the intention is to engage in inquiry over time so as to come to deeper understandings of the issues that have been raised. Graeme Sullivan addresses this idea by moving away from the language of probability and plausibility to possibility. A/r/tographers are committed to artistic forms of engagement that help them to create, interpret, and/or represent new forms of knowledge. Knowing (*theoria*), doing (*praxis*), and making (*poiesis*) are folded together in a/r/tography to form rhizomatic ways of experiencing the world and creating the circumstances to produce knowledge and understanding through inquiry-laden processes. Furthermore, knowledge is always in a state of becoming, meaning that there is a need to be continuously committed to inquiry over time.

A/r/tography involves self-inquiry and collective inquiry. Artists and educators recognize that relationality permeates our existence. The work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Luc Nancy underscored this concept by maintaining that meaning is constituted between beings. According to Nancy, this betweenness is both unity and uniqueness, the singular plural of being. Each identity is created through encounters with others, and it is the *with* that demonstrates the contiguity and distinctiveness of each entity. The relations between these entities and other entities show how the in-betweenness can metaphorically be conceived as a fold. In a fold, the material is simultaneously exterior and interior with no sides. Gilles Deleuze translated un/folding as dividing endlessly—folds within folds existing side by side. Un/folding performs in the in-between spaces, and in a/r/tography relational inquiring is un/folded between the identities and forms of engagement for the artist/researcher/teacher.

Artists, researchers, and educators do not work in isolation. Their work is related to the work of others. A/r/tographers acknowledge the work of others either by attending performances and exhibitions or by citing artists, educators, and researchers in their written work. Furthermore, a/r/tographers are not limited to academic circles. They can be practicing artists, teachers, learners, and students. Although a/r/tography privileges the identities of artists, researchers, and teachers (a/r/t), it should be noted that these identities are broadly conceptualized. For instance, rather than saying *teacher*; it may be better to say *teacher/learner* so that the teaching and learning enterprise is embraced. Just as a/r/tography challenges habits of knowing, it challenges boundaries that are placed on the identities of artists, researchers, and teachers. In so doing, a/r/tographers also challenge the institutional boundaries often associated with these identities. Artist/researcher/teacher identities exist in a contiguous relationship with one another. In communities of a/r/tographers, one might find separate communities of artists and educators, but it is more likely that hybrid communities of artists, educators, and researchers have been created.

Concepts and Conditions of A/r/tographical Inquiry

A/r/tographers look to Mieke Bal's contention that interdisciplinarity needs to find its basis in concepts rather than methods. Concepts are flexible intersubjective locations for enhanced understanding. The conditions for these concepts are relational forms of inquiry. How does a/r/tography fit within a qualitative methodology? A/r/tographers can use any method commonly used by qualitative researchers such as interviews, observations, and reflective note taking, but what is more important is that a/r/tographers understand that concepts direct inquiry, whereas methods are strategies for gathering information. To emphasize the conceptual nature of a/r/tography, concepts are referred to as *renderings*. Thus, a/r/tographers need to consider the conditions (relational forms of inquiry) and the concepts (renderings) that help them to conduct their living inquiry.

A/r/tographical work may be rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations, and excess that are enacted when a condition of relational inquiry becomes the site for working with the arts and text while practicing the broadly conceived identities

of artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography is necessarily about self. Yet so too can communities of a/r/tographers share inquiries, be critical friends, and work collectively to interpret, create, or represent their evocative/provocative works to others. A/r/tography is certainly about inquiry, yet inquiry also involves the presentation of new understandings (rather than findings) from time to time. Renderings help to conceptualize the processes and products within the inquiry. Moreover, renderings are not procedures but may be conceived as performative concepts of possibility. The first, contiguity, represents the coming together of the arts and graphy (writing) as well as the coming together of the identities and practices of artists/researchers/teachers. Contiguity makes visible the spaces in between these practices and identities as well as the relationships these spaces inspire. The dialectical in/between spaces are dynamic living spaces of inquiry where entities touch and then shift yet lie close together. In this space, inquiry becomes open to challenges, discomfort, and surprise.

Rita L. Irwin's A/r/tography, 2006



In this photograph, I have blurred the environment to see it anew. Metaphorically, this affords me an opportunity to blur other areas of inquiry (e.g., teaching, learning) that lead to new insights and perceptions. In a/r/tography, artists/teachers engage in ongoing inquiry around particular issues or curiosities through their art forms and pedagogies and, as a result, use their ongoing inquiry to pursue change in their practices.

Source: Digital photograph, 2006, by Rita L. Irwin.

Artists, researchers, and teachers engaged in a/r/tography are living lives of inquiry where conclusions are seldom found but searching and researching continue despite the unpredictable. Living inquiry is the second rendering. In a/r/tography, visual, written, and performative processes are enacted as a living practice of art making, researching, and teaching. Living inquiry is an embodied encounter constituted through artistic and textual understandings and experiences that may or may not include representations. Living inquiry lingers in the liminal spaces among *a* (artist), and *r* (researcher), and *t* (teacher) and often arises out of everyday life. As such, the emotional, intuitive, spiritual, bodied, and cognitive ways of knowing are accessed through experiences engaged during living inquiry. Artistic and textual renderings of living inquiry may also expose contradictions and assumptions that lead to evocative or provocative a/r/tographic accounts.

Living inquiry is a fluid orientation finding its rigor through continuous reflexivity and analysis. Some individuals are interested in a/r/tography while believing that they do not need to be skilled as artists. On the contrary, a/r/tographers need to be committed to being the best possible educators and artists they can be. A/r/tography should not be chosen simply as a vehicle for artistic representation through research dissemination; rather, it should be chosen as a way of being in the world. Living inquiry encourages one to experience and question the world from different perspectives and to slow down and notice that which is around one. In a photograph, one can blur the environment to see it anew. Metaphorically, this affords one an opportunity to blur other areas of inquiry (e.g., teaching, learning) that lead to new insights and perceptions.

The third rendering encompasses metaphor/metonymy. Through metaphors and metonymic relationships, we render experiences understandable. Metaphors and metonyms allow insight yet ambiguity of meaning. The forward slash between them allows division and doubling, a reverberation between the two that makes them relational and active. Moreover, meaning un/does itself in that there is often a loss of meaning and deeper insights. The fourth rendering is openings. A/r/tography is both active and responsive—open to what is seen and known and to what is not seen and not known. Cracks, tears, holes, losses, invitations, and encounters can represent openings. Inquiry that opens up conversations creates spaces where relationships can reverberate with meaning. This brings us to the fifth rendering. Reverberations call attention to the

movement that shifts meanings. These movements allow meaning-making to be created at deeper levels, across time, and/or with others. An entanglement of meaning often happens in social networks where we push and pull apart meanings in the company of others. The last rendering is excess where we create to become, where we examine our fears and desires, and where we renegotiate the everyday. Excess can represent waste and the sublime, the awful and the incredible. Excess provides opportunities for complexity by questioning our very being and becoming.

Renderings are dynamic and intersubjective concepts. A/r/tographers engage in conditions of aesthetic inquiry to explore possibilities for creating meaning by performing their living inquiry through the contiguous acts of art making and writing, where ideas metaphorically and/or metonymically reverberate in excess and openings. Renderings are often enacted through rhizomatic assemblages where meanings and understandings are interrogated and ruptured. As a result, a/r/tography transforms the idea of theory as an abstract system distinct and separate from practice to become theory *as* practice, an embodied living space of inquiry.

In closing, a/r/tography allows artistic and educational practices to inform, contradict, and complement one another. As a/r/tography is used more widely, other renderings (concepts) and relational forms of inquiry (conditions) may be interpreted, thereby transforming a/r/tography through practice. Recently, scholars in architecture, health care, and the humanities have been exploring how the a/r/tographic practices of artists and educators can enhance their inquiry. These interdisciplinary spaces concentrate on the conditions and concepts for inquiry rather than on the primary disciplines and are pushing the boundaries of inquiry in the academy. A/r/tography as a creative and educative form of living inquiry will transform over time as the arts and education transform in and through time.

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See also Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Narrative Inquiry

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ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

Arts-based research is a form of qualitative research in the human studies that employs the premises, procedures, and principles of the arts. It is defined by the presence of aesthetic qualities (or design elements) within both the inquiry process and the research text. Therefore, arts-based research is quite different in many ways from traditional forms of research that are associated with the social sciences. Arts-based research differs from scientific research both in the process in which the research is conducted and in the modalities used for representing research data. For that reason, social researchers who have been professionally socialized to regard research in the various fields of the human studies as exclusively scientific may dismiss arts-based research as not useful. Over the past couple of decades, however, arts-based research advocates and practitioners have made headway in dispelling the misunderstandings that resulted in earlier

marginalization. This entry reviews the types and purposes of arts-based research, elements of the investigative strategies and communicative approaches it employs, and criteria for evaluating such research.

Kinds of Arts-Based Research Texts

Advocates and practitioners of arts-based research have provided two distinctly different sorts of textual products. The first kind is conceptual insofar as it addresses the nature, characteristics, and purposes of arts-based research. This kind of text is found in articles, books, book chapters, and conference presentations that focus on various dimensions of arts-based research. Of course, as with the formation of any novel approach to researching social phenomena, there is disagreement among scholars regarding these dimensions.

The second kind of text offers actual examples of arts-based research. These examples employ any of a number of art forms in the representation of the social phenomena under study. Various forms of the literary, visual, plastic, and performance arts have been represented, including the following: novel, novella, short story, poetry, found poetry, memoir, autoethnography, readers theater, ethnodrama, verbal portraiture, literary case study, literary essay, educational criticism, autobiography, biography, self-narrative, allegory, mixed genres, photography, film and video documentary and fiction, hypertext, painting, sculpture, museum installation, multimedia, dance, and music.

Purposes of Arts-Based Research

In their increasingly successful efforts to legitimate an approach to social research that is dramatically different from social science, arts-based researchers have identified unique purposes for engaging in their projects. Some scholars have emphasized the capacity of the arts for enabling viewers to perceive qualities within the social world that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. They have suggested, moreover, that different forms of art enable a percipient to see the same phenomena in different ways. This purpose for arts-based research, therefore, may be described as one of enhanced understanding through the communication of subjective realities or personal truths that can occur only through works of art. Elliot Eisner, an educationist scholar who coined the term *arts-based research* during the 1980s, has articulated this aim most forcefully. Eisner, a self-identified cognitive pluralist,

Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching

Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching, published in 2001, is an example of an arts-based work that attempts to problematize orthodox notions of what constitutes quality in teaching. Using a literary format and writing style, Tom Barone crafted the life stories of several former students of the same high school teacher. The stories were aimed at enabling readers to vicariously experience the student-teacher interactions both inside and outside of the classroom setting. Each student insisted on portraying the teacher as a powerfully influential central character in his or her life. In an ensuing analysis of the life stories, however, Barone raised questions about the possibility of teachers as heroic figures who, operating single-handedly against powerful external forces, can indeed make a significant difference in the quality of their students' lives. The result is a book that offers no final answers but rather prompts readers from all walks of life to reconsider their own (perhaps deeply held) beliefs about who is a good teacher.

Source: Barone, T. (2001). *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

advocated a kind of binocular vision that results from investigating educational (and other social) phenomena through both scientific and artistic lenses.

A second purpose identified with arts-based research also entails a shift away from the traditional objectivist epistemology identified with most social science research. Social scientists have tended to strive toward a high degree of certainty in securing and disclosing their findings. The publication of these findings sets forth knowledge claims about the phenomena under study. The higher the validity and reliability of those findings, the more likely they will be deemed useful in predicting, and even controlling, future events. However, arts-based research is not usually aimed toward securing (or even approaching) either "objective" or "subjective" truth. Indeed, most arts-based researchers harbor radically different aspirations for their inquiry projects. This purpose involves the generation of doubts about, the potential for disrupting or transgressing against, and the enhancement of uncertainty regarding presuppositions about the social world that have come to be taken for granted as contributing to a final reality.

Arts-based research texts, therefore, are designed in a manner that will promote profound reconsideration of the commonsensical, the orthodox, the clichéd, and the stereotypical. This disturbance by the arts-based research text of the privilege of the status quo may make possible that toward which many artists strive, according to Maxine Greene and others. This is a work that enables the reader or percipient to reimagine deeply deficient social institutions and practices.

What these articulated goals of arts-based social research—the communication of subjective realities and the vigorous interrogation of a commonsensical way of comprehending the social world—have in common is an enhancement of multiple meanings. Indeed, this possibility of entertaining alternative ways of perceiving the world implies the presence of what Richard Rorty identified as one of two fundamental purposes of human inquiry. If the first purpose has been the discovery of truth through employment of the tools of traditional forms of social science, the second is indeed the revelation of alternative meanings through artistic projects.

Research Design Elements

Research design, of course, involves both investigative strategies and approaches to the communication of research "findings." Elements pertaining to each of these dimensions must serve the shifting purpose of the arts-based researcher. For example, within social science research that is experimental in nature, elements of design are carefully selected to meet the traditional purpose of moving the reader toward certainty regarding the phenomena under study. An experiment that is carefully designed will theoretically result in the most highly valid and reliable truth claims. Within arts-based research, however, radically different design elements may be selected in accordance with their alternative research goals.

These design elements will, of course, vary to some degree according to art form. For works that are literary in character, the inquiry approach may be less systematic than that employed by social scientists. The research process engaged in by playwrights, poets, and novelists, although often extensive and thorough, might not exhibit the highly structured protocols and procedures found in social scientists' methodological toolkit. Most social scientists will, after all, perform in accordance with Rorty's first inquiry aim, a quest for certainty, whereas most arts-based researchers will

honor the process through which interrogative art is created. Similarly, the findings of social science will, on the one hand, quite rightly be revealed within a text that honors the orthodoxies of a scientific report. On the other hand, arts-based researchers will configure their “data” into an aesthetic form that is designed to promote the kind of re-visioning that was described previously. For example, an arts-based manuscript designed to promote an understanding of the world of an adolescent with Asperger’s syndrome may take the form of a novella, a documentary film, or a cluster of poems that enables the reader/viewer to reexperience the world from a previously unavailable vantage point.

The shape and format of this sort of research text will be the result of a reorganization of aesthetic content (“data”) into a form that will entice the reader into a textual engagement where mundane aspects of everyday life are highlighted. Transported into, and repositioned within, an “aesthetic remove,” and thus temporarily bracketed off from the “real world,” the reader can be enticed into reconsidering the meanings underlying the human phenomena being investigated, for the phenomena may now appear strange and unfamiliar and, therefore, in need of reconfiguration within the worldview of the reader. The commonsensical meanings easily attributed to facets of the social and physical world may be challenged, and for the reader the intermediate result may be ambiguity or conflict. However, the ultimate outcome may be increased empathic understanding, that is, a deepened appreciation of alternative outlooks and perspectives—whether those of an emotionally challenged adolescent, members of unfamiliar cultural and/or religious groups, or anyone who dwells outside of what Rorty called the “range of us.”

Qualities of Good Arts-Based Research

Because arts-based research participates in an oft-neglected purpose of human inquiry, the question of what constitutes quality within this approach becomes especially relevant. According to most arts-based researchers, judging their products as if they were indeed works of social science represents a profound category error. They would contend that such assessment malpractice may result in the dismissal of extraordinarily useful research as invalid and even dangerous. Arts-based research projects that serve the purpose of raising profound questions regarding the

value of particular social and cultural practices may be unfairly and irrelevantly critiqued as failing to offer trustworthy knowledge claims.

Advocates of arts-based research contend that an arts-based research text should be judged in terms of the degree to which it possesses the potential for furthering its own inquiry purpose. What, then, are the criteria for making this sort of judgment about the worth of arts-based research texts?

In fact, there is no final set of standards that may be employed to judge the quality of an arts-based work. Indeed, assessing value within arts-based research implies judging not a static quality inherent in the text but rather the degree to which the work possesses a potential for a certain sort of persuasion of members of its audience.

Tom Barone identified three criteria (among additional possibilities) for judging whether an arts-based text evidences the power to raise significant questions regarding commonsensical notions lodged within the prevailing cultural landscape that would otherwise be left undisturbed. First, the research must have reconfigured features of the observed world into a virtual world that is not literally true but plausible, credible, and possible—one that resonates with the experiences of the percipient or reader. Second, the work must be compelling. Does the text have the power to lure the reader into that virtual world so that he or she desires to inhabit it at least temporarily? If the work is not attractive in this sense, it is unlikely to achieve its pragmatic purpose of raising questions in the minds of its audience. Here, most clearly within literary forms of arts-based research, various storytelling devices become important, including (among others) evocative language, strong narrative drive, textured characterizations, and satisfactory sequencing of events. Third, the text must be able to move the reader beyond the constraints of the particular and local, that is, to seduce the reader into seeing the world of the text as analogous to and relevant for situations that reside outside the world of the text and within the more proximate everyday world of the reader/viewer.

The last criterion suggests the importance of a certain sort of “generalizability,” although not in the constricted traditional sense of that term. Instead, the good piece of arts-based research must be able to coax the reader into rethinking the conventionally “real” world around him or her. This text may even provoke groups of audience members into conversation about

the various possible “meanings” of the text and its implications for their perhaps deficient world-at-hand. Profound interrogation of that real world by its audience is indeed viewed by many arts-based researchers as the sign of a successful work of their brand of social research.

Tom Barone

See also Aesthetics; Arts-Informed Research; Dramaturgy; Empathy; Metaphor; Researcher as Artist

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ARTS-INFORMED RESEARCH

Arts-informed research is an approach to qualitative research in the social sciences that is situated in sound understandings of qualitative research approaches. Although the focus of the work is not necessarily about the arts, it is grounded in the arts in several ways. First, the researcher is inspired by an art form, an artist, or a body of artistic work to create innovative research processes. Second, these research processes draw from artistic processes characteristic of how an artist works, whether in the fine arts or applied arts broadly conceived. Third, representation of the research (the telling of the research story) relies heavily on art forms characteristic of the arts’ preceding defining qualities. Arts-informed researchers are

explicitly interested in presenting their work to diverse audiences through means that rely on the arts. This entry describes the goals of arts-informed research and the elements that define it. Then, through an examination of the ways in which arts inform the research process and the research representation, the entry identifies the characteristics of good arts-informed research.

Goals of Arts-Informed Research

Arts-informed research is a mode and form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts broadly conceived. The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible. The methodology infuses the languages, processes, and forms of literary, visual, and performing arts with the expansive possibilities of scholarly inquiry for purposes of advancing knowledge. Arts-informed research is grounded in creative expressions of qualitative research traditions that are informed by the arts broadly defined. Researchers working in this way can greatly extend and enhance those traditions by placing attention on the development of research processes and representations that are inspired and informed by being situated in one or more of the arts.

Arts-based research and arts-informed research are similar in many ways, including the goal of researching in ways that more fully acknowledge the richness and complexity of human experience. The term *arts-based educational research* is more widely used to describe qualitative research that involves or includes the arts in some capacity to advance knowledge and communicate research understandings. Arts-informed research attends more specifically to the relationship between form and purpose—how an art form can inform both the research process and representation for purposes of making research/knowledge more accessible to diverse audiences, including but beyond the academy. Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole developed this arts-related approach during the mid- to late 1990s for the purposes of enhancing and broadening the communicative possibilities of qualitative researching involving the arts through the process of inquiry as well as the representation of research accounts.

Arts-informed research is a way of redefining research form and representation and creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry. This redefinition reflects an explicit challenge to logical positivism and technical rationality as the only acceptable guides to explaining human behavior and understanding. Bringing together the systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional qualitative methodologies with the artistic, disciplined, and imaginative qualities of the arts acknowledges the power of art forms to reach diverse audiences and the importance of diverse languages for gaining insights into the complexities of the human condition. The dominant paradigm of positivism historically has governed the way in which research is defined, conducted, and communicated and has consciously and unconsciously defined what society accepts as knowledge; however, it is not a paradigm that reflects how individuals in society actually experience and process the world. Life is lived and knowledge is made through kitchen table conversations and yarning at the wharf or transit station or coffee shop or tavern, in the imaginative spaces created between the lines of a good book or by an encounter with an evocative photograph, or in an embodied response to a musical composition or an interpretive dance. These moments of meaning-making, however, are not typically thought of as knowledge. Knowledge, as society has learned to define it, dwells beyond the realm of the everyday. It is discovered by intellectuals—researchers and theorists—and held by them until its implications are determined and passed on for consumption. Knowledge is propositional and generalizable, and research is the process by which it is generated. According to this paradigmatic view, knowledge remains the purview of the academy, where it can be carefully defined and controlled.

Arts-informed research, with one of its main goals of accessibility (and breadth of audience), is an attempt to acknowledge individuals in societies as knowledge makers engaged in the act of knowledge advancement. Tied to moral purpose, it is also an explicit attempt to make a difference through research, not only in the lives of ordinary citizens but also in the thinking and decisions of policymakers, politicians, legislators, and other key decision makers.

Arts-informed research is part of a broader commitment to shift the dominant paradigmatic view that keeps the academy and community separated, that is,

to acknowledge the multiple dimensions that constitute and form the human condition—physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural—and the myriad ways of engaging in the world—oral, literal, visual, and embodied. In other words, such research aims to connect the work of the academy with the life and lives of communities through research that is accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, and provocative.

Defining Elements

- How can the arts (broadly conceived) inform the research process?
- How can the arts inform the representational form of research?

As a framework for inquiry, arts-informed research is sufficiently fluid and flexible to serve either as a methodological enhancement to other research approaches or as a stand-alone qualitative methodology. For example, as a methodological enhancement, one might conduct an arts-informed life history study, an arts-informed phenomenological inquiry, an arts-informed narrative inquiry, or an arts-informed ethnography. As a stand-alone methodology, situated within a qualitative framework, arts-informed research perspectives enhance the possibilities of information gathering and representation.

Broadly grounded in assumptions that define a qualitative paradigm, arts-informed research has several defining elements. First and foremost, arts-informed research involves a *commitment to a particular art form* (or forms in the case of mixed media or multimedia) that is reflected in elements of the creative research process and in the representation of the research “text.” The selected art form(s) serves to frame and define the inquiry process and text.

The *methodological integrity* of the research, a second defining element, is determined in large part by the relationship between the form and substance of the research text and the inquiry process reflected in the text. In other words, the rationale for the use of photography, for example, as the defining art form guiding the inquiry or representation must be readily apparent by how and how well it works to illuminate and achieve the research purposes.

Following the emergent nature of qualitative research in general, the *creative inquiry process* of arts-informed research is defined by an openness to the expansive possibilities of the human imagination.

Rather than adhering to a set of rigid guidelines for gathering and working with research material, a researcher using arts-informed methodology follows a more natural process of engagement relying on commonsense decision making, intuition, and a general responsiveness to the natural flow of events and experiences. Serendipity plays a key role in the inquiry process, much as it does in life. Moreover, we infer that researchers can learn from artists about matters of process. That is, the processes of art making inform the inquiry in ways that are congruent with the artistic sensitivities and technical (artistic) strengths of the researcher in concert with the overall spirit and purpose of the inquiry.

Also, as in most qualitative research, the subjective and reflexive *presence of the researcher* is evident in the research text in varying ways depending on the focus and purpose of the inquiry. In arts-informed research, however, the researcher's artistry is also predominant. By artistry, we include conceptual artistry and creative and aesthetic sensibilities, not just technical skills or an externally sanctioned title of "artist." Extending the idea from qualitative inquiry of "researcher as instrument," in arts-informed research the "instrument" of research is also the researcher-as-artist.

Although we operate on the assumption that all research is inherently autobiographical—a reflection of who we are—arts-informed research is not exclusively about the researcher. In other words, although the focus of an arts-informed inquiry may be the researcher herself or himself, this is not necessarily so. Arts-informed research differs, for example, from autoethnography and autobiography, both of which focus on the researcher as the subject of inquiry. Arts-informed research has *strong reflexive elements* that evidence the presence and signature of the researcher, but the researcher is not necessarily the focus or subject of study.

A sixth defining element of arts-informed research relates to *audience*. Consistent with one of the overarching purposes of arts-informed research, there must be an explicit intention for the research to reach communities and audiences, including but beyond the academy. The choice and articulation of form will reflect this intention.

Related to research relevance and accessibility to audience is the *centrality of audience engagement*. The use of the arts in research is not for art's sake. It is explicitly tied to moral purposes of social responsibility and epistemological equity. Thus, the research text is intended to involve the reader/audience in an

active process of meaning-making that is likely to have transformative potential. Relying on the power of art to both inform and engage, the research text is explicitly intended to evoke and provoke emotion, thought, and action.

Qualities of Good Arts-Informed Research

Arts-informed research, in process and representational form, is neither prescriptive nor codified. It is the creative meshing of scholarly and artistic endeavors. Nevertheless, like all research, studies following arts-informed research methodology must be subjected to scrutiny to assess, and perhaps help to explain, their worth or value as research. A broad assessment is guided by the following two general questions: How do the arts inform the research process? How do the arts inform the research representation? More specifically, a study imbued with the qualities that follow is one that is likely to both exemplify and contribute to the broad agenda of arts-informed research, that of enhancing understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry and of reaching multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible.

Intentionality. All research has one or more purposes, but not all research is driven by a moral commitment. Consistent with the broad agenda of social science research to improve the human condition, arts-informed research has both a clear intellectual purpose and moral purpose. Ultimately, the research must stand for something. Arts-informed research representations, then, are not intended as titillations but rather are intended as opportunities for transformation, revelation, or some other intellectual and moral shift. They must be more than good stories, images, or performances.

Researcher Presence. A researcher's presence is evident in a number of ways throughout an arts-informed research text (in whatever form it is presented and, by implication, throughout the entire researching process). The researcher is present through an explicit reflexive self-accounting, her or his presence is also implied and felt, and, the research text (the representational form) clearly bears the signature or fingerprint of researcher-as-artist.

Aesthetic Quality. The central purpose of arts-informed research is knowledge advancement through research, not the production of fine art works. Art is a medium through which research purposes are achieved. The quality of the artistic elements of an arts-informed research project is defined by how well the artistic process and form serve research goals. Attention to the aesthetics of a particular genre are, therefore, important; aesthetics of form is integrally tied to communication.

Methodological Commitment. Arts-informed research evidences attention to the defining elements and form of arts-informed research. As such, the work reflects a methodological commitment through evidence of a principled process, procedural harmony, and attention to aesthetic quality.

Holistic Quality. From purpose to method to interpretation and representation, arts-informed research is a holistic process and rendering that runs counter to more conventional research endeavors that tend to be more linear, sequential, compartmentalized, and distanced from researchers and participants. A rigorous arts-informed text is imbued with an internal consistency and coherence that represents a strong and seamless relationship between purpose and method (process and form). The research text also evidences a high level of authenticity that speaks to the truthfulness and sincerity of the research relationship, process of inquiry, interpretation, and representational form.

Communicability. Foremost in arts-informed work are issues related to audience and the transformative potential of the work. Research that maximizes its communicative potential addresses concerns about the accessibility of the research account, usually through the form and language in which it is written, performed, or otherwise presented. Accessibility is related to the potential for audience engagement and response. Such representations of research have the express purpose of connecting, in a holistic way, with the hearts, souls, and minds of the audience. They are intended to have an evocative quality and a high level of resonance for diverse audiences.

Knowledge Advancement. Research is about advancing knowledge however “knowledge” is defined. The knowledge advanced in arts-informed research is generative rather than propositional and is based on

assumptions that reflect the multidimensional, complex, dynamic, intersubjective, and contextual nature of human experience. In so doing, knowledge claims must be made with sufficient ambiguity and humility to allow multiple interpretations and reader response.

Contributions. Tied to the intellectual and moral purposes of arts-informed research are its theoretical and practical contributions. Sound and rigorous arts-informed work has both theoretical potential and transformative potential. The former acknowledges the centrality of the “so what?” question and the power of the inquiry work to provide insights into the human condition, whereas the latter urges researchers to imagine new possibilities for those whom the work is about and for. Researchers are not passive agents of the state, the university, or any other agency of society. Researchers’ responsibilities are toward fellow humans, neighbors, and community members.

J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole

See also Artography; Arts-Based Research; Researcher as Artist

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ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (AQR)

Qualitative research often provides an unparalleled understanding of the motivations behind human behavior, desires, and needs. In the United Kingdom, the principal authority on the qualitative research industry is the Association for Qualitative Research (AQR). Founded in 1981, AQR is a nonprofit organization. Its core objective is to serve the interests of members through the following:

- Developing understanding of the commercial value of qualitative research within the qualitative research community and among market research buyers, marketers, the broader business community, and the media
- Promoting the highest professional industry standards within the qualitative research community and among market research buyers, marketers, the broader business community, and the media
- Providing inspiring, valuable training courses to independents and client- and agency-based qualitative researchers
- Creating forums that facilitate debate and advance qualitative research methodology, analysis, and consultancy
- Promoting qualitative research as a career
- Providing networking opportunities and social events for members

AQR produces two publications: *In Brief*, which comes out every 2 months, and *In Depth*, which appears twice a year. *In Brief* has a news focus, whereas *In Depth* looks at a topic in detail as its name suggests.

Excellence and effectiveness in qualitative research are encouraged through the Prosper Riley-Smith award, which is announced annually. Riley-Smith was a prominent member of AQR until his untimely death, and the award in his memory is judged by a panel of senior industry luminaries. It is a highly coveted award.

As a way of encouraging new graduates to take an interest in qualitative research, AQR undertakes a program of visits to universities every year to talk about a career in qualitative research. In addition, a bursary is offered twice a year for a candidate to have a place on AQR Foundation training courses, which take place in February and November. The bursaries are offered to candidates who wish to embark on a career in qualitative research, and can demonstrate a genuine interest in and commitment to qualitative research, but who have not yet managed to secure a permanent position with a company.

AQR has an international presence and regularly runs conferences jointly with the U.S.-based Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA). Recent events have taken place in Dublin, Lisbon, and Paris.

Fiona Jack

Websites

Association for Qualitative Research: <http://www.aqr.org>

ATLAS.TI (SOFTWARE)

ATLAS.ti is a qualitative computer software package that assists researchers in their management of textual, graphical, audio, and video data. ATLAS.ti was originally designed for social scientists but is now being used in diverse disciplines such as psychology, literature, medicine, nursing, linguistics, stylistics, history, geography, theology, and law. However, although ATLAS.ti can benefit the qualitative researcher in terms of speed, consistency, rigor, and access to analytic methods not available by hand, it is not a replacement for methodological training.

ATLAS.ti offers two levels of interaction for the qualitative researcher. At the textual level, it allows basic “code and retrieval” of data, and at the

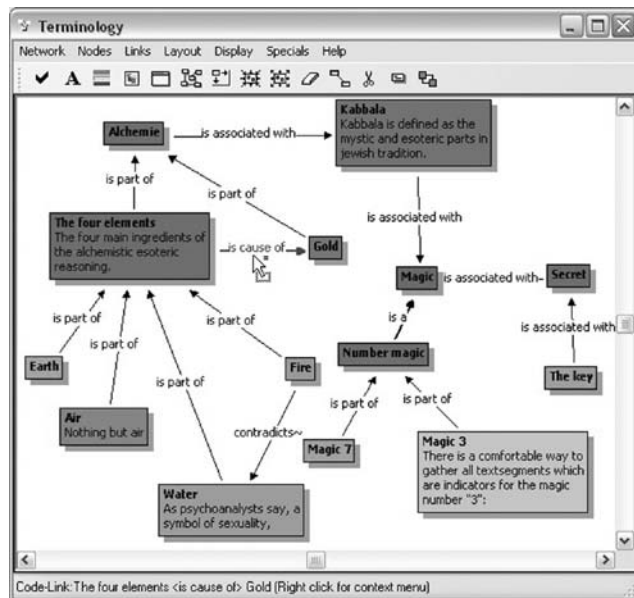


Figure 1 An ATLAS.ti Network Editor Displaying a Network of Codes

Source: Copyright 2007 with ATLAS.ti GmbH; used by permission.

Note: The shadings denote groundedness (amount of data coded) and density (number of links to other codes) of the respective codes.

conceptual level, it allows more sophisticated analysis of model-building activities such as linking codes to form semantic networks and algorithms (Figure 1). Moreover, although ATLAS.ti is intended primarily for supporting qualitative reasoning processes, it is sometimes also useful to analyze the data in a quantitative manner using statistical approaches (especially with large amounts of data). This process is achieved by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) export function in ATLAS.ti that treats codes as variables and treats data segments (quotations) as “cases.” However, such a function is open to criticism because it may result in the qualitative researcher performing types of analysis more suited to quantitative data.

Another very useful function of ATLAS.ti is its facilitation of co-authoring, where two or more researchers or work groups are involved in the same research project. It allows the transfer and conversion of research data while keeping the respective sources of ideas identifiable at all times.

ATLAS.ti’s main strategic modes of operation are termed *VISE* (visualization, integration, serendipity, and exploration). It allows all aspects of the data and analysis on-screen at once and is able to visually map out relationships between different parts of the data and theoretical ideas—to form links between them and jump back and forth—and this encourages creative processes such as stimulating ideas and recognizing patterns. However, this loose structure of ATLAS.ti may be anxiety provoking for some researchers who may prefer a more structured approach such as that offered by the NVivo software program. Nevertheless, the immediacy of ATLAS.ti is its strength because it is considered easy to understand what it does and how it works, at least at the basic level of operation. Therefore, for simple qualitative projects with limited time available, ATLAS.ti is suitable because it is considered a relatively easy package to learn.

Maura Dowling

See also Ethnograph (Software); NVivo (Software)

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AUDIENCE

Throughout the lengthy history of qualitative research and evaluation, inquiry and writing processes have been engaged in with one primary audience in mind: researchers and academics within particular fields under study. Secondary audiences have occasionally included the participants/informants who are the focus of the research and, for research designed with a cathartic or self-therapeutic end in mind (e.g., some autoethnography), the researchers themselves. Still other audiences (at least within program evaluation research) have included policymakers and administrators overseeing social or training programs in various fields (e.g., social work, nursing, education) and participants involved in those programs.

Although some qualitative researchers are committed to making research results available to readers outside of academia, others (such as program evaluators) have rarely contemplated the possibility of broadening the accessibility of their work. This reluctance has been criticized as perpetuating the insular character of some social science texts. Their tendency to alienate nonacademic audiences is viewed as ironic by some when the text aims at redressing injustices that plague the lives of members of marginalized social groups. This aim may be betrayed by the employment of discursive elements that render the text inaccessible to the very “subjects” whose plight is being documented.

Arts-based researchers—qualitative inquirers who swap the premises, principles, and procedures associated with the social sciences for those of the literary, visual, plastic, performance, vernacular, or digital arts—have also largely inquired and composed for a narrow audience of academic colleagues. Some advocates and practitioners of arts-based research have, however, attempted to look beyond the academy for an audience of members of lay publics. The production of inquiry texts with the potential for influencing both lay audiences and academics (insofar as the latter are both scholars and citizens) is sometimes referred to as “audience blending.” Arts-based works that have been composed for broader “blended” audiences have included novels, short stories, films, and staged ethnodramas.

Some arts-based researchers who also emphasize issues of social justice and equity aspire toward a mass audience by producing works with the potential for becoming significant cultural events. These works thereby move to subvert the prevailing cultural meta-narratives regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, and so on by dissemination through mass media outlets.

Of course, many obstacles may impede these efforts toward audience blending. First, the larger culture industry is not easy to penetrate. A second class of impediments arises out of the many hallowed traditions of the academy. Finally, there is the fact that all cultural texts are limited in their ability to reach readers who do not share the cultural background and social values of the researchers/artists.

Some arts-based researchers attempt to surmount these obstacles by identifying with a larger tradition of activist art. The efforts of many activist artists, who

aim toward personal and social transformation, tend to be “local” efforts, participatory and community based, outside of the academy, and bypassing the mass media. Consider, for example, the applied theater projects that attempt to intervene directly in the history of a community. Members of rather circumscribed “publics at large” are both the participants within this work and the audiences of this work.

Tom Barone

See also Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research

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AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Audience analysis stems from mass communication studies that seek to explain the impact of various forms of media on social life. In qualitative research, audience analysis refers to inquiry into how a targeted group receives and uses content delivered by an identified sender. Analysis may also focus on groups whose members were unintended receptors of the content and who repurpose the information in ways the sender does not anticipate or condone. Such repurposing can alter the relationship between the audience and the sender. Audience analysis is sometimes referred to as reception analysis and is also associated with focus group research.

Contemporary mass communication studies can trace the theoretical origins of audience analysis to Walter Benjamin’s early 20th-century criticism of cinema, particularly the reproducibility, worldwide accessibility, and devaluation of an authentic original in the then newly emergent art form of film. Benjamin was one of the first theorists to consider the shifting role of the audience from a passive appreciator of a fixed knowable meaning in a work of art to a dynamic interactant in which individuals and groups created their own meanings and responses.

On a practical nontheoretical level, audience analysis evolved from focus group research that emerged during World War II. The first focus group studies pertained to military research. During the postwar era, these skills were applied to commercial marketing as an audience was associated with potential consumers of a given product. Data analysis from these studies was exclusively quantitative.

Qualitative audience analysis became widespread during the 1980s. The change in methodology also reflected a growing critical stance toward mass communication. Qualitative researchers were not concerned with honing a sender's content for acceptance by the largest number of audience members. Instead, they investigated processes for the reception and mediation of information that both duplicated and reconstructed social structures. Through this evolution, the field moved away from empirical survey and focus group research to examination of forms of power. In some cases, power sought and achieved social replication. In other cases, research suggested direct or passive resistance to existing social paradigms. For example, in *Common Culture*, Paul Willis studied the lives of counterculture British youth who had repurposed popular culture to form individual identities that openly challenged social norms.

Mass communication delivers content through a variety of ways. An audience receives and mediates content in a variety of ways as well. For example, audience analysis studies have examined how European and non-Western audiences repurpose U.S. television soap operas. In such research, an audience is not a blank slate; recipients process and reappropriate content into new meanings.

In studies of the repurposing of mass communication, the use of symbols and signs does not tend to be highly dynamic. The variance within usage is usually rather narrow. Such predictable outcomes from repurposing suggest a limited capacity for audiences to create new meanings in response to expanding forms of media. Thus, rather than focusing on construction of meaning, it may be more fruitful to analyze patterns and rhythms of conventional practice.

In this view, information reception is a deeply cultural dynamic process that interprets, reinterprets, and recontextualizes. Socioeconomic factors can define culture—and thereby audiences—as can codes of discourse or physical media that individuals select to receive information. In all cases, audience analysis

research focuses on interpretive communities and anticipates multilayered interpretations between sender and receptor that both synchronistically duplicate and asynchronistically reconstruct meaning.

Qualitative research incorporating principles of audience analysis and the examination of multiple levels of conflicting forms of meaning is not limited to mass communication studies. For example, in *Doing School*, Denise Clark Pope examined how an audience (high school students) mediates sent information (instruction in the classroom conveyed through textbooks and lectures). She showed how talented students successfully respond to various forms of institutional assessment by duplicating the culturally normed information and, at the same time, actively resist and reconstruct this information in ways that are antithetical to the professed educational objectives of school.

Critical research into how an audience repurposes information ultimately challenges the very concept of audience. If contemporary audiences are constantly sifting and rebuilding information, the concept of a passive receptive audience is antiquated. Denis McQuail referred to this postmodern view of reception as the end of the audience.

Therefore, continuing to dichotomize the relationship of sender and receptor is problematic. Once again, this theory influences qualitative research beyond mass communication studies, as demonstrated by Patti Lather's *Troubling the Angels*, where she struggled against the dichotomies of researcher/participant and receptor/sender. Lather asked to what purpose her research participants (audience) will productively use her research to construct meaning within their own lives. In turn, if her participants' active construction of meaning is critical to her inquiry, who is "doing" the research? Lather questioned whether her own role in this process is productive or parasitical. In such qualitative research, the audience is a dynamically shifting critical presence. This raises questions of authority and control between researcher and audience.

Audience analysis is also a question of who will read a text. In 2002, a report by the U.S. National Research Council titled *Scientific Research in Education* contended that the vast majority of qualitative research methods were unscientific and, thereby, ineligible for federal funding. In this case, audience analysis would be a helpful tool to critically analyze

the assumptions of the council; for whom is research intended, and how were these research audiences expected to use research?

Tom Barone suggested that qualitative research in general, and arts-based research in particular, has more applicability to broad audiences than does impenetrable quantitative research. Barone argued that a virtue of excellent qualitative research is accessibility by a broad audience. Much like Benjamin's critique of cinema, Barone argued that qualitative arts-based research has the capacity to resonate in the public imagination and, thus, effect serious social and policy change in a way that "scientific" research may never achieve. Instead of viewing the audience as a blank slate that receives and inscribes the researcher's meaning (as conceived in the National Research Council report), Barone envisioned an audience that is an active participant in authoring meaning along with the researcher.

Richard Siegesmund

See also Arts-Based Research; Discourse Analysis; Focus Groups; Interpretive Research

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AUDIORECORDING

Audiorecording involves using either analog or digital recording equipment to capture conversations, interactions, and interviews. The most obvious value of audiorecording is that it offers an accurate summary of what was said, and this is especially important for in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Audiorecording in Data Collection

The data captured by audiorecording lie somewhere between the lower level of detail provided by field-notes or simple recall and the higher level of detail provided by videorecording. In addition to the greater

accuracy in comparison with a lack of any recording, audiorecording also provides additional detail by capturing elements of tonality and emphasis. Going beyond audiorecording, videorecording provides even more detail, especially in terms of nonverbal communication.

A common question in qualitative interviewing is whether to use any form of recording at all. The issue here is essentially a trade-off between the advantages of audiorecording and videorecording as tools in data collection and analysis and their potential intrusion in ways that will significantly alter the conversation. Inevitably, the presence of a recording device will have some effect on both the participant and the researcher; thus, the key issue is the degree to which recording will alter the otherwise "naturalistic observation" in a manner that has a substantial effect on either the concept or quality of the data. Qualitative researchers frequently favor audiorecording in this trade-off due to its combination of providing a relatively high level of detail while creating only a minimal intrusion in the interview setting.

The most common way in which audiorecording affects data collection is by inhibiting the research participants from saying things they might reveal if they were not being recorded. For example, audiorecording during interviews with graduate students on the general topic of satisfaction with their program is not likely to have a notable effect on their responses. Alternatively, recording interviews with the same students regarding their satisfaction with the teaching in their graduate program may create concerns that faculty members will learn what specific participants said about them, leading the students to carefully monitor what they do and do not say.

In considering the potentially intrusive effects of how data are captured in qualitative interviewing, it should also be noted that note taking can have its own set of effects. In particular, note taking will almost always reduce eye contact with research participants. In addition, participants may become sensitive to when the researcher takes notes or not—especially when long portions of their conversation do not generate any notes. In contrast, most participants quickly adjust to the presence of audiorecording equipment, leading to the claim that audiorecording can be less intrusive than note taking in terms of its effects on interviewing dynamics.

On a more technical note, the choice of equipment can be an important element of audiorecording. In this regard, the limiting factor is most likely to be the microphone because most audiorecorders (especially digital recorders) are capable of producing high-quality recordings in the range matching the human voice. This is especially important for focus groups because recording devices seldom come with the kind of “omnidirectional” microphone that is best suited to recording groups. How well the built-in microphone in a recording device will work for one-on-one interviews can be determined only by testing the equipment in an appropriate range of settings. That kind of testing is necessary in any event so that the researcher can familiarize himself or herself with the equipment prior to using it. Even when the researcher is quite familiar with the recording equipment, on-site “live testing” of the microphone and recorder prior to the interview is still essential because a blank tape at the end of an interview represents a severe loss of data.

Audiorecording and Data Analysis

The basic point of audiorecording is to capture material for data analysis and reporting. Although this process typically involves transcription of the audiorecording, this is not always necessary—especially when there is no requirement for detailed analysis such as projects that involve either small amounts of data or simple applied goals. Currently, dictation software is not capable of handling recordings that involve more than one person (especially in lively conversations), so researchers face a choice between the relatively lengthy process of doing their own transcribing or the relatively expensive alternative of hiring professional transcription typists. When hiring someone else to do the transcribing, it is prudent to listen to each tape while reviewing the transcript, not only to check for accuracy but also to add notes about tone of voice, emphasis, pauses, laughter, and so on.

After the analysis is done, transcribed audiorecordings are especially valuable as a source for direct quotes to use in presentations of the results. This illustrative material is often an important resource that connects the audience with the original participants. In addition, audiorecordings help to maintain the audit trail, spanning from the steps from data collection,

through analysis, and up to the presentation of the conclusions the researcher draws from the original material.

Finally, it is essential to address the ethical issues raised by audiorecordings that are especially important in research on sensitive topics or any other situation where recordings pose a threat to participants’ confidentiality. Ethics review boards often require that recordings should not be used without the informed consent of the participants. If conversations will be recorded, this should be clearly mentioned in all contacts with potential research participants and the recorded material should be stored in a secure place in accordance with requirements from the ethics review board. Regardless of formal statements of informed consent, researchers should feel an ethical obligation to cease recording any material that clearly makes the participant uncomfortable. In that situation, the researcher and participant can negotiate whether the conversation can continue—possibly with note taking—as well as whether recording can be resumed at a later point. Even if this means a loss in data quality, that concern must be secondary to the protection of the research participants.

David L. Morgan and Heather Guevara

See also Audit Trail; Confidentiality; DICTION (Software); Fieldnotes; Focus Groups; In-Depth Interview; Informed Consent; Institutional Review Boards; Interviewing; Nonverbal Communication; Sensitive Topics; Transcription; Videorecording

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AUDITING

The term *auditing* refers to a systematic review of processes involved in decisions or actions. Typically, this is done to ensure conformation with accepted

standards or to validate the accuracy of results. In qualitative research, auditing serves a comparable purpose and can be a valuable means of demonstrating the rigor of an investigation. Such a review offers a strong defense against criticisms that are sometimes posed in regard to qualitative research such as questions regarding the researcher's neutrality. Auditing of the study, therefore, is a useful means of supporting the credibility and trustworthiness of findings and interpretations in qualitative research.

There continues to be debate over the most appropriate ways in which to demonstrate credibility or rigor in a qualitative study. Auditing is not an essential part of the process of qualitative research. It can, however, be a useful mechanism to address quality aspects of a study. Many variations of auditing are available for qualitative researchers to apply in their projects. It is important that plans for an audit be addressed early in the design of a project so that the process can be incorporated in the manner that is most appropriate to each study. This entry describes the ways in which auditing can be conducted in qualitative research, including both internal and external audits and the timing of the auditing process. It also reviews the materials needed for an audit trail.

Methods of Auditing in Qualitative Research

Auditing of a qualitative study involves oversight and, at a minimum, review of the conduct of the study and the conclusions developed by investigators. There are numerous ways in which an audit can be carried out in a qualitative study. Variations include who serves as auditor, when the auditing process is initiated, how often auditing occurs, and the extent of the actual audit.

Internal Auditing

Auditing can be conducted on an internal basis in which members of the research team provide a system of checks and balances for each other. This process can promote consistency in the research process and can serve to identify, and subsequently decrease, the bias of any particular team members involved in the research. An internal audit can involve an exchange of documentation for review by other members of the team who can examine decisions and analytic

processes associated with the research. An internal audit may be very useful in multisite studies where it is important to ensure consistency in the research process across the various settings. These activities enhance the research but might not provide sufficient evidence of rigor as is typically sought through a more formal or external audit.

External Auditing

Auditing conducted on an external basis involves formal and systematic review carried out by people with no vested interest or involvement in the conduct of the research. An external auditor typically is a researcher who is knowledgeable in the processes of qualitative research and who may or may not have expertise in the subject matter involved in the research. In the typical qualitative study, auditing can be accomplished quite easily by enlisting the assistance of an experienced yet objective colleague, with the investigator presenting and defending decision making to that individual. The colleague also can review raw data, notes, logs, journals, and other materials associated with the study. This process is referred to as peer debriefing, although it accomplishes the same goal as an audit.

Timing of an Audit

The actual process of auditing can be initiated at any point in a study. Formative and ongoing auditing occurs while the study is conducted. Auditing also may be carried out on a summative basis at or near the conclusion of the study. Engaging auditors early in the process enables them to provide valuable monitoring throughout various phases of the research. The auditors may even be involved at the initial conceptual stages of the research, providing oversight and reflexive commentary as initial decisions are made regarding the design of the study. Such involvement, however, increases the risk that the auditors might become less neutral themselves due to their engagement with the project and the researcher or research team. Including auditors later in the process may allow greater neutrality on the part of the auditors. Later involvement, however, creates a greater burden on the researcher to familiarize the auditors with the study and its processes because the auditors will not be aware of the various nuances

and twists that have occurred consistent with the emergent design typical of qualitative research. In the initial contracting with auditors, the researcher should be very clear and detailed about the desired level of involvement and the expectations placed on the auditors.

Elements Needed for an Audit

Auditing cannot be accomplished unless there is an appropriate array of materials available for review. The collection of documentation compiled for this purpose during a qualitative study is referred to as an audit trail. Edward Halpern identified the following categories of documentation needed to constitute an audit trail: raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, notes regarding the processes of the study documentation of the intents and prejudgments or inclinations of the researcher, and information about any instruments used in the study. An organized system of note keeping is essential for this process. For ease of maintaining the audit trail, materials can be grouped into, at a minimum, raw data and fieldnotes providing details of actual encounters with participants; methodological notes regarding data collection processes, interview guides, other instrumentation, and changes in an emergent design; and analytic memos or notes to capture ideas generated during the process of data analysis.

Beth L. Rodgers

See also Audit Trail; Rigor in Qualitative Research

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AUDIT TRAIL

An audit trail in qualitative research consists of a thorough collection of documentation regarding all aspects of the research. Qualitative inquiry typically involves a design that constantly changes or emerges through the iterative processes of data collection and analysis and requires that the researcher make frequent decisions that can alter the course of the study. As a result, records of study processes can be vital in later providing justification of these actions. The audit trail provides a mechanism for retroactive assessment of the conduct of the inquiry and a means to address issues related to the rigor of the research as well as the trustworthiness of the results.

Typical documentation that constitutes this trail of evidence includes notes about data collection experiences, documentation of changes in design, the researcher's experience in the conduct of the study, and memos generated during data analysis. Fieldnotes are composed of the researcher's observations of a setting during a data collection encounter, including notes about the context of a data collection episode. Methodological notes contain critical information regarding alterations in design or data collection strategies. The audit trail enables the researcher to reconstruct the steps of the study and later provide justification for any changes that took place. Both the strategy and the rationale for the change are needed to provide evidence of the purpose and appropriateness of any modifications.

A reflexive journal provides a means to keep track of the researcher's thought processes during the study. Because the work of data analysis in qualitative research relies heavily on the cognitive processes of the researcher, the ability to document these processes and capture the researcher's own insights, interpretations, and reactions can be beneficial to the analysis process. In practice, there is considerable overlap among all of these aspects to be documented such that the separation of notes into unique bodies of evidence may be detrimental to the process of comprehensive record keeping. Fieldnotes may stand alone as a source of data, whereas the other components generally are closely integrated. Computer software designed for qualitative data analysis can be helpful in the construction of an audit trail through the ability to save copies or printouts of various stages of the analysis

process as well as to record notes within the software while working with data.

The importance of an audit trail may be debatable for some forms of qualitative inquiry. Projects involving a team of researchers or large-scale program evaluation may find the audit trail technique particularly beneficial in demonstrating accountability throughout the research process. However, researchers using highly interpretive processes, such as hermeneutic inquiry, may find that documentation of the cognitive processes of analysis is especially challenging.

Beth L. Rodgers

See also Auditing; Emergent Design; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Trustworthiness

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AUTHENTICITY

An important issue for qualitative research is that of authenticity. In establishing authenticity, researchers seek reassurance that both the conduct and evaluation of research are genuine and credible not only in terms of participants' lived experiences but also with respect to the wider political and social implications of research. Authenticity involves shifting away from concerns about the reliability and validity of research to concerns about research that is worthwhile and thinking about its impact on members of the culture or community being researched. Authenticity, then, is seen as an important component of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research so that it may be of some benefit to society.

There are five key criteria for strengthening claims for authenticity as identified by Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln. These are linked to the wider context

of research. The first of these is fairness. Qualitative researchers need to ensure that participants have equal access to the research inquiry to avoid bias, for example, by developing research relationships that go beyond stereotypical roles of question asking and question answering from the outset of the research. Adopting this approach means that participants become responsible for the cultural reproduction of the research inquiry in which they have a part and so have a stronger investment in ensuring that the outcomes of the inquiry are authentic. This avoids marginalization during the inquiry process and ensures that all participants' voices—their views, concerns, and perspectives—are represented throughout the research process as well as in any texts, where their stories should be treated fairly.

The second and third criteria are ontological and educative authenticity. Research should help individual participants to develop greater understandings of the social context being studied. This is ontological authenticity—the extent to which participants have a raised level of awareness. Research should also demonstrate that individuals appreciate the viewpoints of people other than themselves through cultural, social, and organizational engagement. This is educative authenticity and requires responsibility on the part of researchers to help participants expand their perspectives so that they not only have a better understanding of themselves but also appreciate the perspectives of other stakeholder groups.

The final two criteria are catalytic and tactical authenticity. Catalytic authenticity refers to the extent to which the research has stimulated some form of action on the part of the research participants, whereas tactical authenticity refers to the degree to which participants (and stakeholders) are empowered to act—to engage in action not only as individuals but also as members of their community—with a view to positively changing their circumstances. Both of these processes need to be supported by researchers. This can be achieved through research practice, such as action research or cooperative inquiry, that creates the capacity to enable participants to have an expanded awareness not only of themselves but also of their social milieu as a consequence of taking part in the research.

Nalita James

See also Credibility; Trust; Trustworthiness

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AUTHORITY

Authority within qualitative research refers to the claims that actors within the research process, notably the researcher, make so as to speak/write in the way they do about the social process or phenomenon being studied.

The ways in which these claims are made, and whether they are explicit or implicit, vary according to the tradition within which the researcher is working. For example, in positivist research, the voice of the research tends to be dominant in identifying the research agenda, determining the research process, and carrying out analysis. However, in qualitative research, the privileged position of the researcher is more often open to challenge and debate. For example, within an ethnography (and particularly with a critical ethnography), the authority of the researcher to interpret and make claims about the group or culture she or he is researching is unlikely to be accepted automatically. In such an example, the researcher will need to be explicit about the basis on which she or he makes such claims (if she or he is intending to do this). The researcher is likely to engage in reflexive practices, such as the keeping of a research journal, that actively enables the researcher to explore her or his own role within the process—previously unacknowledged agendas, preferences, and values.

In postmodern and poststructural research, the unitary voice of the researcher is usually disrupted and fragmented, providing a range of possible interpretations. Examples include the retelling of ostensibly the same research process from the perspectives of different stakeholders or even the researcher herself or himself in the guise of different identities. Another strategy that can be employed to involve the readers more actively in engaging and questioning the written

material being presented is to include alternative lines of argument, or footnotes, that challenge the main thrust of the text. Still other strategies deployed by postmodern researchers are to create partial, confused, and incomplete texts and to include different modes of representation, such as visual (e.g., photographs), auditory (e.g., audiorecordings), and combinations (e.g., a weblog by an imaginary or actual participant), that can facilitate different ways of viewing the research endeavor. Thus, the authority of the researcher is challenged, and the readers are encouraged to actively participate in constructing meanings and reflect on what they additionally bring to the research as research “consumers.”

Some research approaches, such as participatory action research, deliberately seek to enfranchise and give voice to research participants, arguing that the research process often objectifies participants as passive subjects. This is achieved by inviting those being researched to become co-researchers to share in the process of making meaning.

Claire Ballinger

See also Critical Ethnography; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Reality and Multiple Realities; Reflexivity

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiography is among the most important and valuable vehicles for exploring the human realm in all of its depth, complexity, and richness. Although there are numerous ways to define and conceptualize autobiography, for current purposes it may be considered the specific kind of text that results from the first-person interpretive reconstruction of either a life in its

entirety or a significant portion of it, with the aim not merely of recounting “what happened when” but also of understanding, from the vantage point of the current time, the meaning and movement of the past. Located whenever and wherever such interpretive reconstruction occurs—whether in the context of questionnaires, interviews, or those larger literary texts that may be created when an individual takes the time to explore his or her life in its full measure via writing—autobiography is perhaps the primary inroad to the elusive phenomenon of the self, at least as it has emerged in the context of Western history and culture. It is for this reason that during the early part of the 20th century the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, among others, underscored the profound importance of autobiography for the *Geisteswissenschaften* (the human sciences); insofar as the human sciences were to be founded on methods and modes of inquiry suitable for exploring the distinctively human realm, autobiographical understanding would play a leading role in the project.

Autobiography came to play a prominent role in psychoanalysis—in the “personology” of figures such as Gordon Allport and Henry Murray, in certain strands of anthropological and sociological research (including “autoethnography” in which the researcher’s own autobiography serves as the focus of interest), and (most recently) in “narrative inquiry,” a portion of which considers life stories, in their myriad forms, uniquely suited to exploring issues ranging from selfhood and identity to the process of development throughout the life course to the social/cultural “construction” of human lives. With respect to the qualitative research enterprise, autobiography’s virtues are many. Foremost among them are what might be termed its ontological wholeness, temporal wholeness, enculturedness, hermeneutic multivocality, and (perhaps most centrally) embeddedness within the fabric of narrativity.

Autobiography is among the most “unrestricted” sources of qualitative data; rather than being limited to some specific behavior or characteristic or region of meaning, its ontological scope is the whole of a life, that is, anything and everything about that life that is meaningful and significant enough to warrant its being told. Drawing on autobiography in qualitative research, thus, lends itself to an “idiographic” perspective in which the individual, in all of his or her complexity, is the preferred unit of analysis.

Autobiography also embodies temporal wholeness; by depicting either a significant portion of a life or a life in its entirety, its interpretive reach is capacious. Rather than isolating the individual from the flow of life, autobiography is oriented toward the flow of life itself, its continuities and its changes, its identity in time and its possible dispersion. Insofar as the human person cannot be known except in the unfolding of his or her unique and unrepeatable history, autobiography may be seen as the privileged path to such knowledge. It should be emphasized in this context that neither ontological wholeness nor temporal wholeness entails the supposition that autobiographies—and selves—are unified and coherent; autobiographies vary markedly in their degree of coherence, as do selves. Whether unified and coherent or less so, these dual conditions of wholeness remain.

Because autobiography is predicated on understanding the “real lives” of individuals, qualitative work that draws on autobiography is, of necessity, context specific and “encultured.” Much of social science remains decontextualized and continues to seek to understand human behavior and experience through rarefied environs such as laboratories and through experience-distant means such as paper-and-pencil tests. In the case of autobiography, however, context is of the essence. Given that the natural habitat of humans is culture—the life of language, relationships, and communities—it follows that autobiography is not only about the individual but also about the socio-cultural world through which the individual moves. For this reason, qualitative autobiographical research must be vigorously interdisciplinary, cutting across varied disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and history.

Another defining feature of autobiography is what is here termed its hermeneutic multivocality. In speaking of the “hermeneutic,” there is an immediate reference to the fact that autobiographical understanding is irrevocably interpretive; it is an effort after meaning, with its aim, again, not being merely to recount dispassionately this or that event, experience, or segment of a life but rather to “make sense” of it. Along these lines, there is also a poetic dimension to autobiographical understanding; insofar as the interpretive process is a constructive one, it is a work of poesis or meaning-making. In view of the fact that the personal past permits of multiple “readings” on the part of both individuals themselves and the researchers who study

them, there is also an inescapable multivocality—a multivoicedness—to the autobiographical text. This does not mean that autobiographical understanding is arbitrary, or that it is merely a function of interpretive prejudices, whether of the individual or the researcher. As the philosopher Paul Ricoeur argued, the hermeneutic process, as applied to the project of self-understanding, is essentially open and, at the same time, delimited by the semantic reality of the text itself.

Finally, autobiography is to be understood in terms of its embeddedness within the fabric of narrativity and, thus, is intimately tied to what might plausibly be considered the literary dimension of human life itself. As suggested earlier, a significant feature of human lives is that the meaning of experience frequently changes over time, thereby necessitating multiple readings. This suggests that a further significant feature of human lives is that they require recollection, “looking backward” again and again, resituating, reinterpreting, and rewriting the past as a function of one’s ever-changing present. Life events, therefore, may be considered “episodes” in an evolving narrative of the self, and just as the past is perpetually rewritten from the standpoint of the present, so too is the self, with the relationship between self and autobiographical narrative being a dialectical one through and through; even as the self is the source of autobiography, autobiography is the source of the self. Central to the literary dimension of both autobiography and selfhood is the idea of plot, which Ricoeur described as the “synthesis of heterogeneous elements” that is entailed in the imaginative act of drawing together the disparate lineaments of the past via memory into a whole constellation. This act, Ricoeur argued, is a function of “narrativity”—the narrative fabric of human life itself.

Its considerable virtues notwithstanding, autobiography is also considered by some to be suspect as a viable source of social scientific knowledge. As critics of autobiography frequently argue, memory not only is “reconstructive” but also is capricious, error filled, and distortive and, thus, cannot help but falsify the past. Precisely because it is not a dispassionate recounting of the past “as it was” but rather an imaginative and perhaps wishfully self-aggrandizing act of poetic self-portraiture, memory of the sort that autobiography relies on simply cannot be trusted. Add to the problem of memory the further problem of

textual inscription—the process of transforming memory into “literature” (even if only the literature of the interview-generated social science text that will inevitably be a function of the specific context in which one’s story is told, to whom, and for what reason)—and the resultant product may be so irreparably tarnished as to disqualify it from the pantheon of bona fide knowledge. As interesting and telling as autobiographies may be, it is their memory-saturated literariness that renders them epistemologically suspect. This, coupled with their notorious unwieldiness as “data” (how, after all, can autobiographies be measured and “contained” and transformed into suitable objects of social science inquiry?), has led to their occupying a questionable place in qualitative research.

Drawing on autobiography in qualitative research nevertheless remains an extraordinarily valuable vehicle not only for exploring the human realm in all of its depth, complexity, and richness but also for casting radically into question what constitutes valid and viable knowledge. Seen from one angle, the literariness of autobiography undermines its truth value and places it too far removed from reality—or at least the reality that objectifying science has seen fit to enshrine. Seen from another angle, however, it is this very literariness that points in the direction of a more open and expansive conception of reality and truth alike, one that is more adequate—and faithful—to the human realm. In this sense, autobiography has the potential to become a pivotal player in the refiguring of knowledge, serving as a much-needed bridge between the sciences and the humanities.

Mark P. Freeman

See also Autoethnography; Biography; Case Study; Hermeneutics; Memoirs; Narrative Inquiry

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AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography refers to ethnographic research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. In autoethnography, the life of the researcher becomes a conscious part of what is studied. During the past two decades, autoethnography has had an important influence on qualitative research. Many qualitative researchers—from realists to impressionist writers—now position themselves in their research and include themselves as participants in their interview and ethnographic studies of others. Likewise, there has been a burgeoning of autoethnographic projects that focus directly on the research and personal experiences of the researcher.

Definition and History

As an autobiographical genre of writing and research, autoethnography displays multiple layers of consciousness. Autoethnographers gaze back and forth. First, they look through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience. Next, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition.

The term *autoethnography* has been in circulation for at least two decades. Anthropologist Karl Heider used autoethnography in 1975 to refer to the descriptions the Dani people of New Guinea gave of their own culture, but David Hayano usually is credited as the originator of the term. Hayano limited the term to cultural-level studies by anthropologists of their “own people” in which the researchers are full insiders by virtue of being “native,” acquiring an intimate familiarity with the group, or achieving full membership in the group being studied.

Autoethnographic studies now take place in many social science and humanities disciplines interested in ethnographic research; they are most prevalent in communication and performance studies, sociology, anthropology, education, social work, and nursing, among others. The turn to autoethnography in qualitative research is connected to a shift from viewing our observations of others as nonproblematic to a concern about power, praxis, and the writing process. This shift was inspired in part by the epistemological doubt associated with the crisis of representation and the changing composition of those who become ethnographers, with more women, lower-class, ethnic and racial groups, and scholars from the developing world now represented.

Approaches and Forms of Expression

The term *autoethnography* has become the broad rubric under which many other similarly situated expressions from multiple disciplines are included, such as personal narratives, first-person accounts, opportunistic research, experimental ethnography, lived experience, radical empiricism, autopathography, life writing, confessional tales, ethnographic memoir, narrative ethnography, and Indigenous ethnography. Likewise, a variety of methodological strategies have been developed in connection with autoethnographic projects, including systematic sociological introspection, biographical method, personal experience methods, feminist methods, narrative inquiry, co-constructed narrative, interactive interviewing, and autoethnographic performance.

Autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms such as short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, scripts and performances, personal essays, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. They showcase concrete action, emotion, embodiment, introspection, and self-consciousness portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot.

Negotiating Hope, Reality, and Ambivalence in the Face of Death

Visits to Dr. Silverman, Gene's physician, provided occasions for confronting and evaluating Gene's illness. The doctor's office was on Park Avenue in New York City, yet he made us feel we were being visited by a rural doctor in a horse-drawn carriage. Sentimental and grandfatherly, he held Gene's hand and teared when he had to tell us bad news; but his eyes brightened when immediately afterward he informed us of some new medicine to try or of a success story—a mayor who was working while hooked to a breathing machine—or when telling Gene how far he was above the normal curve given the extent of his emphysema.

"Most people in your condition are home in bed, but look at you, you're traveling around the world," he says to Gene, after hearing about our vacation.

"See, I'm not a wimp," Gene tells me when Dr. Silverman leaves the room.

"Don't you know that I know that?"

Gene needed the validation. Otherwise, how could he be certain how well he was doing? The same was true for me, his partner. How else did I know how hard he was trying to cope?

During one visit when there is a dramatic drop, Dr. Silverman tries to be optimistic: "But look at what you can still do. And there are some developments; a new drug is being tested in Canada. Let's see if we can figure out a way to obtain it." Gene listens attentively, hopefully. Then a cloud passes over his face. "But, Doc, it's not a cure, is it?"

"No," the doctor replies, holding eye-to-eye contact with Gene. "There is no cure. Maybe in the future, but not in your lifetime."

Gene's shoulders sag farther into his chair as Dr. Silverman looks away, busying himself with altering Gene's many medications. "I think changing your antibiotic will help. Try taking one four times a day instead of two twice a day."

This isn't real, I say to myself, looking down and holding my breath. Yes, it is. Accept it. Now, you know the score. My mouth is dry, my eyes are wet. How can I feel so numb but like I am exploding at the same time? I suddenly laugh, then cover it with a sigh. "My god," a voice inside my head screams, "he's going to die. There is nothing I can do. Get me out of here." A calmer voice responds, "You can't leave him. You love him. He needs you and he's doing the best he can."

After this visit, we treat ourselves to lunch in an expensive restaurant on the Upper East Side. Settling into Maxwell's Plum, the tension dissolves under the influence

of champagne and gourmet food. Cost does not concern us. Like new lovers, we hold hands. Like old companions, we talk about death and the shortness of time we have left together. We cry softly as we admit the lowered numbers on pulmonary tests have reaffirmed our worst fears.

Then Gene says angrily, "Why does Dr. Silverman pretend there's hope when there isn't any? Why doesn't he just say so?"

"He does, Gene. He said there was no cure in your lifetime." A pall spreads over our conversation.

"But then he says the shuffling of the medicine will help. It won't," replies Gene, still angry.

"That's true. But think of his position. He wants to be honest, yet not totally depress you or make you feel there's no hope for improvement. So he confronts us with the stark reality of your deterioration and then gives us a ray of hope to hang on to. It isn't dishonest. He wants to have hope too."

"I guess," Gene replies, softening with resignation. Then, because nothing reminds us of our love in quite the same way as facing the loss of it, Gene connects with my eyes and mouth, "I love you." As the feeling flashes back and forth between us, my fear subsides.

"At least we have each other," he continues, now changing sides. "And who knows. Maybe I'll live longer than anybody thinks. There's always the possibility of a lung transplant."

Sure, I think ironically, but say sincerely, "Anything is possible. I'm just glad to have this time now. I guess our situation is not really worse than others. Everybody will die."

"This champagne is wonderful," Gene says. "Taste it in the back of your throat. It's so full and dry."

So began a tradition of having lunch at Maxwell's Plum after each doctor's visit. Without fully realizing it at the time, the two of us were being socialized into the roles of dying and grieving. I rehearsed how to show Gene love, yet shut out pain and fear; Gene practiced how to face his illness, yet escape living as a dying person.

The doctor's candid opinion, supported by the declining test results, confronted us with the reality of Gene's impending death. We began to relate to the disease much as the doctor had—facing the inevitable and then looking for some reason to be hopeful. Ambivalence as a coping mechanism offered comfort yet left room for reality. These afternoon lunches provided opportunities to integrate hope and reality, a balance that would tip toward reality as the illness took over.

Personal narrative writing breaks away from the traditional rational/analytic conventions of academic writing in several ways:

1. The author usually writes in the first person.
2. The story often focuses on a single case, drawing attention to what is particular as well as what may be universal.
3. The autoethnographer claims the conventions of literary writing; the mode of storytelling is more akin to the novel or biography, where characters and scenes are developed and action unfolds, than to the traditional research report.
4. The accessibility and readability of the text repositions the reader as a co-participant in dialogue rather than a passive receiver of knowledge.
5. The story highlights private details of emotional and bodily experience.
6. The narrative text resists the impulse to abstract and explain, stressing the journey over the destination; thus, it eclipses the scientific illusion of control and mastery.
7. The story is written in an episodic form that dramatizes the motion of connected lives over the curve of time; thus, it resists the standard social science practice of portraying social life and relationships between people as a snapshot frozen in time.
8. The evocative story activates subjectivity and compels emotional response. It longs to be used rather than analyzed, to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled, to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions, and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts.

Deborah Reed-Danahay pointed out that autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (*graphy*), on culture (*ethnos*), and on self (*auto*). Different exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along the continuum of each of these three axes. Widely used expressions that provide a sense of the range of approaches associated with autoethnography include those described in the following paragraphs.

Reflexive or narrative ethnographies focus primarily on another culture or subculture, while authors use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self–other

interactions. The researchers' personal experiences become important primarily in how they illuminate the culture under study. Reflexive ethnographies range from starting research from researchers' own experiences to ethnographies where the researchers' experiences are studied along with those of other participants. *Ethnographic memoirs* or *confessional tales*, personal stories that focus on the backstage of the researchers' experiences of doing studies of others, represent the stories that focus most directly on the researchers.

Michael Jackson used the term *radical empiricism* to refer to a process that includes the ethnographers' experiences and interactions with other participants as vital parts of what is being studied. Reflexive ethnographers ideally use all of their senses, bodies, moments, feelings, and whole being; they use the self to learn about the other. Barbara Tedlock referred to the process of incorporating ethnographers' experiences into the ethnographic descriptions and analyses of others, and emphasizing the ethnographic dialogue between the narrators and members of the groups being studied, as *ethnographic narratives* or *observations of participation*.

Indigenous ethnographies are stories about cultures that have been marginalized or exoticized by others written by Aboriginal researchers who now interpret their own cultures for others. Aboriginal ethnographers share a history of colonialism or economic subordination, including subjugation by ethnographers who have made them subjects of their work. Now as bicultural insiders/outside, these ethnographers construct their own cultural stories (often focusing on their own autobiographies), raise serious questions about the interpretations of others who write about them, and use their dual positionality to problematize the distinction between observer and observed, that is, between insider and outsider.

Complete member texts are in-depth explorations of groups in which researchers already are full members or in which, during the research process, they become full members with complete identification and acceptance. The researchers themselves become part of the phenomena being studied.

Personal narratives are stories in which social scientists take on dual academic and personal identities and focus on some aspects of their personal experiences in daily life. These stories generate the most controversy among scholars given that the emphasis is on the self of the researcher rather than on the

other—the usual purview of ethnographic study. The primary purposes in these stories are to understand a self or some aspect of a particular life lived in a cultural context and to understand a way of life from investigating a particular life. In personal narrative texts, authors become “I,” readers become “you,” and subjects become “us.” Sometimes several authors act as researchers and participants, writing and co-constructing their stories together and sharing authority. Readers also take a more active role as they are invited into the authors’ worlds, evoked to a feeling level about the events being described, and stimulated to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives. The goal is to write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and may make a difference, to include sensory and emotional experience, and to write from an ethic of care and concern.

Autoethnography is a blurred genre that brings together the social sciences and humanities. In many cases, whether a work is called an autoethnography or an ethnography depends on the claims made by those who write and those who write about the work. Whether a study is called an autoethnography or a memoir is connected to writing practices (social science autoethnographies usually contain citations to other academics and use an academic disciplinary vocabulary), publishing practices (who publishes the book, how it is promoted [e.g., the field identified on the outside cover] and labeled [ISBN number]), who is the targeted audience, reviewing practices (who endorses it, who reviews it, and who writes about it), and disciplinary practices (whether those in a particular field are receptive to autoethnographic texts and the crossing of the social sciences and humanities divide).

Carolyn S. Ellis

See also Co-Constructed Narrative; Experiential Knowledge; First-Person Voice; Interactive Interview; Lived Experience; Researcher as Instrument; Storytelling; Subjectivity; Systematic Sociological Introspection

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AXIAL CODING

Axial coding is a procedure advocated by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin in their guidelines for the development of grounded theory (theory derived from data) when analyzing qualitative data. Open coding, where the raw data (e.g., interviews, art, fieldnotes) are broken down so that as many ideas and concepts as possible are identified and labeled, sets the stage for axial coding, where the data are reassembled so that the researcher may identify relationships more readily. To do this, the researcher attempts to flesh out the properties of categories and determine how they vary in terms of their dimensions. Categories are pursued in greater depth on the way to the identification of core categories and ultimately to the explanation of phenomena (selective coding).

Axial coding is the phase where concepts and categories that begin to stand out are refined and relationships among them are pursued systematically. Categories represent phenomena such as events, objects, incidents, and actions. As major categories begin to emerge, the researchers are advised to ask questions of the data that concern them in a focused manner.

The questions that researchers are advised to ask of the data when exploring a given category are referred to as the *paradigm* (a scheme to assist in the organization of data). This features guidelines that urge paying particular attention to conditions or context (structure) (e.g., where, when, why), actions/interactions (process) (e.g., responses, strategies), and consequences (e.g., outcomes) that relate to a given category. The paradigm is a tool recommended to assist researchers in integrating structure and process and in thinking in terms of cause and impact.

Axial coding derives its name from attention during this phase of analysis to the intense coding around the “axis” of one category of interest at a time. The recommendation (especially to new researchers) is to seek answers to a series of questions about this focal category. For example, if one has recognized deviant acts as an important category when analyzing interviews concerning children of offenders, one might ask questions of the data such as how often deviant acts are committed, by whom, at what age, where, what kinds of acts are committed, whether the acts are antinormative or illegal, and what happens to those who commit the acts. As new categories are recognized from the coding prompted by the questions asked, relationships between these categories (referred to as *subcategories*, e.g., types of deviance, amount of deviance) and the focal category are identified. Hypotheses—statements about how the categories relate—are then developed as patterns emerge on the road to explaining phenomena.

There is some debate about the benefits of axial coding. There are those who believe (as does Barney Glaser) that addressing paradigmatic questions prematurely risks imposing schemas that impede the emergence of theory, potentially limiting what analysts ultimately recognize in the data. Even among the many followers who value the procedure of axial coding, a prevalent critique is that confusion can arise from the complicated, not always transparent guidelines and terminology associated with the practice.

Lucia Benaquisto

See also Codes and Coding; Grounded Theory; Open Coding; Selective Coding

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AXIOLOGY

Axiology is the recently adopted term used to cover the philosophy of values. It was introduced a century or so ago by the French philosopher Paul Lapie and derives from the Greek *axios*, corresponding to the Latin *valere*, meaning “to be strong” or “to be worthy.” Axiology, or value theory, represents an attempt to bring the disparate discussion of values under a single heading, covering a wide area of critical analysis and debate that includes truth, utility, goodness, beauty, right conduct, and obligation. There is a direct focus on the purported value of matters such as human life, knowledge, wisdom, freedom, love, justice, self-fulfillment, and well-being. Axiology has relevance to the field of qualitative research inasmuch as it has a direct bearing on the ethical context of research, offers an important basis for making explicit the assumptions of different paradigms of research, and provides the foundation for understanding the process of the addition to knowledge involved in scientific inquiry.

Value Theory

Value theory is concerned with the nature of value itself as well as with the various forms that value can take, such as the aesthetic value of beauty, the ethical values of good/bad and right/wrong, and the epistemic values of truth, rationality, and justification.

The central issue of the nature of value is somewhat contentious and has a long history. For example, Plato saw values as essences that are known through intuition, whereas Aristotle saw values as defined simply by human interest. Philosophers in the neo-Kantian tradition have proposed that values are objective and universally valid, whereas existentialists such as Nietzsche and Sartre regard values as constructions, that is, the mere products of human invention. More recently, in the cult novel *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Robert Pirsig equated value with “quality,” a sort of meeting point between the human mind and the material world that resists any reduction to either subjectivity or objectivity but represents a subjective-objective reality. Whatever perspective is taken, it would seem that value is clearly not a property of the thing-in-itself, it cannot be perceived by the senses, and it cannot be measured scientifically, but somehow it arises out of our relationship with things.

The study of values often leads to the identification of what amounts to a core value or a hierarchy of values that leads toward a final value. For example, Aristotle proposed “happiness,” the Stoics stressed “tranquility of mind,” Schopenhauer offered “renunciation,” Sartre proposed “authenticity,” and Taoist philosophy positions “flexibility” and “adaptability to context” as the final value. Furthermore, it is useful to distinguish intrinsic values from instrumental values. Something has intrinsic value if it is worthy, or desirable, in and for itself, whereas something is of instrumental value if it offers a means or contributes directly to something else in turn that is intrinsically of value. Nevertheless, the recurrent problem throughout much of the study of value is that although many philosophers offer systematic accounts of what is of value, they do this without offering any proper justification or without any appeal to some claim to validity.

The study of ethics can be seen as closely related to the study of values, and an ethics that is based specifically on value is called axiological ethics. Here the focus is less on what should be done and more on what is worth doing and what should be avoided.

This issue of value, which has so often been taken for granted in the past, has recently been attracting much more attention within the field of qualitative research. Axiology has become recognized as a key dimension in the comparison of competing, or co-occurring, paradigms of research, and this can be helpfully placed within a discussion of the scientific method in general.

Axiology and Scientific Method

The traditional positivist approach to scientific method is based on a sharp distinction between fact and value. Facts are seen as objective truths that are out there waiting to be discovered. In contrast, values are seen as subjective, undermining the pursuit of truth, and a potential source of bias and error in research; therefore, they are to be excluded from all inquiry. Perhaps the kindest description of this position is that it is at the very best naive. The notion of a value-free and ethically neutral science is little better than a myth. Positivist inquiry is run through with value judgments, and to the extent that these go unacknowledged this is a potentially very serious flaw. For example, traditional science is based on an explicit appeal to the values of truth, knowledge, objectivity, rationality, and so on. Although one could argue that these are intrinsic

values, such a claim still needs to be examined thoroughly and repeatedly in the light of the epistemological and axiological issues that are involved.

The point is that even intrinsic values are values. They require clarification and reflection. We engage in inquiry because we care and want to make a difference. The generation of a research hypothesis, the refining of the research question, the judgment of what might be important additions to knowledge in any field of inquiry, and the choices and decisions made in research design, the selection of participants, and the interpretation of data—all of these involve value claims one way or another. Moreover, inquiry leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to the imposition of some type of order or structure on the world—and this always involves issues of value.

The Human and Social Sciences

The human and social sciences, in their development of a qualitative approach to inquiry, have pointed to the crucial need to deal with the ways in which people relate and give meaning to their social, cultural, and material environments. This points to the acceptance of the role played by human subjectivity, context, and (moreover) human values in the generation of knowledge and in the logic of inquiry.

The growing recognition of the importance of the role that values play in qualitative research is probably best illustrated through the recent work of Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln. They published a series of three chapters in the first, second, and third editions of the groundbreaking *Handbook of Qualitative Research* that set out to examine the competing paradigms being used.

In their chapter for the first edition, Guba and Lincoln distinguished among four major alternative paradigms of inquiry: positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, and critical theory. They defined a paradigm as a set of basic beliefs that represent a particular worldview, which in turn leads to particular approaches to inquiry. They also proposed three fundamental interrelated questions with respect to how paradigms might be compared: the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions. In their discussion, the issue of value was raised briefly with respect to differences in the epistemological posture and practical issues raised. For both the positivist and postpositivist paradigms, values are specifically excluded, whereas for constructivism and critical theory, values take “pride of place” and are seen as

“ineluctable in shaping inquiry outcomes,” according to Guba and Lincoln.

It is important to realize that an inquiry paradigm involves a set of assumptions and that all research—indeed all scientific knowledge and inquiry—necessarily rests on assumptions. Making assumptions is not the problem, but overlooking which assumptions have been made, or taking for granted any assumptions that have been made, will inevitably lead to problems. Because assumptions invariably encode values, the notion of paradigm becomes crucial in the relationship between inquiry and the study of value.

To make the best use of Guba and Lincoln’s ideas, it is perhaps most useful to see paradigms not as competing but rather as pluralistic in approach. This means that, rather than rejecting one worldview or paradigm in favor of another, for any field of inquiry several paradigms might be held as tenable. Indeed, such a preference for a pluralistic approach, rather than a competitive approach, is itself an example of value-in-action.

Guba and Lincoln revised their chapter for the second and third editions of the *Handbook* and specifically highlighted the issue of axiology as a critically important addition. They took up some criticisms of their original chapter that had been raised by John Heron and Peter Reason. One crucial revision involved an expansion of the three fundamental questions by which different paradigms can be compared to include a fourth question—the axiological question. Guba and Lincoln acknowledged that the issue of value had become much larger than they had first conceived. There was clearly the need to recognize the concern with what is of value, and what is worthwhile, as one of the foundational philosophical dimensions of what constitutes a paradigm.

By raising the profile of axiology in this way, Guba and Lincoln acknowledged how values cannot simply be left under the headings of epistemology and methodology, where they become obscured and dealt with through the codes of accepted practice. Instead, they proposed that values need to be explicitly discussed and critically explored in their own right.

Indeed, although axiology has come late into the frame, it could be argued that it might well need to be given some sort of priority, even over ontology and epistemology. Such an idea would be consistent with Martin Heidegger’s contrast between the “readiness-to-hand” and the “present-at-hand.” Those objects and events that are ready-to-hand constitute what is of

value to us, what matters to us, and what is of use to us. Heidegger argued that this type of knowledge has a primacy over our knowledge of the present-at-hand, that is, of the things-in-themselves. Indeed, if qualitative inquiry is to be closely associated with the study of the ready-to-hand, and quantitative inquiry is to be closely associated with the study of the present-at-hand, then it could be argued that it is the qualitative approach to research that should enjoy some sort of priority in scientific endeavor.

Heron and Reason’s Article

The full scope of the article published in 1997 by Heron and Reason that had such an impact on Guba and Lincoln warrants further discussion. It is in proposing an inquiry paradigm that involves a participatory worldview that the need for a more explicit axiology emerges. Heron and Reason explained that none of the inquiry paradigms considered by Guba and Lincoln can account for experiential knowing, which they argued is the ground of our being. For example, Heron and Reason argued that “constructivist views tend to be deficient in any acknowledgement of experiential knowing; that is, knowing by acquaintance, by meeting, and by felt participation in the presence of what is there” (p. 277). Furthermore, “to experience anything is to participate in it, and to participate is both to mould and to encounter; hence, experiential reality is always subjective-objective” (p. 278). In this argument, the inescapable role of values in human experience is being teased out. To know something, to experience something, always implies valuing it in some way or another.

It is precisely these views that led Heron and Reason to propose the fourth fundamental question that is necessary to fully define an inquiry paradigm. Thus, in addition to the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions, they added the axiological question, which they proposed sets out to ask what it is that is intrinsically worthwhile (i.e., what in the human condition is valuable as an end in itself?). Posed in this way, the axiological emphasis leads to asking questions such as the following: What is the value of knowledge itself? What is the ultimate purpose of human inquiry? How much should inquiry promote human flourishing, individual empowerment, advocacy, activism, relief from oppression and suffering, and so on?

Toward a Transparent Axiology

Clearly much more is at stake here than the simple acknowledgment of the role played by values in human affairs and the explicit role of values in qualitative inquiry. The proposal made by Heron and Reason, and its subsequent inclusion by Guba and Lincoln, amounts to a fundamental change in the characterization of qualitative inquiry, the types of knowing with which it is concerned, and the philosophical underpinnings on which it relies. Moreover, it is a major step toward establishing a more fully articulated transparency of values than has so far been feasible in human inquiry. There is space to consider just two examples here.

The Ethics of Inquiry

One of the most obvious ways in which values play a crucial role in research is in the ethics of inquiry. However, by raising the profile of the axiological question, a more transparent ethics can emerge. First, the positivist claim that there is no place for a consideration of values in scientific inquiry is shown up as something of an oversight. Ethical matters are the concern of all scientific endeavor, and this must apply to all fields of research—whatever their paradigm and whatever their focus. Because ethics always rests on a consideration of values, there is simply no escape. Of course, positivists do not deny the importance of ethical considerations, but there is a basic contradiction, and there are significant dangers, in thinking ethically without any reference to human values.

Second, the axiological perspective offers a more useful perspective on the contrast among the ethical positions adopted by the positivist, constructivist, and participatory approaches to inquiry. The positivist employs a mostly extrinsic approach to ethics, with a reliance on ethical codes, ethics committees, and the accepted standards of good practice. In contrast, the qualitative researcher employs an intrinsic approach to ethics, one that accepts the established codes of ethically sound practice but goes farther by striving toward a transparency of values, toward a transparency of the requests and demands put on participants, and also applies a “process ethics” to the forms of knowing that the specific context of the inquiry requires. Process ethics stresses that codes of practice are only a first step that must be followed up with an open-minded vigilance to ethical matters

that might be raised at any point during the research process.

Research as a Co-Operative Inquiry

Perhaps one of the best examples of an approach to qualitative research that offers a transparency of values is Heron’s own idea of *co-operative inquiry*, which offers an explicitly collaborative approach to research. Co-operative inquiry is critical of the idea of qualitative inquiry as being *about* other people and instead promotes inquiry as being *with* other people. Heron pointed out that in most research methodologies the roles of the researcher and subjects (i.e., participants/co-researchers) are regarded as mutually exclusive. In conventional approaches to inquiry, the researcher contributes the thinking that goes into the project, and the subjects contribute the data for the study. But in the co-operative inquiry model, both the researcher and co-researchers (participants) contribute equally to the design of the research and share equally in the experience. The specific issue that is being explicitly raised here is one of value—the value that is to be placed on the full participation of participants in an inquiry. From this perspective, the key value in research is being with people.

In his final discussion of this approach in 1996, Heron argued that people have a moral right to engage in research decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them. To summarize Heron’s value position with respect to co-researchers, if this right is not respected, then

- co-researchers will be *disenfranchised* in not being able to express their own preferences and values;
- they will be *disempowered* and *oppressed* by decisions and values that are not of their choosing;
- they will be *misrepresented* by research designs from which they have been excluded in their planning;
- they will become *accessories* to the knowledge claims made about them that can be misapplied to others;
- they will be *manipulated* in the acquisition and application of the knowledge about them;
- they will be *denied* the opportunity for increased self- and peer-generated knowledge; and
- they will be subtly *oppressed* and *exploited* by the researcher’s ulterior motives.

If this is an example of the axiological perspective, of value-in-action, then it is to be recommended to all

qualitative inquirers. It offers an example of a profound concern with human values that is crucial to the way in which qualitative research is now being defined and must be considered foundational to all human and social inquiry.

David R. Hiles

See also Aesthetics; Epistemology; Ethics; Paradigm; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Transparency; Value-Free Inquiry

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B

BASIC RESEARCH

Some concepts are more easily explained by contrasting them with their opposites, and that is certainly the case with basic research, which is most commonly contrasted with applied research.

Both these terms speak to the immediate motivation of the researcher rather than to any necessary outcome of one's research. Basic research is undertaken for its own sake—to advance knowledge, to develop theory, to solve an interesting theoretical puzzle, or to address a curiosity of the researcher—without any immediate concern for whether doing so will produce anything useful or practical or generalizable. Applied research, in contrast, specifically aims to do something practical about a relatively immediate problem.

One should not be overly rigid in this dichotomization of “basic” and “applied,” however, which is a simplification tied to an older view that basic research comes first and that a separate process of generating applications—done by completely different groups of people who are sometimes even generations removed from the original work—comes later. More recent discussions of the topic, while on the one hand acknowledging the continuing existence of these two pure types, now include a recognition that the time sequence need not be so unidirectional and linear and that the two interests need not be seen as mutually exclusive.

These changing conceptions of basic and applied research and the relations between them reflect broader changes in society and our academic institutions. It once may have been the case that basic research was undertaken in the university by independent academics, while realizing the implications of

these developments was the domain of the private sector. However, more than two decades of government promotion of academic–private sector partnerships have further blurred any lines that might have existed between the two.

Given the pressing nature of many social problems (e.g., crime, abuse, poverty, prejudice and discrimination, injustice), health concerns (e.g., finding causes and cures for everything from the common cold to cancer), and other physical, social, and technological challenges (e.g., how to send people to Mars so that they can survive the trip and return; dealing with global warming), it is perhaps not surprising that some have criticized basic research as an esoteric academic pursuit of ivory tower scholars. In its most extreme form, applied research is considered worthwhile only when its products are in keeping with government-defined priorities and are potentially money-generating through patents, inventions, and commissions. Canada's federal government, for example, would seem to be walking this policy path: the last several decades have seen more and more targeted funding for research deemed in the national interest; most recently, although the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) was granted an increase in research funds in the 2007 federal budget, the increased funding was tied to projects dealing with management, business, and finance (see Church, 2007).

Perhaps in response to this policy, the Canadian federal granting councils continue to support basic research in all disciplines, but have actively encouraged applicants for grants to choose project titles that do not sound too esoteric and to address issues of potential applicability even if this involves no more than complete speculation on possible areas of application.

Chad Gaffield, president of Canada's SSHRC, has stressed the importance of clearly identifying the value of funded research projects.

In contrast, James Turk, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers—an organization that, like the American Association of University Professors, has for many years extolled the virtues of and vigorously defended academic freedom—warns about the myopia of this view. He questions the wisdom of trying to appease politicians by using language that buys into the view that the only valuable research is research that can promise a payoff:

I have little tolerance for those who respond to these kinds of pressures by trying to dress ourselves up as if we too can pay off commercially. . . . They do a disservice to themselves and lend credibility to the approach that what is really important is that which we can predict can pay off. (Turk, as quoted in Church, 2007, p. A7)

Even if one were to grant that some variant of social value is a desirable criterion, researchers sell their possibilities short if all the emphasis is on the here and now and consider nothing but practical problems. A limitation of applied research is that it is grounded in current (and often very short-term) conceptions, assumptions, and understandings. This limitation confuses *what is* with *what might be*, discourages novel approaches and viewpoints that can put contemporary understandings in broader perspective, and fails to consider new ways of dealing with contemporary issues or even to be open to new issues, products, and considerations. As astrophysicist and Nobel Prize recipient George Smoot of the University of California at Berkeley stated, "People cannot foresee the future well enough to predict what's going to develop from basic research. If we *only* did applied research, we would still be making better spears" (as quoted in Mullane, 2006, p. 5). As this statement suggests, basic research that is undertaken for its own sake is often the foundation upon which future knowledge—and future applied research—rests.

It is, thus, not that basic research does not have social value, but rather that it encourages the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake in the belief that it is only by also encouraging research that is outside the box—even though this innovation involves incurring all the dead ends and false leads that such research inevitably will include—that one also finds jewels of understanding that can open new doors and new

possibilities that applied researchers, operating within a limited frame of reference, are unlikely to have considered. Any comprehensive research strategy will include both.

Examples of research abound where the unique curiosity of individuals later provided the basis for technological marvels and entirely new fields of inquiry. Who would have thought, for example, that Michael Faraday's study of electromagnetic induction in the 1830s would lead to the development of virtually everything electronic we have today? Or that Gregor Mendel's study of the characteristics of pea plants in the 1860s would form the basis of our understanding of the basics of genetics and heredity? Or that Albert Einstein's 1917 theory of stimulated emission would decades later be used to produce the laser, which itself was initially thought to be a technological marvel with no practical use but is now a powerful tool used in communication, industry, physics, chemistry, biology, and medicine and does everything from generating holographic representations to performing eye surgery to playing CDs and DVDs?

But all of these examples are from the natural and physical sciences. What of the relation between basic research and the social sciences and humanities, particularly in the realm of qualitative research? Fascinatingly enough, a review of the literature reveals that virtually nothing has been written about this relationship. One reason one may hear less about basic research in the context of qualitative research is that the fruits of social research—even when they are used as a foundation for the development of new policies or practices—are less direct and more ephemeral. There is something very concrete about a laser or a space station or a drug such as penicillin. In contrast, even when the results of social research on such topics as social cognition, leadership styles, or child development are used to generate improved policies and/or practices with respect to human-computer interfaces, corporate decision making, or educational policies, they are less likely to be written about in the newspaper, result in Nobel Prize awards, or lead to products sold in neighborhood retail markets.

But basic research is conducted within the domain of qualitative research. Indeed, one could even argue that two aspects of qualitative research imply that basic research and qualitative research are made for each other. One that comes to mind is the qualitative dictum expressed by methodologians such as Howard Becker that the first obligation of any piece of qualitative research is to the milieu or people one is studying.

From this perspective, it is essential to ensure that one's research has inductive integrity by taking the research site and its inhabitants on their own ground and understanding them on their own terms for their own sake. Similarly, as Robert Stake notes, the intrinsic case study—a case study undertaken for no other reason than the curiosity of the researcher—also has strong traditions in the qualitative realm. Both these authors affirm that the first priority in qualitative research is to the integrity of the case—analogous to the priority that quantitative-experimentalist researchers attach to internal validity—because it is the foundation without which all else is irrelevant. To thine own case be true; generalizability, if it is a concern at all, comes later and is likely to be more a theoretical than a statistical exercise. In this connection, see Becker's (1998) discussion of the part to whole problem.

Notwithstanding the compatibility of qualitative research and basic research outlined above, qualitative research is also strongly associated with a commitment both to applied research and to mixed-motive research that is designed to contribute to social theory as much as it is intended to improve people's lives. Indeed, strong traditions in qualitative research, such as its emergent character, its commitment to examining and providing voice, and the frequently collaborative processes these principles activate and involve—as described, for example, by Ted Palys and Chris Atchison—have an inherent applied focus in their explicit desire both to contribute to knowledge and theory and to improve the human condition. The same is true of entire methodological traditions such as participatory action research, as characterized, for example, by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, and political activist ethnography, as described by Caelie Frampton, Gary Kinsman, Andrew Thompson, and Kate Tilleczeck.

Ted Palys

See also Applied Research; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Theory

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BENEFIT

There are several types of benefit (advantage or profit) in qualitative research. Research may impart benefits to society by fulfilling humans' curiosity and desire for knowledge, fostering further research, and solving problems. Individual research participants may benefit directly through payment, altruism, personal empowerment, or a feeling that they have contributed to science.

The potential benefit of a particular study helps to inform the conditions under which the research may be done. In general, unfunded research does not have to demonstrate any prospective benefit, whereas funded research is generally accountable to government and private agencies. Such organizations engage in a process of scientific peer review to decide which research proposals and applicants merit funding. That is, funded researchers must demonstrate in advance the required methodological expertise, qualifications, and experience to carry out research that may benefit society or the goals of the granting body.

In research involving humans, ethics boards will usually invoke a risk or harm and benefits approach to establish that the potential benefits of a study are not outweighed by potential harms. If proposed research presents no more than minimal risk to human participants,

an ethics board will usually not concern itself with prospective benefits. When research presents greater than minimal risk, an ethics board usually needs to establish that the research has sufficient scientific merit to benefit prospectively the scientific enterprise and society. Scientific merit is normally determined via a process of peer review.

Assessing the prospective benefits of a study is controversial because results cannot be known in advance. For example, Stanley Milgram's psychological experiments on obedience to authority have had far-reaching multidisciplinary application as well as profound contributions to the development of standards for ethical research.

As part of informed consent, research participants should receive information about reasonably foreseeable benefits derived from participation. Immediate benefits to participants include payment, therapy, or new information. Many people participate in research despite no clear benefit, other than to satisfy their curiosity or because they wish to interact with research professionals. It is acceptable to advise participants that not all benefits can be anticipated at the time of the research.

Paying research participants is also controversial. Some scholars argue that payments can coerce participants and undermine the informed consent process. Others argue that payment is not an inducement if an ethics board has ensured participant safety. Finally, some scholars argue that participants are often underpaid and therefore denied proper benefit. This is particularly true in qualitative research.

In summary, the primary benefit derived from research is the contribution to knowledge and ultimately to society. In the case of funded research, the degree of benefit that can be shown in a research proposal will often determine whether or not a study will be done. Research participants may benefit tangibly through payment or intangibly through feelings of altruism.

Russel Ogden

See also Ethics Review Process; Harm; Informed Consent; Risk

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Bias

Bias refers to a predisposition or partiality. In qualitative research, bias involves influences that compromise accurate sampling, data collection, data interpretation, and the reporting of findings. Researchers may show bias when they reach conclusions that ignore contradictory data or when the collection and analysis of data are designed to lead to predetermined conclusions. Publication bias occurs when researchers and journals avoid reporting insignificant findings.

The traditional scientific method says that researchers should revise a theory when data fail to fit the theory, or they should abandon the theory and look for new explanations. Nevertheless, Thomas Kuhn has shown that most scientists attempt to make the data fit the theory. Kuhn's work helps to explain that scientists are products of their environments and therefore bring their assumptions and personal standpoints to the research enterprise.

The potential for bias enters the research enterprise the moment a researcher chooses one topic over another, one research question to the exclusion of another, and one particular theory over another. Researchers, like everyone else, are products of the social world and therefore have values that will be more or less apparent in their research.

Decisions around research method, population sampling, and other design issues can introduce bias. In circumstances where researchers repeatedly follow the methodology of previous studies, they run the risk of reproducing similar findings that are method-dependent. In quantitative research, especially, multiple methods are often used to maximize confidence that findings are reliable and valid. Similarly, it is important to recognize whether a particular sample represents the parent population. In qualitative research, however, biases are often assessed in the context of doing the research, to acknowledge and manage the limitations of the research design. Finally, the wording of interview questions merits careful consideration with regard to the wording of questions so that they are not preordained to elicit biased responses. Wherever possible, pretesting should be employed.

Many researchers anguish over the dilemma of doing research that is either impartial and neutral or firmly grounded in a value position. Howard Becker has argued that this dilemma does not exist because researchers are not value-free, and therefore, personal and political views will enter a research agenda. The real imperative is for researchers to be aware of their values and predispositions and to acknowledge them as inseparable from the research process.

Perception of bias can be most apparent when research challenges a status quo. For example, research that opposes the vested interests of public officials is more likely to be criticized for bias than research that does the opposite. Research that challenges longstanding positions such as drug prohibition, gender discrimination, or ageist policy will often be accused of bias.

Researchers manage bias by being self-aware of their values and assumptions, looking for contradictory data, and being open to alternative interpretations of their data. Although many of the social sciences aspire to objectivity, social scientists should acknowledge their own subjectivity in the research process.

Russel Ogden

See also Objectivity; Reliability; Subjectivity; Validity; Value-Free Inquiry

BIOGRAPHY

Biography, as a genre, and biographical methods, as distinctive aspects of qualitative research, are influenced by a number of disciplinary strands, including history, literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education. These disciplinary influences have created methodological and conceptual variations of biography, including life story, life history, life writing, narrative, oral history, memoir, fictionalized biography, and forms of autobiography that attend to intersubjectivity and blurred boundaries between self and other that influence any representation of a life.

Biography, as both genre and research method, involves not only gathering data about a specific individual, either living or deceased, but also interpreting these data in order to create a representation or portrayal of particular aspects of the subject's life and times. As well, biography and biographical methods currently are subject to questions that frame debates in a variety of disciplines regarding the possibility or

impossibility of any one truthful retelling of any individual's life; the influence of the researcher's historically and socially situated autobiographical contexts, discourses, and perspectives on constructions and depictions of the biographical subject; memory and its shifting contextual influences; and the role of the reader. Although this entry focuses on qualitative research methods typically associated with biographical research, it concurrently gestures toward current and contentious issues that characterize this genre of inquiry.

Typical Methods Utilized in Biographic Research

Whether one is interested in researching and representing the biography of a deceased individual or one who is living, qualitative researchers typically first must attend to ways and reasons why they have chosen particular persons as subjects for biographical research. Researchers also must locate and decide on which pertinent archival or repository materials might be further researched and analyzed, whom they might wish to interview in relation to the subject, and in what document analyses, beyond formally archived materials—including, for example, newspapers, letters, diaries, journals, video- and audiorecordings of the subject—they might need to engage further. Also, researchers might wish to involve themselves in some form of participant observation or nonparticipant observation (the researcher observes, but is not an active participant) to research places and contexts in which their subjects live(d) and work(ed).

The Biographer's Relation to the Subject

Biographers traditionally have chosen exemplary or well-known individuals as subjects of their inquiry. However, recent theorizing in the disciplines of history, sociology, anthropology, literature, education, and psychology as well as within women's studies and ethnicity studies, for example, have highlighted a need to attend to historically underrepresented individuals. Such emphases also highlight the necessity of attending to ways in which these potential biographical subjects both have constructed themselves and have been constructed by particular historical and social-cultural circumstances, power relations, and prevailing discourses.

Therefore, qualitative researchers, no matter what their subject choices, must attend to their reasons for

selecting the particular subject of their biographical inquiry. Researchers initially should spend some time examining motivations for their choices, including their degree of attachment or nonattachment to their intended subjects as well as the ways in which their own autobiographic positions and social, historical, or cultural contexts will influence their data interpretations and representations. Such self-reflexive work, further including attention to which details the researcher chooses to discuss or not discuss in the final account, is crucial in order that the contemporary biographer not appear either as omniscient or as absent in the portrayal of an individual's life and work.

Archival Materials

Qualitative researchers may well choose subjects whose work and personal lives are catalogued within special collection repositories or archives, most often housed in public as well as college and university libraries. These repositories or archives hold government, business, or organization materials and records deemed to have permanent historical value. Repositories, in particular, have collection goals that often include documentation of the lives of less well-known individuals as well as famous persons. In the United States, the National Archives and Records Service maintains the archives of the federal government. Other reference tools that will help researchers identify appropriate repositories include the National Union Catalog of Manuscripts Collections, produced by the Library of Congress and available online; the On Line Union Catalog, which is updated daily and chronicles records at member libraries around the world as well as the Library of Congress; and the Research Libraries Information Network, which contains descriptions of nonbook materials held in and outside the United States.

Researchers must familiarize themselves with various institutions' specific requirements for access to archival and repository materials and should establish primary contact with institutions' reference staffs. Qualitative researchers, most often concerned with in-depth examination of all materials and interactions associated with their subjects' lives over time, perhaps will need to make multiple visits to any one site and will want to write ahead to institutions to inform them of their visits, noting date of arrival, major research focus, and length of stay. The Archival Code of Ethics of the Society of American Archivists prevents archivists from describing to others, without permission, any details of a researcher's work.

Interviews

Another method utilized by most biographers is the in-depth interview, either of the living subject as well as associated individuals whose perspectives and interactions can inform the biographer's interpretations or of individuals who, in various ways, have insights about a subject of historical interest.

Again, issues of access are pertinent here. Biographers cast a wide net in terms of identifying appropriate individuals to interview and usually plan on a series of extended and multiple interviews, if possible. One of the primary tasks facing the biographer is contacting and making arrangements for face-to-face interviews; phone interviews are a secondary possibility, but should be avoided if at all possible because of the importance of nonverbal cues and interactions between researcher and participant.

Contemporary qualitative researchers are aware of the interview itself not only as a means of gathering data from another individual, but also as an active, participatory, and often unpredictable event in which both interviewer and participant are constructing versions of what can get told within the contexts of their interactions as well as representations of self and other. Thus, even within the framing provided by structured or semi-structured interviews, in which the researcher constructs a list or series of questions, with appropriate probes, or follow-up questions, qualitative researchers must attend to ways in which their own perspectives, assumptions, expectations, and biases are influencing both the direction and tenor of the interview, *per se*. Researchers also need to attend to ways in which participants are simultaneously guiding and setting the tone of the interview in interaction with the researcher, especially in terms of how much participants may choose to withhold or reveal, how they position themselves in relation to questions posed, and how meanings may shift over time and within various historical and social contexts for both participant and researcher.

Recreating a Life

Data analysis typically is the second stage of the interview process, as in any ethnographically oriented qualitative research method. However, to a biographer, the materials gathered are considered less as data and more as substances that may contribute to the recreation of a life. Although an ethnographer engages in coding data, biographers listen to interview tapes and

focus on overall content, for example, as one means of developing or enlarging their interpretive lenses. Although the mechanics of coding data receive major attention from many qualitative research methods texts, and biographers may want to familiarize themselves with various coding techniques prescribed initially to construct major themes from data, biographers tend to focus on relating those particular themes to larger interpretations about the subject's life and times.

Thus, biographers must attend to questions raised by current debates across the disciplines most closely associated with biographical research to consider in what ways data gained not only from interviews, but also from a variety of ethnographically as well as historically oriented research methods may contain not only facts about the subject at hand, but also evidence of the complexities, uniqueness, ambiguity, and indeterminateness of any lived life.

Biography as Personal Inquiry

Biographers need to decide, in both their interpretive and writing processes, what emphases they will place on their own interpretive influences, which may include but are not limited to their disciplinary preparation, theoretical and epistemological orientations, and social, historical, cultural, and autobiographical positions and situations. Such decisions are imperative within the processes of data gathering from interviews, participant or nonparticipant observations, and document, archival, and repository research as well as within the processes of the writing of the biography, *per se*. One of the most current challenges and simultaneous paradoxes of doing biographical research involves the necessary self-reflexive work of biographers in relation to their constructions of themselves as well as of their biographical subjects. Given the continuing grappling with the crisis of representation in qualitative research, writ large, this challenge and accompanying paradox promise much in terms of researchers working to create new and fresh biographical methods and forms of inquiry.

Janet L. Miller

See also Artifacts; Document Analysis; Life Stories; Oral History; Reflexivity

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BRACKETING

Bracketing is a beguilingly simple term grounded in a profoundly complex concept. At its core, bracketing is a scientific process where a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the essence of a specific phenomenon. This process allows a focused researcher to observe the unfiltered phenomenon as it is at its essence, without the influence of our natural attitude—individual and societal constructions, presumptions, and assumptions.

Bracketing is conceptually located within the science and philosophy of phenomenology, developed by Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological movement, at the turn of the 20th century. Initially a mathematician, Husserl set out to develop a scientific theory of philosophy where logical and reasoned inquiry could reveal the inherent essence of things. Similar to a mathematical equation, bracketing suspends specific elements by placing them outside the brackets, thus allowing focus on the phenomenon within the parentheses. For Husserl, bracketing or *epoche* was a process of phenomenological reduction that could philosophically lead to the ideal description and understanding of the universal essences of the investigated phenomenon. Over the years, Husserl continued to develop the concept of bracketing from a purely philosophical ideal to a more descriptive practical conceptualization, where researchers may not discover universal truths of a phenomenon, but could gain local truths or understandings. Although bracketing remained fundamental to Husserl's phenomenology writing, he never provided a clear, concise definition or standard application of the concept.

Over the proceeding century, as bracketing continued to grow within the various schools of phenomenological movement (descriptive, Heideggarian, Utrecht, and existential), each reconceptualized the nature and/or elements of phenomenological reduction. As the various movements within phenomenology emerged, vied with each other, and developed their own theoretical tenets, the concept of bracketing became increasingly disconnected from its traditionally philosophical roots. Although the qualitative application of bracketing in research expanded, the concept behind the term eroded and its meanings and applications fractured, with the result that bracketing became multifaceted. Unfortunately, bracketing can also be seen as a formless technique or black-box term in studies, with a general unspoken assumption that there exists a shared understanding to the term. Despite lack of uniformity and often varied application, bracketing is composed of specific standard elements. Whereas researchers from different philosophical, epistemological, or theoretical traditions may employ bracketing based on their own standpoint and divergent meanings, the elemental components of bracketing are consistent. Bracketing remains an efficacious scientific process across various qualitative approaches based on a researcher's ability to effectively define and apply its elements.

Returning to the core definition, bracketing is a rigorous process that suspends internal and external suppositions, thereby allowing the focusing in on a specific phenomenon to understand or see it as it is. The four core elements of the process are as follows:

1. the actual brackets that the researcher places around the phenomenon;
2. the nature of the internal and external suppositions, experiences, theories, or assumptions being held in abeyance or suspended by the researcher;
3. the temporal structure in which the bracketing is applied; and
4. the reintegration of data generated from the bracketing process.

The methodological concept of bracketing requires researchers to explicitly operationalize and define these four elements. The first element centers on the construction of the actual parenthesis, specifically, on how solid or porous the actual brackets are. For example, does the researcher conceptualize the brackets as

able to hold or suspend all or part of internal (e.g., assumptions, beliefs, theories) and external (e.g., context, culture, time) suppositions that may impact, affect, or distort the phenomenon in its natural state? Some researchers may define these brackets as holding most internal and external elements, whereas others may simply want the brackets to hold only their own experiences and opinions.

The second core component of bracketing is the suppositions, assumptions, hypothesis, and/or experiences that are held aside by the brackets. This element consists of two parts, internal suppositions of the researcher (e.g., personal knowledge, history, culture, values, theories, orientations, etc.) and external suppositions that are centered on the phenomenon (e.g., its history, definition, and larger environmental factors). Researchers need to clearly articulate any internal and/or external suppositions they are bracketing out.

The third central element is the researcher's application of the bracketing process in the temporal structure, that is, the start, duration, and end of bracketing. Although for some researchers, bracketing may begin at conceptualization of the research prior to the literature search, others apply bracketing to data collection (e.g., the interview process). Similarly, the duration and end point of the process may vary. Some researchers close bracketing at the end of data collection. Others open and close bracketing throughout the research process, and some extend bracketing into the early phases of the data analysis.

The fourth element is the unbracketing and reintegration of the data derived from the bracketing process into the larger research. As in mathematical equations, once the data within the brackets have been determined, they are incorporated into the larger equation. This reintegration typically occurs in the analysis section of the research, but it may be incorporated throughout the research process.

Bracketing may not have one universal form, but it retains a core definition that is composed of specific elements. Researchers from diverse qualitative traditions and perspectives recognize and value bracketing as a fundamental methodological concept; however, the rigor of bracketing is determined by researchers' operationalization of the central elements that comprise this scientific concept.

Robin Edward Gearing

See also Phenomenology; Qualitative Research, History of

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BRICOLAGE AND BRICOLEUR

The French terms *bricolage* and *bricoleur* were given their key academic sense by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and were subsequently taken up by others, including some recent writers on qualitative research in the United States.

In contemporary French usage, *bricolage* means, broadly speaking, do it yourself, and a *bricoleur* is an amateur who can turn her or his hand to practical repairs of various kinds. Lévi-Strauss (1962/1966) used these concepts in his structuralist analysis of myths, portraying the production of myths as a form of bricolage. His usage was subsequently applied to new fields and elaborated on by others, including Gérard Genette (1966, p. 145); Jacques Derrida (1970/2007); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1972/2004, pp. 7–8); Deena Weinstein and Michael Weinstein (1991); and Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg (1992).

Lévi-Strauss was concerned with the contrast that is often drawn between “primitive” and “civilized” thought, but unlike some earlier views, he did not regard these as inferior and superior ways of thinking, respectively. Rather, he treated them as different modes of orientation toward the world, and he had a distinctive understanding of the value of primitive cultures (see Merquior, 1986, chap. 3).

For him, the character of the bricolage that produces myths is somewhere between that of science and that of modern art. The central feature of myth as

bricolage is that there is a drive to produce a complete picture from whatever intellectual resources are currently available. This drive contrasts with the orientation of the scientist or engineer, who must accept that some things are not currently knowable or doable and who should insist on using only what are judged to be adequate intellectual resources. Furthermore, whereas bricolage focuses on surface features, on things as they appear, and seeks similarities and other relationships among these, science goes beyond surface appearances to find underlying generative structures.

Officially, at least, Lévi-Strauss did not see social science as a form of bricolage; he was explicitly wedded to a scientific version of research modeled on structural linguistics. However, a number of commentators have argued that qualitative research does, or should, follow this model (see Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Lincoln, 2001). In these terms, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2005) portray qualitative research as involving the piecing together of diverse materials so as to produce an emergent construction that they describe as, “A complex, dense, reflexive collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis” (p. 6). In qualitative-inquiry-as-bricolage, materials are juxtaposed in open-ended ways designed to provoke readers rather than to convey some closed message. More generally, what is involved is a form of inquiry involving the flexible use of diverse theoretical and methodological resources in a manner that has more in common with art and literature than with natural science, but which claims its own form of rigor. Although the argument that qualitative researchers should become bricoleurs has been influential, it is not without its critics (see Hammersley, 1999).

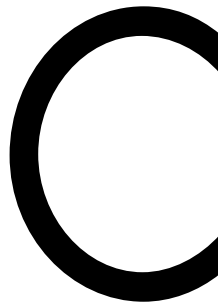
Martyn Hammersley

See also Collage; Deconstruction; Poststructuralism; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Structuralism

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CAPTIVE POPULATION

In some instances, qualitative research is conducted among a captive population. This term refers to the use of participants who find themselves in a context (often an institution, e.g., a school, a prison, a hospital) where they are constrained and dependent on others for their care and for access to them as research participants.

Researchers may choose to work with these persons because of their physical and organizational proximity. In this case, the respondents form a convenience sample. The best-known example of a captive population may be university students who are asked to participate in a research project of their faculty that aims at providing information about phenomena that are also present among other populations.

In other instances, researchers study captive populations because they are the only ones who can provide relevant in-depth information about (living in) the constraining context itself. Conducting in-depth interviews among prisoners to gain insight into the incarceration experience is an example of this second approach. Compared with quantitative methods (e.g., questionnaires, analyses of official criminal data), this qualitative method has the advantage of producing more detailed information about the perspectives, experiences, and slang of the actors. It also allows researchers to discover illegal or deviant activities and to reach illiterate prisoners who are not able to participate in a written questionnaire.

Working with individuals who are in dependent or restricted relationships with the researcher and/or with the institutional personnel often gives rise to ethical

questions and methodological problems. The most obvious ethical issue is that of voluntary consent because members of captive populations might not dare to refuse participation. When they do participate in a study, these respondents often feel prohibited from talking freely about their experiences. It is the researcher's role to emphasize the confidentiality of research data and to ensure the privacy of the respondents. Methodological issues associated with working with captive populations as a convenience sample and as a purposive sample are nonrepresentativeness and difficulties of gaining access to the research setting (e.g., the institution) and the actors of interest, respectively. The first problem refers to the fact that findings that are based on a study among a specific captive population (e.g., students) cannot be extrapolated to other kinds of audiences in the general population. The second problem refers to the existence of institutional gatekeepers (e.g., prison governors) whose permission is needed to get in touch with the captive population.

It is clear that working with captive populations is sometimes preferable or even inevitable for qualitative researchers, but this also requires special considerations.

Heidi Vandebosch

See also Confidentiality; Research Setting

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CASE STUDY

A case study is a research approach in which one or a few instances of a phenomenon are studied in depth. Case studies were the predominant research approach at the beginning of modern social science. This is reflected, for example, in the work of the Austrian-born anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and the Chicago School of sociology, both of which embraced case study research. Nevertheless, after World War II, quantitative methods gained a hegemonic position, at least among methodologists. It is noteworthy that even during this heyday of quantitative research many important studies that provided theoretical breakthroughs and have entered the pantheon of classic works, such as Graham Allison's study on the Cuban missile crisis in 1971, were based on the case study approach. During recent years, we have seen not only a resurgence of case studies in most disciplines but also unprecedented methodological reflection on this approach. This can be seen as an alignment of epistemology/methodology to ontology/theory. The strong emphasis in recent theoretical approaches of aspects such as "ideas" and "timing" is favorable for case study approaches. Social constructivist theories stress the importance of individual perceptions or hegemonic discourses in social processes. Case studies are much better suited than large-*N* studies for tracing these ideas because they can invest heavily in in-depth interviews or discourse analysis. Game theory and theoretical notions such as "path dependency" stress the importance of timing for explaining specific outcomes. Again, producing a detailed historical account is certainly one of the major strengths of case studies.

This entry first discusses the nature of case studies, their advantages and disadvantages, and three perspectives on their use. The final sections of the entry are devoted to the very important steps in doing case study research: case selection and data analysis. Although the praxis of doing case study research is dominated by the challenges of collecting empirical evidence, this stage is not discussed here because useful information for dealing with these challenges can be found in other entries.

What Is a Case Study?

There is no consensus on the basic characteristics of case studies. One reason for this is the fact that the

term is not restricted to social science research but rather is used in many practical contexts. Therefore, the understanding of case studies extends from being a specified tool in a purely positivist scientific research endeavor to being a pedagogical strategy in education and social learning processes. Qualitative case study researchers argue that cases must be seen as configurational context- and/or path-dependent entities. They advocate in-depth strategies such as "thick description" and "process tracing," and they opt for a "case-centered" approach rather than the "variable-centered" one that dominates in quantitative/positivist research.

Case studies focus on one or a few instances, phenomena, or units of analysis, but they are not restricted to one observation. Nevertheless, the boundaries are not fully clear. On the one hand, John Gerring would exclude case studies that lack any spatial or temporal variation. On the other hand, Charles Ragin's qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) methods try to expand the reach of case-centered research approaches beyond the usual limits toward the range of 10 to 60 cases. However, the particular strength of qualitative case study research—the ability to study the case in depth, which is the best-known aspect of research on a captive population—may be lost in this endeavor to bridge the quantitative–qualitative gulf.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Case Studies

To understand the specificities of case study research, it is useful to compare it with the two other main research approaches: experiments and large-*N* surveys. Such comparisons reveal that the main difference between case studies and experiments is that in experiments cases are created by the researcher and factors of influence can be controlled.

The relationship between case studies and large-*N* studies lies in the specific affinities and comparative advantages of these two approaches with respect to specific goals and contexts. First, it is broadly accepted that case studies have been the major source of theoretical innovation, whereas large-*N* studies have their strength in controlling the empirical scope of new theoretical concepts. Second, whereas large-*N* studies tend to focus on causal research goals, case study research has an affinity toward descriptive goals. This does not mean that case study research is not concerned with causal questions, but it usually takes the

descriptive–interpretive elements more seriously. In addition, case studies are often concerned with pinning down the specific mechanisms and pathways between causes and effects rather than revealing the average strength of a factor that causes an effect. Third, even positivist methodologists accept that case studies have a strong comparative advantage with respect to the “depth” of the analysis, where depth can be understood as empirical completeness and natural wholeness or as conceptual richness and theoretical consistency. In contrast, large-*N* studies have advantages in terms of the “breadth” of the propositions, an important argument in contexts where there are many similar cases or where a homogeneous population of cases is assumed. Fourth, large-*N* studies are better equipped for securing external validity by using statistical means of control. In contrast, case studies have advantages with respect to construct and internal validity. The argument for better construct validity is based on the fact that case studies can use more and more diverse indicators for representing a theoretical concept and for securing the internal validity of causal inferences and/or theoretical interpretations for these cases.

Three Different Views on Case Studies

As the methodological reflection on case studies unfolds, it is increasingly obvious that there are quite different understandings of case study research. We can distinguish among three ideal types: naturalism, positivism, and constructivism.

With respect to main goals, naturalists want to generate practical and detailed knowledge, positivists aim at the establishment of conceptually rather narrow but law-like propositions and models that allow predictions, and constructivists see the empirical endeavor of doing case studies as a contribution and check to a theoretical discourse.

Naturalists advocate “natural generalization” through social diffusion and learning processes. Researchers themselves do not try to generalize beyond the case under investigation, but the findings can be taken up by others if they perceive a “fit” to their cases. The generalizations made by positivists can be labeled “statistic generalizations” based on drawing logical inferences from a sample of cases to a specified population. The third approach to generalization was called “analytic generalization” by Robert Yin, but a more distinctive label is “theoretical generalization” because it is characterized by drawing interpretive

inferences from a variety of observable objects to meaningful abstract concepts. For example, Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow used the case study on the Cuban missile crises to show how an “organizational behavior” model and a “governmental politics” model shed additional light on foreign policy decision making, in contrast to a unified/rational actor model.

Both naturalists and positivists make the ontological assumption that there exists a single objective reality that is independent of human observation. Naturalists try to reveal the authentic nature of a social phenomenon or the detailed elements of a causal process by getting as close as possible. Therefore, strategies such as participatory observation and the use of empathy are fully accepted. The positivists opt for “control” instead of “closeness” to reveal an objective reality. The methodological emphasis is not on bridging the gulf between reality and researcher but rather on revealing the relationship between the particular (the individual case) and the universal (the population). Constructivists, in contrast, do not assume any single reality and believe that empirical reality and theoretical concepts are mutually constitutive. For them, bridging is focused on narrowing the gap between concrete observations and abstract meanings using interpretive techniques. Because interpretation loses much of its associative quality if it is pressed into quantitative methods, constructivists adopt another means of control. They use a plurality of theories to understand and analyze cases.

Choosing Cases

For naturalists, it is the intrinsic interest in a specific case that motivates case study researchers. A case may have an important real-life impact, and therefore it makes sense to concentrate their scholarly efforts on the internal complexity of the case, leaving aside any prior considerations about potential generalizations. Having access is another important criterion for selecting cases from this perspective.

Careful selection of cases is essential for positivists because it enables them to draw statistical generalizations and because they accept only covariation as a basis for causal inference. These two aspects are connected to corresponding selection criteria. First, a case can be selected because it has a specific position within the larger population. Prior quantitative studies are necessary to reveal typical/representative, diverse, extreme, deviant, and (statistically) influential cases. Selecting a

case in such embedded case studies can be used to test or differentiate the causal pathways for a statistically proven causal proposition. Second, a few cases can be selected on the basis of their similarity or difference, making it possible to draw causal inferences through cross-case comparisons. Such attempts to control variance and to select what Arend Lijphart called “comparable cases” either with reference to John Stuart Mill’s “method of agreement” and “method of difference” or with reference to Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune’s “most similar systems design” and “most different systems design” are quite common, although they do not hold up to rigorous logical standards.

Constructivists opt for selecting theoretically “crucial cases.” Harry Eckstein’s notions of “least likely” and “most likely” cases have been taken up as devices for theory-oriented selection of cases. Constructivists do not share the positivists’ covariational interpretation of crucial cases but do share their conviction that the selection of crucial cases makes (theoretical) generalizations possible. Most likely cases are cases where a plurality of diverse indicators of an internally coherent theory would make it very likely that another empirical aspect (e.g., an indicator of a dependent variable but also a causal process) also corresponds to the logic of that theory but does not. The famous studies of Malinowski (in 1926), William Foote Whyte (in 1943), and Lijphart (in 1975) followed this logic, and all of them seriously undermined the hegemony of theories that dominated their fields at the time. The selection of least likely cases is aiming at what has been labeled the “Sinatra inference”: If a theory can make it here, it can make it everywhere. A paradigmatic example is the study by Robert Michels (in 1962) on oligarchies in organizations.

Positivists and constructivists need to invest a lot before strategically selecting useful cases to reach their specific kinds of generalization. Nevertheless, if they have selected their cases on the basis of more practical reasons, they should still reflect on the position of their cases with respect to populations or theories if they wish to reach their goals.

Describing, Analyzing, Interpreting, and Documenting Empirical Evidence

For naturalists, it is especially important to provide a comprehensive and consistent picture of a case. Their inductive approach is associated with thick descriptions, narratives, and process tracing as adequate means to

analyze and document the evidence. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett defined process tracing as a method that attempts to identify the intervening causal processes—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable. Because they insisted that every element of the causal chain must be empirically documented and stated an affinity to a scientific realist understanding of causal mechanisms, the emphasis is on chronological narratives. In a second step, a detailed narrative might be combined with abstract concepts that provide general assumptions about the functioning of time (e.g., concept of path dependence) to make the conclusion more plausible. The best-known example for path dependency is the explanation of the widespread adoption of the QWERTY keyboard through positive feedback loops based on an initial large market share and on network effects (and not on intrinsic superiority). Nevertheless, the proof of a causal relationship at a specific sequence (e.g., at a “critical juncture”) relies heavily on finding and documenting a “smoking gun,” that is, evidence for a causal connection that common sense would not doubt.

Positivists instead employ quasi-experimental methods to draw conclusions from empirical data. The most important means are cross-case comparisons, splitting the case into multiple entities, temporal sequencing, and counterfactual thought experiments as a means to allow “controlled” spatial, longitudinal, and/or imaginary covariational comparisons and to draw logical conclusions.

The analytic approach that corresponds to a constructivist account is an extended and specified understanding of what George and Bennett called the congruence method. In contrast to naturalistic approaches, it has a strong deductive element because it begins with theories and assesses their comparative strength in understanding and explaining empirical cases. A constructivist would not limit this method to comparing the theoretical expectations with the empirical reality on a variety of indicators for the dependent and independent variables. Instead, searching for (non)congruence is extended to causal processes. In contrast to the naturalist’s inductive understanding of process tracing and the scientific realist’s account of causal mechanisms, the constructivist deduces empirical implications that correspond to a specific theory all along the way from the causal factors to the causal processes to the effects. Only quite general theories that embody a fundamental

causal mechanism, usually some kind of microfoundation, are capable of serving as a basis for this kind of deduction. This ensures that case studies become embedded in the fundamental theoretical debates within the social sciences. The quality of a case study, thus, does not depend on providing detailed evidence for every step of a causal chain; rather, it depends on a skillful use of empirical evidence for making a convincing argument within a scholarly discourse that consists of competing or complementary theories.

The adequate structure for documenting case study findings is chronological for naturalists, linear-analytic for positivists, and comparative for constructivists.

Joachim K. Blatter

See also Constructivism; Generalizability; Historical Research; Interpretive Research; Narrative Analysis; Naturalistic Inquiry; Positivism

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CATEGORIES

Categories are analytic units developed by qualitative researchers to conceptually organize findings related to a phenomenon or human experience that is under investigation. The novice researcher typically makes few distinctions among analyzing for themes, categories, and codes. If one were to think about a micro-, meso-, or macro-level analysis, coding starts at the micro level, the generation of categories moves the investigator to the meso level, and themes that bear out lessons learned or truths that reflect the findings are indicative of a macro-level analysis. Although themes, categories, and codes might build on each other, there are distinct differences.

The qualitative researcher almost always arrives at some point in the research process when developing categories is necessary. Category development can be done either inductively or deductively. To generate categories inductively, the researcher approaches data analysis without a preset list of categories and analyzes the data to identify analytic units that conceptually match the phenomenon portrayed in the data set. When categories are generated deductively, they emerge not from the data but rather from prior studies, relevant literature, research questions, and the researcher's own experience with and knowledge of the phenomenon. Under this approach, there is a chance that the categories generated from other sources will not be relevant or accurately reflect the qualitative data set at hand. Although inductive and deductive approaches work, both novice and senior researchers fluctuate back and forth between inductive and deductive analyses because blending the two methods helps the researcher to fully interrogate the data.

Recalling that both qualitative and quantitative researchers use categories when designing research studies, it is important to remember that there are various data sources that can be used to develop categories for a qualitative study or qualitative component of a mixed-methods study. Sources include formal and informal interview data, focus group interviews, observation notes, emails, journals, newspapers, primary documents (e.g., memos, internal organizational reports, diaries), and open-ended questionnaires. Potentially, a single study may have multiple data sources that must be analyzed before the researcher can reach any plausible conclusions.

Given the potential for diverse data sources that could be critical for a single study, constructing well-defined categories can be overwhelming for the researcher who must wade through what may appear to be mountains of data. The work is tedious and time-consuming but has the potential to yield great insights. Computer software is available to help keep qualitative categorical data analysis manageable. Qualitative software is helpful in managing and organizing categories. Although some programs tend to be more linear and less flexible in their capacity to reflect non-linear findings, overall they are very instrumental in managing large qualitative data sets.

One benefit of using qualitative software (e.g., ATLAS.ti, NVivo) to conduct categorical analysis is that doing so gives multiple research team members the ability to collaborate during this phase of the research

process. As more researchers gain a growing appreciation for qualitative methods, investigators from different institutions, disciplines, countries, and cultures will form more collaborative efforts that require multiple analyses examining concepts at the categorical level.

Denise O'Neil Green

See also ATLAS.ti (Software); Codes and Coding; NVivo (Software); Themes

Further Readings

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CATEGORIZATION

Categorization is a major component of qualitative data analysis by which investigators attempt to group patterns observed in the data into meaningful units or categories. Through this process, categories are often created by chunking together groups of previously coded data. This integration or aggregation is based on the similarities of meaning between the individually coded bits as observed by the researcher. Categories in turn may be abstracted or conceptualized further to discern semantic, logical, or theoretical links and connections between and across the categories. The results of this process may lead to the creation of themes, constructs, or domains from the categories.

Categories can also be seen as an intermediary step in an ongoing process of separating and connecting units of meaning based on the qualitative data being collected. Coding is often the first step in the analytic process as researchers attempt to make meaning of the various bits of information collected in the field or generated during interviews. As a second step in the ongoing process, researchers look for connections between or among these separate codes. This coding of the content can produce categories as researchers discern linking patterns between or among the individual codes. The analytic process continues as researchers next look for patterns that run through and across the system of categories. The results of this categorization of the categories can lead to the creation of themes, constructs, or domains.

The categorization process encourages researchers to describe overtly what they have observed and to segment the observed phenomena into units. The characteristics or internal properties of the categories are further developed or discovered as researchers continually and transparently note or memo how all coded units of meaning within a particular category are similar and how the coded units within the category contrast with other coded units perceived as being outside the category in question. Researchers can use a variety of techniques to accomplish this goal, including posing a priori questions from existing theoretical systems (i.e., a deductive approach) and testing the integrity of the categories by constantly judging the credibility of the categories with further observations based on the data (i.e., an inductive approach). Researchers can also use a combination of both inductive and deductive logic in creating and refining categories. The process of categorization continues in a research project until saturation (i.e., no further categories are discovered or constructed based on examination of new generated data) or exhaustion (i.e., the existing system of categories accounts for all meaningful or significant aspects of the phenomenon in question).

In constructing a system of categories, it is important for researchers to evaluate how each category has internal integrity (i.e., is there a high degree of homogeneity across the individual coded units within the category?) and external integrity (i.e., is there a high degree of heterogeneity or differentiation between or among the array of homogeneous categories?). Researchers not only must judge the internal and external coherence across the system of categories but also must be cognizant of the coherence between the categories and the phenomenon in question. Researchers should endeavor to create an exhaustive system of categories so that no meaningful feature of the phenomenon under study falls outside the array of categories. In such a fashion, the process of categorization operates along dual planes of focus: horizontality (i.e., category-to-category relationships) and verticality (i.e., category-to-phenomenon relationships).

Establishing Categorization Integrity

Judging the credibility of the categorization involves posing a number of critical questions. First, how well do the categories capture the richness of data? Second, how

coherent is the internal constitution of the categories? Third, how distinct is each category from the other categories? Fourth, how were the categories created and tested? To address these questions of integrity, researchers have developed a number of strategies to help themselves and external reviewers to render their assessments more readily and effectively.

Researchers should carefully document all analytic decisions that lead to the creation of categories. These documents or memos help to form what is commonly called an audit or a decision trail that provides evidence to support the integrity of the coding, categorization, and interpretive choices made throughout the qualitative data analysis process. Researchers can further improve the content and credibility of their studies by opening up their categorization records for verification from external or third parties in the form of peer review (i.e., to independent referees) or member checking (i.e., to participants who provided the material on which the analysis is being conducted).

Marc Conastas developed a comprehensive system for helping researchers to document the category creation process for internal and external review. His system consists of three components: origination (i.e., where does the responsibility reside for the creation of the categories?), verification (i.e., how are the categories justified?), and nomination (i.e., what are the sources of categories' names?). He also asked that researchers share when these decisions were made (i.e., before the data collection began, after the data were collected, or throughout the data collection process).

Another important process in the construction of categories and the establishment of their credibility is to systematically maintain the connections between the codes and categories and the empirical evidence found in the data themselves. Exemplary quotations and excerpts should always remain in contact with their respective codings and categorizations. This contact should also be extended to the publication of the findings so that editors, reviewers, and readers can judge the merits of any categorization based on artifacts from the phenomenon in question (e.g., direct quotations). If done well, the juxtaposition of well-articulated descriptions of categories with rich and vivid exemplary quotations or observations can create a credible account of the findings of a study and a meaningful contextualization of both the categories and the data they are offered to represent.

Ron Chenail

See also Codes and Coding; Constant Comparison; Content Analysis; Core Category; Themes

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CENTER FOR INTERPRETIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The Center for Interpretive and Qualitative Research (CIQR, pronounced “seeker”) at Duquesne University is special both for how it began and for what it does. A number of faculty members were aware that a large percentage of the scholars in the liberal arts, health sciences, education, and other schools at Duquesne used interpretive and qualitative methods in their research. Moreover, the university’s psychology department already had an international reputation for its PhD program in phenomenological psychology. Faculty at Duquesne decided that a center devoted to interpretive and qualitative methods would facilitate communication between these faculty members and their students and, in turn, would fulfill a need for intellectual community as well as present information on a variety of interpretive and qualitative research methods. During the summer of 1999, a group of Duquesne scholars wrote a proposal for such a center, including the term *interpretive* in the title to emphasize that qualitative methods used in literature, philosophy, and other humanities departments would be of an importance equal to those undertaken in the social and behavioral sciences. This grassroots effort was aided by the dean of the College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts at the time. After winning approval from the relevant graduate and dean committees, the group was granted “center” status.

The work of the center revolves around several structures. The first of these is a monthly meeting in which faculty and graduate students from Duquesne

and other universities in the area present their work, focusing on their methods as well as the phenomena they are investigating. Typically, a half-hour presentation is followed by an hour of lively discussion in these well-attended meetings. The second structure is an invitation to an internationally known scholar each semester. The scholar gives a public talk and then a smaller symposium that concentrates on methodology. The third structure is a CIQR certificate program, where a certificate is offered to those graduate students who take specified method-oriented courses from the general curriculum at the university and then a special proseminar. The proseminar requires that the students engage in and jointly discuss research projects that they are undertaking. They then present their work to CIQR members at a meeting for that purpose. After only a year, this program had already granted certificates to 10 graduate students and 1 faculty member. The center also plans to engage in community action research.

The CIQR website includes a description of the center, the original proposals for the center and its certificate program, a list of all the CIQR external speakers and their topics, a description of all the monthly presentations, announcements of coming events, a newsletter, and a list of the subcommittees along with their members and functions, and a sign-up procedure for those wishing to become CIQR members.

Fred Evans

Websites

Center for Interpretive and Qualitative Research:
<http://www.ciqr.duq.edu>

CHAOS AND COMPLEXITY THEORIES

Chaos and complexity theories, along with fractal geometry, form what came to be called the “new sciences” during the latter part of the 20th century. These sciences, developed in recognition of relativity, quantum theory, and evolution, are based on a general acceptance that “nature”—our environment, planet, universe, and cosmos—is fractaled and turbulent. Here life and death, creativity and stagnation, imbalance and balance dance together in what one observer called an “orderly disorder.” This entry describes the origins of the concepts of chaos and complexity and their application in qualitative research methods

today. Furthermore, the entry encourages readers to look at new possibilities in qualitative research, possibilities inherent in the procedure of layering that bring forth the depth and creation of new meaning.

Traditional research methods, quantitative or qualitative, assume a stable and steady universe, as Isaac Newton and others posited. To use Newton’s own phrasing, “Nature is pleased with simplicity” and “is conformable to Herself.” Adopting this meta-physical assumption, quantitative researchers developed the concepts of norming and the bell curve. Norming, however, assumes a stable and steady population; it does not work on a population undergoing transformative change. To hearken back to Francis Bacon and his (then) new science, a “new method must be found.” Qualitative research, when it has an emphasis on triangulation, also assumes a steadiness for its tripartite viewing. In fact, the notion of research itself focuses on searching for that which is believed (indeed assumed) to be true, good, useful, and valid. There is a sense of definitiveness to (traditional) research, often stated in an authoritative way as in the phrase “research says.”

Complexity theorists proceed from recognition and acceptance of the indefinite and probabilistic; they realize that nature is complex, not simple (albeit encompassing and using simples). Whatever conformity nature displays is dynamic; that is, our planet, universe, cosmos, and selves all maintain an order even as they undergo constant change. Emergence, self-organization, self-similarity, patterns, and relationships all become important concepts in this new orderly disorder. Observing the universe, we now realize that the night skies are filled not only with twinkling stars but also with “dark energy,” pulsars, exploding galaxies, and “black holes” that devour all they ensnare. Amid all of this disorder, creativity abounds; order still exists, but now our concept is not of a simple stable order but rather is one of a complex order—complex enough to merit the term *disorder*.

The mathematics used to show patterns of bringing forth the order in this disorder is that of nonlinear equations. Known but neglected during much of the 20th century, these equations gained significance during the latter part of that century with the advent of powerful supercomputers, able to iterate first hundreds and then thousands of times per minute. These equations are nonlinear in that they do not develop straight lines on a graph or even smoothly curved ones. Rather, how they proceed is unpredictable, known only after the fact (i.e., a posteriori). In a nonlinear x/y functional

relationship, the x s are not prechosen (except for the beginning or “seed” x) but rather evolve from the y (as a function of x) being inserted back into the equation as a new x . Such recursive development can be deterministic as one looks back interpretively, but to predict with any accuracy from Situation 1 to Situation 4 is at best probabilistic—due to intervening Situations 2 and 3—with the attempt of probabilistic predictions for Situation 8 or 9 being near to impossible. This recursive patterning, often labeled “deterministic but not predictable,” accounts for weather predictions being given only in short-term probabilistic frames. In a metaphoric sense, to see Situation 2 emerging from Situation 1 and leading on, and indeed influencing (but not determining) Situation 3, brings forth the need for inquiry-oriented research to be interpretive, open-ended, probabilistic, historically situated, and culturally contextual.

At the turn of the 20th century, Henri Poincaré, mapping the results of measuring the gravitational effects of three moving bodies interacting with one another, saw a “monster” (the nonlinear) appearing and cried out “*prédiction devient impossible*.” Only with supercomputers are humans able to tame and train this monster. Now there are strong advocates for high school classes to teach courses in nonlinear mathematics using the power of computers and graphing the results.

Research methodologies in the human and social sciences informed by chaos and complexity theories are not yet framed. It seems, however, that this type of inquiry, oriented to understanding change over time and involving complex situations, might use a combination of (nonlinear mathematical) pattern analysis and anthropological inquiry (a layering of interpretations). These procedures foreground relationships, with reality being nothing set “out there” for discovery but rather emerging from dynamic relationships viewed over time.

Research of all sorts has always required interpretation—the questioning of the procedures used and the conclusions drawn by the researcher—but such interpretation has been against a (presumed) stable background. When interpretation is understood as a dynamic process, both reiterative and reflexive, influencing the process and direction of inquiry, it still has a historical background of past experiences and patterns to play against, but it also has the possibility of bringing forth the not-yet-seen or yet-to-be imagined. Here in the realms of the not-yet-explored, human intention and creativity come into play as inquiry becomes richer and thicker through the layering of interpretations.

Chaos Theory

Those who study chaos theory accept that the world and universe in which we live are filled with turbulence, fractalness, and difference. Such dynamism is the very nature of our world/universe. Equilibrium, balance, simple harmony and conformity, norming, classification, and even equality and justice are human constructs, abstractions placed by us for what William James called “the blooming, buzzing confusion” in which we find ourselves. Such “conceptual maps” are too often taken as physical realities that make prediction and control overly simple and overly orderly. A dominant assumption in this rationalist way of thinking—patriarchal, modernist, analytic-referential—is that, when all or enough facts are collected, accurate predictions can be made. In his 1812 treatise *Analytic Theory of Probability*, Pierre-Simon, marquis de Laplace posited a superior intelligence—often called Laplace’s “demon”—that, through its enormous intellectual powers, would “embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies and those of the lightest atoms; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present before its eyes.”

A century later, Poincaré became aware that Laplace’s vision was impossible. As Poincaré said in 1952, even if nature’s laws held no secret for us, we would still not be able to predict perfectly or even well, for in the interactions of phenomena (be they atoms or events), “small differences in the initial conditions produce very great ones in the final phenomena”; hence, Poincaré was aware that Newton’s calculus works on only two interacting phenomena, with the intrusion of a third yielding the mathematical monstrosity of nonlinearity. This monster (nonlinear equations) lay dormant for most of the next 75 years. As is famously known by now, Edward Lorenz, working on weather predictions during the 1960s, substituted data carried to three decimal places for data he already had carried to six decimal places. His assumption, still current at that time, was that small differences would have only small effects; cause and effect would be orderly and proportionate, not disorderly. To his surprise, over time the new prediction data on his printout began to deviate more and more from his past prediction data until the relation between the three-figure and six-figure sets of data—different initially by .001—were eventually incompatible. During the 1970s, with the advent of supercomputers and their tremendous powers of iteration (which pattern analysis of nonlinear equations requires), chaos theory was

born along with its famous metaphor, “A butterfly flapping its wings in Rio can cause a typhoon in Tokyo.” The point here is that accumulated development need not be linear; thus, it is difficult, indeed often impossible, to predict effects from causes. Weather predictions today are given in short-term probabilities. Stock market moves appear to be random. Human development takes many pathways, with too many factors interacting to make developmental predictions (e.g., IQ) useful. Tsunamis, rogue waves, typhoons, tornados, earthquakes, and avalanches appear suddenly and with little (if any) warning. Researchers in these areas, and in human development and actions, need to be aware not only that the map is not the territory but also that the territory is continually shifting, as are the researchers. Future researchers may well need to operate from a nonlinear mathematical frame, including the study of logistic frames.

Logistic frames deal with systems that are inversely interactive such as those of predator/prey, birth/death, and message/noise. For example, as predators increase, prey decrease, but at a certain point—with surviving prey becoming more skillful and faster than predators—an inverse relationship occurs; prey increase because they are caught less, and predators decrease because they are unable to catch the prey due to the development of lazy habits. Equations to describe this relationship are usually written in the form $F(x) = rx(1-x)$, where r is a constant (e.g., food, space, information) and $1-x$ is an inversion of the original x , limiting (but by no means centering) the interactive relationship. The notion of a system being bounded but not centered—one that is dynamically changing—offers challenges and opportunities to any researcher.

An interesting aspect of the logistic equation (above) is that as r increases from 1 to 2, doubling occurs (the output in the equation vacillates between two numbers—a boom/bust, 7 good years/7 bad years bifurcation). Another doubling occurs as r moves to 3, whereas at 3.57 (where doublings are fast and furious) chaos sets in. From this third doubling arises the word *chaos* in a mathematical sense: Period 3 implies chaos. What is even more intriguing here is that in this chaotic realm (≥ 3.57 for r), spaces of regular simple order appear. In a complexivist frame, then, order and chaos are not dichotomous (as modernist and Newton frames posit) but rather entwined. A good/bad, black/white, either/or, right/wrong frame gives way—not to a compromise frame between two

dichotomous poles but rather to a “third space” frame where entirely new possibilities can emerge. The challenge for researchers, then, is to let go of an orientation that looks for and finds cause/effect, either/or simple relationships and to develop research designs that explore the depth, richness, and thickness of the complex relationships that exist in any given situation.

Complexity Theory

It is possible to say that chaoticians study the turbulent aspects of nature with an emphasis on both accelerated development—the dramatic effects of small differences over time—and the intertwining of order/disorder in this development. Regarding complexity theory, it is possible to say that complexivists study nature’s ability to remain “stable” by accommodating and using small differences. Such dynamic stability requires the system to use just the right amount of perturbation for its continued functioning. All living systems are dynamically stable. The human brain is one example; it functions as it is perturbed in “just the right amount.” It is impossible to predict the right amount of perturbation, somewhere between too much and too little disequilibrium. The human body is not so much a smoothly running machine as it is a complex adaptive system.

In complex adaptive systems, concepts such as networks, self-organization (or self-regulation), feedback loops, self-similarity (or nestings), and disequilibrium all are important and have implications for human learning. Learning is a natural activity of the human species, and attention to the concepts inherent in chaos and complexity theories produce an epistemology quite different from the current one based on a Newtonian sense of stability and conformity. An idea from these theories, important to social science researchers, is that of dynamic networks and their feedback loops.

A dynamic network, “alive” due to its constantly adapting to change and new input, may or may not have major nodes. There is not, however, a central dominating node. Rather, there are interconnected pathways, as in a power or communications grid and in the human nervous or immune systems. In such systems, multiple pathways exist. Information flows in, around, and through these pathways. As information flows from one local node or situation to another local node or situation, it is changed as it intersects with other pathways (or experiences). The concept of

there being one and only one major pathway, or royal road, to interpretation, learning, and teaching is quite nonsensical to a complexity theorist. Each local situation has its own uniqueness, and as one local situation connects to another local situation—as happens in a network, even one dominated by major arteries—interpretation/understanding becomes contextualized. Metaphorically, if one wishes to say the phrase “research says,” it is necessary to realize that research speaks with a dual emphasis; each situation is unique, not generalizable, but each situation also is connected to and interacts with other situations. A collection (or nexus) of situations can form a pattern or system made up of interconnected locals. Although each local requires its own contextualized interpretation, relationships among situations, in forming patterns or systems, can show enough similarity to produce a meta-pattern. It is this issue of connecting local situation to local situation, in a meta-pattern frame, that so bothered and consumed anthropological researcher Gregory Bateson. During his 20th-century lifetime, his search was for “the pattern that connects.”

The novel idea of feedback, introduced to systems thinking at the Macy Conferences during the 1950s, provided Bateson not only with insight into the pattern that connects but also with a new way of thinking about research. Drawing a network (visually), with its set of interconnected nodes, one quickly sees that it is nonlinear, with connections going in all sorts of directions. Because of this nonlinearity, information (or a message) flows around various pathways, often cycling back to its origin. Such returning, recursing, and feeding back bring new information gathered along the way, and thus the original is “seen yet again for the first time.” Thus, interpretation of a situation is enriched by being layered with more interpretations.

Interpretive Inquiry

Chaos and complexity theories, the new sciences, are still in their early stages of development and, hence, do not yet have a well-formed research methodology. Being framed by the concept of orderly disorder, however, they potentially offer to researchers a different method of doing research—interpretive inquiry. Inquiry, in its act, requires dialogue (or conversation), and dialogue requires interpretation. Interpretation is a reciprocal act, between text and reader, between situation and researcher. Each influences/directs the other. In this mutually interactive relationship, new

ideas, understandings, and insights emerge. Feedback (or recursive loops) becomes a powerful vehicle. Using such a vehicle, it is possible to conceive of a researcher exploring a situation and then asking others to explore not only the same situation but also the researcher’s own explorations. Recursively, the researcher can then explore the interpretations of those critiquing her or his interpretations. As such a recursive method goes on, spaces open between the interpretations. These spaces, in between boundaries, are often called liminal spaces or third spaces. It is in these spaces that depth of meaning and the creation of new meaning reside. Such a (layering) method, yet to be fully developed, may well be what chaos and complexity theories have to offer researchers.

Research Implications

Research of the 20th century was heavily influenced by analytic quantitative methods. These methods assume a stable base, work from closed system assumptions, and are reductionist and linear in nature. Over a number of recent decades, qualitative methods have come to the fore in a number of disciplines or professions. To the degree that qualitative methods favor triangulation, they mimic quantitative methods and their closed systems frame. To the degree that qualitative methods are narrative, personal, and cultural, they work from an open systems frame and yield the possibility of the newness emerging. The key distinction here is the difference between proving (the essential nature of research) and probing (the essential nature of inquiry). The former is closed in the sense that it is designed to come to a definite conclusion. The latter is open in the sense that it is designed to explore possibilities inherent in a situation. Each has its own methodologies or sets of operation. Research with a quantitative bent follows definite, preset, clearly stated procedures. The frame is one of either/or, as in one procedure/pill being better (more effective) than another, or the frame is one of finding a definite statement or fact, as in historical or legal research. In either case, there is a sense of certainty—of proving—hence the anthropomorphic phrase “research says.” In a proving, certainty-desired model, the logic used is that of domination.

Research with a qualitative—nontriangulated—bent, often labeled as subjective for its emphasis on the personal and narrative, is more open-ended. Here experience, not validity, dominates. Human experience brings in intentionality, conscious reflection, hope, and

angst—all of which one would label under the term *human condition*. It is narrative that highlights this condition, it is narrative that probes this condition, and it is narrative with its interpretive methodology that brings to a situation its “truth.” Such truth is not provable but is felt. The situation is not objectified but is what Jerome Bruner called “subjunctified”—“trafficking in human possibilities.” Research in this mode is far more akin to interpretive inquiry than to usual (and traditional) concepts of research.

Wm. E. Doll, Jr.

See also Interpretive Inquiry; Liminal Perspective

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Websites

New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI):
<http://www.necsi.org>
 Santa Fe Institute: <http://www.santafe.edu>

CHECKLISTS

Checklists are used to encourage or verify that a number of specific lines of inquiry, steps, or actions are being taken, or have been taken, by a researcher. These surface in a variety of forms throughout data collection and analysis and thereafter as part of either writing or review. For example, checklists might be used by researchers during data collection as a precautionary backup so that they consistently and purposefully take note of a particular phenomenon. These types of checklists might be open-ended (e.g., reminders to take general note of a specific type of behavior) or exhaustive and more structured (e.g., indicating whether a behavior falls into one or more predetermined categories). In the former case, they can make data collection more time-consuming because any number of scenarios might occur and require recording. In the latter case, they can be less demanding on the researcher, either because nothing that falls into the predetermined categories is observed or because only the most basic of note needs to be taken for each (e.g., indicating frequencies or the occurrence). These types of reminder checklists imply specific types of observations that will ultimately affect a study's directions, findings, and conclusions; therefore, if they are used during data collection, it is helpful when researchers articulate why and how and include the details of any categorization system used.

At another level, checklists can be used to either articulate or assess methodological and analytic steps and, hence, indicate the rigor and credibility of a published study. In this sense, they might be developed by researchers and included in their publications or developed by readers/reviewers and applied in their judgment of multiple research reports and articles. Used in both of these ways, checklists have helped those

unfamiliar with qualitative methods (particularly quantitative and clinical researchers) to evaluate them. Recently however, a number of academics have criticized these types of checklists as being oversimplistic, overgeneralized, and formulaic, with their view being that listing technical “fixes” is inadequate for conferring the rigor of each complex and unique qualitative study. Moreover, it has also been suggested that checklists encourage qualitative researchers to use and list well-recognized and standard approaches—such as purposive sampling, grounded theory, and triangulation—as “bumper stickers” to legitimize their approaches regardless of whether they are the best ones to use.

Gavin J. Andrews

See also Audit Trail; Reliability; Rigor in Qualitative Research

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CLINICAL RESEARCH

Clinical research can be defined as research that is related to experiences and descriptions of individual and interpersonal problems, transition, and change. This includes social science and medical science studies of human behavior and interactions, cognition, and somatic experiences from a variety of perspectives. Transition and change can occur as part of one's life course experiences or as a result of clinical intervention. The purpose of this entry is to provide an overview of choice points for clinical researchers to consider. The entry is not meant to explain how to do qualitative clinical research; rather, it is meant to raise topics and possible issues for researchers to consider as they conceptualize, design, implement, and write up studies. The entry does not differentiate between clients and patients; rather, the word *clients* is used to refer to both patients and clients.

It is important for researchers to position themselves as well as their theoretical and methodological framework, and in doing clinical research this transparency of integrating theory with practice becomes even more relevant. This is due to the multiple

relationships that can occur between researchers and the people participating in their studies as well as the potential for the research itself having an effect on the participants. To help researchers conducting clinical research, this entry contains the following sections: (a) description of the links among epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods; (b) types of research questions; (c) underlying agendas driving questions; (d) consideration of whose perspectives one is considering; (e) researcher/researched relationships; (f) points in time being investigated; (g) presentation of findings; (h) ethical issues in clinical research; and (i) political context of clinical research. As this entry explains, clinical researchers are challenged with a multitude of decision points to consider during the research process. It is important for researchers to consider some of these points at the genesis of conception of a project. Other points of consideration come into play as the projects are designed, implemented, and written up (or performed). In addition, it is recommended that researchers continuously reflect on ethical and political ramifications of their work.

Linking Epistemology, Theory, Methodology, and Methods

This section is based on Michael Crotty's *The Foundations of Social Science Research*. Crotty made a strong argument for the importance of logical consistency among one's epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods. Although there is a wide range of methodologies that researchers may draw on to organize their research efforts, how a particular methodology is employed and made sense of will vary according to one's epistemology. This topic is discussed in the section on theoretical frameworks, and the point here is to advocate that researchers articulate their epistemological orientation and theories they are employing as well as how this framework will influence their methodology, methods, conclusions, and results.

As an example of this point, consider a researcher using videotape playback of sessions with open-ended interviews with clients to find out what they saw as meaningful in marital therapy. From the perspective of a postpositivist (objectivist) epistemology and symbolic interactional theory, the researcher might claim to be discovering the key points that the couple found meaningful in therapy. From the perspective of a postmodern and social constructionist theory, the researcher might suggest that the interviews themselves were shaping the couple's memories and might have had a therapeutic

impact as well. Although both approaches have research legitimacy, the two studies might come to very different conclusions and implications.

Other aspects of these chains of logical consistency are whether and how researchers bring a critical perspective into their studies. If researchers view human behavior as more than an intrapsychic phenomenon, such that human behavior and personal meaning are shaped by cultural sociopolitical contexts, then researchers will consider more than clients' experiences and descriptions. The research will likely also consider how clients themselves are shaped by cultural discourses as well as how clinical practices are shaped by cultural practices. From this critical perspective, researchers can even consider how their own research practices (and implicit biases) are shaped by cultural values and dominant themes.

Types of Research Questions

Clinical research questions are often viewed as being about either process or outcome; however, it is also useful to conceptualize clinical research as being for the purposes of predicting, understanding, emancipating, or deconstructing. Although these four perspectives are often couched as each corresponding to different epistemological and theoretical frameworks, to some degree a researcher can conceptualize any of these goals in different epistemological grounding. Clinical research seeking to find patterns for prediction is useful for the current evidence-based practice model. Research seeking to understand is helpful for studying the clinical process. Research seeking to emancipate is part of the action research movement and is sensitive to issues of power and social hierarchies while also addressing social justice. Research seeking to deconstruct is examining how clinical practices (and research practices) are not independent of one's societal environment and how practices of power, identity, and meaning are culturally imposed. Depending on the type of question(s) being asked and the purpose of the question(s), the researcher can decide which methodologies and methods may be best suited for the project.

Underlying Agendas That Drive Research Questions

In posing research questions, it is relevant to also consider who or what is organizing the research project

itself: For example, a clinical agency might be seeking a program evaluation. Clinicians might be interested in how their practices are experienced by their clients and in the effectiveness of their clinical work. Funding sources for a program may be behind the research project such that they are requesting data for determining future funding. Government funding sources might be shaping the research questions being posed. Also, the researcher himself or herself might be the one initiating the research project based on his or her own personal experiences or professional constraints or out of personal curiosity. Who or what frames the purpose of the entire research project can influence both the types of research questions being asked and how results are distributed.

From Whose Perspective Do the Data Emerge?

Research data can emerge from many different perspectives. If one conceptualizes clients from a systemic or ecological perspective, the starting place can be (a) the individual (client), and the context can be expanded to include (b) multiple clients (couple, family, or social network), (c) the clinician, (d) the researcher(s), (e) the community, and (f) cultural discourses. Research can focus on any one of these perspectives or consider multiple perspectives.

In terms of framing the individual perspective, such as with a biopsychosocial–spiritual framework, data could include emotional descriptions, behavioral change, current cognitive processes, retrospective descriptions, biological processes (either self-reported or observed by others), and spiritual and religious accounts. Each of these aspects of an individual's experience might involve different methods of data collection.

Multiple clients' perspectives could include a couple, a family, or a broader social network. In considering a multiple-clients perspective, it is important to consider how data are gathered. For example, if a couple is interviewed, are the members interviewed separately, together, or a combination of alone and together? If it is a combination, how are the different accounts woven together? The broader social network might include the client's friends, neighbors, extended family, or fictive kin. The clinician's perspective can include a single clinician or a clinical team working together. With a clinical team, it is important to consider whether the team data are gathered individually,

in a group, or using a combination. The researcher himself or herself can also be a source of data. This is true in autoethnography and heuristic inquiry, but the researcher can include personal reflections and experiences in other methodologies as well. The community perspective could include sources such as officers of the court, social service workers, and school personnel. Finally, one can also consider the cultural perspective on clinical practices, for example, how society's dominant discourses might influence the definitions of health, dysfunction, pathology, diagnoses, practitioner/healer, and responsible treatment.

Relationships Between the Researcher and the Researched

There are various types of relationships that can occur between the researcher and those being researched. In classical experimental research, the people being studied were referred to as subjects. This created a clear separation between the researcher and the "other" in terms of power, personal relationship, voice, and knowledge.

In clinical qualitative research, there are multiple signifiers a researcher can use to define the researcher and "other" relationship. Are the people being researched considered participants, collaborators, co-researchers, or some other concept? The choice of terms has real implications for the research endeavor, with both epistemological and phenomenological impacts. In designing a study, the researcher should have a clear rationale for what descriptors are used in the study and an appreciation for how the language reflects the researcher's relationship with the people being studied. When the people being researched are considered co-researchers, this implies that they have a voice in the research process itself. This voice can include shaping the design before the study is conducted, shaping the analysis, and even having a say in whether or how reports are to be written. When the researcher considers the relationship as collaborative, it is important to consider how power is shared, how decisions are made, and how consensus and nonconsensus are negotiated.

Points in Time Being Investigated

Another consideration for the clinical researcher is what points in time are being studied. Is the researcher interested in the experiences and phenomenon prior to

intervention or prior to the occurrence of the problem(s)? Is the researcher interested in the experiences and phenomenon that occur during the course of treatment? Does the researcher need to have inquiries about the experiences and phenomenon after clinical treatment? Research can look at any of these points in time or at multiple time points. Often when conducting clinical research, one considers multiple time periods. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be clear as to which anchor points are being studied. For example, if one researcher is looking at the actual talk of therapy through conversation analysis and another researcher is interviewing clients posttreatment through videotape playback, these are two discrete time periods with unique data and interpretation. To consider these two data sets as comparable is problematic. The study of the "talk of therapy" (phenomenon that occurs in treatment moment to moment throughout the process) may be very different from the study of the "talk about the talk of therapy" (discussion by client, researcher, or other about what has happened in therapy or as a result of treatment).

Presenting Findings

There are a number of ways in which findings and reports of a research project can be presented. These include written texts, papers/articles, posters and talks at conferences, web postings, and performances. The type of audience the researcher wants to present to (scholarly, professional, lay, or all three) can also influence how the data are analyzed and written.

Ethics and Clinical Research

Although attention to ethics is important for all researchers, clinical researchers need to be particularly attentive and prepared for issues that may arise. This attention begins with the conceptualization of the project: What risks might participants face from being a part of the project? What information might researchers learn that becomes a legal or moral issue for them (e.g., child abuse, illegal activity, elder abuse, affairs)? Sometimes information gathered is not even relevant to the study but respondents disclose anyway, and then researchers must do something with this knowledge. When is it appropriate to refer a respondent for clinical help? How do researchers know when the boundaries between themselves and respondents have gotten blurred and when the relationship is not

professional? How do researchers take care of themselves as they learn about painful and emotional events that may trigger their own emotions? How do researchers manage multiple roles such as when they are both clinicians and researchers? Which professional lens do they use in conducting interviews and analyzing data? For example, clinical interviews are different from research interviews, and how researchers/clinicians respond can achieve different outcomes.

Addressing these issues is relevant in preparing for human subject approval, but also the researcher needs to be prepared for the unexpected. It is useful to have colleagues to talk with about issues as they arise. Finally, in preparing a report of findings, the researcher needs to consider possible long-range impacts of the study. How might respondents feel when they read the document later? How does the researcher honor the participants' voices but maintain confidentiality? How does the researcher deal with ending research relationships, particularly when the research process has been very collaborative and intimate in the sharing of information? Addressing these questions prior to data gathering may prevent potential ethical dilemmas later for the researcher and participants.

Politics of Research

The last section considers the broader context of the research. Different professional and interpersonal dynamics are at play for research conducted in a university setting, in a hospital setting, at an agency, or for one's private practice. It is important to consider the potential differences among these settings. These might include elements such as who gets (or "owns") the information learned, timelines, relationship dynamics, authorship, data storage, confidentiality, and funding.

In terms of clinical research, it is also important to consider the relationship between one's research and the current culture of privileging evidence-based research. Not all contexts are supportive of qualitative research, especially during the era of evidenced-based health care. Evidence-based medicine is the notion that clinical expertise should be integrated with best research evidence and patient values. Although for many scholars randomized clinical trials and meta-analyses are considered the best external evidence

when researching clinical interventions, there are many questions about "best evidence" that can be answered qualitatively.

Regardless of whether one is doing evidence-based research using a mixed-methods study or a stand-alone qualitative study, the following are questions to consider: How can qualitative research contribute to evidence-based studies? How might qualitative research challenge the findings of evidence-based studies? How might researchers deal with other scholars who may minimize qualitative clinical research and the research findings? These biases could include those of dissertation committee members, fellow faculty or professional colleagues, funding agencies, and other influential people and institutions. What are the implications of funding sources for clinical research? Might a funding source control which results are to be published?

It is important for researchers to be aware of the politics and professional ramifications of conducting qualitative research within their institutions (e.g., medicine, education, government, industry). Finally, it is important for researchers to consider how their findings might be used (or misused) by others, such as for policy change.

Jerry E. Gale and J. Maria Bermudez

See also Collaborative Research; Critical Discourse Analysis; Critical Research; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Epistemology; Evidence-Based Practice; Multicultural Research; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Researcher–Participant Relationships; Transparency

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CLOSED QUESTION

A closed question is a type of question posed by researchers to participants in research projects that specifies the parameters within which participants can frame their answers. Closed questions typically provide possible responses in the questions, request specific facts or information from interviewees or survey respondents, or may even limit responses to “yes” or “no.” Closed questions are associated with structured interview formats and spoken and written questionnaires, and they assume that people’s experiences may be reduced to facts that can be coded with preestablished researcher-generated categories. In contrast to open-ended questions, which are designed to give participants freedom to initiate topics within research settings, closed questions are worded to eliminate possibilities for participants to introduce their own topics or provide answers that do not fit the researcher’s coding schemes. Such questions are frequently used in a way that formulates the human subject as passive, responding to a neutral researcher working to elicit specific facts concerning research topics.

Closed questions are commonly used in structured interviews and focus groups, and they are especially suited to research projects in which the same information must be obtained from a large number of participants. Given that closed questions are widely used as a means of eliciting data in standardized survey interviews and rely on quantitative methods of data analysis,

close attention has been paid to methodological aspects of question formulation and how questions are sequenced and administered by interviewers.

David Stewart and colleagues identified two forms of closed questions: explicit and implicit. In explicit closed questions, interviewees are provided with possible responses from which they must select an answer. The following are examples:

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal that *x* should be implemented?

How frequently have you attended meetings about *x*: never, 1 or 2 times, 3 or 4 times, 5 times or more?

How would you rate the process of information sharing undertaken with respect to the implementation of *x* on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is *very poor* and 5 is *excellent*?

Implicit closed questions include an assumption about the possible range of responses in the questions without providing a specific response. For example, in response to the following questions, interviewees can provide multiple answers that are not included in the questions:

How many weeks do you intend to travel overseas this year?

With what airline will you fly?

Some qualitative researchers have critiqued the use of closed questions as a method of generating information about people’s lived experiences, arguing that such questions limit the ability of research participants to provide rich descriptions and relevant information concerning their lives. Other methodologists argue that a judicious mix of both closed and open-ended questions can be used to generate useful data for social research. How qualitative researchers use closed questions in their work largely depends on the epistemological and theoretical assumptions underlying the research design of a given study.

Kathryn J. Roulston

See also Focus Groups; Interview Guide; Open-Ended Question; Structured Interview; Telephone Interview

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CO-CONSTRUCTED NARRATIVE

Co-constructed narratives are stories jointly constructed by relational partners about epiphanies in their lives. This approach offers a way for participants to actively construct a version of a relational event that provides insight, understanding, and an in-depth and complex reflection on what occurred. As such, this mode of doing research provides an alternative to traditional interviewing, especially when the topic under consideration is emotionally charged, personal, and sensitive. This entry discusses the goals, concerns, and practices associated with this research approach and the narratives that result.

Co-constructed narratives show dyads engaged in the specific, concrete, and unique details of daily living. They show couples coping and trying to make sense of the untidy ambiguities, ambivalences, and contradictions of relationship life and their local situations. This type of research focuses on the interactional sequences by which interpretations of lived experiences are constructed, coordinated, and solidified into stories. Thus, the local narratives that are jointly produced display couples in the process of “doing” their relationships as they try to turn fragmented, vague, or disjointed events into intelligible coherent accounts.

Co-constructed narratives may be “mediated,” meaning that a researcher may monitor the conversation of two relational partners, or “unmediated,” meaning that a researcher may study his or her own relationship with a partner or two researchers might study their relationship with each other. Mediated co-constructed narrative research is similar to conjoint marital therapy, where couples participate together in therapy after providing their different perspectives on the same events. In mediated co-constructed narratives, a researcher serves as coordinator and moderator as a couple engages in a joint construction of an epiphany in the two members’ relationship. The researcher asks them to reflect on the event and to write, talk into a tape recorder, or be interviewed separately about the experiences. Then, in the presence of the investigator, the participants hold a discussion about the event. Sometimes the participants are asked

to exchange transcripts or stories written independently and to read each other’s constructions before the discussion, although this might not always be feasible. Nevertheless, the goal is to produce or co-construct a version of the event that takes into account each individual’s perspective.

The investigator stays in the role of researcher as she or he takes notes on (and/or records) the interaction. The researcher then writes the participants’ story from the materials they provide as well as from her or his own observations of and participation in their co-construction. While writing their story, the researcher reflects on how she or he views the participants and analyzes their conversational style and their negotiation of the co-construction of their separate stories. The researcher might describe events leading up to the interview, the physical and emotional environment of the interview, and the researcher’s role in the interview (e.g., what she or he asked the participants, how she or he responded to them, and how she or he possibly influenced the conversation). The account of the interview process becomes part of the story told. The researcher also might include her or his views on and experiences with the topic at hand and a discussion of how her or his perceptions and feelings have developed and changed as a result of observation of and interaction with the participants. Including the researcher’s experience helps readers to understand more about the researcher’s interest in the topic and provides background for how she or he interprets what is happening. Although the researcher becomes a character in the story, her or his identity remains that of researcher. The focus stays on the experience of the other research participants rather than on the interviewer.

In unmediated co-constructed narratives, the focus turns directly to the self as researchers examine their own relationships rather than the relationships of others. In such narratives, researchers use the same procedures as just described except that there is no outside researcher mediating the interview process. The two researchers, or a researcher and a partner, write their stories separately, exchange them with each other, read them, and then discuss them. Then they attempt to co-construct a collective version. They might present the result in the form of a script, a short story, or an essay, or they might analyze or even perform their narrative for an audience. Other participants in the event might be asked to add their voices as well. The end result is a collective interpretation, although individual voices might be kept intact.

Co-constructed narratives offer a way to study relationships that closely reflects how we live them in everyday life. The procedures connected with this approach are based on several premises about how relationships are practiced. For example, it is assumed that relationships between people are jointly authored, incomplete, and historically situated. Connections hinge on contingencies of conversation and negotiation that often produce unexpected outcomes. One of the actions we take in relationships is to assign significance and meaning to rather vague experiences and events in an attempt to bring order to the unit. We do this by telling stories about our relationships, stories that are co-constructed continuously and, in that sense, are always unfinished. Each person's views and actions affect the other's, and the joint activity and mutual identification that result (or fail to develop) become part of the relationship.

Carolyn S. Ellis

See also Autoethnography; Collaborative Research; Conversational Interviewing; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Empathy; Interactive Focus Groups; Interactive Interview; Interviewing; Life Stories; Lived Experience; Narrative Interview; Participants as Co-Researchers; Reflexivity; Storytelling; Subjectivity; Vulnerability; Writing Process

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prior to data collection or may emerge inductively through the coding process. In qualitative research, discussions of coding most often center on the inductive process of searching for concepts, ideas, themes, and categories that help the researcher to organize and interpret data. This entry provides an overview of the coding process, describes strategies for deriving codes, and reviews both the initial stage of open coding and the stage in which more focused coding is carried out.

Coding as Process

The derivation of codes and the coding process tend to differ in quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, codes are commonly created prior to data collection. Concepts and hypotheses are most often developed in advance, and categories and their codes are derived deductively from theory or borrowed from the extant literature. These predetermined categories are used to structure the data that are collected. Many questionnaires, for example, are in fact precoded (the categories and their dimensions are explicitly listed and the respondent is asked to choose among the options provided). For instance, one might be interested in how anger is expressed and ask a respondent to choose among options, such as cursing and throwing things, that provide varying realizations of the concept. The categories, in addition to their definitions and properties, are often clearly laid out in a codebook specific to the study.

In qualitative research coding is the process of generating ideas and concepts from raw data such as interview transcripts, fieldnotes, archival materials, reports, newspaper articles, and art. The coding process refers to the steps the researcher takes to identify, arrange, and systematize the ideas, concepts, and categories uncovered in the data. Coding consists of identifying potentially interesting events, features, phrases, behaviors, or stages of a process and distinguishing them with labels. These are then further differentiated or integrated so that they may be reworked into a smaller number of categories, relationships, and patterns so as to tell a story or communicate conclusions drawn from the data. A coding frame, a scheme that lays out key concepts, their definitions, and criteria for recognition, is evolved over time during the coding and analysis of the data. It is subject to change and refinement as the researcher proceeds with successive passes through the data.

Many researchers keep notes on insights, ideas, patterns, and connections that occur to them as they

CODES AND CODING

Codes and coding are integral to the process of data analysis. Codes refer to concepts and their identification through explicit criteria. Codes may be developed

read and reread the data. This activity, known as mem-
 oing, occurs throughout the coding process. For many,
 coding starts with attention to very fine details and
 evolves into emergent categories that are applicable at
 much higher degrees of abstraction. Code notes help
 the researcher to keep track of the emergent defini-
 tions of codes and their distinctive criteria. Computer-
 assisted data analysis software is increasingly being
 used to manage qualitative data sets, keeping track of
 notes and comments and where specific codes have
 been assigned to specific data elements, thereby facil-
 itating the sorting and retrieval of data.

Whether one is primarily aiming to provide descrip-
 tive accounts, searching for patterns, or intending to
 develop theory, the goals of code creation are to identify
 categories and themes by making their criteria explicit
 and providing evidence for them—and the conclusions
 based on them—that is drawn from the data. The strate-
 gies and techniques offered for this process vary, but
 there are many commonalities and themes concerning
 procedures for coding that may be abstracted from the
 growing literature on qualitative research methods.

Coding Strategies

A number of methodologists distinguish between two
 main strategies by which codes and categories are
 derived. *In vivo* codes are those obtained directly from
 the data, for example, terms used by interviewees.
 Many respondents will put forward folk typologies;
 for example, prison inmates explicitly speak of types
 of “cons” (convicts). The “snitch” (a con who reports
 the actions of other cons to the authorities) is a vivid
 example of a conceptual category taken from the
 interviewees. Alternatively, social science constructs
 may be created or imposed by the researcher, who
 either derives them from the existing literature or may
 be influenced by the literature in their creation.
 Keeping with the example of an inmate study, the
 social science constructs of stigma or institutionalized
 mentality may be concepts employed by the researcher
 to illuminate aspects of the data and evoke broader
 theoretical issues of interest.

The grounded theory approach to qualitative data,
 associated with Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, is
 the most prominent source of an explicit set of tech-
 niques and procedures for coding and processing data.
 In the grounded theory approach, where the develop-
 ment of theory as emergent from the data is more
 heavily emphasized, the dynamism of coding is

stressed. Grounded theory proponents have broken the
 coding process into stages in an attempt to illuminate
 the logic that underlies analysis, although they caution
 that no sharp boundaries exist in actual practice. The
 labeling of concepts and categories during the early
 stages of coding is referred to as open coding. During
 successive stages of coding, the researcher begins to
 home in on and refine more specific categories and
 their properties, examining in depth one category at a
 time. This is spoken of as axial coding. A still further
 focus on particular links and relationships among a
 few chosen categories (the integration of categories) is
 referred to as selective coding. The grounded theory
 approach tends to emphasize more impersonal, rela-
 tively objective processing and reprocessing of data.
 Although most writers on coding practices acknowl-
 edge their debt to the grounded theory approach,
 many urge relaxing one or another of the recommen-
 dations in hopes of stimulating creativity and insight.

Initial or Open Coding

During this initial stage of bringing order to and mak-
 ing sense of the data, a close line-by-line reading of
 the data is often suggested in a search to identify as
 many ideas and concepts as possible without concern
 for how they relate. A number of researchers suggest
 asking questions of the data to help identify ideas and
 concepts of interest such as the following: What is
 going on? What was done? How is it being done?
 Who did it? What are the goals? What was the mean-
 ing of it? What was the intent? What feelings or
 thoughts are being communicated?

Another place where many begin in coding is to
 look for information as it concerns the original goals
 and interests of the research study. Such advice often
 comes with a warning to keep an open mind for other
 issues that might arise. Controversy exists over what
 stance toward prior knowledge is ideal. Some believe
 that one should begin the coding process without the
 influence of existing ideas and concepts. A more
 prevalent stance, however, is that this is not possible
 given most researchers' knowledge of their discipline
 and of the particular areas they are researching. Those
 who adopt this stance advise using ideas and cate-
 gories to which one has been sensitized while staying
 alert to other possible concepts, ideas, and themes.

Coding is dynamic. By attaching code labels or
 words to identify occurrences, meanings, activities, or
 phenomena, the researcher begins to group instances

or events that are similar and to distinguish those that differ. For example, when reading interviews of criminal offenders, one might attach the concept of thrill seeker to a remark such as, "I got a rush as I drove off with the car." In talking with spouses of incarcerated individuals, the following event might be coded as an instance of neighbor assistance: "Ed next door helped with snow removal when I couldn't get my car out." The same event, incident, activity, or representation in the data may be coded in multiple ways. For instance, the neighbor's assistance with snow removal might also be coded as spousal help needed or problems encountered. As one continues to comb through the data, many new concepts and ideas may be identified, but similar ones will also be recognized. For example, the code of neighbor assistance might be applied later in the data to instances of a neighbor coming to the rescue when a kitchen pipe broke or when a spouse recounted the story of how Sam, who lives across the street, stopped by with jumper cables to help start a car. The code of thrill seeker may be applied to a remark such as, "I got very excited as I broke into the house, thinking about all the things I might get away with. I like that feeling."

As one proceeds through the stage of open coding, refinements begin to occur to the researcher. Certain concepts may be evidenced repeatedly, whereas others may be viewed as less common or perhaps viewed as variations of a concept or theme already recognized. Many researchers suggest that open coding should continue until nothing new and interesting emerges, some codes begin to stand out as significant or telling, and links between codes begin to cohere. These are signs that more focused and integrated coding should be pursued. In the process of this analytic exercise, broader categories and their properties or dimensions are discovered.

Focused, Integrative, and Selective Coding

The move from open coding to a more focused coding is not a clearly defined step. Many caution that although there are general guidelines that indicate a progression in the coding process from identifying new concepts to refining and integrating existing categories, one should not think of the process of coding as linear. If a new idea is discovered later in the process, or as more data are added, original concepts can arise, and the need to broaden one's outlook or open one's mind to new possibilities again may occur.

As one proceeds through the initial coding of the data, there is usually much potential for pursuing a variety of themes and issues. Nonetheless, as coding progresses, particular categories and themes emerge as more salient, as central to integrating a number of key concepts, and/or as being of interest to a particular topic under study. The data are then more thoroughly and systematically reviewed with fewer specific concepts or categories in mind to determine where and how these are illustrated in the data. The coding process alternatively has both inductive and deductive elements. Codes that emerge from the data, when confronted with further data, are often revised to accommodate the evidence. Newly discovered codes or the refinement of existing codes may prompt the researcher to reread the data or assess newly acquired data.

In the pursuit of a more refined and focused analysis, many concepts are reconceptualized and incorporated into broader, more abstract categories, whereas others are refined by seeking out possible variations in their properties or dimensions. It is through repeated reviewing and coding of the data that links between various codes are made and relationships among categories begin to solidify. The researcher may retrieve all of the data segments associated with a given code and compare them, determining their fit and looking for potential further variation or links. Using the earlier example of neighbor assistance, one might notice different types of assistance from neighbors such as emergency help (e.g., aiding with a car breakdown or a leaking pipe), emotional help (e.g., dropping by for coffee and to chat about troubles), and financial assistance (e.g., lending money for groceries).

With further intense coding, focusing on questions such as what forms of assistance are mentioned by the spouses of incarcerated offenders and who provides it, a number of other types of help might be distinguished. A statement concerning how women at a local church alternated in providing child care could be coded as church support. A remark about how the local food bank helps a family to avoid going hungry at the end of the month might be coded as local charity assistance. Eventually, these various forms of assistance may be combined and incorporated into a broader category of types of community assistance that include neighbors, churches, and local charity organizations.

This higher level category of community assistance may, in turn, be theoretically reworked and incorporated into an even broader conceptual category. In

searching for other types of assistance that spouses of incarcerated offenders received, familial support may be another category discovered with various dimensions that include financial and emotional support. These may be integrated and reduced further, subsumed by a more general abstract category, types of support, that includes subcategories of support such as community, family, and government. Links and ideas about the role that various types of support might play in the lives of the spouses of incarcerated individuals and the impact that various types of support might have on their outcomes may then be pursued. It is through the successive stages of coding in qualitative data that such analytic discoveries are possible.

Some argue that the coding and analysis of qualitative data cannot be systematized or taught. It is an interpretive process that necessarily involves creativity and subjectivity. There are a growing number of researchers who believe that, even if this is the case, laying out procedures and calling for clarity and transparency in the reporting of how researchers proceed in the coding of their data go a long way toward helping to deal with the issue of reliability of qualitative research.

Lucia Benaquisto

See also Axial Coding; Coding Frame, Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Inter- and Intracoder Reliability; In Vivo Coding; Memos and Memoing; Open Coding; Selective Coding

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CODING FRAME

A coding frame is the guiding conceptual scheme for a research study. As a record of the codes and criteria used to classify observations, it contains the definitions

of concepts and categories that mediate the translation of raw data (e.g., interviews, reports, editorials, fieldnotes, open-ended questions) into instances, examples, and illustrations that ultimately make up the storyline summarizing the data (explanation of phenomena). A coding frame or scheme, therefore, supplies the names of concepts and the criteria used to identify and sort them and, thus, the rules used to single out the observations associated with them in raw data. It provides the guidelines for how to label and interpret (code) research observations.

This framework for classifying, organizing, and summarizing raw data may be developed a priori from theory (deductively) or adopted from extant research. In qualitative research, however, a coding frame often emerges inductively from the data. Over the course of data analysis, as categories are uncovered and refined, the coding frame evolves, helping to classify further data segments into already established or new conceptual categories. The terms *codebook* and *code manual* are also used to refer to the written document containing the scheme of concepts and categories used to structure and interpret the data. These terms are often associated with quantitative data sets; however, they are used by qualitative researchers as well.

The approach one takes in developing a coding frame depends on a number of factors, including the issue under study, how well the topic is understood, the complexity of the phenomenon, and even the amount of time one has for analysis.

Coding frames may be more or less formal. For instance, coding schemes for surveys and content analysis (the assessment of all forms of communication that have been recorded, e.g., books, newspapers, paintings) are most often highly formal. Those developed for questionnaires are more often deductively derived, whereas those for content analysis are more often inductively developed. In grounded theory, the ultimate set of codes used may or may not be formally laid out, but the steps taken and the concepts used are often spelled out in memos. More explicit and well-documented coding schemes are particularly needed when research is conducted by teams and coding and analysis are shared tasks. Explicit schemes are essential for achieving intercoder reliability and code consistency checks.

Whether a coding frame for a given study is maintained in the format of a book, kept track of by a computer software program, or contained in memos written throughout the process of data analysis, the common feature of such schemes is to record

decisions made in the classification of the raw empirical data into categories for analysis.

There is some disagreement about the value of preset coding schemes versus the development of coding frames from the data. Some argue that preset codes may encourage one to force fit observations into existing categories. Other researchers have expressed concern about possible misclassification of empirical observations in support of newly generated categories that are thought to be key to perceived relationships emerging from the data. However derived, coding frames record the guidelines that governed the analysis of a body of data.

Lucia Benaquisto

See also Codes and Coding; Inter- and Intracoder Reliability; Memos and Memoing

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COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

Cognitive interviewing encompasses a variety of approaches for eliciting qualitative data on how participants interpret and respond to a wide variety of situations. Cognitive interviewing increasingly is used in the evaluation of technology interfaces such as websites and tools for informatics. It is used in education to understand how students think about content and respond to test items and in marketing to understand how to evaluate products better. This entry focuses on an especially salient application of cognitive interviewing for researchers in varied disciplines—the development of structured questionnaire and interview items.

Beginning in the late 1970s, cognitive interviewing developed through the interdisciplinary efforts of cognitive psychologists and survey design methodologists. The intent of these interdisciplinary collaborations was to study the cognitive processes that shape participants' responses to questions and to use cognitive theory to improve survey design. Cognitive interviewing increasingly is viewed as an essential aspect of developing valid and reliable standardized measures. Through cognitive interviews with members of the target population for a new measure, researchers are

able to identify problems with question interpretation as well as understand the kinds of information participants use in formulating their responses. Cognitive interviewing also provides insights into participants' decisions to respond to questionnaire items in a particular way. As a distinct form of qualitative interviewing, cognitive interviewing makes important contributions to instrument development and survey design.

Problems Addressed by Cognitive Interviewing

Cognitive interviews are used to identify a variety of potential problems with items of structured instruments. Gordon Willis and colleagues identified key cognitive processes involved in responding to questionnaires that were potentially problematic: comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response. Problems of *comprehension* are related to respondents' understanding of the item and whether or not that understanding is in keeping with the investigator's intent. Sophisticated or overly technical language and lengthy complex questions can pose a threat to respondents' ability to understand items. In other instances, respondents may understand the item but in an unintended way. For example, the item may ask about respondents' beliefs about health promotion with the intent of eliciting information on what sorts of things are linked to a healthy lifestyle, but respondents may interpret the item as asking how religious beliefs contribute to health. Problems of *retrieval* are related to respondents being able to recall certain information or experiences. For example, respondents may understand the question but have no memories of their experiences or opinions on the issue. Issues of *judgment* relate to respondents' decisions about what information to provide and how to frame their answers. For example, if the question relates to a sensitive topic, participants may respond in a socially desirable way that does not reflect their actual experiences or opinions. *Response* problems have to do with how respondents fit their experiences and opinions into the response format of the questionnaire. As noted by Chris McQuiston and colleagues, members of certain cultural and ethnic groups have considerable difficulty in translating their experiences and opinions into a Likert scale response set. Cognitive interviewing is useful in helping the investigator to uncover the nature and extent of all these measurement problems.

Forms of Cognitive Interviewing

Cognitive interviewing takes multiple forms that address different problematic aspects of standardized measures. Verbal probing and think-aloud techniques are the two main approaches to cognitive interviewing.

Verbal probing usually occurs after respondents have completed the questionnaire, with the researcher asking additional questions about how items were interpreted and the basis for participants' responses. Respondents may be asked to give their interpretations of specific words, their assessments of the accuracy of their responses, or their evaluations of the appropriateness of the questions. Verbal probing can be used to identify problems of comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response. Respondents may be asked to give their interpretations of specific words or phrases, providing input on the extent to which the items are understandable and being interpreted as intended. For example, using the previous example of the use of the word *belief*, verbal probing would reveal the extent to which respondents had different interpretations of the term. Verbal probing is useful for determining how participants weigh issues of social desirability in responding to a question and for assessing the quality and extent of information that participants consider in formulating responses. Respondents can provide feedback on whether or not they think future respondents will answer a question truthfully. Kathleen Knafl and colleagues used cognitive interviewing in developing a new measure of family management of childhood chronic conditions and found that parents strongly objected to the word *burden* in some of the items and stated that future respondents would not respond truthfully to any items using that word. If the investigator has concerns about the response format of the questionnaire, verbal probing also can be used to judge its appropriateness for certain groups. Verbal probing interviews may be based on a standardized guide, with all participants being asked the same questions about items, or they may be individualized based on each participant's responses. For example, special attention might be given to eliciting data on items that respondents failed to answer or that were answered in the extreme categories of the response set.

Closely related to verbal probing is the technique of paraphrasing, which asks respondents to restate each item in their words. Paraphrasing is especially useful in identifying problems of comprehension and the extent to which items evoke similar interpretations

across respondents. Multiple interpretations of an item provide compelling evidence that the item needs to be either revised or deleted from a measure that is under development. Paraphrasing, when used in conjunction with verbal probing, is useful in identifying respondents' overall understanding of the item as well as pinpointing problematic aspects related to ambiguous or offensive wording.

Think-aloud interviewing is the second major cognitive interviewing approach. In the think-aloud interview, the respondent is asked to say what he or she is thinking while answering an item. Think-aloud interviews provide information on retrieval and judgment issues. Through think-aloud interviews, the investigator gains insight into what the respondent remembers about an event or the memories that inform a particular opinion. This kind of information can be useful for determining an appropriate time frame for a question (e.g., number of times the respondent has attempted to lose weight or stop smoking) and for understanding what the respondent identifies as relevant and irrelevant information when formulating a response to a question. Such information contributes to the revision of questions so that the respondent is retrieving the kind of information the investigator is seeking. Think-aloud interviewing typically takes place simultaneously with instrument completion.

Study Design

Although there are few guidelines for sample size and selection when using cognitive interviews for instrument development, investigators typically report interviewing 20 to 30 respondents who represent the target population. As noted in the description of the different forms of cognitive interviewing, respondents may be asked to recall information retrospectively about their formulation of responses, or they may be asked to think-aloud the basis for their responses at the time when they are answering the questionnaire. Researchers using the verbal probing approach to cognitive interviewing vary in the extent to which they use a structured interview guide or rely on general open-ended questions such as, "How did you arrive at your response to the question?" In either case, cognitive interviews generate qualitative data that are meant to inform further instrument development. The analysis of these data focuses on the item as the unit of analysis, with the investigator reviewing all input on a given item to reach decisions about

retaining, deleting, or revising the item. In some cases the analysis is based on a predetermined list of problematic aspects of items (e.g., lexical, temporal, logical), and in some cases problem identification is based on a content analysis of the cognitive data. Regardless of design or analytic approach, investigators consistently report that cognitive interviewing leads to substantial improvements in instrument quality.

Kathleen Knafl

See also Interviewing; Structured Interview; Unstructured Interview

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COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Collaborative research is research “with” rather than research “on.” It is research that arises out of the expressed needs, interests, and questions of the stakeholders who are most invested in the research and its findings, and it is research conducted in relationship with them. Collaborative research reflects a move in the social sciences away from a hierarchical understanding of research as informing practice to an understanding of the reciprocal and interdependent nature of research and practice. This entry focuses on the epistemological, ideological, and ethical beliefs that underlie collaborative research and the ways in which those beliefs are translated in the design, implementation, and dissemination of such research.

Collaborative research enables the voices of researchers and those in the field—practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders—to be positioned alongside one another in a shared inquiry of mutual interest and benefit. Collaborative research can be situated within the specificity of a discipline (e.g., researchers, teachers, administrators, and parents inquiring into ways to enhance parent engagement in schooling), or it can be situated across disciplines where diverse voices and perspectives come together in multidisciplinary or intersectoral teams to pursue a research question in more comprehensive, holistic, or integrated ways (e.g., researchers, practitioners, and policymakers from health, education, justice, and social services, alongside parents and community members, researching reforms to the provision and integration of human services delivery to enhance the well-being and academic success of children and families living in an inner-city neighborhood). Collaborative research can also be situated in a university–community relationship where an issue the community is puzzling over is researched with the support and facility of university academics (e.g., a concern posed to academic researchers in a department of nutrition by a community-based nonprofit food security organization regarding how to work with school lunch providers to enhance the nutritional value of lunches provided in school-administered programs). Although it can involve many types of alliances, common goals and mutuality are integral to collaborative research—a sense that each partner has much to learn from the other and that the results of the

research will be richer through collaboration than any one partner could achieve without the other.

Beliefs From Which Collaborative Research Arises

Collaborative research reflects a belief in experience as education and in all individuals as holders and constructors of knowledge. It steps away from a commonly held notion that theory is generated through research and by researchers and then is transmitted to the field where it is taken up by and acted on by policymakers and practitioners. Rather than perpetuating such a top-down model, it promotes a side-by-side positioning in which the differing experiences and resulting knowledge that each individual brings to the research, whether as researcher, policymaker, practitioner, or stakeholder, is seen as valuable and valued. It reflects a belief that regardless of one's role, all of one's actions in that role are simultaneously acts of theorizing and acts of practice. Collaborative research invites rich dialogue between and among individuals and the multiple perspectives they represent.

Collaborative research is a vehicle for democratic participation in processes of inquiry, problem solving, and social change. It reflects a belief that because social science research can affect the well-being of a social group, members of that group have a place in all aspects of the research. It is based on a shared commitment to furthering both the knowledge of the individual and the knowledge of the collective.

Collaborative research is relational research. It reflects a commitment to a special kind of care and attention in the provision of continuous opportunities for engagement, voice, and response for all research partners (or co-researchers, as they are frequently called). It works to level power differences by creating research structures that do not privilege the researcher's voice over any other (e.g., research team conversation circles, where every voice is equal and heard, rather than research team meetings with set agendas or led by the principal investigator; opportunities for every co-researcher to speak back or write back to field text and research text). Collaborative research reflects an interactivity among team members based on living the research in caring and respectful ways. It calls for a wakefulness to each voice at all stages of the research process and a responsiveness to shaping and reshaping research roles as the research unfolds.

Characteristics of Collaborative Research

Collaborative research is based on a relationship of equity among co-researchers working together to achieve mutually determined and mutually beneficial goals. It reflects a shared belief in both the means and the ends of the research. It reflects the engagement of co-researchers in all aspects of the research, from shaping the research question or puzzle and the parameters in which the research is framed, to designing and engaging in the inquiry process, to discussing field texts, to making and communicating meaning through research texts, papers/articles, presentations, performances, and so on.

It is important to note that the mutuality of the research is based on equity, not equality. Although authentic and genuine participation of all co-researchers is critical to collaborative research, this will not look the same for everyone because of the variations in the individual's role, the time the individual can commit, and/or the skills, interest, or confidence the individual has in different aspects of the research. Some aspects of the research may be done together by co-researchers, whereas other aspects are done as divided labor; some aspects may be done synchronously, whereas other aspects are done asynchronously; and some aspects may be done to a greater extent or more frequently by some co-researchers, whereas other aspects are done to a lesser extent or less frequently by others. There may be a symmetry to the actions of co-researchers or perhaps a complementarity to the roles they play. Returning to the earlier example of an inquiry into parent engagement in schooling, co-researcher participation could unfold as follows: All co-researchers would be involved in regularly scheduled and recorded research team conversations to share stories of their experiences with parent engagement, to respond to each other's stories, to make meaning together of experiences captured in field text, and to monitor and adjust unfolding research plans. Some on-site co-researchers may keep field journals and/or reflective journals of their observations or experiences relating to parent engagement. Other on-site co-researchers may record research moments through photographs or the collection of artifacts. While university co-researchers are engaged in recorded conversations with participants (other parents, educators, community members, and staff members who are not on the research team but who can add to the inquiry),

other co-researchers may also be scheduling and facilitating recorded conversations with other participants to add to the field text. Co-researchers may be reading from a diverse range of literature, from parenting magazines to scholarly books and articles, to infuse new and different ideas into research team conversations. Co-researchers, alone or in small groups, may be visiting other school sites to learn about their beliefs and practices in relation to parent engagement. Co-researchers, together as a team or in small groups, may be sharing research in progress or research findings at the school or community level or within local, regional, or national research communities. Flexibility in individually and collectively determining roles, and in negotiating and renegotiating those roles as the research unfolds, enables each co-researcher to participate in ways that are comfortable yet maintain the inclusivity of multiple perspectives and enhance the richness and outcomes of the research program. What remains important is the sense of interdependence among co-researchers, a sense of shared responsibility for the whole of the research, and a sense of mutual respect for each individual and the contribution each individual makes to the research process and results.

Challenges of Collaborative Research

Although the relational nature of collaborative research is one of its greatest richnesses, it is also one of its challenges. Building trust and establishing rapport among co-researchers is central to all research activities yet takes time, contact, space, and support. Spending time getting to know one another at the outset of the research process is an important investment in the research and needs to be considered when the timeline for the research is being established. Building relationships in social and informal settings, perhaps over food and conversation where bonds can develop between individuals and where individuals can begin to know one another personally as well as in relation to research interests, enables the growing of a sense of trust that is essential to collaborative research. Relationships cannot be assumed or taken for granted; they require nurturing and facilitation.

To get to a place where co-researchers can risk being vulnerable with one another, where they can respectfully challenge one another's thinking or interpretations, and where tension can be viewed as a constructive part of the meaning-making process, there needs to be a move beyond the surface congeniality of

relationships to a deeper collegiality based on a moral and ethical commitment to one another and the research purpose. Explicitly establishing research team norms or strategies for conflict resolution or negotiation early in the research process can make having difficult conversations much easier for any team member later on if that becomes necessary.

Other research team issues that may be beneficial to discuss at the outset of the research include leadership and coordination of the team, workload, division of labor, ownership of data, rights of publication, and career and status issues. Attention paid early on to each individual's agenda and interests can avert any later conflict over issues such as power or knowledge differentials, a sense of appropriation of research data or findings, and recognition or status received from the research.

Advantages of Collaborative Research

In response to the debate about how to bridge the gap between research and practice, collaborative research provides a possibility. Because collaborative research is typically conducted in a field setting with practitioners, the knowledge developed is already integral to practice rather than separated from it. Having co-researchers who are authentically inside the experience—co-researchers who have explored it and understand it from the inside—voids this concern with the research–practice divide.

Creating a collaborative research team, a team that represents multiple viewpoints and voices as well as differing positions in relation to the research puzzle, makes the research richer and more complex and pushes the inquiry deeper. The knowledge of the research context and the particularities, specificities, and subtleties of that research context that on-site co-researchers bring to the research add dimensions to the inquiry that outsiders might not discover, perceive, or understand because of their positioning. Working with co-researchers who are inside the experience invites a different problematizing of practice, a reflection gained from participation in both the practice and the research of the practice that engagement in just one or the other could not produce.

Working as co-researchers rather than in the more typical researcher and participant relationship, researchers reduce the chances that they will “other” the participants. When everyone's viewpoints are laid alongside one another, discussed deeply, searched,

and re-searched, understandings that are shared develop and voices speak together rather than for or about some other. The researchers' backgrounds and biases, their positions and privileges, are not obscured or invisible but rather become part of the inquiry and the co-constructed understandings that emerge from the inquiry. There is no longer an author, an authority, speaking on behalf of someone else.

Collaborative research is a choice a researcher makes based on epistemological, ideological, and ethical beliefs. Although it is research that requires a different thoughtfulness about research design and methods as well as about research relationships, it provides a rich possibility for addressing inequities in the social sciences in researcher-participant relationships and for speaking to the artificiality of the research-practice divide. Collaborative research presents a possibility for impact that more typical forms of research might not.

Debbie Pushor

See also Participants as Co-Researchers; Reciprocity; Relational Ethics; Research Team; Researcher-Participant Relationships

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COLLAGE

Collage is an arts-based research approach to meaning-making through the juxtaposition of a variety of pictures, artifacts, natural objects, words, phrases, textiles, sounds, and stories. It is not meant to provide one-to-one transfer of information; rather, it strives to create metaphoric evocative texts through which readers, audiences, and patrons create their own meanings on a given research topic. Usually, material is taken out of context from a range of sources and used to create a new assemblage from the bricolage collected. What underpins the creation of research collages is the attempt to construct meanings about the research question and/or process, the participants, and emerging themes.

Although collage is traditionally thought of as an artistic product, Donna Davis and Lynn Butler-Kisber focused on its analytic function with the belief that meaning can be mediated through images. Davis, a fine- and commercial artist, found that she projected difficulty she was having with a research participant into a collage she was making for another purpose. On examination, she was able to translate the images into words, further articulating her thoughts on the research. In 2006, Sara Promislow presented a paper about using visual collages as an in-depth analytic tool to assist her in articulating what the research experience meant for her (see Figure 1). She created one on the research process and one for each of the participants: “With the rich information and knowledge gleaned from the collages, I was able to continue the research analysis with a deeper and more complex understanding of their experiences” (p. 5).

Joe Norris, Glenys Berry, and Giacomo Guercio detailed a collage-making process from arts-based courses taught by Norris. Students articulated to one another their research topics/questions and browsed through a large assortment of magazines looking for images and phrases that “called” them. They were encouraged to go to what Lorri Neilsen referred to as the liminal space, a threshold in which new meanings can be found (see sidebar on p. 96). They were asked “not to think, edit, or censor” but to collect everything that intuitively spoke to them. Because this was a



Figure 1 “Methodology” Collage by Sara Promislow

Source: “Methodology” (Promislow, 2004), Collage, mixed media, 11 × 9.6 inches. Used by permission.

group process, they also provided pictures and phrases to classmates when an image or phrase seemed to relate to their peers’ topics.

For Norris, the intuitive is the essential first step. Rather than employing a theme analysis and coding approach that creates categories, he invited researchers to take a leap of faith and enter into an imaginative state where meanings emerge through the interplay among the research question, the collected data, and seemingly disjointed images and words. Using Hans-Georg Gadamer’s theory of translation, Norris believes that new meanings can be found in the space between two languages, in this case the visual and the written. Guercio affirmed this in his description of a collage he made to help him understand his life’s journey:

Creating the collage helped me to find certain meanings that were lost during the process of making a living. . . . In observing my collage I see the cause and effect of leaking and escaping from inner and outer spaces that I created. They are the connections of thought and manifestation.

Both Guercio and Davis claimed that color played a large part in their selection of pictures. Davis claimed that it was for mood setting. Guercio knew this but could not explain why. Davis also noted that space and (implicitly) time play roles in collage construction. For her, the aesthetic dimension was as important as the meaning-making process.

The cutting of pictures and phrases is also an analytic, interpretive, and aesthetic act. An image could be cut into a specific shape, such as a square or circle with contextual or extraneous material remaining or removed, highlighting only what the researcher deems essential. Each cut is a highly interpretive and artistic act that will later influence the entire product. Norris encouraged researchers to keep a meta-cognitive log while making a collage. The interplay between the log and the collage acts recursively, assisting in the articulation of thought in both word and image. Davis and Butler-Kisber promoted the use of both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches in research for deeper meaning-making, and the use of the log is one such means. The act of recording why a picture was cut in such a way further articulates the emergent insights. Such recordings do find themselves in the final research product, with the story of the collage making interwoven with the generated meanings.

Kathleen Vaughan provided her analysis as she documented the research process. Similar to Davis and Butler-Kisber, Vaughan’s stories cannot be separated from the topic. Readers witness the relationship between the researcher and the topic and, like the metaphoric “singer/song,” become one. There can be a recursive relationship between the artist and the collage in that the collage can change the artist, thereby making her or him the product.

The arrangement and ultimate “fixing” of images and words in relation to one another is the final act. A phrase placed over an image has a different significance than the same phrase positioned to the side of the same picture. Some collages may contain three-dimensional elements, some have the entire background full, and others may have blank spaces, strategically placing certain like elements together. Berry chose to photocopy all pictures and used the black and white reproductions to cover an entire poster board so as to explore the construct of identity. Size, location, and juxtaposition along with styles of cutting are part of the collage’s syntax and, like written sentences and paragraphs, have both epistemological and aesthetic dimensions. Although the artistic process can be more emergent than deliberate, the intuitive choices are part of the evocative meaning-making structure.

The preceding examples described how researchers have used collages in analysis and dissemination. Morna McDermott took a different approach, using collage as both a pedagogical and data collection tool. She had her preservice teachers create collages

Textual Collage—An Example

Knowledge, like fiction itself, is liminal space. It never arrives. It is always on the brink.

Source: Neilsen, L. (2002). Learning from the liminal: Fiction as knowledge. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 47, 206–214 (quote from p. 208).

as a reflective process to examine their positions on creativity, social justice, and education. Four students were randomly selected to demonstrate the instructional value of collage to all students, and follow-up interviews were conducted. Students reported that through the process they were learning things about themselves. The implication is that collage making could accompany questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation as another data generation technique. Although Davis and Butler-Kisber referred to collage as an alternative form of representation, it must be noted that the term *alternative* has a political dimension. Arts-based researchers consider these methods as legitimate as traditional methods, albeit novel. The choice of collage is one of many possibilities.

But collages need not be visual. Monika Kostera asked her participants to write fictional stories about her research topics and at times has used an opening sentence as a writing prompt. The stories acted like a collage of issues on the topic, and Kostera used these accounts to understand how the participants perceived their lived worlds. She analyzed the written texts and wrote her own composite response that is a collage of the issues brought forth.

Norris also used the theatrical convention of voice collage to highlight the multidimensional aspects of an issue. In “What’s the Fine Line?” six actors read a list of phrases used by youth and adults that encourage and discourage teenage sexual activity. Collectively, they concisely presented the complexity of sexual pressures facing youth. Like Butler-Kisber’s found poems, an artistic composition pithily provides a synopsis of some of the salient features found in the data.

Copyright is an issue that is still being explored by those creating collages. With most research, the use of a small amount of material from other pieces,

if properly cited, is not only considered legitimate but even encouraged as an essential part of a literature review. Visual collages are different. The appropriation of segments from pictures, phrases, and slogans found in magazines, newspapers, websites, and other media is not as clear. Copyrights rest with publishers, photographers, and commercial corporations that did not intend their property to be used in such a way. In addition, collage creators do not cite their sources, and to do so would be awkward. For those who use collages for data generation and interpretation, this is not an issue because the collage remains private. For those who publicly display their collages in academic journals, questions about the use of others’ works still exist. The common position taken is that these images are taken out of their contexts and reframed in new ones, drastically changing the original pieces. To date, the resources used in collage making have not been legally brought into question.

In summary, although collages are traditionally thought of as products, they can be effectively used in all stages of qualitative research. They need not be strictly visual but also can be written and spoken texts. They are meant to evoke disparate meanings in others and strive to communicate on a metaphoric, rather than a transactional, information-giving level.

Joe Norris

See also Aesthetics; A/r/tography; Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Bricolage and Bricoleur; Interpretation; Liminal Perspective; Meaning; Representation

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COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Community-based research has emerged as a preference among qualitative researchers who engage in inquiry primarily for its usefulness to the social unit where it originates. Research practices engaged in the interests of community service are evolving and have been shaped by the contexts in which the research occurs. Community-based research methods (i.e., for data collection) have been adopted by researchers using methodologies (i.e., epistemological or theoretical stances) that are participatory and based in an ethics of care that guides human relationships. Community-based research emphasizes relationality and the democratic involvement of participants in research events. Many community-based researchers equate usefulness criteria with empowerment. They seek social justice through the potential for research to strengthen communities by facilitating diverse involvement in research practices and promoting critical reflection about the community by members of the community. An overriding interest is in the power of research events to provoke political action. Community-based research is a form of collective action that a community undertakes as key to its survival, its empowerment, or its continued effectiveness in encouraging social and political change.

Characteristics of Community-Based Research

Community-based research is grounded in Indigenous and ethnic community studies and in feminist epistemologies. Various Aboriginal, Mexican American, and African American communities have also engaged in continuing efforts at decolonizing ways of knowing and

understanding the increasingly globalized world. Black community studies arose in university discourse to criticize domination by Western White epistemologies. From the turn of the 20th century, this work stressed the importance of subjective interpretations of human experience, ethnic diversity in experience as the foundation for learning, and commitment to scholarship that linked research, pedagogical praxis, and community service. From DuBois and contemporary Black writers of his time, there emerged a commitment to research that would improve the daily lives of people of color; the service orientation they envisioned was conceived as an opportunity for reciprocal benefit in collaborations between universities and society. This early vision of community-centered action by university researchers was reinvigorated during the 1960s, and again during the early 1990s, through university and community efforts to establish "Black agenda projects" in the United States. These early scholars in Black studies founded the strong tradition of action-centered, political community discourse about diversity that is central to community-based research.

Similarly, feminist epistemologies have generated community-based research practices in which a relational ontology of self-other defines situated knowledge and partial perspectives. This is, again, overtly political research that privileges the participant's own understanding and processes for meaning-making over those of the researcher. In serving the community, feminist researchers strive to redefine the role of the researcher from one of distant impartiality to structure research through interactions and relationships based in empathy, mutuality, and respect for the expert knowledge of the participant.

Ethnic and feminist epistemologies encouraged a tradition of situated research that is continued today in numerous examples of community-based research.

Community-based research is a feature, characteristic, or (alternatively) a condition on which participatory action research, performance ethnography, critical arts-based inquiry, and other new paradigm approaches are contingent.

These and other strands of community-based research exist simultaneously. There are, however, commonalities in the various theories and approaches to performing research in the community. Community-based research across the disciplines addresses positionality, reflexivity, collaboration, voice, and praxis, and it embraces an ethics based in human caring. All community-based research is grounded in methodologies

that challenge privileged access to truth, impartiality, and scientific objectivity. As such, it draws on the “situated knowledge” of both the researcher and the researched (or research participants); that is, knowing depends on the contexts (space and time marked by borders and interruptions) in which it occurs.

Positionality. Positionality is about the situatedness of knowledge. People experience the world from different embodied, social, intellectual, and spatial locations. How we are situated within social spaces and locations, taken in combination with our personal and shared intellectual histories as well as our lived experiences, shapes each of our understandings of the world, our knowledge, and our actions. Humans perceive “self” and are perceived by others in relation to multiple, diverse, and dynamic social processes, including (but not limited to) gender, class, race/ethnicity, age, and sexuality. These social, geographic, and intellectual spaces that we hold individually and as members of multiple communities serve to position us differently in well-established hierarchies of political power and social privilege. Positionality also refers to the embodied presence of the researcher and the participants’ responses to the dynamic interplay of the presence of the researcher in their social world. Knowledge, facts, truths, and understandings are social constructions marked by the continual processes of life as it has been lived. This concentration on positionality and situated ways of knowing calls for research that plays with the ephemeral, vernacular, and dynamic performances of thought and action.

Reflexivity. In the context of community-based research, reflexivity means the ongoing analysis of relationships, power dynamics, and purposes of researchers. Reflexive researchers acknowledge that it is never possible to fully understand oneself or one’s relationships in the community, nor is it fully possible to understand the motivations, purposes, or hegemonic indicators that pull us toward particular understandings, positionalities, or worldviews. Thus, the research remains open to critical evaluation and reconsideration and is, ultimately, flexible to the ongoing dynamics of individual and group development and change.

Collaboration. In community research, collaboration speaks to the involvement of a social group in the use of inquiry methodologies to promote empowerment and facilitate the emergence of the group as a political

voice. In community-based inquiry events, both the researcher and participants are collaborators in the project of doing research. Often their roles are interchangeable, engaged as they are in a reciprocal exchange of ideas. Research design in this mode is sensitive to how values, power, and politics frame “truths.” Interpretations of information are labeled as constructions and are noted as interpretations of the world marked by the contexts in which they are produced. It is typically a collaborative communal project in which all participants, including both the researcher and the researched, acknowledge that they bring social, historical, familial, and other diverse social constructions into their research interpretations. In practice, this critical reflection about how ideas are formed and traditions are created may take the form of autobiography. Furthermore, among practitioners in the paradigm of community-based inquiry, it is widely acknowledged that research is always political, moral, and steeped in the complexities of power, privilege, oppressions, and representations.

Voice. Voice is an important consideration during data collection when the researcher has the responsibility of including members of the community who might otherwise be silenced or marginalized during the processes of doing research. Voice is also a consideration in analytic and representational processes of doing research; it is expected that the researcher will take care to interpret research data in the context of the community from which they arose (rather than back in the laboratory) and to engage multiple people with differing points of view in interpreting data. Finally, it is the responsibility of the researcher to include the voices of others in the representations of research as a function of demonstrating the dynamic ephemeral qualities of research that exists as community activity. For example, artist-researchers accomplish this by creating open spaces and multiple entrances to their work; they create new ways for people to position themselves in the world. They are the catalysts for new interpretations, understandings, and forces for taking action. Within discursive openings, various and diverse members of the community can form new collaborations that have the potential to revise the hegemonic ravishes of relationship and history.

Praxis. Praxis refers to the interplay between reflection and action that is the purpose of community-based research. In praxis-based research, the purpose is to use

the act of doing research as a means to revise stereotypes, habits of mind, and deeply held meanings that guide people's thinking about social and political issues and to encourage actions that demonstrate these changes in theories or worldviews underscoring the ways in which people live in society. Community-based research involves a group of individuals in the processes of doing research for the purpose of social change that will result in social justice and democratic equity.

Ethics of Community-Based Research

An ethics of care is built on the idea that participants in research are co-equals. As co-equals, interviews are replaced by conversations. Discourse among research collaborators is an exchange of ideas. Power dynamics, hierarchy, and political positions are explicated rather than ignored. Ethics sometimes clashes with reality as the balance of power shifts, as purposes for doing research diverge, and as the very personal dynamics of the collaborative research unfold with all of the tensions and rewards known to occur in human relationships. Retaining reflexivity becomes an important act in preserving the ethics of community-based research. Through ongoing discourse about relationships of individuals, the research can stay on track toward rethinking and reforming social values and practices.

Advantages and Challenges of Doing Research in the Community

Probably the greatest advantage of performing community-based research is the potential for the research participants to exercise control over their own lives, solve their own problems, respond to social situations in their own voices, and promote their own causes.

Among the challenges of collaboration is the possibility of co-opting the research event to larger community goals that do not serve social justice or equity but, instead, reinforce systemic hegemony. Who participates in the collaboration depends on the context, the problem that is being researched, and the inclusiveness of the research participants. The research project may include only individuals who are affected by a particular problem, or it may include representatives of social service agencies or other community actors whose role is to address social issues through systemic functions

(e.g., health care providers who work closely with a community to deliver services while also researching the impact of those services). Thus, community-based research differs greatly depending on membership, and democratic participation does not always serve social justice. For instance, if a group of people living in a shelter become activist-researchers seeking information on how to improve the system of services to unhoused individuals, their efforts could be compromised by an existing system of missionary care or governmental interventions that do not include long-term housing if their research collaborative includes representatives of the existing system.

Researchers need to be attentive to a balance of freedoms such that the positive liberties of one community do not create a powerful hierarchy over another community of individuals. Care must be taken to notice whose interests were not represented in the research. Similarly, researchers need to be caring about the human tendency to know "what's best" for others—based on their own worldviews and experiences—such that community-based research can become colonizing in the same ways as can expert-directed research; the experts are just differently named and larger in number as constituents of a community. Involving all stakeholders in a research project is more easily said than done. Rifts can occur between members of communities and the holders of resources (e.g., university researchers) and can create unintended new power hierarchies. Inclusion carries its own difficulties in that open dialogue can be thwarted in situations where trust is in question. It is always difficult to attend to questions such as "whose truth" is being represented in research, especially when it is a given that different truths exist simultaneously.

Susan Finley

See also Critical Arts-Based Inquiry; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Performance Ethnography

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Comparison is at the heart of most social sciences research. Comparison can take place between different entities, such as individuals, interviews, statements, settings, themes, groups, and cases, or at different points in time. These entities or time periods are then analyzed to isolate prominent similarities and differences, a process that is described by the term *comparative analysis*.

A prominent strand of comparative analysis is “constant comparative analysis,” which stems from the grounded theory methodology of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. It involves taking one entity or piece of data, such as a statement, an interview, or a theme, and comparing it with others to identify similarities or differences. By isolating these aspects, it is then possible to develop a conceptual model of the possible relations between various entities. Researchers may, for example, compare the accounts or experiences of two different people who experienced the same event or are in similar contexts to engage in analytic accounts of why there are differences and how these two individuals’ experiences are related to one another.

Comparative analysis is also a primary task within case study research. Case studies are often compiled with the knowledge that comparisons will be made with the description of a particular case. In some instances, researchers will compare a particular case with that of a hypothetical reference group or frame of reference to highlight differences. This focus on comparison is at odds with the approach of “thick description” by Clifford Geertz, where the detailed description of the case itself, as opposed to the comparison, is the focus of the study. A comparative qualitative approach to the examination of cases is often via the examination of a few cases in a very intensive manner.

Melinda C. Mills

See also Case Study; Comparative Research; Grounded Theory

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COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

Comparison in qualitative research is inescapable. The importance and utility of comparative research penetrate virtually all types of qualitative research projects. *Comparative research* is a broad term that refers to the evaluation of the similarities, differences, and associations between entities. Entities may be based on many lines such as statements from an interview or individual, symbols, case studies, social groups, geographical or political configurations, and cross-national comparisons. Comparative research is used within most qualitative approaches, such as comparisons by core emic categories in ethnographic studies, within-case comparisons in phenomenology, case study comparisons, comparative politics, and examination of contrasts in narrative and discourse analysis.

The goal of this entry is to define and outline the goals of comparative research, provide some examples in the field, and then discuss some of the central issues and problems in qualitative research. These include (a) case selection, unit, level, and scale of analysis; (b) construct equivalence; (c) case or characteristic orientation; and (d) issues of causality.

The Goal of Comparative Research

The underlying goal of comparative research is to search for similarity and variation between the entities that are the object of comparison. The examination of similarity often means the application of a more general theory and a search for universals or underlying

general processes across different contexts or categories. The ontology of patterns or categories is assumed to be universal and independent of time and space. In other words, the comparison should be broad enough to allow researchers to compare at a “higher level” of abstraction. However, it remains difficult to determine these general patterns. For this reason, comparative research is often used to separate patterns that are more general and isolate regularities or discrepancies from the context-laden environment. Following Max Weber’s comparative sociology, for example, the search for variance places more emphasis on context and difference so as to understand specificities. Comparisons not only uncover differences between social entities but also reveal unique aspects of a particular entity that would be virtually impossible to detect otherwise.

Examples of Comparative Qualitative Research

The majority of qualitative research relies on some type of comparison either to establish regularities, categorizations, and links or to understand phenomena within the context they are observed and experienced. Because comparison is often a key aspect in studies, there are numerous examples of comparative research across a variety of topics and disciplines. Several examples aid us in understanding how we can use these methods to engage in a comparative study design.

A well-known type of comparative analysis used in qualitative research is Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss’s technique of “constant comparative analysis” derived from the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism. The central task is to compare one piece of data with all others to compare similarities and differences. Data may be in the form of an interview, a statement, a theme, or another specified unit. These comparisons are used to develop categories and conceptualizations and then to examine potential relationships between these categories. The researcher then compares each new interview, account, or observation until all of them have been compared. This technique is frequently used in narrative research. Using the lens of phenomenological theory, for example, George Butte examined the historical shift in literary subjectivity and intersubjectivity via a comparative analysis of 18th- and 19th-century English novels. Comparative analysis is a useful technique to establish general phenomena such as processes of

marital breakdown, stages of grieving or coping with illness, and other fundamental processes.

Another common comparative application within qualitative research is that of cross-national comparisons. A long-standing practice in ethnography is the use of “controlled comparison” of different societies stemming from the work of Frederick Eggan during the early 1950s. More recent examples include Sneja Gunew’s cross-country comparative study of the meaning of multiculturalism in Canada, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. This research was grounded in comparative studies and Donna Haraway’s prominent concept of situated knowledge or the idea that meanings are often embedded in local, national, and global contexts. Cross-national qualitative case study comparisons are also often used within political science in the research fields of comparative politics and international relations. The use of comparative methods and measurement issues in comparative politics has been the central focus of authors such as David Collier. Researchers can also refer to the widely used book on qualitative data analysis by Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, who provided a more detailed list of strategies for comparison and advice on how to use these strategies.

Central Problems in Comparative Research

Comparative research poses several key methodological problems that continue to frustrate, captivate, and stimulate researchers. These are the selection of cases (including the unit, level, and scale of analysis), construct equivalence, case versus characteristic orientation, and the debate regarding causality.

Case Selection and Unit, Level, and Scale of Analysis

Bernard Ebbinghaus recently argued that case selection or sampling is one of the most critical problems in comparative research. In cross-national comparative research, cases have been preselected due to historical and political processes. In small-*N* qualitative studies, the selection of cases is often deliberate and theory driven. This is what Charles Ragin categorized as the difference between a “given” population and a “constructed” population. Because the constructed population is more theory driven, it is likewise more driven by the researcher and may be open

to favoring the findings of a particular research question. Conversely, although given or taken-for-granted populations are seemingly objective, they may contain many irrelevant cases that significantly affect the results.

In addition, researchers need to decide on the scale of the analysis. The choice lies between a small sample size and a relatively large sample size (often referred to as the *N*), each of which poses specific problems. In the case where the choice is to include a large number of units (e.g., countries, cases) with only scant, more general comparative characteristics, the researcher runs the risk of producing superficial results. On the other hand, if the choice is to include only a few units of analysis with a large amount of descriptive depth and characteristics, there is the risk of having too many comparative characteristics and too few cases to effectively examine different explanations or causal models. Some qualitative methods, such as phenomenological approaches, do not aim at finding common patterns but want to find the underlying structure or essence via an intensive descriptive study of individual cases. Other ethnographic approaches also choose to examine detail and depth and to engage in in-depth comparisons within one case.

Yet it is not only the unit but also the level of analysis that is vital for comparative research, and this brings problems on the substantive, theoretical, and methodological levels. This is the difference between studying the effects of macro-structural aspects, such as cultural norms, and studying the effects of micro-level individual characteristics, such as an individual's position in a kinship group or meaning ascribed to certain norms. Another related problem that emerges with case selection is that the unit of analysis or population under study is not always self-evident, for example, the nation-state in cross-national studies or the unit of speech or text in narrative or discourse analysis. Finally, among other issues is the issue of how to deal with large comparative differences across groups such as variation in cultural norms or the value of certain objects or meaning attributed to different aspects across groups and societies.

Construct Equivalence

Because the goal of comparative research is to search for both similarity and variance in cases, research necessitates equivalent instruments or definitions to

measure constructs. Many argue that cross-cultural or cross-national comparisons are valid only when there is construct equivalence. Construct equivalence refers to the instance where the instrument measures the same latent trait across all speech units, groups, nations, or cultures. This includes, for example, efforts to build cross-national and cross-group comparative categorizations of ethnicity, class, or sexuality.

The necessity of equivalent comparison within comparative studies also forces us to debate the utility and meaning not only of standard analytic concepts, such as race and class, but also of seemingly straightforward concepts, such as age and gender. The ethnographer Clarence Gravlee, for instance, demonstrated that the term *race* as used in the North American context is vastly different from what Latin Americans mean for the same term. Cross-national or cross-cultural comparisons of constructs allow researchers to identify which definitions transcend a particular context or which are nation or cultural bound.

Case Versus Characteristic Orientation

Another broader debate within comparative research pertains to the orientation of the approach. The case-oriented approach used in many qualitative methods aims at fully understanding one case, or only a few cases, with "thick description" or rich data, thereby using many comparative characteristics or variables. This is in opposition to a more quantitative variable-oriented approach that stresses the search for parsimony (i.e., the statistical explanation of variance in many cases by means of only a few variables or characteristics). There is a vibrant debate within the literature on this issue, focusing largely on whether researchers should concentrate on characteristics or define comparisons by "sets" of cases.

Causality

Causality is another central methodological issue in comparative research. However, the definition and very relation to the concept of causality differs fundamentally between quantitative and qualitative approaches and has been an area of fierce debate. The more positivist and quantitative nomothetic notions of causality, such as those based on David Hume and

advocated by John Goldthorpe, attempt to draw out regularities and specify the underlying social mechanisms and processes that generate these regularities. Conversely, a wider debate within qualitative research questions the very validity of the concept of causality (e.g., by Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba) or challenges the necessity to establish universals with variable-oriented approaches (e.g., by Ragin). Joseph Maxwell provided an excellent summary and discussion of strategies for causal explanation using qualitative methods.

Qualitative researchers are often interested in examining differences, similarities, and associations among a variety of objects such as statements, individual meanings, and political configurations. This makes comparative research virtually inescapable. To accomplish this, researchers need to consider vital aspects such as selecting a particular case or scale of analysis, defining constructs, and deciding whether they will focus on cases or characteristics. Comparisons can then take place on a variety of topics using many different types of qualitative methods.

Melinda C. Mills

See also Comparative Analysis

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COMPUTER-ASSISTED DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative software packages offer a range of functions that serve as resources for analyzing qualitative data. These functions allow users to simulate off-screen approaches used to work with qualitative data. As qualitative software products continue to evolve, they move beyond simple “code and retrieve” tools. Some programs offer specific functionality to imitate simple highlighting of text and writing of margin notes. The ability to diagram ideas and create models that develop over the course of an analysis continues to progress as well.

Qualitative software can be considered as a basic “toolkit” containing specific tools that help users to organize and record thoughts about and reactions to data as well as tools to access and review the material they organize and record.

The Basic Toolkit: Tools to Organize and Record

A three-system foundation forms the core of qualitative software programs. The *document system* allows users to maintain the integrity (the original look and content) of each data document used within a package. The *memo system* provides an opportunity to record notes of different lengths and depths throughout the life of an analysis. The *category system* contains tools to organize data at two different levels. First, entire data documents can be organized according to their attributes. This organization facilitates filtering and comparison according to characteristics of documents, for example, comparing women’s documents

with men's documents or comparing documents in which someone either reveals or does not reveal a personal trauma. Second, individual sections of data documents can be organized into codes. Simple code and retrieve procedures can be used for summary by code topic. More complex procedures can be used to evolve code meanings and definitions, to explore how combinations of codes applied to data influence ideas that emerge during analysis, and to pursue answers to questions that preceded data collection.

Document System

Initially, researchers make decisions about what type of data they will collect and how they will manage those data within software. The document system within qualitative software is the primary tool for storing each data document users work with in a qualitative software package. A document can be in the form of text, graphic, audio, or video file. Several packages allow the use of rich text or Word files, thereby maintaining the original formats (e.g., bold, italic, underline, color) present in documents when they are reviewed within a software package. In software packages where users can engage with multimedia files (e.g., photographs, audio, video), the program either permits full engagement with a file or has a linking system where the users connect an entire multimedia file from within the body of a text document. This procedure works like weblinks placed in the body of an email. Direct work with a multimedia file proceeds in the same way as work with a text document. Users can write notes about all or parts of the file. Sections of the file can be marked and/or coded for later retrieval, and entire files can be organized by major categories that characterize them.

Although users do not engage directly with the document system within a software package, the document system serves to manage and track their data documents. In programs where users can edit files, the document system automatically tracks how any changes caused by editing data documents affect the placement of codes and memos. The codes and memos placed before any edits automatically adjust so that these items remain with the original text where they were first placed.

When users review each segment of text coded to a code or to which they attached a memo, they are able to view that text within the body of the document where it originates. The document system is the core

tool that maintains the integrity of users' original data document so that users are able to view these sections of text in context.

Memo System

Qualitative software offers an opportunity to write memos and locate them in places that are easy to access. These memos vary in size and content. Memos can be simple reactions to a section of a fieldnote, an interview, or a focus group, or they can be reactions to complex theoretical treatises. Users can write a memo about any individual data document, about any section of text, about any code, or about any independent topics that arise in the course of their analysis. In essence, memos about documents, codes, and sections of text are the equivalent of "sticky notes" that users place on those items. Just like working within a word processor or on a notepad, memos in qualitative software are live, editable documents into which users can copy quotes from documents. Any memo that users write can be saved and opened in their word processors. Reminder icons and memo lists help users to access their memos for retrieval, reaction, and adjustment. Memos are easily exported to users' word processors for further editing and integration with other writing on their research topic.

Category System

There are two primary levels of categorization within qualitative software. Researchers can categorize entire data documents into attributes for sorting and filtering larger data sets. In addition, sections of a document can be grouped together to gather examples of topics represented in codes designated by researchers.

Attributes

If a study involves comparisons of groups of data, attribute functions of qualitative software can be helpful. Major variables and points of comparison can be entered into a program, and researchers can identify which documents belonged to specific subcategories of each variable. For example, researchers can add information about participants' background characteristics to compare along lines of gender, age, income, race, ethnicity, and political or religious affiliation. For mixed-methods studies, spreadsheet files that contain

background information and/or responses to key questions can be imported into qualitative software, and specific responses can be associated with corresponding qualitative documents. Points of comparison that arise during review of data documents can be added as well. For example, if researchers discover that some participants experienced financial challenges, this category can be added as well and the sample can be categorized according to who did or did not experience financial problems. Organizing data by attributes of data documents allows researchers to focus reviews of topics represented in code categories. Discussions of religion can be read for all women who live in the northeastern United States and then for all men who live in that same region of the country. These steps help researchers to answer foundation questions that define their analysis.

Codes

Codes are used to organize sections of text into key topics defined by researchers. A review of text by codes is a key component of diagnosing patterns of discussion within qualitative data. Codes can be created, maintained, and adjusted within codebooks, which are inherently flexible. Some researchers start a project by entering deductive codes into their qualitative software program. These codes might arise from research questions, topic literature, and/or interview and data collection protocols. Inductive coding is also possible. New topics that arise via document review can be made and applied to the selections of data where they first appear and throughout an entire data set. Codes can be renamed, deleted, combined, and broken into smaller subcategories.

Codes can also be applied via search facilities within qualitative software. Researchers can search for instances of “health” and code results along with surrounding text to a code category. For more structured data, researchers can use “autocode” functions to sort all responses to each question of an open-ended survey or a structured interview into its own code folder. Use of this feature requires minor data formatting to enable this functionality.

Supplemental Tool: Marking and Labeling Key Sections of Text

As qualitative software evolves, efforts to simulate all tasks that qualitative researchers do off-screen

imitated inside software continue to increase. One area of focus is an early phase of analysis where researchers gain familiarity with text and their reactions to it via a first read. At this time, it is common to simply highlight sections of text and write notes with reaction and reflection in the margin of the document. There are several advantages to this form of computerized text highlighting.

Visual Aid. As with a manual highlight pen, computerized highlighting results in a mark placed over or next to the text that users highlight. This visual aid allows users to easily recognize this section of text on a second review.

Gathering Tool. Sections highlighted within qualitative software are added to a convenient list that allows easy retrieval and examination.

Labels for Sections. The highlighted sections can be named or labeled. To distinguish this process from coding, users are not gathering examples on a topic with this feature. Instead, they are labeling and naming individual sections with what can be considered “nicknames.” All of these labels can be reviewed as a transition into shaping a codebook.

Foundation for Data Profiles. Highlighted sections of text can be imported into diagrams to create pictures and profiles for all or part of a data document or series of documents.

The Basic Toolkit: Tools to Access and Review

Any item created within the systems introduced in the previous section can be reviewed as a means of gaining clarity of its meaning and import to the analysis at hand. Simple memo and code retrieval tools assist in this process. It is important to note that access and review of any memo, code, or combination of these items is not an isolated task. Software packages are built to invite continual evolution of ideas. The names and content of memos, codes, and attributes are easy to adjust as researchers refine their developing understanding of each item. These processes often dictate how researchers take advantage of co-occurrence and diagramming tools found within qualitative software. Researchers use co-occurrence tools to find instances where codes, originally applied by them, occur in

combination (or not in combination) within and across data documents. Changes to these tools now allow researchers to find an anticipated combination of codes (e.g., every time health and finances are coded together) or to assess combinations that they did not predict. This latter function encourages discovery of serendipitous connections. Researchers use diagramming tools as a way to explore potential connections or to design models to portray concrete ideas for presentation.

Simple Retrieval Tools

As users label and organize data into categories and write memos, they begin to reflect on what their efforts are teaching them. Memos, coding, and categorization efforts can be retrieved in isolation or combination to help users assess what they have learned and to help them determine next steps.

Memos

Memos that users write are available for retrieval in two ways. First, lists of memos are available for independent retrieval. As users read any individual memo, they can edit text and/or add sample quotes from their data. Memos can be saved and opened in a word processing program. This facility makes memos portable. They can be attached to or pasted into emails to share with colleagues and research team members.

Memos that were written alongside sections of text can be retrieved as users review codes and co-occurrences. If users coded a section of text to religion and wrote a note about that text, they can opt to display their note along with that text on retrieval. This strategy is common and allows for thinking out loud and linking ideas in data with thoughts and reactions to text with knowledge of material that users bring to their data.

Memos evolve as analysis progresses. They serve as useful transition points in analysis and help to build the foundation for final written material about users' project.

Codes

A core function within qualitative software is the retrieval of all segments of data coded to sections of text. Users can examine complete sets of text coded to any one topic for summary and reflection. Early in a project, this process allows users to determine the importance of a category and the effectiveness of coding efforts. Later in a project, summaries of codes facilitate important conclusions about a data set.

Codes can be reviewed on-screen or in report form. On-screen code review encourages adjustments to

coding. Users can remove or replace codes from text, adjust the amount of text coded to a category, and add memos during this review. They can also review all instances coded to a category in a report for a direct summary of that topic. These reports can be read in users' word processors and/or shared with colleagues. It is common for research teams to share information about key topics using this tool.

Filtering for Comparison

Filters can be applied prior to a review of codes and memos to narrow and focus users' search of these items. For example, users can filter their data set to just the women's documents before they review all instances coded to religion. All coded instances that users review will appear with corresponding memos for just the women's documents. This step should give users a better perspective of women's experiences with and perspectives on religion along with their thoughts on women's discussions of religion. Users can then change their filter to the men's documents to gain a better picture of gender difference. Filtering can be used for single variable comparison or for exploration of how combinations of variables, such as gender and age, affect discussions and experiences within users' projects.

Co-Occurrence Tools

The ability to retrieve co-occurring codes is one of the major features that distinguishes qualitative software from simple code-and-retrieve programs. Rather than just seeing all quotations coded to religion or all quotations coded to health, co-occurrence tools allow users to retrieve all quotations coded to both religion and health, providing better access to the ways in which two codes interact. The existence of co-occurrence tools enables users to monitor single concepts, such as religion and health, and dynamic ways in which topics combine to potentially build thematic discussion.

Co-occurrence tools can be used to find instances where the same two codes are applied to the same text or for more specific questions of how the location of two codes falls across users' entire data set. Users can find instances of one code inside another code, one code overlapping another code, and/or one code preceding a second code. Pursuit of options within co-occurrence tools is determined by users' research questions and goals and their evolving analysis. Recent innovations in these tools allow more flexible engagement with co-occurrence. Previously, these tools required researchers to know code connections,

such as religion coded with health, before they searched for a co-occurrence. New tools monitor co-occurrences throughout a project. At any point in the coding process, users can assess all codes that overlap. They can focus on the religion code and see every code that overlaps at least once and then move to each section that overlaps. Serendipitous connections are now more accessible because of these changes.

Diagramming Tools

Diagramming tools in qualitative software (frequently called maps, models, or networks) can be used for brainstorming about potential or real connections researchers uncover in their analysis or for presenting concrete ideas to an audience. Researchers can link component parts of a project to display connections they are pursuing. Increasingly, researchers have the ability to link any part of their project to any other part of the project. Typically, researchers link codes to codes to show component parts of code groups or how one code might relate to another.

More dynamic connections are available in models of different programs. Users can include icons to represent different sections of text that contribute to an important conversation. Clicking on icons brings users to the text of the data documents. Users can also link data documents to diagram connections between individuals within a data set. Graphic files can be added to maps as well to enhance the messages conveyed by maps. Although currently the functionality presented in this paragraph is uneven across programs, the discussion does represent what is possible and might predict what to expect as functionality converges across programs in the future.

Diagrams created in any program can be exported for work in word processing, presentation, and visual diagramming programs.

Supplemental Tools: Tools for Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research and Facilitating Teamwork

Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research

If a project requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, researchers can use tools to import or export quantitative information to a project. Spreadsheets that provide demographic and survey information for respondents can be imported to a qualitative software program. This information can

be linked to data about these individuals within researchers' qualitative software projects. Importing quantitative information provides the foundation for comparisons outlined earlier in the "Filtering for Comparison" section.

Qualitative software also provides counts of coded instances by code. Counts for individual codes appear next to codes in codebook displays. In addition, tables showing code distribution across documents can be exported to spreadsheets and, in some instances, directly to SPSS software. These outputs can be linked to quantitative databases for further exploration.

Teamwork

Teamwork continues to be an area of focus for qualitative software developers. Research teams can use output reports to share information on key topics. Log-in functions provide basic information about who works on different sections of a data set. Component projects worked on by different members of a team can also be combined via teamwork import and merge functions of qualitative software.

Raymond C. Maietta

See also ATLAS.ti (Software); DITION (Software); Ethnograph (Software); Framework (Software); HyperRESEARCH (Software); MAXqda (Software); NVivo (Software); Qualrus (Software); Quantitative Research; SuperHyperQual (Software); TextQuest (Software); Transana (Software)

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Websites**Resources**

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Networking
Project (CAQDAS): <http://caqdas.soc.surrey.ac.uk>
ResearchTalk, Inc.: <http://www.researchtalk.com>

Software

ATLAS.ti: <http://www.atlasti.com>
DICTION: <http://dictionsoftware.com>
Ethnograph: <http://www.qualisresearch.com>
Framework: http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/hw_framework.htm
HyperRESEARCH: <http://www.researchware.com>
MAXqda: <http://www.maxqda.com>
NVivo: <http://www.qsr.com.au>
QDA Miner: <http://www.provalisresearch.com>
Qualrus: <http://www.ideaworks.com>
SuperHyperQual: <http://home.satx.rr.com/hyperqual>
TextQuest: <http://www.textquest.de/tqe.htm>
Transana: <http://www.transana.org>

CONCEPT MAPPING

Concept mapping creates a visual representation of the relationships among a set of targeted topics. The goal of concept mapping is to create an actual map where the concepts are represented as nodes and the relationships between them are represented as lines that link those nodes. In addition, the links are often labeled with descriptions of the relationships between the concepts they join. The result of concept mapping, thus, is similar to a network diagram that captures the relationships among a set of topics. In qualitative research, concept mapping can be used in both data collection and analysis processes.

Uses for Concept Mapping in Data Collection

Concept mapping provides a procedure to guide the participants in either individual interviews or focus groups through the generation, classification, and interpretation of the relationships among a set of key concepts. Instead of simply encouraging a dialogue that is later transcribed and coded by researchers, concept mapping allows the participants to be more closely involved with analyzing and interpreting key

topics. In addition, it produces a concrete visual summary of this process.

Concept mapping exercises provide new opportunities to “give voice” to participants and offer insights into the meaning that participants ascribe to their experiences. The original language of participants is preserved as they do the work of sorting and linking the various concepts, providing further understanding of the meaning and significance of not just specific connections but also the overall network of connects that the participants produce. This kind of rich interpretive data is especially likely to occur in concept mapping exercises that are divided into two parts, starting with the creation of the initial map and followed by a more reflective consideration of how this particular map summarizes the overall set of relationships among the concepts.

The initial input for concept mapping consists of a list of concepts that the individual participants arrange and connect in a physical layout. In both individual and group interviews, one of the central issues is whether researchers present a list of predetermined concepts for mapping or whether the participants themselves generate the list of concepts. The main advantage of an externally generated list is the greater ease of making comparisons across the full set of the maps, all of which will share the same set of possible concepts and, thus, differ only in the ways in which participants connect those concepts. Alternatively, letting the participants generate both the list of concepts and the connections among them produces a more emic insight into their thinking but at the expensive of less straightforward comparability across a more diverse set of maps.

Among the range of alternative ways in which to do concept mapping, one of the best-known approaches is a formalized set of procedures developed by William Trochim. His version of concept mapping typically relies on groups that work with a predetermined list of concepts. Each member of a group receives a set of cards with one concept per card, and the participants then sort those cards into piles according to how similar or closely linked the concepts are. The combined pile sorts from a group provide data on how “close” any two concepts are based on how often the group members sorted them together. These data on the closeness of pairs of concepts serve as input to multidimensional scaling and clustering software programs that generate maps describing the overall pattern of closeness across the full set of concepts. Thus, Trochim’s approach creates maps by applying software tools to inputs from the participants rather than

having the participants produce the maps directly, although the resulting maps are often used to generate further discussions in later interviews.

Regardless of how the concept maps themselves are generated, two of the most common research design options are (1) making systematic comparisons of the maps produced by different categories of participants and (2) using repeated interviews where the maps from earlier sessions are presented as “stimulus material” in later interviews. For systematic comparisons, purposive sampling divides the participants into different categories so that researchers can investigate the similarities and differences among these sets of maps. In applications that involve program planning, such comparisons are often used to understand the thinking and preference of different “stakeholder” groups. For repeated interviews, there is typically an intervening process between the rounds of interviews where researchers analyze the various maps from the original participants to create summary maps before showing the results of those analyses to either the same participants or an equivalent set of participants. To continue the previous program planning example, the research team might produce a summary map for each stakeholder group and then use this set of summary maps to find out how each group reacts to the thinking of the other stakeholders.

Uses for Concept Mapping in Data Analysis

This section concentrates on concept mapping as a broad approach to analyzing qualitative data. It is worth noting, however, that concept maps can also be used as a more specific tool for examining interviews and other forms of text data. The most common version of this method, developed by Susan Jones, begins by locating the key concepts used to discuss a topic and then reviewing the text to capture links among those concepts. Thus, in analyzing a set of interviews, researchers would create a concept map for each participant to summarize that person’s thinking on the research topic and then make comparisons across these different conceptual summaries.

The more common use of concept mapping in qualitative analysis, however, is to represent and capture researchers’ own thinking after earlier work on coding and conceptualization. This process usually involves the creation of network diagrams where lower level codes are grouped into a set of more conceptual codes, which are then linked in ways that summarize their relationships. In other words, researchers create a

concept map that represents their own thinking about the key concepts in the data and how those concepts are related. Indeed, the implementation of this process within qualitative software packages such as ATLAS.ti, MAXqda, and NVivo is very similar to that within other software programs that implement this kind of free format concept mapping for a wide variety of purposes such as decision making and educational applications. It is interesting that this increasing use of concept mapping within the overall process of qualitative analysis has not been accompanied by greater attention to concept mapping as a method for data collection. Perhaps either the analysis of concept maps as an explicit form of data or the use of concept maps as an early step in the analysis process will help to create a connection that is currently missing.

David L. Morgan and Heather Guevara

See also ATLAS.ti (Software); Emic/Etic Distinction; MAXqda (Software); NVivo (Software); Purposive Sampling

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CONCEPTUAL ORDERING

Conceptual ordering is a method of organizing data into discrete categories by assessing the data’s properties or underlying meanings and then using these properties to categorize the data into groups. At times it can be helpful to use ratings when organizing the data, for example, rating the level of importance of each of the categories. Conceptual ordering is a first step in developing themes. After conceptual ordering, the data can be grouped into similar categories and then themes can be developed.

There are multiple methods for accomplishing conceptual ordering. Concepts can be the basis for ordering the data, as can other schemas such as time or roles of

the participants. An example of conceptual ordering is an ethnographic account. Ethnographers work to present the actions and beliefs of participants in an ordered fashion. Another example of conceptual ordering is when data are ordered according to time or stages. A final example of conceptual ordering occurring is when data are organized according to actors or actions.

When data have been ordered conceptually, it can be helpful to depict the ordering in a display. There are two common methods of displaying conceptually ordered data: within-case and cross-case. Conceptually ordered within-case displays present information for one case (i.e., a person or a group of people), whereas conceptually ordered cross-case displays present information for comparing two or more cases. The multiple types of within-case and cross-case displays are outlined in what follows.

There are many types of conceptually ordered within-case displays, including conceptually clustered matrices, thematic conceptual matrices, effects matrices, folk taxonomies, and cognitive maps. The first type of conceptually ordered within-case display, conceptually clustered matrices, connects data so that there is conceptual coherence. The matrix is created in table format with multiple research questions included. The responses to these research questions are placed in the body of the table. Ordering the data in this matrix assists the researcher in seeing possible connections among the concepts under investigation.

The second type of conceptually ordered within-case display, thematic conceptual matrices, has a foundation based on themes. Specifically, a thematic conceptual matrix reflects an ordering of themes. To create a thematic conceptual matrix, the researcher starts by clustering those data, in other words, putting similar data together and reading through them to identify underlying issues or problems. These underlying issues then are used as headings in the matrix to assist the researcher in identifying similarities and differences in the data.

The third type of conceptually ordered within-case display is an effect matrix. When researchers have complex data with multiple cases and are interested in relationships, developing an effect matrix can be beneficial. Effect matrices are appropriate when there are “ultimate” outcomes. Effect matrices help the researcher to identify occurrences of change, for example, displaying the “before” and “after” impressions of a new teaching strategy.

The fourth type of conceptually ordered within-case display is a case dynamics matrix. Here the qualitative researcher displays a set of elements for change and attempts to link consequential processes and outcomes for the purpose of initial explanation. As such, case dynamics matrices help the researcher to examine cause and effect.

Not all conceptually ordered displays are in matrix format. Network formats, including hierarchical tree diagrams, can be used. These are commonly referred to as folk taxonomies. Folk taxonomies tend to be idiosyncratic aspects that are not labeled and that can have overlapping categories. More specifically, folk taxonomies typically represent a hierarchical tree diagram that displays how a person classifies important phenomena.

When data are not hierarchical, the fifth type of conceptually ordered within-case display, a cognitive map, can be developed. Frequently cognitive maps contain data for one person—his or her thoughts, perceptions, and/or beliefs. To create a cognitive map, the researcher identifies concepts and nodes and the relationships among each.

When the researcher is interested in comparing across cases, a conceptually ordered cross-case display can be useful. The main type of conceptually ordered cross-case display is a content analytic summary table. The data in a content analytic summary table can be organized by concepts or by demographic information (e.g., job position, gender, level of ability). The foundation of a content analytic summary table is building a matrix that allows the researcher to examine the data without referencing specific cases. Matrices or decision trees commonly are used to represent the table. When generating a matrix, the researcher can use substruction or dimensionalizing, which refers to identifying underlying themes or dimensions systematically. Cross-case content analytic summary tables can illuminate how concepts play out in different cases. Other conceptually ordered cross-case displays include variable-by-variable matrices (i.e., tables that display two major variables in the rows and columns ordered by intensity with the cell entries representing the cases), causal models (i.e., networks of variables with causal connections among them to provide a stable set of propositions or hunches about the complete network of variables and their interrelationships), causal networks (i.e., comparative analyses of all cases using variables deemed to be the most influential in explaining the outcome or

criterion), and antecedent matrices (i.e., displays ordered by the outcome variable that display all of the variables that appear to change the outcome variable). Thus, the qualitative researcher has numerous ways of conceptually ordering data.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Categories; Comparative Analysis; Content Analysis; Ethnography

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CONFIDENTIALITY

Respect for confidentiality is an established principle in research ethics codes and professional codes of conduct. More broadly, in many cultures confidentiality is also considered as fundamental to human dignity. Researchers often give assurances of confidentiality to protect the privacy of research participants. This means that information shared with researchers will not be disclosed in a way that can publicly identify a participant or source.

There are many reasons for respecting confidentiality. It can protect people from embarrassment or save them from harm or stigma. Promises of confidentiality are usually necessary when researchers seek sensitive data such as information about health, sexual behaviors, drug use, tax evasion, and other personal secrets. Without confidentiality, many people either would refuse to take part in sensitive research or would be less forthcoming with the information that they share with researchers. Therefore, confidentiality helps to enhance both the quality and validity of data.

Confidentiality can be protected in various ways. Sometimes participants are truly anonymous and cannot be identified in any way, for example, when people use pseudonyms in secure internet chat rooms. Researchers may also remove identifying information from coding sheets or interview transcripts so that no

particular response can be linked to a specific person. Identifying information is sometimes stored in a secure location separate from the data that will be used for analysis. This allows researchers to keep track of participants without compromising their confidentiality.

A participant's confidential relationship with a researcher can depend heavily on the commitment the researcher makes to guarantee confidentiality. In Canada and the United States, researchers have faced legal threats to compel disclosure of confidential data. In 1993, Rik Scarce, a Washington State University graduate student, was jailed for 159 days for contempt of court when he refused to disclose information to a grand jury about animal rights activists. In 1994, Russel Ogden, a graduate student at Simon Fraser University, was subpoenaed to a coroner's inquest for his research into assisted suicides among persons with HIV and AIDS. He refused to violate a promise to his participants of "absolute confidentiality" and eventually established a common law privilege to protect against disclosure of identifying information. Since then, Ogden has resisted two more subpoenas from Crown prosecutors to a criminal trial on assisted suicide.

Although the experiences of Scarce and Ogden are relatively rare, they highlight the conflict between researchers' ethical responsibility to participants and competing obligations to law. In Canada, there have been calls for the development of law that will allow researchers to promise confidentiality without fearing a legal challenge to such promises.

In the United States, some criminological and health research can receive statute-based protections. Researchers funded by the National Institute of Justice can apply for "privacy certificates." Regardless of the funding body, health researchers can make applications to the National Institutes of Health for "certificates of confidentiality."

Russel Ogden

See also Anonymity; Harm; Privacy; Pseudonym; Sensitive Topics

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CONFIRMABILITY

In qualitative research, the actions and perceptions of participants are analyzed for their expressions of meaning within a given context. Consistent with the practices of the selected qualitative methodology used, the researcher then interprets the participant expressions through a coding or meaning-making process. In this coding process, the researcher is looking for messages that are consistent with, confirm, or expand on current knowledge and theory. From these insights, the researcher is then able to make statements about the context under study. In so doing, additional processes must be incorporated into the research design that verifies the truthfulness or meaning being asserted in the study. This is called confirmability.

Confirmability is often equated with reliability and objectivity in quantitative research. Reliability and objectivity are measures of the accuracy of the truth or meaning being expressed in the study. The epistemological function of this process is to suggest that truth and meaning are reliable only to the point where they can be verified as more than just a singular event peculiar to that specific research endeavor and researcher. This is essential because it is an academic process that moves the research beyond a one-time event into a framework where meaning and truth can be used to build on, expand, or create theory.

Confirmability is an accurate means through which to verify the two basic goals of qualitative research: (1) to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the research participants and (2) to understand the meanings people give to their experiences. Confirmability is concerned with providing evidence that the researcher's interpretations of participants' constructions are rooted in the participants' constructions and also that data analysis and the resulting findings and conclusions can be verified as reflective of and grounded in the participants' perceptions. In essence, confirmability can be expressed as the degree to which the results of the study are based on the research purpose and not altered due to researcher bias.

Although confirmability does not deny that each researcher will bring a unique perspective to the study, it requires that the researcher account for any

biases by being up front and open about them and use the appropriate qualitative methodological practices to respond to those biases. For example, a researcher using discourse analysis can have multiple coders of the same data to establish a measure of the consistency in the coding of themes. The researcher can also make the research process as transparent as possible by clearly describing how data were collected and analyzed and possibly offering examples of the coding process in the final document. Confirmability can also be expressed through an audit trail where an independent reviewer is allowed to verify the research process and interpretations of the data as consistent on both the literature and methodological levels. Selected participants can also be asked to review some of the coding and meaning-making process to determine whether the researcher's interpretations are consistent with their perceptions.

Devon Jensen

See also Audit Trail; Bias; Codes and Coding; Reliability; Research Design

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflicts of interest occur in research projects when researchers have coexisting personal, financial, political, and academic interests and the potential exists for one interest to be favored over another that has equal or even greater legitimacy in a way that might make other reasonable people feel misled or deceived. Researchers risk appearing to be negligent, incompetent, or deceptive.

Such conflicts have been best explored in the biomedical literature on cases where academics who benefit financially from industry—through research funding, consultancies, or royalties or by holding shares in companies—are more likely to reach conclusions that favor their corporate sponsors. On some occasions, they have conducted research of lower quality and have been less open to peer review.

Although social scientists may be less likely to have a financial stake in their research areas, they

may still need to negotiate financial or contractual relationships with corporations or government agencies. So, should they accept contracts where clients hold a veto over publication? Should they disclose corporate or government affiliations when advising the public or publishing research? Should they assess grant applications from commercial competitors? Many research institutions are developing enterprise cultures that make such conflicts of interest more likely.

Agencies, including professional associations, funding bodies, and university groupings, have developed responses to the threats posed by conflicts of interest. In 2002, the Committee on Assessing Integrity in Research Environments in the United States argued for transparency, urging researchers to disclose conflicts of interest to their institutions as well as in all presentations and publications that arise from their research. Some of these practices were already in place.

Qualitative researchers often use the term *conflict of interest* to describe role conflicts where their relationships with research participants involve multiple roles as researchers as well as (perhaps) teachers, clinicians, activists, colleagues, or friends. This can occur wherever researchers are embedded as insiders in their research sites, notably in action research. In such circumstances, it may be particularly difficult to negotiate informed consent, guard confidentiality, avoid harm, and convince research ethics committees that the research relationship has not been exploitative.

Institutional conflicts of interest may influence the governance and conduct of research. Some ethically acceptable research proposals might be blocked during the ethics review process because of, for example, a desire by the reviewing institution to avoid legal action. Commercial relationships maintained by research institutions can also place individual researchers in invidious positions; even if individual researchers are not directly compromised by their home institutions' corporate relationships, they could be influenced by the knowledge that their own institutions' financial health may be affected by the results of their research or, at least, may be seen as influenced.

Mark Israel and Iain Hay

See also Action Research; Confidentiality; Ethics Review Process; Informed Consent; Insider/Outsider Status; Researcher Roles

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CONNOISSEURSHIP

Connoisseurship is the skill the researcher must possess to conduct Elliot Eisner's arts-based methodology of educational criticism. Like an art critic, the educational critic perceives subtle qualitative distinctions. Through carefully crafted language, the critic enables a broad audience to see—and appreciate the educational importance of—these distinctions. Through deep expertise and subjective familiarity with the phenomenon under study, the critic has the ability to bring understanding and appreciation to a subject that might otherwise appear obtuse to the untrained eye.

The educational critic must address four areas of data analysis. First, the critic must provide a full and illuminating description of the phenomenon being studied. Second, the critic must offer an interpretation of how these details form a whole. How do the separate parts come together in a meaningful way? Third, the critic must then provide an evaluation of the goodness or worth of the phenomenon. Fourth, the critic must address thematics. These are overarching and enduring themes raised through the close study. The researcher must address all four areas to demonstrate competency as a connoisseur.

It is important that the critic achieve credibility with readers. The research must be believable. For the study to be worthy of research, the critic must address three dimensions of credibility: structural corroboration, referential adequacy, and consensual validation.

The first condition, structural corroboration, is a question of evidence. Is there sufficient information to sustain a clear argument through the dimensions of description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics?

The second condition, referential adequacy, relates to the value of the argument for understanding other similar cases. Is our perception of practice sufficiently expanded by the research that we could recognize the features of the phenomenon outside the context of this particular study? Readers must be able to fruitfully apply the insights of the research to different contexts.

The third condition, consensual validation, is concerned with whether the research moves an informed audience to carefully discuss it. The value of the research lies in the broadening dialogue it initiates. A work of educational criticism is not the final word but rather a point of departure for more rewarding conversations.

The concepts of critic and connoisseur have proven to be controversial. In the popular imagination, art critics and connoisseurs are often authoritative intellectuals who render summative, callous, and nondebatable judgments. Eisner explicitly rejected such restrictive connotations of his terms. Nevertheless, feminist researchers found the language to be oppressive. Although deeply sympathetic to Eisner's advocacy for research unabashedly guided by deep subjective knowledge, they called for a more open, and less authoritative, terminology.

Educational criticism is the first fully developed arts-based research methodology. Connoisseurship has been highly influential in the development of other arts-based methodologies, including narrative storytelling and a/r/tography.

Richard Siegesmund

See also A/r/tography; Arts-Based Research; Subjectivity

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CONSTANT COMPARISON

Constant comparison is the process used by the researcher in the collection and analysis of data for a grounded theory. It is the term used by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their 1967 book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Glaser and Strauss described the research method they called “grounded theory,” so named because the end product, or theory, is grounded in data. The method involves a social psychological examination of a social scene. This entry describes the process of constant comparison and the functions of record keeping, coding, comparison with existing

literature, and sorting as elements in the development of a grounded theory. Constant comparison is vital to every action in the process of developing a grounded theory. It could be said that it is the essence of the method.

The Process

Constant comparison can be thought of as a qualitative approach that resembles the quantitative methods of factor analysis or multiple regression in that every data bit is compared with every other data bit; however, two major differences exist. First, rather than a computer, the analyzing instrument is the researcher's brain. Second, as the theory begins to take shape, the researcher is free to alter her or his study question. For example, a researcher may enter the field looking at the experience of loss associated with home fire victims and find that those emotions are exacerbated by the rituals followed by their social nexus—rituals that can be connected or unconnected to what the victims need.

If the researcher is using interview and observational data, each episode is coded and compared with every other episode for similarities and differences to answer the question, “What is going on here?” In this method, data gathering and analysis go on simultaneously rather than at the end of data collection. The interview schedule and observation site will evolve as the developing theory begins to take shape. When the researcher is able to group analyzed data into categories, those categories are examined for how they are related to one another and then collapsed under a higher level category until the central category that explains most of variation in the data is revealed or “discovered,” as Glaser and Strauss put it. The process holds for other kinds of data, documents, and records as well as the work of other authors.

Memorandums. The mental calisthenics required of the researcher using grounded theory necessitates careful record keeping in the form of memos that represent the researcher's thoughts about the data, how the theory is coming together, and possible next steps. Later in the process these memos, through constant comparison, are sorted into categories and subcategories until it becomes clear that one central category holds the developing theory together and subcategories become properties of the central category. Sorted memos become the basis for the research report.

Theoretical Codes. Theoretical codes are regulators that transform descriptive data into an abstract or

Analysis of Rituals Used in Restructuring Life After Home Loss by Fire

"When fire destroys a home, victims endure feelings of helplessness, sadness, and depletion that are engendered by privation and the problem of restructuring their lives. How do victims process losing their homes to fire, and how does social ritual connect with their needs? With a sample of 113 people from 8 countries we found that, despite the seriousness of the problems victims face, social ritual guides support" (Stern & Kerry, 1996, p. 11).

In the fire study, June Kerry and I realized early on that the rituals in play were unhelpful because people, in general, were unaware of rituals connected to need. Rituals for marriage and death, for example, are firmly in place, but in the case of home fire, we found that the majority of people were at a loss as to what action was appropriate. We asked ourselves under what conditions were connected rituals followed. Constantly comparing our memos, we were able to develop the properties of the main category. For example, it became clear that rural dwellers supplied necessary comfort and material goods because rural citizens need to depend on one another for survival in everyday life, whereas city dwellers, who prefer to maintain separation from their neighbors, have no training or insight regarding what fire victims might need. We named the phenomena *ritual-support connection*; in other words, the most common social ritual that failed to connect to need was hardy assurances of "at least no one was hurt and the insurance will cover everything." This message belittles the victims' grief over their losses.

Source: For more information on this topic, see Stern, P. N., & Kerry, J. (1996). Restructuring life after home loss by fire. *Image: The Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 28, 9–14.

theoretical structure. There are families of codes; for example, Glaser wrote of the "six Cs": context, condition, cause, consequence, covariance, and contingency.

Comparison With Existing Literature. A grounded theory is verified by its acceptance by the targeted population, but by comparing the new knowledge with existing theory, the researcher can place her or his theory within the context of knowledge development. For example, in a study of home loss by fire, Phyllis Stern and June Kerry looked for other works on loss rituals.

Sorting. Whether using one of the various computer programs available or using the original hand method, sorting involves the constant comparison of memos to determine how the labyrinth of data connects to form an integrated grounded theory. Through sorting, the researcher can literally *see* the conceptual framework build. Using the hand method, memos are distributed into piles of memos that, in turn, are labeled as certain properties. For example in the fire study, under unconnected ritual, Stern and Kerry grouped memos about how friends and acquaintances at first expressed concern but then tried to "make it better" by pointing out the advantage of having "all new things" when what the victims needed was people to help compile the extensive lists of burned items required by their insurance companies and sympathetic ears willing to listen to their tales of grief over the loss of prized possessions, such as "the quilt grandma brought from the old country," and their places of comfort and safety—their homes.

Writing the Research Report. Judith Wuest advised that students often fail to realize how much analysis goes on while writing the research report. As the researcher struggles to explain her or his theory while comparing the memo groups, the memory of data bits that did not seem important early on come to mind, forcing the researcher to give a new twist to the evolving theory. The write-up of a grounded theory needs to grab readers, help them to understand the theory, and illuminate for them how the theory relates to their work and lives.

Phyllis Noerager Stern

See also Active Listening; Categorization; Comparative Analysis; Core Category; Data Analysis; Diaries and Journals; Emergent Design; Feminist Epistemology; First-Person Voice; Theoretical Sampling; Writing Process

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CONSTRUCTIVISM

Ontological and epistemological views in the constructivism paradigm disallow the existence of an external objective reality independent of an individual from which knowledge may be collected or gained. Instead, each individual constructs knowledge and his or her experience through social interaction. This research paradigm represents a change from the focus on explaining phenomena (*Erklärung*) typical in the natural sciences to an emphasis on understanding (*Verstehen*), which is deemed more appropriate for investigating phenomena in the human sciences. This change, referred to as the interpretive turn, was initiated during the 19th century through the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, and Max Weber, among others. These philosophers, especially, articulated how human agency and meaning-making require an approach to the human sciences that is ontologically and epistemologically different from the positivist approach that had been derived from the empiricism of the natural sciences (positivism asserts that causal knowledge of the social world can be obtained objectively through observation and experimentation). During the 20th and 21st centuries, the interpretive paradigm generally labeled as constructivism became more complex with the development of social constructivism, psychological constructivism, and radical constructivism. These approaches to research reflect varying degrees to which knowledge is socially constructed.

Theoretical Antecedents

The antipositivist movement was focused in 19th-century Germany, where scholars sought to describe the inherent differences between the human and natural sciences and, thereby, to develop a paradigm better suited for studying the social world. Essentially, these thinkers saw the need for a science that would investigate the world created by humans—the built environment, social institutions, language, culture, belief systems, and so on—and the meanings humans ascribed to their experience in this social world.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911)

Dilthey's contribution to the interpretive turn in the human sciences is in his assertion that humans must

be studied within the context of their social and cultural lives. He believed that this investigation should occur systematically and empirically, but not with the aim of developing a mechanistic explanation. Although he thought that there was an underlying order to human experience, this order was developed dialectically through humans' interactions with their social and physical environments and manifested through meaningful constructions such as myths, religions, and works of art (literary, performance, and visual). The aim of the human sciences is to understand the meaning humans give to their experience. This interpretive understanding, *Verstehen*, is a kind of knowledge that is constructed in the exchange between researcher and participant.

Dilthey's ideas were influenced by the hermeneutic tradition that originally referred to the interpretation of texts, especially scripture. Dilthey identified hermeneutics as a method for the human sciences due to the hermeneutic dependence on a knowledge of context for interpretation and the circular process of interpretation. In the hermeneutic circle, interpretation develops out of a constant back-and-forth movement between parts and the whole; one understands the meaning of a sentence based on the relationship between individual words. The meaning of individual words depends on their situation within the context of the entire sentence. This applies similarly to passages of text in relation to the entire work and, analogously, to individual experience in the social world. The process is circular in that there is no obvious starting or end point; meaning is dynamic and developed in the very process of interpretation. Dilthey was concerned, however, with the relativism that this process may engender.

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938)

Husserl's contribution to the interpretive turn in the human sciences was through his development of phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of experience through reflection. The individual reflects on an experience and describes its essences through imaginative manipulation (an intuitive grasping of what is essential about an instance). It is not a passive process but rather an active sifting through of contingencies and variables to perceive the essential character of an instance or experience. Husserl termed the awareness of the essence of a phenomenon as *Anschauung*—the realization of the insight. The constitution of

phenomena within consciousness—the realization or intuition of the essence of an experience—is historically and socially situated. In this way, intuited meaning may be constructed through researcher–participant interaction. A phenomenological methodology is especially common in interview studies in the constructivism paradigm as the researcher asks participants to reflect on their experience of a phenomenon and describe what was essentially meaningful to them. Through this reflection, both the researcher and participant gain insight, or construct knowledge, about the experience.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Weber emphasized the agency in human experience. Distinguishing action from behavior, which he described as biological and instinctive, Weber described action as guided by meaning and values. The aim of human science is to interpretively understand (*Verstehen*) the meaning an action has for an individual. This understanding is essential for trying to explain why an action occurs. In this way, Weber was trying to bridge the division between explanation and understanding as aims for social science. Weber, like Dilthey, was concerned with the relativism and subjectivism of the knowledge that may be constructed based on an actor's description of his or her motivation. Weber's influence on the constructivism paradigm is evident in social sciences research that focuses on participants' motivations such as studies of teachers' instructional decisions and planning for curricula.

The relativism of knowledge is a persistent issue in the constructivism paradigm. Efforts were made during the 20th century to develop methods for establishing the trustworthiness of knowledge warrants in constructivist research. The degree to which practitioners are comfortable with relativism is reflected in the varieties of constructivism as described in what follows.

20th-Century Developments

Moving into the 20th century, John Dewey's (1859–1952) lifelong investigation of the nature of experience and humans' interaction with their environment may be considered constructivist in his recognition that knowledge is constructed in social contexts and that students need to be active learners—not

passive recipients—of knowledge. Jean Piaget's (1896–1980) theory of cognitive development has been considered constructivist in that through activity a child constructs his or her understanding of reality. Most significant is the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), whose sociocultural learning theory states that a child develops higher mental functions through interaction with significant adults and peers. Through these interactions, a child learns language and constructs knowledge specific to his or her culture. Therefore, an individual's understanding is mediated by his or her sociohistorical context.

Constructivism during the latter 20th century included efforts to develop a methodology for understanding the meaning of human experience out of the theoretical foundation laid by German 19th-century thinkers and early to mid-20th-century philosophers and psychologists.

Research and Evaluation Methodology

Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln wrote several key works outlining the constructivist paradigm as it relates to social science inquiry, both research and evaluation. They explicitly took up the debate carried on by Dilthey, Weber, and others by articulating how constructivism is different from what they called the conventional paradigm (positivism and postpositivism). Ontologically, reality is relative, multiple, socially constructed, and ungoverned by natural laws. It claims a monistic subjectivist epistemology in which knowledge is constructed between inquirer and participant through the inquiry process itself. Inquiry is carried out through a hermeneutic methodology that is essentially dialectic and iterative and where insights and understanding emerge from the joint construction of inquirer and participant (etic and emic views).

Considering this relativist reality and subjectivist epistemology, there is a need for criteria to judge the merit of knowledge warrants in constructivist research. According to Guba and Lincoln, the positivist/postpositivist strategies for controlling threats to internal and external validity and for assessing the reliability and objectivity of a study are incongruent with the constructivist paradigm. They sought to determine the credibility—not validity—of knowledge warrants in the constructivist paradigm. A knowledge warrant may be deemed as credible if there is consensus among informed and qualified persons. A constructivist inquiry is successful if it presents increasing

understanding of its phenomenon. This relates to the criterion of generalizability as external validity in postpositivist research, but in the constructivist paradigm Guba and Lincoln identified transferability as the more salient criterion. The researcher presents increasing understanding of its phenomenon through thick description as described by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz; it is up to readers to transfer this understanding to other contexts and assess the similarity. In constructivist inquiry, an interpretation is considered to be dependable—not reliable—if the inquiry process is tracked, with changes being documented and made available for public inspection. Constructivism rejects the idea that there is objective knowledge in some external reality for the researcher to retrieve mechanistically. Instead, the researcher's values and dispositions influence the knowledge that is constructed through interaction with the phenomenon and participants in the inquiry. To determine whether the researcher's interpretations are not fictitious, data and their interpretation may be confirmed by tracking the data to their original source and transparently presenting the logic of the interpretive process and analytic strategies in the report or narrative. Finally, because constructivist research is naturalistic—inquiry happens in the settings where a phenomenon naturally occurs (e.g., classroom, medical clinic, community center)—the understanding that results must be authentic. Authenticity refers to the balanced presentation of all perspectives, values, and beliefs related to the inquiry. Criteria for determining the authenticity of an inquiry include fairness, ontological authenticity, and catalytic authenticity. Fairness relates to what extent different constructions and value structures are addressed and respected during the inquiry process and its presentation. Ontological authenticity determines how the participant's understanding of an experience or a phenomenon became more informed or substantial (possibly illustrated through member checks or audit trails) as a result of the study. Catalytic authenticity determines the degree to which action is inspired by the inquiry process.

Lincoln and Guba's discussion of the authenticity criteria came in 2000 in the second edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. It reflects growing concerns in qualitative research regarding power relations between researcher and participant, the role of the participant in inquiry, and how research may foster social justice.

Variations of Constructivism During the 21st Century

Along with the methodological developments in the constructivist paradigm is an ongoing philosophical exploration of the nature of constructivism. Although categorization is essentially flawed because there are blurred boundaries among various theories, recent scholarship (e.g., D. C. Phillips's writing) aims to provide some clarity regarding the complex landscape of constructivism by offering descriptions of major trends in the paradigm. Phillips delineated the following trends in an edited volume focused on constructivism in education.

Psychological Constructivism

Psychological constructivism addresses the epistemological questions of constructivism and is especially relevant to education as it deals with how people learn and, thereby, how instruction should be carried out. Essentially, knowledge is not acquired but rather is made (or constructed). The learner is an active participant in building knowledge, not a passive recipient of information. The educational theories of Dewey and the psychological theories of Piaget are especially influential in this realm, as is Jerome Bruner's conception of learning as individual meaning-making.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism addresses the ontological–epistemological questions of constructivism in describing the bodies of knowledge developed over human history as social constructs that do not reflect an objective external world. Everything we know has been determined by the intersection of politics, values, ideologies, religious beliefs, language, and so on. Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory, especially his work regarding language development and his theory of the zone of proximal development, is influential in this realm, as is the scholarship of the contemporary social psychologist Kenneth Gergen.

Radical Constructivism

Radical constructivism is an extreme form of psychological constructivism. It asserts that any external world is entirely a construction of an individual and

exists in that person's consciousness as his or her subjective experience. Ernst von Glasersfeld's writing reflects and describes this position. For example, in Catherine Twomey Fosnot's edited volume on constructivism, von Glasersfeld related this idea to the concept of environment in educational contexts, both the physical classroom environment and the psychological learning environment. He urged educators to remember that, from a radical constructivism epistemological view, a teacher's perception of the learning environment he or she has created (physical and psychological) is experienced and known differently by each student in that environment. Therefore, according to von Glasersfeld, there is no absolute external learning environment; there is only the perceived learning environment built in each individual student's mind.

Research in the Constructivist Paradigm

In terms of methods, constructivist qualitative research studies typically emphasize participant observation and interviewing for data generation as the researcher aims to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it. The researcher's understanding is co-constructed with that of the participants through their mutual interaction within the research setting and dialogic interaction through researcher-initiated data generation efforts such as interviewing.

Guba and Lincoln's work on developing criteria for determining the trustworthiness of interpretations produced within the constructivist paradigm provides some specificity to how one may conduct and digest research in this paradigm. The preceding historical discussion and delineation of constructivist theories provides possible conceptual frameworks to guide and understand research in this paradigm. For example, Husserl's phenomenology, adapted and developed by contemporary qualitative researchers such as Max von Manen, is a common methodological framework for constructivist research studies. Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory is an oft-cited theoretical framework in constructivist educational research. For example, Christine Thompson and Sandra Bales described the nature of preschool and kindergarten children's talk surrounding voluntary art activities in an art classroom using a phenomenological methodology in that they observed and recorded students' speech and drawing acts within the specific social context of an art classroom and reflected on what

these acts might mean for the role of speech in early childhood artistic expression. They used the theories of both Vygotsky and Piaget to understand students' use of language in this specific context and area of cognitive development.

Future Directions

The general constructivist paradigm is becoming obscured by the dominating influence of the transformative paradigm in 21st-century qualitative research. The transformative paradigm, which includes feminist critical theory and participatory action research methodologies, grows out of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations of constructivism but has an explicitly social reconstructionist agenda that aims to promote social justice through research and evaluation.

Tracie E. Costantino

See also Context-Centered Knowledge; Hermeneutics; Interpretive Research; Phenomenology; Relativism; Social Constructionism

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CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes. Qualitative content analysis is sometimes referred to as latent content analysis. This analytic method is a way of reducing data and making sense of them—of deriving meaning. It is a commonly used method of analyzing a wide range of textual data, including interview transcripts, recorded observations, narratives, responses to open-ended questionnaire items, speeches, postings to listservs, and media such as drawings, photographs, and video.

Content analysis is a method that is independent of theoretical perspective or framework (e.g., grounded theory, phenomenology) but has its beginnings as a quantitative method. Where quantitative content analysis is helpful in answering "what" questions, qualitative content analysis can be helpful in answering "why" questions and analyzing perceptions. It is commonly associated with mass communications research, but it is widely applied in the social sciences whenever textual data are analyzed. In qualitative research, content analysis is interpretive, involving close reading of text. Qualitative researchers using a content analytic approach recognize that text is open to subjective interpretation, reflects multiple meanings, and is context dependent (e.g., part of a larger discourse). This entry describes how qualitative content analysis is used and how to use it well.

When analyzing qualitative data such as interview transcripts, analyses across the whole set of data typically produce clusters or codes that translate into

"themes." For example, an interview study that explores the experience of new parenthood may produce interview transcripts that are analyzed for content related to themes ranging from stress to social isolation to joy. Those themes may have been identified a priori, so that the researcher seeks evidence for participants' expressions relating to those themes, or may simply emerge from the analysis of the transcripts. Textual data include nonwritten text, such as photographic data, equally open to content analysis. In this case, the researcher may identify content as straightforwardly as identifying objects evident in photographs or may conduct more subtle analyses of symbolic communications that can be unconsciously discerned from a physical space. The level at which content analysis occurs varies widely, from obvious surface-level groups of similar responses to a particular interview question to deeper inductive insights inferred from more sustained, iterative, and recursive interaction with textual data. For example, the varying connotations associated with particular words used by participants, or the degrees of enthusiasm expressed about an issue, are open to content analysis. Regardless of the level at which analysis occurs, the fundamental principle is that content is recognized.

In the case of the written word, that content is often subject related (i.e., analyses refer to the "aboutness" of text). For example, content analysis could be applied to the official reports and policies of an organization; such an analysis may identify the stated priorities of that organization as well as reveal implicit political perspectives. Thus, content analysis is useful for identifying both conscious and unconscious messages communicated by text (i.e., what is stated explicitly as well as what is implied or revealed by the manner in which content is expressed). The results of a content analysis may reveal recurrent instances of "items" or themes, or they may reveal broader discourses. The "categories" or clusters of data identified may represent discrete instances (i.e., something is apparent or not), or they may be represented as degrees of attributes, such as direction and intensity, or qualities (i.e., a quality such as joy is evident to some degree rather than simply present or absent). Identifying themes or categories is usually an iterative process, so the researcher spends time revisiting categories identified previously and combining or dividing them, resolving contradictions, as the text is analyzed over and over. It is also important to note that a single piece of text (e.g., one sentence from an

interview transcript) may be relevant to more than one category or theme. When applying labels to categories, it is good practice to use language consistent with that used in the text under analysis. For example, if new parents in an interview study tend to use the word *joy* to describe one of their experiences, then the researcher should use that word, rather than a synonym such as *happiness*, to label that theme. This practice is related to the need to remain true to the source of the text. As much as possible, the results of a content analysis should make sense and resonate accurately with the producers of that text (e.g., with interview participants).

In quantitative work, content analysis is applied in a deductive manner, producing frequencies of preselected categories or values associated with particular variables. A qualitative approach to content analysis, however, is typically inductive, beginning with deep close reading of text and attempting to uncover the less obvious contextual or latent content therein. For example, a researcher seeking to understand participants' experiences or understandings of a phenomenon of interest is likely to use such an inductive approach to analysis of interview data. The quantitative or qualitative approaches may be combined within a single research study depending on the purpose of the analysis.

Validity and reliability are key to robust content analysis. In qualitative terms, the researcher doing a qualitative content analysis seeks trustworthiness and credibility by conducting iterative analyses, seeking negative or contradictory examples, seeking confirmatory data through methodological triangulation, and providing supporting examples for conclusions drawn. For example, using more than one researcher to analyze the data and seeking agreement between different researchers on the content identified is a common method of improving trustworthiness. In qualitative content analysis, a reliability coefficient of .60 (i.e., 60% agreement between different coders) is considered acceptable. Because meaning is context dependent and subjective, a single piece of text can indeed be open to different qualitative interpretations by different researchers. Reliability of judgment remains important nevertheless, and researchers must always be mindful of the perspectives they bring to their analytic work as well as of the context for the text being analyzed. In addition, once thematic categories are identified, the careful researcher attempts to ensure that the groupings or categories of data are carefully defined in

ways that are comprehensive (i.e., they cover all categories identifiable in the data set and all relevant data are categorized) and mutually exclusive (i.e., their definitions do not overlap). These are important intellectual principles that increase trustworthiness of the analyses and conclusions. The researcher also should consider what is missing or not present in the text being analyzed. For example, if new parents do not mention any positive emotions in interviews, then this absence is also worthy of attention and interpretation.

Content analysis is an intellectual process, but the outcomes of that thinking must be recorded in some way. Practically speaking, content analysis can be accomplished using very low-tech materials such as a pencil and paper, colored sticky notes, or colored felt pens. These tools are likely sufficient for relatively small amounts of text such as a small number of interview transcripts. However, several useful software packages, such as NVivo, are very helpful tools for handling larger quantities of data. These tools can assist the researcher in organizing intellectual work quickly and in bringing identified categories of data together for easy comparison. These programs also offer tools to define categories, annotate text, write memos, and calculate frequencies of categories and codes. Using a computer does not reduce the need for intellectual effort on the part of the researcher, but doing so certainly provides help in recording and organizing the results of that effort.

As an analytic method, content analysis is very flexible, providing a systematic way of synthesizing a wide range of data. It can be a useful way of analyzing longitudinal data to demonstrate change over time and is nonintrusive because it is applied to data already collected or existing text.

Heidi Julien

See also Data Analysis; Document Analysis; NVivo (Software); Textual Analysis; Thematic Coding and Analysis; Themes

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CONTEXT AND CONTEXTUALITY

Central to most forms of qualitative inquiry is the idea that human actions, of whatever kind, can be properly understood only *in context*—that by their very nature they are *situated*. In these terms, quantitative methods are often criticized for effectively stripping what people say and do out of their normal contexts. Instead of this, qualitative researchers generally seek to gather data in “natural” settings and in ways that are sensitive to the contexts in which the data were generated.

At the same time, there are some significant differences among qualitative researchers over what taking account of context means. One dimension concerns whether the emphasis is on local or wider contexts—whether the focus is micro or macro. Microethnography emphasizes the role of immediate context in shaping action. In contrast, other kinds of qualitative research insist that we cannot understand what goes on in any local situation without viewing it within the context of the larger national society or, indeed, of global processes.

A second dimension concerns how context is to be identified. Some see social context as socially defined by participants. The researcher’s task, therefore, is to document how people interpret the situation they are in, either by means of in-depth interviews or through close analysis of processes of social interaction. For example, those influenced by conversation analysis argue that contextualization is ongoingly accomplished through actors displaying the context of their actions to one another, with this being essential to communication and the coordination of action. The task of the analyst, then, is to document how contexts are displayed and ratified in and through processes of social interaction.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who see the specification of context as the task of the analyst, drawing on theory. Here the very rationale for research is that people will not be aware of the context

in terms of which their actions can be properly understood. This is because relevant parts of this context will be either below or beyond their awareness—whether in the form of unconscious psychodynamic processes, macrohistorical structures, or both.

A third dimension concerns the ontological status of any definition of context. Is it discovered or constructed? All of the approaches discussed up to now tend to treat context as an objective feature of the world being studied. However, other qualitative researchers treat context as necessarily relative to purpose and perspective. It is argued that, in understanding anything, the analyst cannot avoid relying on inherited background assumptions, and these provide the context for what is observed. Nor does this process need to be interpreted in entirely cognitivist terms; the role of emotional response may also be acknowledged. There is an alternative version of this argument that can be termed postmodernist in broad terms. Here context is essentially arbitrary; there are many incommensurable contexts in which we could locate what we are studying in the sense that a host of stories could be told. There is no notion of validity, in the sense of correspondence with reality, on which we can draw to privilege one definition of context over another. Other selection criteria—political, ethical, or aesthetic—must be used. Moreover, none of these can be treated as being of universal value.

Involved in these various approaches to identifying context are quite fundamental differences in view about the purpose and character of social science. At the same time, much qualitative research mixes these orientations to one degree or another. For example, it generally seeks both to take account of how people define the contexts in which they act and to provide more analytic characterizations of context for the purpose of explaining their actions. Furthermore, although few researchers adopt what we label here as the postmodernist position, many acknowledge the extent to which the analyses they produce reflect who they are.

The concept of context is also implicated in ideas about what qualitative inquiry produces. It is often argued that quantitative methods seek to produce abstract general knowledge about social and psychological processes, whereas qualitative research is idiographic in character, being concerned with providing thick descriptions of particular contexts. Sometimes this amounts to a denial that generalization is possible; instead, readers must use these thick descriptions to make sense of new situations for themselves, engaging in a form of naturalistic generalization.

Of course, many qualitative researchers do seek to develop general theoretical models, but at the same time they seek to give due attention to the particularities of the cases they study. This is true, for example, of those working in the tradition of grounded theorizing. Here, and elsewhere, there is an attempt to blend the idiographic and nomothetic.

One area of qualitative inquiry that throws up issues about context in an especially interesting and difficult way is the study of online communities. Some researchers treat context here as entirely that which is enacted on the relevant websites. Others insist that people's online and offline lives are usually interwoven in complex ways so that a much broader focus must be adopted.

Another area that highlights the issue of context is the reuse of archived qualitative data. Can those data provide access to the original context in which a study was done? Can they be "reconceptualized" in a way that both retains their integrity and provides the basis for a new analysis? Here all of the problems surrounding context outlined above reemerge in various ways.

The notion of context, then, is central to qualitative inquiry. At the same time, it is a complex and contested concept.

Martyn Hammersley

See also Conversation Analysis; Emic/Etic Distinction; Generalizability; Indexicality; Virtual Ethnography; Virtual Research

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CONTEXT-CENTERED KNOWLEDGE

Context-centered knowledge is most generally related to action research. Action research is problem focused, particularly as those problems relate to specific locales or settings. Thus, the knowledge generated from action research is a result of a set of circumstances and occurrences that can also attend to the sociocultural contexts in which the research problem arose. In addition, knowledge generated in these contexts is action oriented and geared toward creating positive change.

Communicating the results, or the knowledge that actors within a setting generate in response to the problem, to an audience whose members are unfamiliar with the setting is often a challenge. This challenge may be more acute given that in many epistemological frameworks the expectation is that the results will be immediately transferable and relevant to all settings. Within particular epistemological frameworks, when the knowledge generated from a specific setting appears to be context specific and unique, it is often dismissed as too subjective and not useful for other settings; however, the specificity of the setting and the results that emerge from within can be informative rather than detracting. Moreover, the specificity, or the uniqueness of the results because of the locale/setting, can provide insights on how to approach an answer to a problem.

Researchers who use ethnographic methods attend to context-centered knowledge similarly to researchers who use action research methods. However, the intent of research might not always be problem centered; instead, it might be to illuminate the beliefs and experiences of a particular group for the sake of illuminating that group.

For example, Black feminist researchers who have examined the pedagogy of Black women teachers situate the teachers' practices within their local settings and focus the analysis on how the teachers make sense of their practices. In addition, these researchers argue that the context—living in the United States and being a woman of color—provides an angle of vision that informs and influences the teachers' pedagogy. In this way, research of this nature also draws on standpoint theory and argues that the knowledge generated from the research provides an understanding of not only teaching but also the specific teaching practices of Black women. Similarly, Indigenous researchers argue that the knowledge generated from their research, which is action oriented but not classified as

action research, is specific to the context and reflects the epistemological framework of the community.

By the same token, researchers who draw on critical race theory as a theoretical framework draw on the context of the project to examine and redress issues related to race, racism, and other forms of marginalization that intersect with race. Although researchers who use critical race theory as a theoretical framework have social justice and social change as the ultimate intent of their research, critical race theory is not related to action research to the extent that it is interventional or offers an intervention. Quite often researchers who use critical race theory draw on context-centered knowledge as a means to illuminate both inequity and responses to inequity.

Adrienne Dixon

See also Action Research; Critical Race Theory; Ethnography; Feminist Epistemology; Social Justice

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CONVENIENCE SAMPLE

A convenience sample can be defined as a sample in which research participants are selected based on their ease of availability. Essentially, individuals who are the most ready, willing, and able to participate in the study are the ones who are selected to participate. In qualitative research, it may be helpful to use a convenience sample to test the appropriateness of interview questions in an inexpensive and quick way by approaching an interested group of people first before embarking on a larger, longer, and more expensive study.

One common example of convenience sampling is found in psychology, where introductory psychology

students are frequently recruited to answer psychologically oriented research questions, such as their motivation to exercise, as part of their introductory coursework in psychological research. In essence, these students have been asked to answer questions about their motivation to exercise because they are readily accessible. That is, the researcher could recruit them directly from introductory psychology classes and did not need to venture into the wider community to conduct the research.

Although this type of sampling technique can most assuredly save the researcher time and money at the recruitment stage, it is not without its drawbacks. If the researcher recruits students from a psychology class at a particular academic institution, for example, it is difficult to know whether or not the students' motivation to exercise is reflective of motivation to exercise in other contexts. Similarly, it may be that students are perhaps less motivated to exercise than members of the larger society because they are too busy with their coursework. Hence, it is difficult to assess whether or not the study's findings regarding motivation to exercise can apply to students and the population at large. For this reason, convenience samples can lack transferability (or external validity) in qualitative research. In quantitative projects, it can be difficult to generalize the results beyond the original sample from which the data were collected. However, because qualitative researchers are typically interested in studying specific groups of people rather than generalizing to larger populations, it may be tempting for researchers to view this issue as a less significant problem than it is for quantitative researchers. However, it is still important to be aware that the participants recruited are not necessarily reflective of the population being studied. For example, when recruiting for a study about the views of breast-feeding mothers, it is possible that those who answer the advertisement and come to talk to the researchers are the ones with the strongest opinions. They may be individuals who have the most vested interest in sharing their stories because they want to effect change in society's attitudes toward breast-feeding. With this in mind, qualitative researchers should be aware that the people who are recruited most readily are not necessarily reflective of all viewpoints.

In sum, a convenience sample can be described as a group of participants who have been recruited for a given study because they were readily accessible. Using a convenience sample can be both time- and

cost-effective, but caution about the nature of the results should be considered in their interpretation.

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Nonprobability Sampling; Purposive Sampling; Sampling; Snowball Sampling

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CONVERGENT INTERVIEWING

Convergent interviewing (CI) is a technique developed by Bob Dick from the University of Queensland in Australia. CI aims to collect, analyze, and interpret people's experiences, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that converge around a set of interviews. It was created primarily to address issues in underresearched areas. Although used and documented mainly by Australian researchers in marketing/business disciplines with foci on organizational change and development, it has been extended and adapted to broader social science and health research. This entry describes the CI process and compares and contrasts it with other qualitative techniques and methods. CI provides a mechanism to flexibly structure research projects while using unstructured content to enable greater reflexivity throughout the different phases of research.

CI permits in-depth interviewing by promoting a cyclical research process that requires ongoing analysis as part of the overall strategy. It is most suitably applied when multiple interviewers are being used in a project, and its aim is to document priority issues when these converge over a series of interviews. According to David Carson and colleagues, this process is iterative and, thus, enables continuous refinement. Interviewers engage in a constant comparative reflexive process that permits detailed rich content and theoretical sampling as researchers seek to continuously test emerging interpretations from early interviews in subsequent interviews.

Although designed to accommodate the use of multiple interviewers, a single interviewer can be used

provided that he or she can hold discussions with one or more members of the research team. CI provides a structured process while using unstructured content to enable greater reflexivity throughout the different phases of research.

Several aspects of CI bear mentioning, including use of prior literature, sampling, designing the interview questions, data capture, and comparing and contrasting during the interview process through to the analysis phases.

Prior Literature

Unlike with grounded theory approaches and earlier articulations of CI, Bob Dick encouraged researchers to engage with the literature from the beginning. Prior knowledge is designed to facilitate the development of rapport (interviewers/researchers can make more convincing "sounds" showing their understanding of what participants are expressing), to enable researchers to recognize potential priority issues (arising out of discussions with participants as well as the literature), to aid in the development of a relevantly worded opening question (which can keep participants talking without needing to ask additional questions), to assist in the selection of an appropriate sample, and to increase researchers' confidence when conducting interviews. As Carson and colleagues noted, engaging with the literature throughout the process—both data collection and data analysis—permits an "unfolding" of the literature as priority issues emerge from the interviews.

Sampling and Developing Interview Questions

Sampling is heterogeneous, seeking maximum variation that may be augmented through snowball sampling strategies as deemed appropriate. Participants are sampled as information-rich cases where each subsequent interview is designed to pursue areas of agreement or disagreement on what the priority issues are for the phenomenon under study. To accomplish this, a very general opening question is used to guide the process. This opening question is designed to have the participant speak for a long period of time (up to an hour) without the interviewer needing to ask additional questions beyond gentle follow-ups on what is raised specifically by the respondent; for example, when the

respondent discusses issues of trust, the interviewer might say, “Trust? Please elaborate.” Dick argued that this type of approach helps to ensure that the interviewer does not guide or introduce the content.

The development of the opening interview question requires the participant to comment on, or share a story about, both the strengths and weaknesses, or what was “good” and “bad,” about the phenomenon under study. Although seemingly similar to the critical incident technique, the CI process differs in fundamental ways. Unlike with the critical incident technique, its interviewers do not present participants with a brief statement for their comment on the activity, nor do they query how observed behavior is to be evaluated and classified. Moreover, the CI process does not involve the interview guide being developed prior to data collection (beyond the general opening question), nor are interview questions direct and typically sequential as they tend to be in critical incident interviewing techniques. Rather, the interview guide is developed and built on over time using topics raised during earlier interviews in subsequent interviews as convergence over priority issues is sought through constant comparison.

Data Capture

Dick originally preferred that researchers adopt a self-designed memory system of 20 keywords raised in the interview to reconstruct the key ideas from the interview rather than rely on audiorecordings. However, alternative approaches using CI that have evolved

encourage the use of audiorecordings, and Dick even softened his stance on this point. Like grounded theory approaches, CI encourages the interviewer-researchers to faithfully produce short notes and fieldnotes in addition to making audiorecordings of interviews for later transcription. Fieldnotes also facilitate the discussions of priority issues emerging from the interviews between interviewers.

Comparing and Contrasting

Dick designed CI to accommodate multiple interviewers; although this is not always feasible in academic projects due to limited resources. In many projects, the use of multiple interviewers can introduce substantial variation in quality and reliability that can be minimized if interviewers are given prior training and use a standardized interview guide. However, in CI the ideal circumstance is to have multiple interviewers working in pairs but conducting their own individual interviews. This process involves the interviewers meeting following each pair of interviews to discuss what ideas or issues were raised by participants. They check for early convergence and develop questions to be asked only after the original opening question has been exhausted to verify areas of agreement or disagreement. With each discussion among the interviewers, more prompts are developed over the course of data collection but often are not asked because participants themselves raise these areas unprompted by the researcher. These frequent discussions among the interviewers are designed to ensure that areas of

Table 1 An Example Matrix of Agreements and Disagreements About Issues in Five Convergent Interviews

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Issue</i>						
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
A	Yes	Yes	–	–	–	–	–
B	Agree	Disagree	Yes	Yes	–	–	–
C	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Yes	Yes	–
D	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	–	Yes
E	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Source: Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Gronhaug, K., & Perry, C. (2001). *Qualitative research in marketing*. London: Sage. Reprinted with permission by Sage Publications, Ltd.

Notes: This table is for illustrative purposes only. To illustrate, Respondent A raises two issues during the interview. Respondent B agrees with Issue 1 but disagrees with Issue 2. Respondent B also raises Issues 3 and 4. Respondent C agrees with Issues 1, 3, and 4 but disagrees with Issue 2 and raises Issues 5 and 6 and so forth.

agreement and disagreement are consistent across the sample and that no new priority areas or disagreements are being introduced.

Frequent discussions among interviewers also facilitate preliminary and detailed analysis. Unlike with grounded theory, where early analysis can lead researchers in unanticipated directions or necessitate greater sampling, the inherent process of CI forces interviewers to identify differences as the interviews progress. By capitalizing on the use of multiple interviewers, it is possible to reach saturation or convergence on priority issues more quickly because interviewers can gain from the experiences of other participants that they did not personally interview. These iterative discussions between the interviewers may also ensure that the epistemology (theories of knowledge or how knowledge is demonstrated) and ontology (examples of social reality) of the research project are maintained throughout the process of data collection and data analysis. These discussions can also overcome obstacles that may arise when dealing with large multidisciplinary research teams. S. Michelle Driedger and colleagues presented a more detailed discussion of how CI facilitates this by making explicit project epistemologies and ontologies.

Table 1 illustrates the CI process.

S. Michelle Driedger

See also Constant Comparison; Critical Incident Technique; Data Saturation; Grounded Theory; Interviewing; Reflexivity

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CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Conversational interviewing is an approach used by research interviewers to generate verbal data through talking about specified topics with research participants in an informal and conversational way. Although all qualitative interviewing relies on speakers' everyday conversational resources, conversational interviewing foregrounds aspects of sociability, reciprocity, and symmetry in turn taking found in mundane conversation.

Whether research interviews are structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, interviewers and interviewees rely on taken-for-granted assumptions about how everyday talk occurs and how speakers make meaning of one another's utterances. In emphasizing features of mundane conversation, conversational interviewers strive to facilitate a research environment in which participants feel free to participate in extended discussions of research topics in a less hierarchical environment than that convened in structured interview settings.

Conversational interviews have long been used by anthropologists and sociologists to talk to people for the purpose of generating data in field studies and ethnographic work. Although this form of interviewing is used by ethnographic researchers undertaking prolonged fieldwork, it is also popular among qualitative researchers who use open-ended, in-depth, or unstructured interview formats and among researchers who advocate feminist and emancipatory approaches to research interviewing.

Methodological discussions of qualitative interviewing have frequently associated conversation with research interviews. Regardless of the theoretical orientation taken by different methodologists, the notion that conversation is synonymous with interview is widespread and the qualitative interview has been

described variously as a “guided conversation,” a “conversation with a purpose,” a “professional conversation,” and a “directed conversation.” Although ordinary conversation is the bedrock on which interview interaction relies, there are distinct differences between conversational talk and interview interaction.

Contrasting Conversation and Research Interviews

Research interviews are frequently conducted with strangers, and researchers must first arrange a time and place for talking with research participants—either in person or via telephone. The scheduling involved in research interviews is unlike the haphazardness inherent in everyday conversation. In making use of conversational interviews in prolonged fieldwork, ethnographic interviewers are better able to emulate the spontaneity of conversation in their interviewing practice when they pose casual questions to participants about what is going on as part of their participant observations. Qualitative researchers must abide by institutional procedures for informed consent, and the requirements for obtaining written or oral consent from participants for their participation in research also deviate from everyday conversation. Thus, conversational interviewers must work against these formal constraints by simultaneously orienting participants to the purpose of upcoming interaction and setting an informal and casual tone for extended conversation.

Conversations routinely take place between people who are known to one another; thus, rapport building is not necessarily facilitated in the talk *prior to* a conversation but might be thought of as being produced by good conversation. In everyday life, initiating conversations with strangers is a delicate task, and topics must be introduced judiciously by speakers if the interaction is to be prolonged. Just as initiating conversations with strangers is delicate work, conversational interviews with strangers must be handled with sensitivity, and talk leading up to the discussion of research topics is thought to be important for rapport building. Thus, conversational interviews require that at the outset of interviews, researchers facilitate the kind of small talk familiar to conversationalists who have just met; for example, in Western societies, this could include observations concerning travel, weather, or occupations. Conversational *entrées* to research interviews are seen to facilitate openness, informality, and rapport between interviewers and interviewees.

Viewed superficially, everyday conversation seems chaotic and unfocused, with speakers collaboratively involved in asking and responding to questions in an interactive sequence that involves new topics and continuous clarification of speakers’ meanings. Conversation analysts have shown mundane conversation to be complex, with routine sequences that speakers deliberately use as resources to accomplish daily activities such as greetings, making excuses, apologizing, complaining, and closing conversations. In research interviews, the central activity is generating data via question-and-answer sequences, and researchers set the scene for subsequent interview talk by providing participants with an outline of the research topic. Interviewers pose questions and follow up speakers’ answers with requests or probes for further explanation. Conversational interviewers strive to create a friendly and informal atmosphere in which participants are respected as equal partners who are free to share their understandings concerning the research topic.

Everyday conversations generally do not have a preset topical agenda for talk; in contrast, researchers use questions drawn from a semi-structured interview protocol or a list of prepared topics to introduce topics of interest into conversational interviews. Whereas in structured interviews there is little opportunity for interviewees to introduce new topics or ask questions, conversational interviewers are open to new directions in the talk provided by participants and are likely to respond in an open and authentic way to questions that interviewees might pose to them.

In everyday conversation, speakers do not necessarily unpack statements made by others in systematic ways. Consider, for example, the following exchange:

Speaker A: How’s work?

Speaker B: It’s going well.

In a conversation with a friend, Speaker A would be unlikely to reply to Speaker B with, “Tell me more about what is going well for you at work,” and without other nonverbal cues from Speaker B, Speaker A would likely move to a new topic of talk. Conversational interviewers, however, unpack the “glosses” provided by interviewees. Thus, in response to the same question in an interview setting, Speaker A’s response to Speaker B’s utterance might not be out of place. Because the utterances made by both speakers in a conversational interview are produced for research purposes, the

interviewer is more likely to take the roles of topic initiator, question poser, and clarification seeker than is the interviewee. The interviewer's ability to pose questions, seek further explanation, and initiate topics as part of his or her research agenda, then, tends to produce a more asymmetrical relationship than one might see in ordinary conversation between equals.

Finally, in everyday conversations, it would be unusual for interaction to be recorded. In conversational interviews, with the prior consent of participants, researchers will make written records of participants' utterances that will become data for analysis and interpretation, and excerpts will be used for research reports. Whereas early qualitative researchers frequently relied on handwritten notes from research interviews that were expanded at a later point in time, qualitative researchers today commonly audio- or videorecord interviews for transcription, analysis, and interpretation.

Issues in Using Conversational Interviews

Although conversational interviewing as a format for eliciting data for research projects has become increasingly favored by qualitative researchers, there are both benefits and limitations to this approach to data generation. A friendly and skilled interviewer facilitates an in-depth exchange with research participants through the use of conversational interaction. Conversational strategies include incorporating informal talk, showing flexibility in allowing topic shifts and questions from interviewees, inviting reciprocity by openly responding to questions and comments from interviewees, and treating conversational partners sociably—with respect, care, and intensive listening. In response to this framing of the interview by the researcher, interviewees may provide confessional and self-revealing details about their lived experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. Although some methodologists have referred to data generated in such exchanges as more authentic than those derived in more structured formats, others have critiqued this view of interviewing as naive and simplistic, instead emphasizing the manipulative potential of conversational interviewing. In generating disclosure from their participants via casual, friendly, and informal interview formats, researchers may be accused of manipulating their participants for personal gain.

Furthermore, data generated via conversation provide much potential for manipulation by researchers

as they code, analyze, interpret, and represent speakers' words. Researchers using conversational interviews in their work must address a range of questions concerning data generation and representation: When is it appropriate for a researcher to contribute personal accounts and views to the interaction? What are the implications of a researcher's contributions to the talk for what participants say next? Given that speakers' talk routinely includes slips and repairs, what features of talk should be transcribed and how should talk be edited for final reports? How much of a researcher's contribution to the generation of the talk should be included in reports? What means of analysis should be used for conversational talk in which both speakers contribute to equal degrees?

Given that interviewing as a method of data generation is complex work, relying on the conversational skills of both interviewer and interviewee, the answers to these questions are likely to be different for each and every researcher in each and every interview encounter.

Kathryn J. Roulston

See also Focus Groups; In-Depth Interview; Probes and Probing; Semi-Structured Interview; Structured Interview; Unstructured Interview

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CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Conversation analysis (CA) has become the established label for a quite specific approach to the analysis of interaction that emerged during the 1960s in the work

of Harvey Sacks and his coworkers Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Its basic interest was sociological—understanding social order. As such, it was inspired by the sociological perspective of Erving Goffman and the ethnomethodology as developed at the time by Harold Garfinkel. Conversation, or talk-in-interaction as it later came to be called, was chosen as its field of application because the creation and maintenance of social order could be studied in detail by inspecting recordings of actual interactions. As it developed, the method of CA was refined and attracted a still growing number of practitioners, not only from sociology but also from linguistics, anthropology, communication studies, and psychology. Its original impetus and way of working have, however, remained essentially the same. What follows is a sketch of the general properties of CA as a unique approach in the human sciences and then an indication of some of its applications.

To explain what CA is, one can characterize the typical CA research process in terms of a sequence of phases. CA research is essentially a data-driven endeavor, so it starts with the collection of data. Researchers in CA work on audio- or videorecordings of interactions that are “naturally occurring,” meaning that they are not arranged or provoked by the researcher as in experiments or interviews. For CA as such—“pure CA”—there are in principle, and often in practice, no further requirements or limitations, although for specialized forms of “applied CA” it makes sense to collect recordings of specific types of situations.

These recordings are then carefully transcribed using a set of conventions developed by Gail Jefferson. Apart from the words-as-spoken, these conventions allow the researcher to highlight a range of “production detail” concerning timing, intonation, and the like that have been proven to be important for the organization of the interaction.

Listening to the recording and reading the transcript, the analyst tries to understand what the interactants are doing “organizationally” when they speak as they do. They may, for instance, be requesting information, offering to tell a story, or changing the topic. Such understandings will be based, first, on the researcher’s membership knowledge as, one might say, a “cultural colleague” of the speakers. Second, however, the analyst will check the sequential context and especially the uptake of the utterances in question in subsequent talk immediately following (e.g., by granting a request) or later in the conversation.

However, understanding the actions is not the purpose of the research but rather a necessary requirement

for the next step, which is to formulate the procedures used to accomplish the actions-as-understood. CA’s interest is organizational and procedural. The ultimate object of CA research is what Schegloff called the “procedural infrastructure of interaction” and, in particular, the practices of talking in conversation. This means that conversational practices are analyzed not in terms of individual properties or institutional expectations but rather as situated accomplishments.

It is often recommended that the researcher approach data with an open mind, that is, without pre-formulated interests, questions, or hypotheses (except the general organizational and procedural orientation). The idea is that inspecting the data in this way will raise an interest in the researcher’s mind that can be used as a starting point for a more systematic exploration of an emerging analytic theme. The researcher searches the available data for instances that seem to be similar to the “candidate phenomenon” that inspired the first formulation of the theme as well as data that seem to point in a different direction—the so-called deviant case analysis. It may also be useful to collect new data to expand the analysis. In short, the researcher builds a collection of relevant cases in search of patterns that help to elucidate some procedural issues.

Core interests of CA have been the organization of turn taking, sequential organization, and “repair”—how participants deal with problems of understanding. On these and other matters, CA research has produced a range of insights into the organization of talk-in-interaction that can be “applied” to an enormous variety of social situations in which talking together plays an essential role. The following are just a few that have been researched extensively: doctor–patient interaction, news interviews, police interrogations, court sessions, school settings, research interviews, talk of pilots in airline cockpits, and emergency calls. Researchers using video have extended the analysis of talk-in-interaction to include visual aspects such as gaze, gesture, body posture, and the use of various material artifacts. This extension has been most fruitful in the study of work practices in technologically complex environments—so-called workplace studies. CA has also been used to elucidate problems and solutions in the interaction with communicatively impaired persons. Linguists have used CA to throw new light on properties of language-as-spoken, in contrast to language-as-written, as well as on the ways in which properties of various languages have an impact on how talk using such languages gets organized. For some social psychologists, CA has become a major influence in what they call “discursive psychology.”

In all of these branches and applications, the original methods developed by Sacks and his coworkers during the 1960s are still being used fruitfully.

Paul ten Have

See also Audiorecording; Discursive Psychology; Ethnomethodology; Videorecording

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CORE CATEGORY

The concept of core category is most often associated with the grounded theory method developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, but it has been used in relation to other qualitative methods such as phenomenology. The terminology varies, and a core category may sometimes be referred to or indexed as a core theme, core meaning, core variable, or central category. A core category is the main theme, storyline, or process that subsumes and integrates all lower level categories in a grounded theory, encapsulates the data efficiently at the most abstract level, and is the category with the strongest explanatory power.

Core categories are identified and developed through the process of coding textual data. Three iterative stages of coding are outlined in grounded theory procedures. First, open coding is the process during which the researcher develops and refines codes through the constant comparison of phenomena in line-by-line scrutiny of the data. Second, during axial coding, relationships between these codes are identified and links between them are articulated. As these two stages progress, core categories develop and

theory appears to cohere around them. Memos and diagrams aid axial coding through helping to identify core categories and show where the gaps are in the developing theory. Third, selective coding is used to saturate weak categories and fill gaps through returning to the original material and/or coding new material gathered specifically for this purpose. A common mistake is to commit to a core category too early in an analysis—before the scheme has been tested and verified against enough data. The general advice is to develop and write up theory around one core category at a time because this should constitute a substantial enough task.

Core categories are always theoretical and abstract, and sometimes they represent basic social (or structural) processes (BSPs). Not all grounded theory studies will identify a BSP, but when they do it is usually the organizing principle of the theory. BSPs are important in accounting for change over time and understanding how phenomena evolve, and often they contain an “-ing.” So, examples of core categories from the published literature include “integrating novelty” (from a study examining the transformational experience of insight) and “holding” (from a study of the use of transitional objects in psychotherapy) but also “relational closeness” (from a study of adult mother–daughter relationships).

There is some debate as to whether categories, including the core category, of a grounded theory analysis should be considered to have “emerged” from, or been “discovered” in, the data or whether categories should be conceptualized as having been constructed by, and hence an interpretation of, the researcher. The language of the original works on grounded theory suggests the former; however, the trend in grounded theory research today is toward constructionist interpretations. This has been clearly explored and articulated in the work of Kathy Charmaz.

Anna Madill

See also Grounded Theory

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COUNTERNARRATIVE

In their broadest formulation, counternarratives are stories/narratives that splinter widely accepted truths about people, cultures, and institutions as well as the value of those institutions and the knowledge produced by and within those cultural institutions. The term *counternarrative* itself clearly highlights its essence in expressing skepticism of narratives that claim the authority of knowledge of human experience or narratives that make grand claims about what is to be taken as truth. This entry describes the nature and potential effects of two types of counternarratives identified by scholars: one that challenges the assumption of the West as superior and one that focuses on the knowledge of those who are marginalized within a society.

The first form of counternarrative challenges modernist grand narratives that position the West at the pinnacle of development and civilization, casting Western ideals and knowledge as irrefutable representations of human knowledge and experience. This first version of counternarratives has dismantled the idea of a universal culture and cultural ideal through the retelling of stories that have revitalized Indigenous cultures, languages, ethics, aesthetics, and epistemologies that are different from Western forms. The expressions of this form of counternarrative, in which non-Western knowledge forms and epistemologies not only are celebrated but also have emerged as a separate and different way of thinking about and narrating experience, are at the heart of decolonizing and postcolonial works found in virtually all disciplines today.

A second form of counternarrative counters unquestioned narratives or “official stories” that are sometimes backed by “scientific” evidence or unquestioned conventional wisdom—that state “truths” about people, situations, or places. An example of a contemporary official narrative is that which conflates Islam with extremism and terrorism and then uses this as a justification for Western intervention in Iraq. This second form of counternarrative highlights the “little stories” of groups and/or individuals that are produced at the margins of the telling of “official stories.” For instance, stories of ordinary peace-loving people in war zones of Iraq living everyday lives counter the official war narrative that equates all Muslims with fundamentalism, extremism, and/or terrorism. Counternarratives that tell those little stories emphasize their social and political dimensions, not merely

the personal ones. Furthermore, those counternarratives highlight the ways in which the marginalization of groups or individuals within a culture are legitimized and used to justify their exclusion, subjugation, and erasure from the official truth telling. Those little stories that constitute the counternarratives of this form engage and deconstruct the official apparatus (e.g., systems of education, justice, and religion) used to create and sustain “otherness” and maintain marginality.

What the two forms of counternarrative have in common is the production of an invisible silent “other” who stands unrecognized at the borders of grand/official narratives that assimilate the other by weaving a narrative of a common culture and shared language. Both formulations of counternarratives hold emancipatory possibilities for groups that are marginalized when stories concerning them are created by other entities. They dismantle the grand/official narratives that sustain hegemony, raise questions about the presumed superiority of one group over another, and take away the power of those entities that characterize, define, and/or claim to speak for all. Furthermore, counternarratives create new spaces and possibilities for the theorizing of a different form of knowledge that is new and non-Western/nonofficial. In this way, counternarratives go beyond merely countering or opposing Western/official knowledge to producing a different way of representation that is distinctly non-Western/nonofficial.

Kagendo Mutua

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Otherness; Truth

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COVERT OBSERVATION

Covert observation is a particular type of participant observation in which the identity of the researcher, the nature of the research project, and the fact that participants are being observed are concealed from those who are being studied. Investigators using covert observation adopt the research role of complete participant.

Covert observation is conducted in three contexts: public and open settings where everyone has a right to be (e.g., grocery stores, airports), closed settings where the researcher is already a member (e.g., a nurse in a hospital), and closed settings where the researcher gains access by adopting a role appropriate for that setting (e.g., pretending to be an antiwar activist at a protest rally).

Covert observation has a number of strengths. It is particularly appropriate for the study of phenomena such as criminal and other deviant behavior of groups and individuals who would not normally allow themselves to be studied. By becoming a member of a group, the researcher directly experiences the activities of the group and so may develop a deeper understanding of the behavior. It has also been argued that this research method increases the trustworthiness of data in that participants are not controlled or manipulated and the reactivity or observer effect is less likely.

Covert observation has a variety of weaknesses. To gain access, the researcher needs to share or adopt characteristics with the group, and this may present a significant barrier. If the real identity of the researcher became known, the investigator could be confronted with a dangerous situation due to either the nature of the setting or the antagonism of unwilling participants. Covert observation restricts data collection. Overt methods, such as interviewing, and data-recording strategies, such as audiorecording and note taking, cannot be used. Fieldnotes must be prepared from memory after the researcher has left the field and, therefore, are subject to errors of omission and faulty recall.

Some researchers regard covert observation as an unethical practice because it represents an invasion of privacy and violates the norm of informed consent. The ethical guidelines for most of the major social science scholarly associations advise against the use of covert methods. However, other researchers, such as Richard Mitchell, claim that nearly all research involves some secrecy. For example, no matter what

method is used, few researchers disclose full information about a study and many adjust how they represent themselves so as to facilitate access. Covert observation conducted in public places, where it may be presumed that individuals know that others will see what they are doing, is less problematic. Finally, ensuring that research protocols involving covert observation undergo rigorous ethics review helps to ensure the safety and support the rights of participants.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Ethics; Nonparticipant Observation; Observational Research; Participant Observation; Unobtrusive Research

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COVERT RESEARCH

Covert research is an investigative strategy in which the researcher's professional identity and academic intentions are hidden, either partially or fully, from those involved in the study. Therefore, research is conducted without the knowledge or consent of those being studied. Although the use of covert research is increasingly frowned on, it remains an important qualitative research strategy in studies where opportunities to provide detailed explanations of the research or gain informed consent are limited. This entry outlines the different forms of covert research, discusses the advantages of using it as a research strategy, and considers the limitations of covert research and the challenges its use presents.

Types of Covert Research

It is possible to distinguish between active and passive forms of covert research. Arguably, the distinction between the two forms is meaningless because, in both cases, participants do not contribute willingly to the study. However, active forms of covert research are often more problematic than passive forms because

deceit is such a fundamental part of fieldwork relationships. When conducting active forms of covert research, investigators may purposefully obscure their identities and intentionally misrepresent their motivations for engaging in social interaction. For example, a researcher may participate in the activities of a religious organization as a member of the congregation, or may join a commercial organization as an employee, while actually conducting research on the organization and its members. Most of the prominent and controversial covert research has involved this type of subterfuge. However, researchers may gain access to a group or an individual overtly and still conduct covert research. For example, an investigator can claim to be conducting research on one subject area while secretly using contact time with participants to ask questions, observe activities, and/or gain access to documents that are unrelated to the study to which participants agreed to contribute.

Passive forms of covert research are also conducted without the knowledge or consent of those being studied, but investigators do not attempt to deceive or mislead participants. Traditionally, the most common example of this type of covert research has involved observation of social and physical activity in public places such as shopping malls, parks, restaurants, cafes, and bars. However, with the growth of virtual communities, studies of interaction and communications in internet chat rooms and through electronic message boards are increasing. Investigators may observe and monitor the online interaction of other participants but choose not to contribute or provide a formal explanation of their research. Researchers may also use nonre-active methods to gain information about individuals. For example, an investigator may interview one person as a way to get information about a second individual or group of people, or a researcher may examine records kept on people by organizations without the consent of the individuals concerned.

Passive forms of covert research often emerge because of particular contextual aspects of the fieldwork rather than a need for deception or subterfuge. For example, when conducting observational research in places where interaction between people is minimal, especially in places that people inhabit for short periods, the offer of any detailed explanation or the gaining of formal consent is unfeasible. Furthermore, when a researcher tries to gain access to a group or community without the help of a formal gatekeeper who could introduce the researcher and mediate his or her entry, the researcher's identity and intentions will

inevitably remain hidden from certain members of that group.

Time is also a key factor that determines researchers' ability to provide formal explanations and gain informed consent. The initial stages of research projects concerned with loosely connected individuals, or groups with fluid membership, are often conducted covertly because opportunities for explanation and consent are limited. However, as investigators gain access to individuals and spend increasing amounts of time with participants and informants, details about their professional identities and research intentions become increasingly clear. This is not to say that the research will become completely overt; in these kinds of studies, researchers continue to engage with new individuals who are not acquainted with the studies and for whom they remain covert research.

Advantages of Covert Research

When people are aware that their actions are being observed, recorded, and scrutinized, they often change their behaviors. Individuals may act in socially accepted ways and purposefully abide by social conventions that they usually reject. People may also behave in extraordinary ways and choose to over- or underemphasize certain actions and, thus, project a misleading impression of their identities and the values they hold. Therefore, investigators most often choose to engage in covert research to ensure that participants do not change their behaviors significantly; they may engage in covert research to try to gain a more authentic impression of people and their worlds.

Covert methods are used mostly in studies concerned with individuals who engage in what are conventionally perceived to be morally contentious or illegal activities. Such individuals and the groups or organizations with which they are affiliated often do not wish to draw attention to their activities and, therefore, are unlikely to participate consensually in research that jeopardizes their interests. So, investigators may presume that, to gain access to individuals and obtain information about their activities, it is necessary to conduct the study covertly. If participants are not aware that their actions are being researched, they are less likely to deviate from their normal behaviors. Thus, researchers can gain insights into social practices that are usually hidden from public view.

Beginning a relationship with informants or participants is often difficult. The esoteric nature of qualitative research means that initial encounters with

potential participants can often be made awkward and tense by any attempt to explain the study. Individuals may immediately withdraw from interaction when an investigator mentions that he or she is conducting research. If this happens, there might not be further opportunities to interact with people who decide that they do not want to communicate with the researcher. In covert research, these problems are avoided and, within that social context, social interaction can remain ongoing. By disguising his or her identity, the researcher can gain informants' trust faster and, consequently, get access to information faster. This is likely to be particularly important when researchers do not have extended periods of time in which to conduct fieldwork and there is not enough time to build formal and open relationships slowly between investigators and participants or informants.

Challenges in Using Covert Research

Covert research is, arguably, an abuse of investigators' powerful position. It is certainly true that unwilling participants do not have control over representations of their lives. This problem is likely to emerge in all but the most participative studies; however, in studies involving covert research, the potential powerlessness of participants is even more acute. Therefore, investigators must think carefully about the responsibilities they have to the individuals, groups, and organizations they study and about how social science serves or undermines the interests of particular sections of society. In many cases, covert research is an invasion of privacy, and many people find this objectionable unless there is a reasonable justification for it. Justification is usually based on arguments about the greater social good that such research serves. However, although some individuals and organizations present a clear and immediate risk to society, what social benefits are achieved through covert research and whether they are worth the cost to personal freedom and privacy are often contentious issues. There is certainly a risk that marginal groups and individuals who are studied feel even more stigmatized and, thus, are marginalized even further. In the cases of criminal groups and religious organizations, this will make its members even more suspicious of social science and encourage them to withdraw further from the legal and moral conventions of society.

The deception involved in covert research is problematic for research participants. Unwilling participants may feel deceived, and this may, in turn, taint their relationships with strangers in the future. It may

also make them suspicious of research, thereby fueling a perception that all social scientists are untrustworthy and that social science research is fundamentally exploitative. This may make it difficult for researchers to recruit participants in the future.

There is also a significant risk to investigators who engage in covert research. By adopting alternative identities and roles in the fieldwork, researchers may begin to question their own sense of self. This is especially problematic when conducting research on immoral or illegal activities. Trust between undercover investigators and the individuals who engage in illicit activities is often built through researchers' complicity. These acts may conflict with researchers' own sense of morality, and this may in itself cause psychological harm to researchers. Participation in illegal activities may result in prosecution, and (more seriously) some action may result in harm to researchers or other individuals. For example, those conducting research on fraud, theft, violence, or sex crimes, and who are expected (as part of the study) to participate in these activities in any way, are caught in a very perilous moral, legal, and professional position.

From a methodological point of view, the advantages of gaining access to previously hidden information is offset by the limitation placed on researchers trying to gain access to key pieces of data. When adopting a totally covert role, investigators must act within the boundaries of that role. Asking too many questions or probing questions that are inappropriate in a social context may make individuals suspicious of investigators. Therefore, researchers are limited in what they can find out, when they can find it out, and how they can get to specific pieces of information. Because of this, covert research may be more time-consuming than overt research and may offer only limited information on specific issues that cannot be explored with participants through everyday social interaction.

Finally, academic institutions and the organizations that fund research are increasingly concerned with the ethics of research. Most academic institutions have developed, or are in the process of developing, ethical guidelines that define how research is to be conducted. Most of these institutions also have systems of review that evaluate the ethical dimensions of research conducted by affiliated staff. Support among funding bodies and host institutions for covert research that involves active deception is declining. Fear of legal prosecution, negative publicity, and any subsequent cut in funding has made organizations wary of becoming associated with such research.

Investigators preparing to engage in active forms of covert research must be clear about the risks involved; they need to carefully evaluate the benefits of covert research and must be prepared to justify its use. Investigators working in social or organizational contexts where explanation and informed consent are not possible, or those conducting research in contexts where relationships are built slowly and covertness is unavoidable at certain stages of their studies, must draw on a number of points of reference in deciding how to approach the emerging problems. When deciding on the appropriateness of covert research, investigators must consider the professional and institutional guidelines and the legal implications of their actions, they must draw on the past experiences of other researchers, and they must examine reflexively their own moral and ethical positions before entering the field.

Peter Lugosi

See also Deception; Ethics; Naturalistic Observation; Nonparticipant Observation; Participant Observation; Unobtrusive Research

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CREATIVE WRITING

Creative writing consists of writing in literary forms such as poetry, fiction, plays, creative nonfiction, and

memoir. Creative writing in qualitative research has several facets. One could consider that all writing is creative whatever the purpose. Indeed, in qualitative research circles, the use of literary forms such as poetry, fiction, plays, creative nonfiction, and memoir has proliferated. Literary writing is usually situated in the humanities, especially literature, theater, and creative writing, where people who use creative writing as a technique usually have some instruction and background. In the social sciences, the increase of literary writing has posed certain problems, especially with regard to the quality of the writing.

Using poetic representation in qualitative research usually takes the form of free verse. Free verse is also called *vers libre*. Qualitative researchers who use the technique of *vers libre* often break up interview transcripts into small (or short) units, or lines, without regard to foot, syllable, or meter. The purpose is to focus and intensify the expression of what the participant said. The poetic technique is usually enjambement, which breaks up the text by clauses or phrases, proceeding through the verse to the period at the end. The use of other verse forms such as blank verse (where there is meter but the ends do not rhyme), the sonnet, the ballad, the villanelle, the rondeau, the epic, and the haiku is rare.

Fiction as a technique in qualitative research is generally frowned on. Rather, qualitative researchers in social science may "fictionalize"; that is, they may be required to change the names—to use pseudonyms—to protect their participants. However, changing the essential facts and findings is not recommended. Audit trails should yield evidence that what researchers purported to find was indeed true.

However, debates have occurred about whether a dissertation can be a novel; for example, the debate among Robert Donmoyer, Elliot Eisner, and Howard Gardner at the 1996 American Educational Research Association annual conference in New York City. Donmoyer and Eisner advocated that, indeed, a dissertation could be a novel, whereas Gardner advocated that writing a novel for a dissertation views fiction as narrative and not as a complex artistic effort requiring familiarity and background with the history of fiction and of writing fiction, a background usually gained when one majors in literature and has studied the tradition, beginning with its inception during the 18th century. The subject is still controversial, and whereas some programs permit fictional qualitative dissertations, others do not.

Those who advocate that one can write a novel for a qualitative research dissertation seem to view the

Fraternity Bar in Athens, Georgia

they were shoulder to shoulder
 drinking beer and playing pool
 the room stunk of smoke from hell
 the light under the bar shone orange
 I sat at the end
 talked to who came by
 of race in Georgia
 inexhaustibly they spewed
 heedless of Mark Fuhrman's ignominy
 that word
 northerners don't dare to use
 and many other words prefaced
 by "they" and "them"
 shaved almost bald
 in fashion in front-faced
 corduroy baseball caps
 ("I'd never wear my hat backwards like them")
 beside their long-haired white-toothed beauties
 they assumed a tribal camaraderie
 from the color of my skin
 told me their scarred inner hearts
 while I smoked their cigarettes
 in words I didn't want to hear
 in words I wish I hadn't asked
 at 2 A.M. they bid me bye
 "y'all come back again, Professor
 when you move to town"
 in a conspiracy of skin and tribe
 I kept my shame.

Source: Piirto, J. (1999). *What rough beast: Poems of the millennium*. Ashland, OH: Ashland Poetry Press. Reprinted in Piirto (2002). The question of quality and qualifications: Writing inferior poems as qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15, 431–445.

novel as mere narrative, rather than as art and metaphor rendered more true than the accretion of the facts. They may see fiction in the Aristotelian sense, where the writer is viewed as an imitator of nature. The humanities sees fiction as an art, a creation that is itself, through plot, scene, structure, story, climax, and other elements, a totality that through technique is rendered more than the sum of its parts in the truth that it tells. Often that truth is not consciously intended but is experienced by readers through some

mysterious synthesis that occurs through the process of reading. Again, the question remains whether the qualitative researcher seeking to write a novel (or even a short story) based on the data gathered is being a qualitative researcher or a literary artist and whether the researcher should study fiction so as to write it.

The use of the playwriting genre of creative writing in qualitative research usually takes the form of readers theater, where the participants present the data (from interviews, observations, and documents) in sequence, standing or sitting, dressed in black, on a stage with their script in folders, reading in a dramatic manner. The data are put into the format used in plays. Again, the creativity is in the form of presentation and from the selection of the excerpts that are read by the participants on stage.

Other theatrical forms of creative writing in qualitative research include documentaries and films that are edited in an artistic manner before presentation and publication. These usually have a credits menu that includes the term *writer*.

Creative nonfiction is the most frequent genre of creative writing that is used in the representation of qualitative research. Creative nonfiction uses techniques such as the active voice, rather than the passive voice, in verbs; vivid description using colorful and evocative adjectives, nouns, and adverbs; and recreated dialogue. Creative nonfiction is also called journalistic and takes the form of the essay that is based on researched material. The writing is concrete, with solid examples, and stresses ease of readability, inviting readers to identify with the situation being depicted. In the literary world, the issue of willful falsification has arisen, but in qualitative research circles, the ethics forbid falsification and this is prevented by the necessity to preserve original data.

Memoir, or telling about a part of one's own life in a thematic manner (as opposed to autobiography, which is a chronological account of one's life), is similar to what is called *autoethnography* in qualitative research. Self-observation is the technique, and the attempt to do so again puts forth the questions of whether one can truly observe one's self, whether doing so is social science or literary art, whether or not falsification must occur, whether objectivity is possible, and/or whether objectivity is merely a trope and not possible whether or not one writes in the third person or in the first person. The literary (but not the social science) shelves of bookstores are filled with memoirs by people who have stories to tell, who experienced trauma or addiction or were eyewitnesses to

historical happenings, and who tell their stories using structural techniques such as scene, climax, and even plot and try to write about it in a compelling and interesting manner. Again, the writing is creative, with an intent to amuse and entertain as well as to inform.

In conclusion, creative writing in qualitative research takes several forms, all of which contain their own rules of expression that should be incorporated when the qualitative researcher is writing. The qualitative researcher seeking to write poetry, fiction, plays, creative nonfiction, or memoir should be aware of the literary roots of these genres and even, perhaps, do some study of them.

Jane M. Piirto

See also Aesthetics; Arts-Based Research; Critical Arts-Based Inquiry; Fictional Writing; Literature in Qualitative Research; Memoirs; Narrative Texts; Poetry in Qualitative Research; Readers Theater; Researcher as Artist; Storytelling; Theatre of the Oppressed; Vignettes

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CREDIBILITY

One of the responsibilities of any qualitative researcher is to create a high level of consistency in the article. For example, the readers and research participants should see why a particular research model was used and why the participants were selected for the study. The data analysis process should also reveal a believable link between what the participants expressed and the themes and codes that emerge. The accuracy of this process for both the readers and participants creates a measure of credibility to the research project. As such, credibility can be defined as the methodological procedures and sources used to establish a high level of harmony between the participants' expressions and the researcher's interpretations of them.

The basic notion with credibility is that both the readers and participants must be able to look at the research design and have it make sense to them. Questions for the researcher to consider in relation to credibility include the following: Were the appropriate participants selected for the topic? Was the appropriate data collection methodology used? Were participants' responses open, complete, and truthful?

Here is an example of how these items of credibility could be addressed when putting together a research study on the devaluing of nurses by doctors using a survey instrument and focus groups. The study would lack credibility if nurses were the only participants. It would be more credible by including nurses, registered nurses, and doctors. A closed question survey would lack credibility because the researcher is defining the context through the survey items rather than allowing the participants to define them. A survey instrument with both closed and open-ended items would be more credible. Credibility of the study would be lacking if a focus group of two doctors and two nurses was the only means for the participants to discuss the topic because nurses might not provide open and truthful information in the presence of doctors. In this focus group setting, nurses also would not be able to provide complete information because of the power dynamic that exists between doctors and nurses. Thus, this methodology for collecting the data would have low credibility because it has a very narrow means of illuminating the context under study. The credibility of the study could be enhanced by having a larger focus group, introducing private interviews with the

participants, and then providing opportunities for follow-up interviews as necessary.

The researcher can use the following methodological procedures to increase credibility:

Time: Establish enough contact with the participants and the context to get the information one needs.

Angles: Look at the data from different perspectives and viewpoints to get a holistic picture of the environment.

Colleagues: Use support networks knowledgeable in the area to review and critique the research and data analysis findings.

Triangulation: Seek out multiple sources of data and use multiple data-gathering techniques.

Member checks: Use the participants to make sure that the data analysis is accurate and consistent with their beliefs and perceptions of the context being studied.

Devon Jensen

See also Closed Question; Focus Groups; Research Design; Survey Research; Themes

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CRITICAL ACTION RESEARCH

Critical action research is a validation and extension of action research or participatory action research processes that combines critical theory with the action research paradigm. The critical action research process turns the traditional power hierarchy between “professional” researchers and research “subjects” upside down and invokes a commitment to break down the dominance and privilege of researchers to produce relevant research that is able to be sensitive to the complexities of contextual and relational reality. In this type of research, the stakeholders of the research work with the researchers to define the problem and set the research agenda, find new ways of seeing the situation, and work toward solutions. The process empowers both the researchers and the research participants because the research effort allows discovery and exploration of power differentials in the research

relationship as well as in the community under study. This entry describes action research, critical theory, and their integration to form critical action research. It then presents a number of examples of such research and reviews some of the challenges in using this approach.

Action Research

Kurt Lewin, one of the principal founders of action research, called for a collaboration between organizational members and researchers on all phases of research from planning to analysis. Action research is characterized by three key qualities: (1) a focus on problem solving, (2) an emergent nature, and (3) a collaborative effort between researchers and participants.

The overarching trait of action research is that it involves generation of practical knowledge useful for sustainable organizational or community change. Action research, by definition, always occurs within practice in concrete situations. Action research is change oriented and accomplishes this by involving the people under study as co-researchers, thereby providing them with the tools to effect change themselves.

Action research involves an emergent inquiry process that evolves throughout the research effort and focuses on generation of new knowledge and ways of thinking and seeing the world. In action research, scientific knowledge is combined with organizational knowledge in a collaborative effort designed to solve actual organizational problems. In addition, local knowledge held by the organizational stakeholders is considered to be equally as valid as, or more valid than, that held by the “professional” researchers.

Action research is more concerned with the relational cooperative process between the researcher and the researched, and with the practical nature of the research outcomes, than with following positivist research criteria. In opposition to positivist research, action research deobjectifies research participants by making them co-researchers rather than “subjects” under study and gives participants the opportunity to understand their (and others’) interpretations of the world.

Action research may include qualitative or quantitative research methods and data collection methods such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus groups, informal conversations, journaling, document reviews, and observations. Action research often includes multiple methods and many different ways of knowing as it strives to be inclusive of diverse viewpoints. Regardless of the method used, action research

occurs within natural contexts and often uses interpretive methods of analysis.

Critical Theory

Critical theory looks at, exposes, and questions hegemony—traditional power assumptions held about relationships, groups, communities, societies, and organizations—to promote social change. Combined with action research, critical theory questions the assumed power that researchers typically hold over the people they typically research. Thus, critical action research is based on the assumption that society is essentially discriminatory but is capable of becoming less so through purposeful human action. Critical action research also assumes that the dominant forms of professional research are discriminatory and must be challenged.

Critical action research takes the concept of knowledge-as-power, and equalizes the generation of, access to, and use of that knowledge. Critical action research is an ethical choice that gives voice to, and shares power with, previously marginalized and muted people.

Mission of Critical Action Research

Critical action research, often conducted at the community grassroots level, typically takes as its mission social critique—the study of marginalized, oppressed, disenfranchised, or disadvantaged populations—with the aim to promote social justice among these populations. Critical action researchers do this by questioning the social implications and moral issues of action and by seeking shared understanding of the social action.

Critical action research seeks to empower people by involving them in the study of the social processes that have constructed their submissive positions in society. In the process, critical action research moves people with issues such as illness, disability, and poverty toward equal status with the people who are studying them. Thus, critical action research models a more equal or democratic distribution of power in community. The aim of critical action research is twofold: (1) improved understanding of a social phenomenon and (2) social transformation at a community or organizational level resulting from reflexivity and self-reflection about the hegemony in the research relationship and in the community or organization. Critical action research requires seeing things through

the worldviews of other people and understanding, perhaps challenging, conflicting value systems.

Critical action research follows a collaborative cycle between participants and researchers of reflecting, planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, and so on. Elizabeth DePoy and colleagues in 1999 suggested a model of critical action research that includes the following:

1. Recognizing and articulating a social problem
2. Convening a steering committee from among all stakeholder groups
3. Identifying the scope of the research and the type of social change desired
4. Selecting a collaborative research team
5. Training lay researchers on the research team in research methods
6. Designing the study, including research questions and methods
7. Conducting the study and analysis
8. Reporting the findings in accessible formats to all stakeholder groups
9. Acting on the findings by planning and following through with social change
10. Identifying a steering committee for follow-up inquiry

The cycle of planning, reflecting, and acting between community participants and researchers breaks down the traditional positivist research tradition of certainty and objectivity on the part of the researchers. It requires a willingness for vulnerability on the part of both the researchers and the community participants as they open their own ways of thinking, behaving, and being to scrutiny and question. However, because critical action research allows those being scrutinized to participate in the scrutiny, the level of insight and understanding resulting from the process can be deep and lasting provided that everyone involved is given the autonomy to fully collaborate in every stage of the effort.

Examples of Critical Action Research

Critical action research is frequently conducted in many different fields of study. In education, for example, much critical action research looks at issues of

curriculum or teaching styles by collaborating with students and other educators. Terry Carson's research group, "Collaborative Action Research in Peace Education" or CARPE, initiated a dialogue with other teachers and education professionals on the topic of international peace education. This process used a critically reflective process to develop and implement a practice of peace education in their respective teaching situations. Kathleen Chiswell, also in education, used critical action research to examine her own teaching methods and communication style. Dorothy Lander and Leona English, in adult education, used critical action research to read and respond to each other's research through a dialogic process of reflecting on, analyzing, and synthesizing their writings. Marion Walton and Arlene Archer used a critical action research framework to examine a curriculum on academic literacy. Paul Dufficy used critical action research to investigate the teaching of English as a second language in multilingual classrooms in Australia.

In other fields, Caroline Humphrey studied the personal, professional, and political dilemmas of women, Blacks, people with disabilities, lesbians, and gay men within labor unions in Britain. Jonathan Fox described how Martin Diskin worked with policymakers and development agencies in Latin American studies to conduct what they called "power structure research" in which they exposed injustice as a strategy for building coalitions and motivating movements. Christine Davis's ethnography of a children's mental health treatment team was an interdisciplinary research project involving the fields of communication studies, social work, and mental health. Conducted in partnership with community agencies, this research examined issues of power, marginalization, and control within these teams. It suggested a stance toward children and families that rejects the traditional hierarchical medical model of care and instead treats them as unique valuable humans and as equal partners in treatment.

Challenges to Conducting Critical Action Research

In practice, full democracy in action research is a large and difficult change from traditional research roles. Giving research participants status that is fully equal to that of the researchers is a tall order, and inviting people to participate in research that has already been designed, organized, and set up by professional

researchers will not likely succeed in affecting hegemonic structures. In fact, simply the act of choosing a group or topic to study points out hegemonic power and control issues inherent in a social order. The research act itself, therefore, involves political choices and ramifications. Creating true change in a research relationship requires major shifts in thinking and behaving—inviting participants to formulate the original questions, design the methodology, facilitate the sessions, and lead the analysis efforts. It requires physically moving the research away from the universities and into the community. It requires dissemination of the findings in nontraditional and nonacademic ways. It most certainly requires a different type of engagement on the part of the "professional" researchers to allow "nonprofessional" researchers room to engage.

Effecting true change in a community or an organization from action research is also a challenge. Collaborative knowing requires setting aside assumptions, prejudices, and even experiences brought by all research participants (both professional and lay participants). It requires focusing on the process as much as on the outcomes. It requires being open to different ways of knowing, understanding, and interpreting and having the willingness to take action and risk change.

Summary

Critical action research is an ethical choice that exposes and seeks to change existing power structures and inequalities within the community under study. It does so within a framework of smoothing out inequalities within the research structure. Both of these processes, at the research level and at the community level, are fraught with the challenges expected when rebelling against the status quo. This research-as-activism process leads to social change, but it is neither smooth nor easy. It is, however, worthwhile.

Christine S. Davis

See also Action Research; Critical Theory; Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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facilitate community-based performances that reconstruct or blur both physical and abstract boundaries. The first and most dramatic such realignment is the synthesis of beliefs and practices among social scientists with critical revolutionaries among artists. Activism, such as is seen in revolutionary new genre public art and performance art based in a history of resistance, is reflected in critical performance ethnography and other new methodologies used in arts-based inquiry. Social science research that can be described as critical arts-based inquiry is likely to consider social, political, and critical aspects of pedagogy and to enact theoretical stances of dialogic, experiential, transactional, emancipatory class and race theories, and/or feminist critical critique. Indigenous voices and anticolonialist discourse will be features of this work. It will resound with multiple and contradictory worldviews in shared pedagogical spaces. Thus, it will encourage new identity politics that bridge gender, race, and ethnic differences. In so doing, it will embrace radical democratic ideals while performing social criticism. Social science in this ilk uses the processes of critically reflective inquiry to expose the complexities of educational processes, deepens understandings of the power structures inherent in those processes, and creates emancipatory responses to social injustices.

In addition to drawing from the community of radical political artists, revolutionary arts-based inquiry emerges from, among others, qualitative inquiry theories and methods developed in the areas of critical inquiry, arts-based research, and performance ethnography.

Critical Inquiry

Critical inquiry occurs when actors attempt to determine the meaning and value of societal artifacts and actions (e.g., words, work, hegemony). Researchers undertake critical inquiry because they seek to understand the systems of power and oppression at play in society and because they search for ways to disrupt unjust systemic power structures. Inquiry serves as the basis for reenvisioning social interactions, processes, and historically ingrained ideas in efforts to reform society toward democratic practices and values of social equity. Critical inquirers typically either belong to the communities they research or form very strong, caring, emotional, and intellectual attachments with individuals in those communities as part of their methodological praxis. Meanwhile, “inquiry” implies a broader range of questions and modes of interpretation than

CRITICAL ARTS-BASED INQUIRY

Critical arts-based inquiry is characterized by its integration of multiple disciplines and diverse discourse communities. Similarly, critical arts-based researchers

does “research,” and it stands in some contrast to “research” in its use in emergent traditions of qualitative research.

Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research draws on emotive and affective responses to experiences, senses, and bodies in exploration of space and place; it arouses imaginative and emotive aspects of intellect; and it opens alternatives for interpretive and creative praxis. Primarily, it addresses the need to explore new options for representing research that are produced within new paradigm methodologies. Arts-based researchers appropriate many different forms of the arts for reporting on research, including dance, film, plastic arts, photography, drama, poetry, and narrative writing.

Types of Critical Arts-Based Inquiry Methods

To do critical arts-based inquiry, researchers-as-artists and artists-as-researchers create spaces for dialogue and facilitate openings for diverse voices. They engage in multiple collaborations of varying types. Although theory provides guidelines for work (both process and product) that is political, pedagogical, moral, and ethical, the purpose of the work is to change accepted theory, create new understandings, and involve a broader community in reflective practice so as to initiate meaningful actions that complete political commitments to social justice, democratic equity, and emancipation of oppressed peoples. It follows, then, that there are no prescribed methods for doing critical arts-based inquiry. The methods will be those that fit the context and priorities of the Indigenous or local community where the research occurs as well as its forms and traditions of art. Modes of performance will fit meanings and be chosen for their “power to inform,” and they are not limited to public murals, films and photographic displays, oral and written poetry and stories, installations, dance, and dramatic and comedic performances. Quality of critical arts-based inquiry hinges on inclusivity, reflectivity, advocacy, and the potential of such inquiry to inspire various types of actions such as the following.

Dialogue/Discursive Action

Within critical pedagogies, the goal of the researcher is educative and includes engaging people

in narrating their own lives to better understand their lived realities. These social narratives reveal problems inherent in social structures that are played out in people’s lives. Voice is itself a social problem. Dialogue reveals problems of voice. Voice ties to relationships, hierarchies and distribution of power, issues over whose knowledge is important, and questions about how we know. Furthermore, it is possible to bridge cultural differences by sharing one’s narratives of lived experience in dialogue with others. Dialogue creates community through empathy for others based in understanding others’ lived realities.

For example, interviews, a common method used in qualitative research, are opportunities for storying individuals’ lives. The interview is an opportunity to give personal voice to a social problem, and it is a forum for critical dialogue. In critical dialogue, meanings are co-constructed but always controlled by the person telling his or her own story, yet the interview presents an occasion for questioning culturally preferred terms of language and interrogating the cultural systems that have deterred or provided opportunities in an individual’s life. In critical arts-based research, dialogue is performative, and it both draws from and challenges the conventions of various literary genres.

Collaborative Action

Collaboration bridges the gap between the researcher and the researched. The task of the critical arts-based researcher is to facilitate inclusion. In principle, the critical arts-based project provides openings for entry of as many affected people as possible in the processes of inquiry. Among the properties of collaborative interaction in critical approaches to research is explicit recognition of difference within communities. Many arts are well suited to demonstrate, represent, and facilitate conflict, tension, difference, processes of change, and juxtaposition of multiple values and points of view.

Reflective Action

Critical arts-based research is produced by critical consciousness, which is achieved through interactions and mutual struggle among people in discourse communities. It is the goal of such research to encourage both participants and audiences of arts-based performances to engage in critical reflection such as is necessarily precedent to meaningful political action. In critical arts-based research, reflective action might be

achieved through poetry, theater, dance, and other performances that are presented to diverse audiences as precursors to dialogue that generates empathy and understanding and also erases the boundaries of “otherness” between people in diverse communities.

Performance/Performative Action

Importantly, for critical arts-based research, use of various art forms is not reserved for reporting research findings; instead, forms of art are adopted from within the community as an already existing form of dialogue that embodies the culture of research participants.

Critical arts-based research is public pedagogy. The telling of life stories can take many art forms. For instance, Indigenous arts often relay stories based in tradition, history, and social realities. Arts can be used to demonstrate the conflict of individuals in a changing world where cultural values are in conflict. They can be used to interrogate stereotypes. Arts-based critical inquiry is action based, process oriented, and situated in real-world problems, events, and communities. Art is used more for its power to emotionally involve audiences and research participants, create dialogue, cause questions, and raise doubts than for representation. Within its limited representational scope, critical arts-based research uses the power of imagination to inspire community efforts to solve social injustices and opens spaces in which to imagine and hope for the creation of circumstances of social equality.

As with other forms of arts-based research, the performative turn in social science research is interdisciplinary, drawing primarily from new paradigm research in sociology, anthropology, communication, and education. Its basic tenet is that cultures are performances (of language, rites, and everyday events) and that, by reproducing the phenomena of everyday events in new reflections of understanding of these performances, researchers can intervene and resist hegemonic traditions in thought, language, and action. Performances of possibility, arrangements that recover meaning from tradition, offer hope and create new ways to see and be in the world.

Ethics of Critical Arts-Based Inquiry

With the new paradigm of community-based research, the values behind reporting conventions have evolved.

Writing and other representations of critical arts-based inquiry deliberately expose the research processes; textual coherence gives way to “messy texts” that expose and even amplify disagreements between researchers and participants, contradictions between beliefs and actions, power relationships in the research community, and conflicts, holes, and gaps in the information used to develop meanings. Transparency is a guiding concept for critical arts-based researchers. Gone are the objective omniscient voices of researchers. The values, worldviews, and assumptions about the research process, the community of participants, and the researcher are exposed and explained in the mediation of meanings brought out during the research process.

Inquiry is a moral act as well as a political act. The primary value exercised in critical arts-based research is the ethic of care. An ethical critical inquirer pays attention to the feelings and emotional investments of participants, is responsive to conflict, and is concerned with analyzing and discussing the political implications of all aspects of the work. Because the arts are conducive to thick descriptions and detailed multivoiced narratives about everyday experiences, they provide useful formats for conducting inquiry that is dialogic and portrays “truths” in flexible dynamic forms. This does not mean that they are impartial; they tell the stories and perform the activities of particular groups and individuals whose lives are improved by reinvigorating an ethics of care at a societal level. Through demonstrations of injustice, there is hope for a dialogue of care to emerge and the possibility for social change to emerge out of dialogue. The arts are uniquely suited to provoking reflection, creating opportunities for dialogue with others about meanings taken from reflection about a work of art, and forming communities of people based in the hope for social change. Such is the function of critical arts-based research. The performative dimension of arts-based research moves the audience to discourse and beyond; it evokes communal expressions of understanding that reveal the engaged imagination, the powers of empathy, and the embodied responses to art.

Susan Finley

See also Arts-Based Research; Community-Based Research; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Performance Ethnography

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CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a theoretical approach to studying the role of language in society that originated within linguistics but has found widespread application across the social sciences. The term is also sometimes used to refer only to the methodological framework of CDA that centers on the qualitative linguistic analysis of spoken or written texts.

Background and Key Tenets

CDA became known through the writings of a group of primarily European linguists during the late 1980s, most prominently Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk. Similar but largely independent developments emerged in the United States around the same time through the work of James Paul Gee. The intellectual origins of CDA reach back to British and Australian critical linguistics of the 1970s that researched the intersection of discourse, ideology, and power. Critical linguists were greatly influenced by

M. A. K. Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, which provides an important foundation for current CDA theory and methodology as well. Although the specific research areas and methods of analysis within CDA are by no means homogeneous, what unites all scholars engaged in CDA is a critical perspective that is geared toward examining the subtle ways in which unequal power relations are maintained and reproduced through language use. Many CDA scholars reject the idea that CDA is an established "school" or "paradigm" and prefer to characterize their work as an explicitly critical and political orientation to studying discourse.

The term *discourse* is generally understood to refer to any instance of signification, or meaning-making, whether through oral or written language or nonverbal means. In this sense, a dinner table conversation and a newspaper article on globalization are instances of discourse, and so is an advertisement in a fishing magazine, although most CDA analyses rely on written texts or transcripts of oral interactions as data. In CDA, discourse is assumed to be a central vehicle in the construction of social reality. Because different ways of using language are thought to produce different social outcomes, close attention to linguistic properties of texts can shed light on how different outcomes may come about. Most CDA research operates within a moderate version of social constructivism that acknowledges the enabling and constraining effects of existing structural arrangements.

CDA scholars also advocate situating linguistic investigations within social analysis. Their emphasis on interdisciplinarity has resulted in an engagement with a variety of theories outside of the linguistic canon, most often in sociology, cultural studies, and political economy. This fusion has entailed a significant expansion in the conceptual toolkit of the CDA analyst because the goal is no longer linguistic description but rather an understanding of how language-in-use (discourse) contributes to and reproduces social inequality. Concepts such as globalization, power, ideology, and hegemony often figure in CDA studies that attempt to capture the interconnections among discourse, power, and social organization.

Areas of Research and Application

Much of the early work within CDA targeted the political domain. This remains a very active line of research

to date, and studies typically scrutinize speeches by key politicians or critique documents published by government agencies, institutions, or international organizations. Many scholars have engaged in researching and critiquing media texts from a CDA perspective, pointing to systematic biases and discriminatory tendencies in news reporting. Examining media images such as advertisements constitutes an important area of visual semiotics, a line of inquiry that has taken CDA tenets beyond the verbal realm. A considerable number of feminist researchers have relied on CDA to produce illuminating analyses of gender-based discriminatory practices in a variety of discourse genres. CDA has been widely applied within research in education, an area not only rife with social problems but also where discursive practices are central and salient. Recently, more CDA studies analyze face-to-face interaction, examining various service encounters or personal narratives produced in research interviews.

Major Theoretical Strands

In addition to methodological and conceptual diversity, CDA as a mode of investigation lacks a unitary theoretical framework, although it is by no means atheoretical. Norman Fairclough was one of the leading developers of CDA's theoretical grounding, and his writings have become standard reference points for many who pursue critical textual analysis. One of the theoretical challenges for CDA as a socially and politically sensitive model of language use has been to explicate the relationship between discourse and social formations while attending to the layered nature of social existence. Fairclough addressed this particular problem by advocating a three-tier organization of social life that is well known within the social sciences: Social events (micro level) are linked to social structures (macro level) by mediating social practices (meso level). Discourse is a part of all three levels; language is seen as a set of structural possibilities from which certain orders of discourse emerge at the level of social practices, which then influence the production and reception of discourse in social events. Importantly, discourse in this sense is not another social practice but rather a part of social practices. As such, it should be analyzed in conjunction with other social elements of events and practices such as material surroundings and participants and their social relationships.

A second theoretical strand within CDA concerns itself with the role of cognition in maintaining oppressive social practices and reproducing ideologies, and the works of Teun van Dijk and Paul Chilton are

relevant in this regard. Cognition within CDA is always socially rooted and encompasses shared group norms, beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies. Researchers studying social cognition emphasize that individual or group discriminatory practices, such as acts of race-related violence or anti-immigrant legislation, need to be studied in conjunction with the social cognitions (attitudes and ideologies) that are necessary to produce and maintain them. Many scholars have studied metaphors as a discursive link that mediates between social cognition and social organization. Discourse constitutes an important arena because beliefs and norms are largely disseminated and reproduced through public means of communication, all of which are controlled by the elite. Through their privileged access to outlets of public discourse, elites play an instrumental role in the shaping of public opinion and the production and maintenance of discriminatory and biased beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies.

In their investigations of discriminatory discourses of various kinds, Ruth Wodak and her colleagues developed the discourse-historical approach as a critical mode of inquiry within the larger framework of CDA. Like most CDA research, discourse-historical studies are concerned with social critique through the in-depth analysis of hegemonic discursive practices within particular social domains, most notably politics. Discourse-historical investigations place special emphasis on studying diachronic changes in discourses as well as tracing intertextual connections among areas of social life as a necessary step to uncover how genres and discourse topics spread across time and social domains. Analyses are complex because researchers rely on multiple data sources (e.g., newspapers, legislative texts, individual narratives) to link text-internal analysis to sociohistorical context and draw on interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks for interpretation and explanation. Researchers working within this strand have identified systematic ways of using language to discursively construct sameness or difference ("us" vs. "them") that are deployed in racist or nationalist discourses across contexts.

Methodological Principles

Given CDA's disciplinary roots in linguistics and the theoretical import attributed to language, linguistic (grammatical) analysis constitutes a core element of most CDA research. However, there is widespread variation among studies in this regard. Analyzing texts for grammatical structures requires some training in

formal linguistics. Scholars who have taken up CDA vary greatly with regard to disciplinary orientation and background in linguistics, resulting in analyses that differ widely in their scope and detail to attention to linguistic properties of texts. Second, in every text, there is a multitude of potentially relevant discourse structures that could be examined so that a full analysis of any piece of discourse is impossible. Third, the type of data used will, to some extent, determine the type of linguistic properties that can be examined. For instance, although a politician's speech may be studied for the intonation patterns and phonetic features he or she employs, such analysis is clearly impossible when one is dealing with newspaper articles.

In line with CDA's explicit commitment to furthering social justice, most investigations start by identifying a social problem that has a discursive aspect. Often the social problem under scrutiny involves some form of systematic oppression or marginalization of particular groups by a dominant group such as racism or nationalism. Studies focus on the discursive manifestations of (hegemonic) oppression within a particular network of practices such as education or the media. The specific social domain will also partly determine what kinds of data are to be analyzed. Studies looking at media representations of minority groups may examine newspaper articles, transcripts of television debates, and/or radio interviews. If the locus of interest lies in the discursive exclusion of immigrant children in mainstream classrooms, the researcher may record class interaction and conduct interviews with teachers. There are no rules for how much data are enough; that decision will depend on the scope of the research project. Analysts can choose to look at how a particular event is reported in several newspapers, compare two textbooks for ideological content, or critically examine a single political debate. Ideally, CDA research is conducted within an ethnographic framework or involves a thorough description of the institutional framework in which the given social practice is embedded. The ultimate goal of analysis is to identify ways of resisting or changing oppressive discursive practices, although this objective often receives only modest attention.

Regarding the analytic procedures of CDA, texts can be examined for a number of properties that are thought to contribute to their ideological shaping. When researching how certain people or events are discursively represented, for instance, one can examine how agentive or salient they appear in a text. One way of doing that is to analyze the grammatical role in which a person is placed (e.g., actor, affected) or whether a

person appears as a named individual (e.g., Mr. Brown), as a member of a group (e.g., a policeman), or as a collective (e.g., the police). One can also look at the types of processes that are associated with particular people and look for any patterned differences. In a newspaper article, for example, who typically appears as agents of activities that have negative connotations? A researcher may choose to concentrate on analyzing the argumentation structure of a text and its rhetorical effects. This may entail looking at how clauses and sentences are linked through causal, contrastive, or other relations. The text may also be analyzed with regard to the source of legitimation the author uses to support points and claims (e.g., personal narrative, reference to authority), and an examination of modality (e.g., modal verbs, hedges) can shed light on whether the information is conveyed as a fact, a possibility, or an opinion. Studies that look at conversational interaction will have additional analytic dimensions such as turn taking, interruptions, and the role of nonverbal cues.

Critical Assessments

Critical discourse analysis has gained currency and legitimacy across many disciplines in the social sciences and, due partly to its popularity, has also become the target of substantial scholarly critique. Probably the most serious critique has questioned the assumptions of CDA research regarding the relationship between linguistic form and social function. It is a problem of circularity; CDA claims that no linguistic form has intrinsic ideological function, yet analysts are able to "read off" the manipulative intent of texts. Many critics have also raised the point that, given the analyst's a priori critical and political stance, the analyst is likely to find what he or she is looking for in a text. This also relates to charges against a lack of methodological rigor in data selection/elicitation and analysis that leaves too much room for researcher bias to guide the research process. Finally, a preference for structural and ideological critique within CDA has precluded analyses that highlight the creative power of language that enables people to resist or subvert powerful discourses. Clearly, CDA scholars will need to continue engaging with these critical issues, especially if CDA is to maintain its appeal as a cross-disciplinary framework and advance both theoretically and methodologically.

Csilla Weninger

See also Discourse; Discourse Analysis; Textual Analysis

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CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Critical ethnography is a relatively new mode of qualitative investigation and one in need of further elaboration, discussion, and debate. Critical ethnography shares the methods of traditional ethnography, such as by seeking the emic perspective gained through intense fieldwork, but it adds an explicit political focus. This focus places critical ethnography in a unique position to examine power-laden social and cultural processes within particular social sites. More specifically, critical ethnography can be defined as a research methodology through which social, cultural, political, and economic issues can be interpreted and represented to illustrate the processes of oppression and engage people in addressing them.

History

Critical ethnography is a relatively new research methodology. However, critical ethnography has its roots in the well-established tradition of anthropological ethnography. Critical ethnography grew out of dissatisfaction with both the atheoretical stance of traditional ethnography, which ignored social structures such as class, patriarchy, and racism, and what some regarded as the overly deterministic and theoretical approaches of critical theory, which ignored the lived experience and agency of human actors.

In the Chicago School, traditional ethnographers were beginning to examine critical issues by researching subordinate populations and shifting the focus from individual experience to cultural dominance and marginalization. In Britain, a “new” sociology produced prototypes for a dialectical representation of structure and agency.

In parallel with sociology and cultural studies, critical ethnography was being taken up in education. Here critical ethnography was positioned as the

convergence of traditional ethnography and composition pedagogy, providing a new sociology of education that highlighted both neo-Marxist and interactionist perspectives. These shifts occurred from the 1970s onward in both North America and Europe, producing differing accounts of what constituted qualitative methodology—and, within this, ethnography and critical ethnography—and how they should be practiced. During the past decade, however, advances in the description and application of critical ethnography have produced a more coherent account.

The most notable publications influencing the uptake and development of critical ethnography have been Jim Thomas’s *Doing Critical Ethnography*, which outlined the theoretical underpinnings of critical ethnography, and Phil Carspecken’s *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, which provided a methodological theory of critical ethnography accompanied by empirical techniques, data, and findings.

Carspecken’s work has been most influential. In his text, Carspecken drew on the work of Joe Kinchloe and Peter McLaren, who outlined the assumptions shared by critical researchers. These include assumptions that inequality exists in society, mainstream practices often reproduce inequalities, oppression occurs in many forms and is most forceful when it involves hegemonic learning, and critical research should engage in social criticism to support efforts for change. These assumptions mirror the tenets of critical ethnography regarding both the nature of reality and the ethics or purpose of such research.

The philosophical approach that underpins critical ethnography stems from the historical debates regarding the role and function of qualitative research. There has been a shift away from positivism toward methods that accommodate negotiated meanings and the power differentials inherent in research relationships. To this end, critical ethnography is openly ideological and is often at odds with both the objective positivists and relativist constructivists. To outline a research stance that can accommodate both negotiated meaning and the existence of larger social structures, great attention must be paid to the philosophical issues of ontology, epistemology, and the validity of critical ethnographic research.

Philosophical Positions in Critical Research

Carspecken contributed most to the description of a philosophical critical ethnographic approach; however, he regarded this position as more in line

with critical qualitative research in general rather than ethnography more specifically. This mirrors other researchers' assertions that ethnography has not been able to sufficiently separate itself from positivist assumptions as it seeks to describe the social "reality" of a particular group. Carspecken's description of a critical qualitative epistemology, however, provides a pathway between the purported neutrality of positivism and the multiple realities of constructivism that do not lend themselves to an analysis of the social production of oppression.

Carspecken pointed to what he referred to as a social ontology tied tightly to critical epistemology. He described the social site of research as composed of social interactions between actors and the social practices that reproduce systemic relationships. These interactions and relations occur within the context of economic, political, and cultural structures that integrate the particular social site, and the actors within it, within a society. These interactions, Carspecken noted, can be evidenced through objective, subjective, and normative truth claims inherent in all human interaction. Disaggregating these truth claims can provide powerful data on the legitimacy, organization, and structure of cultural relations. It is by documenting, understanding, and interpreting the interactions between actors within the site and their references and representations to broader societal structures that critical ethnographers can begin to examine cultural forms of oppression and engage people to address them.

The values and assumptions of critical ethnography point toward criteria of validity that extend beyond those of positivist research. Although Carspecken dismissed the relativity of some constructivist research standards, many researchers have suggested that trustworthiness, catalytic validity, and reflexivity, as informed by the work of Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, are essential criteria that have been endorsed by numerous critical ethnographers. Critical ethnographic researchers have suggested that reflexivity is required to reflect on the social positioning of research, action and structure, theory and practice, and so on. They suggest that critical ethnographic research necessarily involves dialectic among the researcher, the research process, and the research product and regards reflexivity as providing rigor and member checking as ensuring validity.

Methodology

Critical ethnographic approaches necessarily rely on reflexivity of method and, as such, must recognize the

interplay between the researcher and the participant, between data and theory, and between research and action. Critical ethnographic projects need to move beyond the interview-only study not only to engage participants in naturalistic dialogue but also to involve them as co-researchers with a stake in interpreting results and suggesting avenues for action. Once again, the most notable source of information comes from Carspecken, who outlined a comprehensive five-step approach to conducting a critical ethnographic project. These steps involve building and analyzing a record of observations, fieldnotes, and natural interactions between participants in the social site; using interviews and videotaped observations or interactions with participants; and examining broader social structures and systems that interact with and influence the social site.

D. Soyini Madison also provided a useful description of critical ethnographic methods. Her description, in contrast with Carspecken's philosophically grounded account, centered on the practicalities of conducting the project. Taken together, these works provide useful starting points for those venturing into critical ethnography. Madison's work focused on the ethnographic interview as the primary source of data, yet it must be stressed that interviews alone will not provide the detail required to make connections between the social interactions of actors and the social routines that reproduce system relations. To this end, some researchers have called for an expansion of critical ethnography to include a greater analysis of discourse. However, this may be inherent in the methodology of Carspecken when he called for an examination of policies, documents, and cultural commodities such as books, television shows, and music to consider their possible symbolic and cultural meanings. Others, such as Norman Fairclough, have suggested that a combination of critical discourse analysis and ethnographic analysis in fact constitutes what is regarded as critical ethnography.

In terms of analysis, Carspecken suggested a micro-analysis of interpersonal interactions, breaking them into objective, subjective, and normative-evaluative truth claims and locating these within broader system relations. This type of analysis extends beyond thematic coding to examine what Michael Agar termed "rich points," which are disjunctures between the source (participant's) perspective and the target (researcher's) perspective or problems in translation between the world of the participant and the world of the researcher. These rich points, when broken into objective, subjective, and normative truth claims, can reveal underlying assumptions regarding power hierarchies, inequities, and

Using Critical Ethnography in Work With Welfare Recipients and Agencies

By engaging people in monologic and dialogic data collection, sharing the results of critical analysis, and supporting participant action on these findings, critical ethnographic processes and results can assist individuals, groups, and communities in addressing their own situations or lobbying to change oppressive social structures. For example, engaging sole parent welfare recipients and welfare agencies in a critical ethnographic analysis of return-to-work efforts may provide impetus for single parents and welfare agencies to lobby for increased benefit levels and support services.

cultural knowledge. This process relies on abductive logic that involves the formulation and subsequent testing of plausible hypotheses or premises. When applied to critical ethnographic analysis, this process involves seeking out new premises to explain what happened in the rich point and why. For critical ethnographic projects, as in many qualitative projects, building theory requires a reciprocal relationship among the data, analysis, and emerging theory. The researcher must be allowed to generate propositions to be tested in the data. These propositions should be derived from two sources, with attention paid to the dialectical relationship between them. Critical ethnography permits the use of *a priori* theoretical frameworks but safeguards against their rigid and unquestioned use. At the same time, new conceptual frameworks emerging from the data are the primary source of insight, yet these frameworks must be compared with existing theoretical knowledge to develop a robust and useful theory to be applied to the particular social site.

Communication of Results

When it comes to documenting the results of critical ethnographic research, researchers early in the period of the proliferation of critical ethnographic methodologies suggested the need to move away from descriptive “storytelling” to engage in a synthesis of description and theory as just described. It was suggested that openly ideological research raises issues beyond those encountered in naturalistic research as it seeks to place individuals’ experiences within

larger structural systems. As such, the interplay between participants’ experiences and the researcher’s interpretation of them needs to be carefully documented and justified.

The action imperative implicit in critical ethnography requires dissemination in a variety of formats to reach research participants, influential members in the social site (e.g., politicians, community leaders), and (to a lesser extent) academics. Disseminating critical ethnographic work requires researchers to examine the power differentials between researchers and participants and to question who is speaking for whom and how they can be represented. Often the need to conduct research with catalytic authenticity, or an action impetus, is at odds with the need to publish in high-impact, peer-reviewed academic journals. How this tension is reconciled within a university context remains a challenge for critical ethnographers and participatory researchers more broadly.

On this note, although researchers have suggested that the methodology of critical ethnography could be used by practice-focused disciplines, such as health promotion and social work, to instigate action around research findings, writers on the development of critical ethnography have criticized the lack of action resulting from such studies. To this end, it has been suggested that the focus in critical ethnographic projects be placed on developing the skills of participants to enable them to continue researching their own lives and settings long after the researchers have departed. Some have also recommended moving critical ethnography farther into the realm of action research where the power differentials that exist between the researcher and the researched dissolve. Again, how these practices are carried out within the hierarchical and outcome-focused setting of the university remains a contest.

Challenges

With respect to theoretical aspects of critical ethnography, several challenges have been identified. First, it has been suggested that critical ethnography is ahistorical because it does not take into consideration changes in social and cultural trends. The challenge for researchers is to bridge the divide between the micro-level interactions of participants and macro social and cultural systems rooted in historical traditions. Second, many critical ethnographic projects have been criticized as being too site specific; that is, they have focused on a local setting, such as a school,

rather than on a broader social or cultural setting, such as the education system. In many of the research studies using critical ethnographic methodologies, this appears to be the case. Again, how researchers are able to link site-specific interactions with broader social and cultural systems is a challenge.

In summary, the methodology of critical ethnography has emerged as a useful approach to explore many of the issues confronting contemporary society. Although there are a range of possibilities in terms of method, these need to be located within a robust ontology and epistemology to counter challenges posed by critics of openly ideological research. Although a single study might not achieve the structural change desired by either researchers or participants, adhering to the principles of critical research methodologies will enable both parties to identify and explore oppression and inequality and to move closer to emancipatory action.

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See also Action Research; Critical Research; Critical Theory; Ethnography

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undertaken by a variety of philosophical and social-theoretical thinkers since the 1960s. It is “hermeneutics” because the core of the shared orientation consists in reconstructing the general grounds for the understanding and interpretation of symbolic expressions, including texts, actions, images, and practices. Yet it is “critical” because it takes the grounds of interpretation to be essentially linked to social power and domination and, thus, to require a systematic analysis of the nature, structure, and impact of power on the constitution and understanding of meaning. In the same vein, the focus on power gives this theoretical project a critical dimension inasmuch as its cognitive interest aims at a normatively motivated transformation of social practices toward more freedom, self-realization, and equality. The basic idea is that acts of interpretation are internally related to forms of power, whereas this reflexive insight can foster practices of critical interpretation within which power practices are unmasked. Those existing power practices thereby become challengeable, enabling an improved ethical practice.

Critical Social Theory as Critical Hermeneutics

We can distinguish two phases in the articulation of a critical hermeneutic paradigm. By “paradigm” here, we mean a coherent vision and perspective vis-à-vis the understanding of social agency as well as its symbolic and cultural expressions. Such a perspective emerges first in the debate between philosophical hermeneutics and critical social theory. Jürgen Habermas articulated, initially on the basis of neo-Marxist assumptions, a forceful criticism of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer's lasting achievement was to bring Martin Heidegger's insight on the universal significance of interpretation for human existence to bear on the methodological self-understanding of the human and social sciences. Humans are, in Charles Taylor's words, interpreting animals; human agency is intrinsically defined by linguistic concepts grounded in social and historical practices. Gadamer showed how this entails that all explicit understanding remains bound to an implicit pre-understanding that encompasses all interpretation. Given that pre-understanding makes interpretation possible because it provides a horizon of significance and relevance, the positivist illusion of objective understanding and neutral assessment of meaning must be abandoned. In its place moves the concept of a dialogic encounter of other meaning that

CRITICAL HERMENEUTICS

Critical hermeneutics is the umbrella term for the shared theoretical and methodological projects

is oriented at truthfully explicating the other's beliefs and assumptions while knowing that any such process will entail a fusion of horizons based on the involved background concepts.

Habermas understood the force of these insights but challenged the claim to universality that Gadamer raised on its basis. He rejected conceiving social-scientific understanding solely on the basis of a linguistic dialogue because of the fact that language itself is shaped and determined by social factors. Modern bureaucratic power and capitalistic economy present us with objective shaping forces that a comprehensive (and critical) social science must take into account. Taking such factors into account means methodologically developing theoretical tools that transcend the internal first- and second-person orientation to dialogic meaning and introduce third-person explanatory models. For example, reading a religious text cannot focus solely on its intended meaning regarding the truthfulness of the message concerning God but also must recognize and analyze how this discourse might express and legitimize social power and hierarchy. Habermas set out in a first step to conceive a theory of communicative competence that entails the normative resources to understand critical interpretation, meaning that the orientation to validity is seen as essentially built into language use. Yet he eventually fulfilled the promise of a comprehensive social theory in his opus magnum theory of communicative action where he combined the internal communicative approach to meaning and truth with a functionalist perspective developed in terms of social systems theory. This made it possible to analyze how value orientations might be systematically affected by structural social power relations.

The critical exchange between Habermas and Gadamer gave rise to a larger debate about the foundations of critical theory. In this context, the term *critical hermeneutics* was first raised to capture the communicative transformation of critical theory (which was initially conceived as a fusion of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud). Habermas's paradigm of critical theory makes linguistic communication (not labor as with Marx) central, and it is oriented at communicative action as a means to engage in dialogic rationality so as to solve social conflicts. However, many believed that the hermeneutic insights into the contextual nature of interpretation and the moment of productive historical dialogue here are given up for a universalist neo-Kantian conception of communication because in the end the validity claims of communication are seen as the most important structuring force of language. The

main emphasis of Habermas's work and influence led to a discourse ethics and a normative theory of the law and democratic state. Attempts to relate communicative theory to issues relating directly to the intertwining of discursive meaning and social power are already inspired by the second and mature paradigm of critical interpretation.

Critical Hermeneutics as Articulated Paradigm

The emergence of French poststructuralism (in particular Michel Foucault but also Jacques Derrida) on the international scene set the stage for a new paradigm of critical interpretation. A fusion of hermeneutics and poststructuralism suggests itself because both perspectives argue for the general significance of language for mediating human experience, both take such a mediation to be essentially contextually defined and articulated, and both agree that linguistic practices or discourses are to be understood as expressions of social practices and contexts. Thus, the stage is set for a methodological connection of discourse and dialogue with social power.

To be sure, the two paradigms exemplify radical differences in methodology: Philosophical hermeneutics continues and transforms a romantic first-person theory of understanding that it turns into a general form of dialogic interpretation, according to which interpreters are engaged in coming to an agreement concerning the subject matter at stake. Poststructuralist discourse analysis, however, tries to objectify and distance the existing communicative practices to discern the underlying rules, norms, or power structures that remain hidden for the intentional understanding of agents. Yet the hermeneutic approach is itself essentially premised on the assumption of an implicit and linguistically mediated background understanding on which all dialogue necessarily draws. And one can show that any discourse analytic approach must approach the meaning of the communicative practices by reconstructing what the discourse is talking about, that is, its subject matter. Thus, it turns out that a comprehensive conception of situated intentional understanding can integrate the insights of hermeneutics and poststructuralism by reconstructing how the implicit and linguistically mediated background relates to the intentional and conscious interpretation of discourse.

Indeed, the methodological coalition of hermeneutic and poststructuralist ideas can strengthen interpretation

by addressing blind spots in both positions. Hermeneutics' obvious weakness—the failure to take social power sufficiently seriously—was exposed by Habermas. But one can integrate into the conception of the hermeneutic background the layer of social power relations as a structuring force. This keeps power intrinsically connected and integrated to understanding. Yet the poststructuralist tendency of giving power relations an overwhelming and excessive significance, such that intentional meaning and dialogic reflexivity are reduced to nothing but an expression of power, can now be avoided as well; because power relations are one dimension of a symbolically mediated background, they structure meaning without defining it in its entirety. Thus, dialogic interpretation can in good conscience attempt to achieve an adequate understanding of the subject matters and their contexts and in this process can itself thematize the role of power for interpretation. Thus, we have arrived at a genuine mode of critical interpretation that avoids the Scylla of hermeneutic idealism, where all meaning finally fuses into a harmonious consensus of truth, and the Charybdis of power reductionism, where the epistemic gain of power analysis is paid for by the abandonment of any truth-based or normative meaning.

The Methodological Core of Critical Interpretation

The theoretical core of critical hermeneutics claims that all explicit or conscious acts of interpretation are essentially grounded in an implicit and unthematic background understanding. Because this background is linguistically mediated and culturally and socially situated (and, as such, always contextually anchored and defined), the internal orientation of one's focus in interpretive understanding is unavoidably impregnated by social power practices. Accordingly, the horizon from within which all understanding initially takes off entails power because the linguistic background is, as such, shaped by social practices entailing power relations. Yet it is also true that the interpretive process can thematize, challenge, and partially transcend those power structures through its internal dialogic dynamic that allows interpreters to transcend their previously taken-for-granted horizons and look critically from the outside at their own assumptions and practices. The practical core of critical hermeneutics, thus, is that although understanding is structured by power, human agency is nevertheless not doomed to remain power defined. The linguistically grounded capacity to interpret one's

existence is seen as a critical source of self-definition and resistance capable of challenging and transforming existing social practices and, thus, of unleashing a potential of autonomy and self-realization the masking and control of which is precisely an effect of existing power. But how exactly is this process to be understood? How can the potential of critical self-reflexivity be unleashed through the process of dialogic interpretation? And how are interpreters to approach their object such that the beliefs and assumptions of the other can develop their critical force?

The guiding idea for this methodological attitude is to reconstruct in a particular way the insight into the mutual dependence of linguistic meaning and intentional thought. To understand a symbolic expression, we need to understand the belief it expresses, that is, what it is about. Understanding something as meaningful entails that we take it to express a belief. But to understand a belief means that we need to have beliefs ourselves; accordingly, this requires that we correlate the other thought or belief to our own thoughts. Similarly, whenever we encounter symbolic expressions or practices, interpreting them means that we articulate the beliefs they express. Thus, interpreting symbolic expressions means relating them to our own beliefs. Now because beliefs are thoughts that we take to be true, philosophical theories of interpretation tend to emphasize the necessity of attributing true beliefs to the meaning of another belief. Interpretation can succeed only if we can reach a truth-based fusion of horizons (Hans-Georg Gadamer) or maximize shared true beliefs (Donald Davidson). This assumption also guides Habermas's conception of implicit yet foundational validity claims as grounding intersubjective understanding. Yet although it is true that all interpretation must begin at home, because we need to invest our own belief-based pre-understanding to reconstruct the meaning of symbolic expressions, the orientation at shared truth as an explicit methodological objective does not follow.

The critical hermeneutic approach grounds all interpretation in the interpreter's background but reconstructs the process of dialogic interpretation as one within which the different symbolic, cultural-social, and individual presuppositions can become reflexive. Based on a phenomenology that captures all interpretive encounters—not just those that end in shared substantive consensus—the projection of one's own taken-to-be-true background beliefs is taken to be subjected to an ongoing check that often results in the articulation of differences concerning a

subject matter. The process of reflexive dialogic understanding that can be unleashed from here has three ideal typical phases.

First, the different symbolic background assumptions are articulated in mutual contrast and an understanding of the different ontological, value-based, or normative premises is reached. To profile the different symbolic ontological assumptions, the interpreter makes use of his or her epistemic outsider position vis-à-vis the other expressions and practices. The interpreter necessarily starts from his or her own conceptions to connect with the other context but at the same time brackets the normative value judgments that would suggest themselves given the interpreter's background. Thus, it becomes possible to focus on the internal connections and assumptions that would make the other's expressions valid according to the other's respective contextual standards.

Second, the different symbolic premises are then looked at in the context of social practices and institutions, where the linguistic concepts and beliefs will show how their conceptualization of reality involves the constraining and predefining of experiences based on social power. Beliefs and assumptions here are seen as discursively structured because they are necessarily embedded in networks of discursive practices. Those practices are always part of larger contexts of social networks that are organized in social fields. Because their internal organization tends to be hierarchical and constrained, the discourses themselves are internally influenced and structured by power. Here power works as a structuring force that shapes the background understanding of intentional agents and their self-understanding. The critical hermeneutic attitude is in particular interested in thematizing both the power relation between theorist and agent as well as the power relations that exist in the respective social background contexts of the agents and the theorists.

Third, this insight into the connections of discourse–power relations can now be incorporated into the reflexive self-understanding of the agent as an interpreting subject. The process of critical interpretive reflexivity comes into its own when the agent qua self-interpreter learns to see hitherto taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions as implicated in hierarchical and discriminating practices and, thus, is put in a position to react to them. Similarly, the theorist may come to see himself or herself as the agent with particular background assumptions that deserve further scrutiny.

Accordingly, although critical hermeneutics conceives social understanding to be an interpretive and

embedded process, it does not rest content with the given intentional orientation at meaning and truth in which either agents or theorists may be engaged. Instead, this approach intends to restore meaning in its social (power) contexts and to challenge theorist and agent alike to reflexively thematize their hidden power dimensions, but without reducing this process itself to nothing but an expression of power. The goal is a state of critical reflexivity that should inform a complex conception of situated autonomous agency. In this respect, critical hermeneutic insights, sometimes under this explicit label and sometimes not, have been explored in a variety of fields, including cultural anthropology (James Clifford in 1988; Brita Renee Heimark in 2003), religious studies (Fiorenza Schüssler in 2000), reflexive sociology (Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant in 1992; Hans-Herbert Kögler et al. in 1997), multiculturalism and intercultural understanding (Cosimo Zene and Arvind Mair in 2005 and 2006), and social psychology (Jack Martin et al. in 2003; Frank Richardson in 2002). At stake are the understanding of other cultures, different religious traditions, intercultural relations, the agency/structure relation, and a new conception of agency and autonomy. A methodological approach can be defined as critical hermeneutic when the situated reconstruction of another's (and in turn one's own) meaning premises is undertaken with the explicit consciousness of the power relations involved and with the declared goal to enhance the critical reflexivity and ethical self-determination of the social agents in light of this.

In sum, critical hermeneutics is a philosophically grounded approach that aims at reconstructing the basic implications of all understanding and interpretation such that this critical process can become a viable option for human agents. Its aim is to foster a methodological practice of critical interpretation that defines a normative practical attitude of analysis in social and cultural studies.

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See also Critical Theory; Hermeneutics; Poststructuralism

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CRITICAL HUMANISM

Critical humanism refers to a set of research practices that focus on the difficult task of understanding human cultural differences as the expressions of an underlying human nature. The difficulty with this approach lies in providing a nonreductionist and nonexclusionary account of human identity. There is no definitive history of critical humanism, but as its

name suggests, its origins must be related to the emergence of humanism during the Italian Renaissance. This broader movement drew together thinkers from a number of distinct philosophical and scientific traditions. Uniting these distinct thinkers was an interpretation of the Greek and Roman classics as defining expressions of the virtuous development of human capabilities. The humanists sought to develop and extend the Greco-Roman idealization of the human form. Implicit in this movement was the principle that the proper governance of human life must be determined by reflection on the nature of human being itself. Of course, this approach did not rule out appeal to transcendent standards, but these standards themselves were interpreted in light of the specific context and problems of human life.

Historical Roots

It was within this broad movement that perhaps the key principle of what one can call “critical” humanism emerged. This principle was best expressed in the work of the neo-Platonic thinker Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. He espoused a doctrine of syncretism—the belief that the truth is a transcendent unified order that manifests itself in different concrete forms in different historical and cultural contexts. Hence, although essentially a neo-Platonist, Pico was well read in Persian, Egyptian, Islamic, and Jewish thought. His arguments exemplify the contribution critical humanism can make to the qualitative study of society. Instead of simply accepting different cultural interpretations of the truth as given facts, Pico tried to explain them as different responses to the same problems. He neither denied the reality of differences (as a reductionist approach would) nor accepted them as ultimate (as a relativist might). The principle that he asserted is essential for the development of a critical humanism is that the distinctiveness of humans lies in their self-creative nature. In a retelling of the Judeo-Christian creation myth that commences his most important work, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Pico argued that what distinguishes humans from other living species is that the human form or essence is not a determinate predicate, such as rationality or bipedalism, but rather a general capability to create and change the essence of humans. This principle is implicitly critical because it enables philosophy to think about human identity without needing to rely on falsely universalized cultural assumptions. The standard of “truly human life” is identified not with any

particular culture but rather with the practices of cultural world creation found at the basis of all human societies. That which makes humanism critical is precisely the historical focus on the different practices by which different possibilities encoded in human organic social nature are repressed or developed in different institutional forms.

Hegel and Marx

Of course, Pico did not develop this insight with any sophistication. Its subsequent development traces a line through Giambattista Vico and Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel to Karl Marx, arguably the most important contributor to the development of critical humanism (although he never used the term). Marx took up and developed the core insight of Hegelian philosophy that human self-consciousness is the realization of universal rationality. Hegel meant that human history is a complex and contradictory series of struggles for self-understanding. He did not reduce human nature to a single exclusive property but rather claimed that it is variously expressed in the general practices of world building and world transformation. Each shape of human social life is a real expression of one aspect of human being. The whole truth of humanity is found not in some particular set of institutions but rather in the understanding of the general truth made manifest in human history—that humans are not the object of external determining forces but rather the collective subject, the active creators, of their own reality.

Hegel, it is true, did not always remain true to this core principle, especially when discussing the contributions of non-European peoples to the expression of essential human capabilities. The same objection could be leveled at Marx. However, the failure of Marx's political project (communism) does not negate the insights of his understanding of human being. His early philosophical work can be read as a systematic elaboration on the critical humanist principle that human nature or human identity is self-creation. The value of this principle for research is that it concentrates attention on the general capabilities that enable people to build and rebuild their social worlds. Thus, critical humanism not only can aid in generating cross-cultural understanding (by explicating cultural differences as the result of shared needs and capabilities) but also can aid in effecting social change by revealing that societies are not given and unalterable

facts but rather the results of collective human action subject to change through changed actions. If human being is essentially self-creating being, then it follows that every human, no matter what culture, class, gender, or ethnicity he or she belongs to, is considered an individual member of this species who is essentially capable, as Marx said in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, of free and conscious creative activity. A society that systematically impedes the full and free development of this capability for conscious activity is, according to this reasoning, coercive (i.e., in contradiction to the essential value of human life).

Critical Humanism and Contemporary Social Critique

The critical impetus of this form of humanism need not be read in strictly Marxist terms. The essential value of the critical humanist perspective is that it enables philosophy and social science to avoid the opposed dead ends of cultural imperialism and cultural relativism. Because the conception of human identity is derived from a contrasting reflection between human world-building activity in general and the more limited forms of activity of other species, it cannot be accused of falsely generalizing its conception of human nature from some particular historical or cultural tradition. Although some forms of social life permit wider or narrower expressions of human being, all depend on this world-making power. Thus, the essential human capability is neither absent nor fully realized in any particular cultural form. Despite this truth, critical humanism does not remain agnostic about the social implications of conceiving human identity in terms of free self-creation. Precisely because it is critical, it must refuse a merely empirical attitude toward history that is incapable of judging or evaluating different social forms. Its aim, as its name suggests, is to criticize any and all social, cultural, political, and economic impediments to the full and free development in each individual of his or her creative capabilities. For example, a critical humanist researcher investigating race in a given society would look to see how racialized minorities are “constructed” by that society so that they appear to lack the “essential” capabilities according to which that society defines humanity. The critical humanist would then demonstrate the way in which that society essentially tries to block the realization of the subaltern's self-creative power. In other words, the critical

humanist would assert the humanity of the subaltern (their capability to express and realize their concrete differences) against the oppressive structures that impede the realization of the capability.

Critical humanism does not judge values as good or bad relative to their coherence with some particular assumption about human being (e.g., that the good for humans is the maximal accumulation of wealth, altruism, love of Jesus, or ascetic self-denial). Rather, values and modes of activity are judged according to whether they are coerced by others/coercive to others or whether they are freely determined by the individual and enabling of the free activity of others. In principle, this approach leaves open the question of what sorts of societies are consistent with human nature. If the realization of the essence of human being can be impeded in different ways (by class structure, sexism, racism, etc.), then it follows that it can be realized in different ways as well. Properly understood critical humanism does not impose some definite form of historical development on different peoples, although it does argue against any sort of institution that relies on preventing the full and free development of human potentiality for everyone. Its essential aim, however, is not to demonize this or that culture but rather to uncover the different forms of institutional blockage standing in the way of all-around development of individually meaningful and socially valuable modes of activity. In keeping with its principle about the self-creative nature of humans, critical humanism must leave the solutions to definite social problems in the hands of those most concretely affected by them.

At the same time, critical humanism does have something to say in general terms about what a human society, as opposed to an inhuman society, must look like. First, critical humanism maintains that a free or human society must satisfy the life interests of all humans equally. Critical humanism, regardless of its different forms of development, must demonstrate that humans share a general organic nature as well as certain fundamental social needs linked to the development of their conscious creative capabilities. If it cannot or does not demonstrate these shared needs, then its claims about human identity are mere assertions lacking any objective grounds. In line with this contention, it follows that no society that systematically denies basic life resources to designated groups of humans on the basis of their supposed "inferiority" can be legitimate. Indeed, the essential value of critical humanist modes of research lies in their ability to

expose and diagnose these pathological forms of ideological and institutional exclusion. Second, it also follows from a critical humanist perspective that human life is essentially social and interdependent. What this principle means is that because every human relies on the work of many other humans for the satisfaction of his or her basic life interests, the realization of everyone's capabilities, in a truly human way, must be socially valuable as well as individually meaningful. That is, a purely egoistic focus on self is incompatible with the principles of critical humanism. This claim does not entail the necessity of self-denying altruism; rather, it entails a principle of social reciprocity according to which the full value of individual activity is determined by the degree to which the activity one finds individually meaningful at the same time contributes to the satisfaction of other people's life interests and, therefore, is socially valuable as well.

Critical humanist approaches to the problem of human identity can play a vitally important role in the contemporary period. Regardless of how globalization is evaluated, one undeniable result is that it has brought different human cultures into more extensive and intensive interaction than ever before. These new forms of interaction have generated a great deal of anxiety about the incompatibility of different value systems. Alarmists from all quarters have been quick to warn of impending clashes of civilizations generated by contradictory value systems struggling against each other. Because a critical humanist approach focuses on the dynamic nature of human cultures and, therefore, accepts the fact that cultures are products of human activity that are always changing, it does not immediately draw alarmist conclusions from the fact that intensifying global dynamics are causing people to reshape their cultures. The key question from the critical humanist perspective is not "Is change as such good or bad" but rather "What values are shaping the changes?" From this perspective, the important conflict is not necessarily between culturally specific value sets but rather between more basic socioeconomic and political interests. If change is being coerced by social and economic dynamics that do not affirm human self-creative freedom as the most basic value, then globalization appears to be problematic. By refocusing attention on the underlying clash between prevailing socioeconomic interests and the common life interests in institutions that satisfy fundamental needs and, thus, enable people to realize their self-creative potential, a basis of solidarity

between cultures is established. In that way, critical humanism can engender dialogue about new institutions and practices that gradually transcend exclusionary forms of power to make way for a different world in which the expression of different cultural practices is not threatening to nonmembers because it takes place in a global context of solidarity and the equal satisfaction of shared life interests. Such a world would be based neither on indifference toward the practices of others nor on the imperialist imposition of the same practices on everyone by a group powerful enough to do so. It would be a new constellation of different practices equally committed to the principle of equal satisfaction of life interests for the sake of equal freedom in the active expression of human capabilities.

Jeff Noonan

See also Essence; Essentialism; Historical Research; Multicultural Research

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determining the job requirements critical for success in a variety of occupations across many industries, relied on expert observations in the field, and was used as a tool to create a functional description of an activity. The CIT was defined by Flanagan as a set of procedures to collect direct observations of human behaviors in a way that facilitates their use in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. Since its introduction more than 50 years ago, it has evolved into a robust research method whose influence has expanded into many disciplines, including counseling, nursing, psychology, education, job analysis, marketing, social work, and organizational learning.

Since its inception, the CIT has advanced in two major ways as chronicled by Lee Butterfield and colleagues. First, whereas initially it was very behaviorally based, now it is also applied to studying psychological states or experiences. Second, emphasis has shifted from direct observation by experts to retrospective self-report. These changes have proven to be fruitful in a number of research studies, but there also have been some challenges. Due to the increased subjectivity of the data gathering, there is a greater need for establishing credibility or trustworthiness checks. What follows is an overview of the current steps involved in conducting a CIT study and the credibility checks that need to be incorporated.

A number of researchers have suggested that the CIT have the following five major steps.

Step 1: Ascertain the general aims of the activity to be studied. In essence, this becomes the research question—the activity or psychological construct that one wants to observe or have participants self-report.

Step 2: Make plans and set specifications. Flanagan described four specifications to be decided on: (1) defining the types of situations to be observed or reported, (2) determining the situation's/experience's relevance to the general aim, (3) understanding the extent of the situation's/experience's effect on the general aim, and (4) deciding who will make the observations or whether participants will self-report.

Step 3: Collect the data. Data collection can be done by direct observation of people performing a task by supervisors or experts in the field or through participants recalling past incidents or experiences and

CRITICAL INCIDENT TECHNIQUE

The critical incident technique (CIT) is a qualitative research method with roots in industrial and organizational psychology. Early use of the CIT was developed by John Flanagan and focused primarily on

describing them in face-to-face or telephone interviews or by questionnaire. When data collection involves an interview, it is important for the interviewer to start by establishing rapport. The interviewer then proceeds to gather the critical incidents that helped or hindered participants, their importance or meaning to participants, the outcome of having employed the critical incidents, and an example (if possible). In a CIT study, the size of the sample is determined by the number of critical incidents gathered, not the number of participants. Demographic information is usually collected at the end of the interview.

Step 4: Analyze the data. This involves (a) determining the frame of reference that arises from the use to be made of the data, (b) formulating the categories through an inductive process, and (c) determining the level of specificity or generality to be used in reporting the data. The narrative form of a CIT study is that of categories with operational definitions and self-descriptive titles.

Step 5: Interpret the data and report the results. To determine the trustworthiness of a CIT study's results, a series of nine credibility checks have evolved: (1) audio- or videotaping the interviews, a check that ensures accuracy and provides descriptive validity; (2) interview fidelity, where a CIT expert listens to a sample of interview tapes to ensure that the method is being followed; (3) independent extraction of critical incidents, where someone independently extracts critical incidents from 25% of the interviews; (4) exhaustiveness, that is, tracking when new categories stop emerging from the developing category scheme; (5) participation rate, that is, the percentage of participants who cited incidents in a particular category (a participation rate of at least 25% is required for a category to be considered viable); (6) independent placement of incidents into categories, where an independent judge places 25% of critical incidents into the category scheme and calculates the match rate (a match rate between 75% and 85% is needed for the categories to be considered credible); (7) participant cross-checking, that is, a second interview with participants to review the accuracy of the critical incidents and categories developed from their first interviews; (8) expert opinions, that is, inviting experts in the field to review the categories and comment on their utility, what is surprising, and what is missing; and

(9) theoretical agreement, that is, making explicit the assumptions underlying the project and comparing the category scheme with appropriate literature. Using these credibility checks makes the method more robust by helping to ensure that the results more accurately reflect the situation that has been studied and by situating them in the broader research and professional community.

The CIT continues to evolve and now routinely uncovers context, captures meaning, explores incidents of personal significance, and focuses on eliciting the beliefs, opinions, and suggestions that formed part of the critical incident itself. The flexibility of the CIT that allows it to be used in these new ways is one of its strengths. When the method is followed as just described, it strengthens researchers' claims that the findings are credible or sound. The credibility procedures as described here are in keeping with Flanagan's philosophy that establishing the credibility of the findings in a CIT study is an important responsibility of the researcher.

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and Lee D. Butterfield*

See also Categories; Credibility; Data Analysis; Interviewing; Semi-Structured Interview

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CRITICAL PRAGMATISM

Several critical versions of pragmatism have emerged throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. These perspectives have done much to rediscover the radical political spirit of classical pragmatism and to present an updated progressive version of pragmatism capable of critically assessing the shortcomings of liberal democracy and the global consumer capitalist spirit typical of the current times. Although there are no clear boundaries between pragmatism and critical pragmatism, and although critical pragmatists share with pragmatists at large key presuppositions about human nature and social processes, it is fair to say that critical pragmatists strongly emphasize the emancipatory, polemical, and transformative potential of pragmatist philosophy and social theory and research as well as the polemical and even activist role of the citizen-scholar.

Classical pragmatism, embodied by the likes of John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, W. I. Thomas, Charles Herbert Cooley, and George Herbert Mead, has often been criticized for positing a view of human nature as excessively voluntarist and optimistic, complacent toward the status quo of U.S. democracy, and largely biased by a classless, raceless, and genderless ideology. Such criticisms of classical pragmatism have also often been mounted against the social theory of symbolic interactionism—pragmatism's main intellectual offshoot in the social sciences.

Although these criticisms have taken a strong hold in a handful of sociological circles, in actuality early pragmatism constituted a sharply critical perspective, even a radical one for the times. Pragmatism's views on social reality as being constantly in flux, on knowledge as relative and shaped by multiple and instrumentalist goals, on society as a form of discursive interaction, on the self as a biographical project free of metaphysical baggage, on science as will to meaning and power, and on methodology as a form of situated inquiry largely predate the onset of most postmodern and poststructural social and cultural criticism. Indeed, philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, Donna Haraway, and Jean-Francois Lyotard all have been clearly influenced by classical pragmatism, and to their credit some of them have explicitly recognized their debt. Therefore, rather than an entity living on its own, critical pragmatism stands in close rapport not only with the history and past intellectual development of

classical pragmatism but also with current social and cultural theory. Furthermore, its boundaries are extremely difficult to draw, and the identity and status of its figureheads are contested and uncertain. Nevertheless, critical pragmatism is enjoying a remarkable renaissance across the social sciences, and its followers are multiplying exponentially. Rather than describing central figures or currents, this entry outlines four critical characteristics of classical pragmatism. These four characteristics represent strong theoretical threads in the ongoing growth of critical pragmatism.

The Socially Constructed Nature of Reality

Whereas for many theoretical perspectives the world is either ready-made or hardly malleable, for pragmatists reality is constantly open to change, becoming, and flux. Pragmatism's indeterminate view of reality is now shared by many researchers who put a premium on the constructed nature of social reality. On the one hand, this has opened up pragmatism to the criticism of those who believe its indeterminacy easily dismisses obdurate sources of social inequality; on the other hand, this makes pragmatism particularly amenable to progressive political philosophies aiming for cultural criticism, social reform, and political transformation.

Pragmatists view social action as the site where multiple realities are created. Contemporary critical pragmatists supplement this view with an emphasis on the construction of reality as a struggle between conflicting discourses and competing definitions of the situation. Viewing reality construction as a site of contention opens up the space for deconstructive and polemical approaches to the making and remaking of reality as a political act. Because pragmatism privileges the doing and the performing over the done and the performed, critical pragmatists emphasize the openness of culture to critical change, to knowing as a critical form of inquiry, to reflexive understanding as emancipation and radical pedagogy, to concerted action as orchestrated resistance, and to power as knowledge.

Influenced by the quasi-pragmatism of Foucault, many contemporary critical pragmatists emphasize the polyvocality of power, pluralism, inclusiveness, the value of subaltern cultural beliefs and practices, and the incomplete, partial, and contingent nature of

reality. Critical pragmatists value involvement and participation and, therefore, embrace an understanding of multiple realities as the tool for a participatory orientation toward praxis and change. As Norman Denzin discussed, such a critical pragmatist view of cultural realities becomes a politics of resistance and possibility and a moral call for everyone to intervene in public life and interrupt the uncontested flow of inequality.

The Emergent Nature of Social Structure and Organization

Pragmatists have repeatedly been criticized for their supposed astructural bias. The story goes that pragmatism and related theoretical perspectives neglect to consider the pervasiveness of structural powers and the deep-rootedness of ascriptive traits, such as race, sex, and (in part) class, and instead privilege an overly voluntarist view of life. Yet both classical pragmatists and contemporary critical pragmatists argue that the very nature of interaction constitutes a form of social organization that limits (as well as enables) individual and group action. In other words, pragmatists are well aware of the constraining potential of group life, yet they refuse to believe that individuals have no choice but to succumb to the power of the structures they have created.

Contemporary critical followers of the pragmatist tradition such as Peter Hall have capitalized on the pragmatists' rich arsenal of concepts for the study of social structure and built their theoretical approaches around a negotiated and historical view of social organizations and institutions. These approaches emphasize organization as recurring patterns of collective activity, interlinked contexts of action, intersecting intentions, conflicting goals, and the emergent formation of conventions and practices. Researchers influenced by critical pragmatism have outlined the differential consequences of forms of inequality, the interactive constitution of injustice, and the contingent nature of the creation and reproduction of social problems and their definitions.

Inspired by the emancipatory political consciousness of C. Wright Mills, current studies informed by critical pragmatism pay close attention to the components of generic social processes of inequality reproduction within institutions such as stigmatization, "othering," marginalization, alienating emotional labor, subordination, the formation of symbolic boundaries,

the selective transmission of cultural and social capital, the regulation of discourse, the scripting of mass events, and more. These inequality orders function neither at the macro level nor at the micro level of sociological analysis alone; rather they function within a meso domain that mediates distant contexts and local situations of interaction through forms of meta power—processes that influence local conditions of interaction from afar.

The Situated Nature of Knowledge

Classical pragmatists' stance toward objectivist epistemology is without doubt one of its most critically progressive aspects. Knowledge cannot be generated from the outside; it can be understood only through sympathetic introspection by taking the role of the other. Understanding the world from a culture member's perspective constitutes a uniquely radical position in a world still dominated by universalist and absolutist pretensions toward the objects of knowledge. Participant observation and life history research—the methods privileged by most social researchers influenced by pragmatism—require that research-driven knowing not be guided by overly rationalist, pretentiously unbiased, deterministic, and atomistic models. By blurring the boundaries between common sense and scientific knowledge, by privileging depth and diversity over superficial uniformity, and by viewing the verification of truth as a contingent process based on negotiation, pragmatism features one of the most critical and radically democratic views on knowledge.

Contemporary critical pragmatists such as Dorothy Smith have embraced a view of knowledge based on embodied situated forms of experience of the world. Recent growing interest in institutional ethnography, critical ethnography, reflexive and postmodern ethnography, and narrative and performance studies has blended traditional pragmatist approaches to knowledge with contemporary poststructural concerns with the power of discourse, the social construction of knowledge, and representation. For example, institutional ethnographers study how everyday experiences are shaped by relations of power generated within social institutions and typically transmitted through texts and discourses. Performance scholars such as Norman Denzin have instead been instrumental in shaping and diffusing awareness of postcolonial research strategies that center around emotions,

polemics, situated narratives, bodily presence, cultural diversity, and multiple versions of truth.

Contemporary critical pragmatist approaches to knowledge continue to show the relevance of earlier pragmatist concerns with the changing character of scientific truths, the sensitizing nature of research concepts, the role of science in constituting knowledge (and thus in reproducing or eradicating inequalities), the obtuse instrumental rationality of quantifying research procedures, the anthropocentric character of science and technology, the alienating character of nonintimate methods such as mass scale survey research, the cognitive bias of positivism, ethnocentric faith in formal rationality and linear logic, and the elitist and exclusionary character of scientific writing and representation.

The Progressive Nature of Pragmatism's Democratic Ideology

As the influential contemporary pragmatist scholar Hans Joas noted repeatedly, classical pragmatism has been wrongly accused of being an overly naive, optimistic, and accommodating philosophy. The creativity of human action that pragmatism posits, coupled with its adaptive spirit and accompanied by healthy skepticism toward essential views of human nature and teleological perspectives of social history, constitutes the very backbone of a truly democratic philosophy. When compared with the elitism of polemical critical theories, the inevitability of destiny embraced by historical materialism, the various forms of reductionism typical of much social theory, and the deindividualizing spirit of structuralism and functionalism, pragmatism's egalitarianism appears to be most congenial with the ideology of authentic democracy. Indeed, pragmatism's view of social reality as malleable could very well be the philosophical foundation for programs oriented toward social reform.

Within critical pragmatism, no principles of truth are absolute; no realities transcend the local conditions under which they emerge. Experience and interaction are the sites where knowledge takes shape, and dialogue is the process through which consensus is achieved. Pragmatism is critical of liberal democracies founded on technocratic principles. Science is meant not to rule but rather to help in concrete circumstances. Ethics is to be guided not by universal codes but rather by context-driven action focused on how

goals-at-hand serve the public good. Cultural policy is to follow not objective aesthetic criteria of elites but rather a universe of diversity. State organization is not to supersede the spirit of individuals freely collaborating and creating local institutions built to protect civil liberties. Meanings can be shaped and shared in communicative action. The public sphere can be reformed through mutual understanding and relationality. Communication can be free from domination and occupy the most central role in the formation of inclusive social welfare structures. Citizens' ability to form associations and movements can impede further colonization of the lifeworld by the hands of a consumerist corporate hegemony.

Yet this is no carefree rosy optimism. Contemporary critical pragmatists share a deep concern for the conciliatory nature of bourgeois liberalism. Nancy Fraser's socialist-democratic feminist pragmatism, for example, challenges the essentialism of male-centric views of power and politics and opens the door for a historical and hermeneutic criticism of institutions as the site of gender-biased discursive political practice. Her perspective is critical of hegemonies in the structures of knowledge and the economy that lead to unequal gender divisions of labor, the racial segmentation of markets, and a global economy insensitive to need. Other contemporary critical pragmatists have empirically outlined systems of disjuncture and difference in global cultures and identities, the blurring of national and ethnic identities, the power of the technological imperative to shape media ecologies, the pervasiveness of diasporic populations, the transnational formation of identity-based and interest-driven social movements, the demagogic impression management of ruling politicians, and the resilience of old conservative meta-narratives and the reactionary party structures that support them.

Much like classical pragmatism, contemporary critical pragmatism's power resides in its potential to generate useful knowledge through concrete empirical observation. The future of critical pragmatism, therefore, resides not in its internal coherence or its resilience from external criticism but rather in its potential to remain useful for the critical goals its followers set out to achieve.

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See also Constructivism; Institutional Ethnography; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interactionism

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CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical perspective that purposely centers race and racism in its analysis. It considers racism to be the central reason for racial inequality in the United States. In CRT, racism is defined as a structure embedded in society that systematically advantages Whites and disadvantages people of color. Rather than aberrant or random acts, racism is considered a normal condition of U.S. society, relating directly to and resulting from the racialized history of the country. Originating in the United States, CRT is just now beginning to be explored by scholars around the world seeking a new way to analyze systematic racial inequality in law, education, and other dimensions of society.

The goal of CRT is to dismantle systematic inequity by calling attention to it. CRT does this by intentionally focusing attention on race, problematizing the neutrality associated with dominant ideologies, and highlighting the situatedness of one's perspective. It also centers the stories of those who have personally experienced racial inequality and enables these stories to be told in compelling ways so

that a wide audience can learn from their perspectives. This entry first describes the history of CRT, beginning in the mid-1970s. It then explores the characteristics of CRT, including its description of racism as embedded, normal, and permanent; its critique of liberalism; the concept of interest convergence; and the view that Whiteness constitutes a property right. It also discusses the role of storytelling in CRT. Finally, it describes some of the current “outside-centered” theories that are outgrowths of CRT.

History

CRT originated in the United States in the field of law during the mid-1970s, growing out of and responding to critical legal studies (CLS), which at the time was an emerging movement of legal scholarship that rejected the notion that legal matters were neutral and could be interpreted objectively. Influenced by postmodernism, CLS advocates argue that politics and social situations influence U.S. jurisprudence. Legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Mari Matsuda, among others, responded that race and racism also play significant roles in U.S. law, influencing laws as well as those who interpret them. The U.S. civil rights movement and the nationalist movements advanced by Malcolm X and the Black Panthers also influenced the creation of CRT. Bell, Crenshaw, and Freeman (considered the founders of CRT), among others, believed that the progress made during the 1960s toward civil rights was already stalling by the mid-1970s. Thus, CRT was created to focus specifically on racial inequality in all aspects of U.S. jurisprudence and to actively work toward dismantling racism in the law.

In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced education scholars to CRT in their article in *Teachers College Record*, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education.” In this article, they argued that CRT can explain racial inequity in school achievement by focusing on race and racism as influential entities in all aspects of U.S. society and schooling. Some scholars in education now frequently address the influence of racism on the historical constructions and purposes of school and schooling as well as on teachers, administrators, and student achievement. Like CRT scholars in the area of law, Ladson-Billings and Tate suggested that the “business as usual” of racial inequality in education will not be resolved

until it is addressed pointedly. CRT has also been adopted into the social sciences literature and can be found as a theoretical and analytical tool in very diverse fields of study.

Characteristics

Whereas CRT is a multifaceted theoretical perspective, it has several key characteristics, including the embedded normal nature of racism, the permanence of racism, the critique of liberalism, interest convergence, property rights in Whiteness, storytelling, and the goal of dismantling racism.

Embedded Normal Nature of Racism

A foundational aspect of CRT is the belief that racism is embedded in society. In 1995, Richard Delgado, one of the major contributors to CRT, emphasized, “Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture” (p. xiv). Racism, in this perspective, is seen not only in the rantings of the Ku Klux Klan but also in the racial makeup of those in power and those who are disempowered as well as in the frequent absence of people of color in everything from political leadership to school curriculum to popular media. CRT theorists (or criticalists) argue that because racism is so deeply ingrained in society, it is necessarily ingrained in jurisprudence, education, and all other institutions and aspects of society.

Permanence of Racism

A second foundational aspect of CRT is the notion that racism is persistent, enduring, or even permanent. The progress of race relations is not considered linear, moving toward equality as time passes. Rather, the structural embedded nature of racism prevents it from being removed from the fabric of society. Progress toward future equality is questioned, and much criticism is given to the exceedingly slow and unpredictable nature of societal change. Recognizing racism as a permanent embedded condition in society is what Bell termed “racial realism.” Racial realism is in the tradition of legal realism, which was a precursor to CLS. Its main tenet was that because humans create law, their own imperfections are mirrored in the law. The term *racial realism* implies that racism is a

problem influencing law and society because it is a problem influencing humans.

Critique of Liberalism

Directly related to the preceding understanding of racism is the CRT critique of liberalism. Because racism is considered to be embedded and persistent, many tenets of liberalism are rejected by criticalists as actually standing in the way of racial equity. These tenets include the belief that jurisprudence is neutral and outside or above the influence of humans. This is the central tenet of U.S. law which CLS and legal realism also reject. In addition, criticalists reject the notion that jurisprudence is color-blind. They argue that color-blindness masks the influence of race and racism in everyday forms of inequity and prevents them from being recognized as entrenched aspects of the justice system. Criticalists also disapprove of the liberal tenet of incremental change through the system of legal precedence. They assert that this system ensures that the dominating social group in society, Whites in the United States, controls change. As a result, change is slow and comes about only when the dominant group benefits from such change.

Interest Convergence

The notion that the dominant group permits legal change toward racial equity only when its own best interests are served is termed *interest convergence*. This concept was developed by Bell, who used it in 1980 in reference to the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Bell called attention to the ways in which the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown* reflected the recognition by Whites that desegregation had economic and political values for Whites unrelated to the immorality of racial inequality. For example, in anticipation of this case, the U.S. Department of Justice filed an amicus curiae (“friend of the court”) brief stating that racial integration in the United States was important because it was considered as highly beneficial for the image of the United States abroad. Affirmative action can also be examined through the interpretive lens of interest convergence by examining its impact on White women compared with its effect on men and women of color. A third example of interest convergence can be found in the history of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Although federal legislation creating the holiday had been passed in 1983 and Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt had signed an executive order designating it as a state holiday in 1986, Governor Evan Meacham rescinded this executive order when he took office in 1987. This action set off a tourist boycott that in 1991 prompted the National Football League to move the 1993 Super Bowl from Arizona to California. In 1992, Arizona voters passed a proposition establishing the holiday, and the 1993 Super Bowl was held in Tempe, Arizona.

Property Rights in Whiteness

The notion that being White confers valuable rights as inalienable as they are unearned is another central tenet of CRT. During the time of slavery, African Americans were recognized under the law as property, whereas Whites had no such status and could not be enslaved. African American slaves could be bought, sold, and substituted for cash for purposes of paying debts or making purchases. Legal scholar Cheryl Harris argued that Whiteness, initially a concept of racial identity, was so closely attached to the right to be free and to own property that Whiteness itself became a kind of property right. Harris suggested that such a property right can be seen in legal precedents that give individuals the right to sue for defamation for being erroneously called Black but not for being erroneously called White. *Black* was considered to be a slanderous label affording harm to an individual, but *White* was not.

Another property right put forth by Harris was the “absolute right to exclude.” Because Whiteness is constructed as the absence of African heritage, it is inherently exclusionary. The privileging of Whiteness is also evidenced in the “one-drop rule” written into law in most U.S. states, beginning with Tennessee in 1910. This rule contended that any amount of African heritage deprived an individual of the rights attached to Whiteness. The last one-drop rule was repealed by the state of Louisiana as recently as 1983. In contemporary times, Whiteness is still recognized as valuable property that affords certain rights such as the right to be trusted, the right to be given the benefit of the doubt, the right to be perceived as a professional, and the right to attend schools and school programs where one’s race does not prevent one from accessing excellent materials, curricula, and teachers. These issues

have been examined by Harris and the education scholars Ladson-Billings and Tate, among others.

Storytelling

A central characteristic of CRT that readily lends itself to qualitative methodology is the importance of narrative in general and of storytelling in particular. Because voices of color have so often been ignored and dismissed by the dominant group in society, first-person narratives are considered to be particularly powerful. They often tell the stories that have not been heard. Being influenced by postmodernism and critical legal studies, CRT maintains that one reality and/or truth does not exist. Instead, reality is considered to be socially constructed and, as such, individuals are believed to have their own realities and truths that are shared through storytelling. In addition, the stories people tell are often engaging and easy to understand, enabling stories to make strong impressions on audiences from a variety of backgrounds. This emphasis on accessibility aligns with the activist nature of CRT. If a wide variety of people are able to comprehend complex and often esoteric legal issues through first-person narratives told in absorbing ways, many people can then actively respond to these issues.

Because of the emphasis on multiple truths and realities, criticalists often use nontraditional forms of writing to make their points. Harris and Ladson-Billings, for example, weaved in stories from their own lives to make their points more vivid. Harris wrote about her grandmother’s experience in “passing” for White during the 1930s. Ladson-Billings wrote of being mistaken for a waitress while passing time in a VIP lounge after giving an invited lecture. Bell used science fiction to tell the story of “space traders” who come to the earth offering gold and energy in exchange for just one thing: all African Americans. He followed this short story with a critique of liberalism in U.S. jurisprudence. Delgado took on an “alter ego” in his *Rodrigo Chronicles*, where he shared the fictionalized stories of law student Rodrigo and his professor mentor. Through this writing style, legal and social issues are examined in dialogic fashion with questions, answers, ambiguities, and hesitations par for the course. These scholars are recognized for their more traditional styles of writing as well, but all saw great potential in the creativity and related accessibility of these more engaging writing forms.

In addition to narrative and storytelling, two other strategic forms of stories are used in CRT: stock stories and counterstories. Stock stories are akin to grand narratives in postmodern language. They explain “why things are” in ways that satisfy the dominant culture. The following are two typical examples of stock stories. First, there are so few people of color in leadership positions in business and academia because there are few qualified people of color. Second, only people who prove to be untrustworthy or dangerous are followed by security in department stores or pulled over while driving by the police. Counterstories purposely disrupt stock stories by telling personal accounts that contradict the stock stories. For example, a counterstory to the first story could be a first-person account of being the most objectively qualified person who was not hired because of subjective concerns about “fit” as a person of color. A counterstory to the second story could be a first-person account of being exceedingly trustworthy and not dangerous (e.g., a teacher, a medical doctor, a church pastor) and nevertheless being followed in department stores and pulled over by police for appearing to be suspicious. These are stories that people of color of all economic backgrounds, and of all educational and professional attainments, tell. The first-person voice, absent in this encyclopedia entry, brings the sincerity, passion, and gravitas to the counterstory.

Goal of Dismantling Racism

It is important to emphasize that the overarching goal of CRT is to dismantle racism. Although critical theories, including CRT, are sometimes criticized for being too idealistic, changing and improving lived realities is a central tenet in all of them. By naming racism, criticizing “liberal” approaches to addressing racism, and highlighting and legitimizing the personal stories of those who experience racism, CRT endeavors to dismantle the systematic nature of racism. Thus, CRT necessarily has a social justice agenda. It is not a component of research conducted for its own sake.

Related Outsider-Centered Areas of Study

Although CRT has not focused only on African Americans, African American perspectives and concerns have shaped much of CRT. Its focus on the lived

experiences and perspectives of those who are subordinated in society, its critique of dominance, its main tenets, and its creative use of form and substance have inspired other outsider-centered theoretical perspectives that have emerged—and continue to emerge—out of CRT. Recently emerging (1990s–2000s) race-centered areas of scholarship include LatCrit, which focuses specifically on Latina/o perspectives and experiences in law and society; AsianCrit, which focuses similarly on Asians; and TribalCrit, which focuses similarly on Native Americans. Well-known scholars in these three fields include Richard Delgado, Robert Chang, and Brian Brayboy, respectively.

Critical studies in Whiteness is also an emerging area of study in the social sciences. Inspired by CRT legal scholars and other scholars of color who look at the ways in which Whiteness dominates society and other racial groups through its idealism and apparent neutrality, academics in a variety of areas have been critically examining Whiteness since around the late 1980s. Ian Haney López (in law), Peggy McIntosh (in women’s studies and education), David Roediger (in history), Ruth Frankenberg (in sociology), and Alice McIntyre and James Scheurich (in education) are some of the best-known Whiteness scholars.

Another compelling outgrowth of CRT is critical race feminism, which centers both race and gender in its theoretical framework. An example of a unique term in critical race feminism is “Blackwoman,” which emphasizes the inimitable experiences of Black women and the importance of situating one’s perspective in race and gender. The goal of critical race feminism, like other dimensions of CRT, is to dismantle racism and sexism as well as to highlight the lived experiences and perspectives of those living within and without the borders of what society deems to be neutral. Jennifer Russell and Adrien Katherine Wing are two well-known critical race feminists.

Although not specifically race centered, queer theory is also connected to CRT, emerging from some of the same social theories and forces that continue to shape CRT and the other race- and gender-centered theories already described. Just as CRT seeks to disrupt Whiteness and the neutrality that masks its power, queer theory strives to disrupt the neutrality associated with heterosexuality and to situate it as an often idealized exclusive construct. In contrast to the neutrality of heterosexuality, other sexual and gender orientations are often demonized, essentialized, or omitted in public and private discourses. Queer theory

draws attention to this inequity with the goal of eliminating it. The works of Annamarie Jagose and Francisco Valdez are examples of this theoretical perspective.

Recently, outsider-centered theorists have also begun troubling the binaries that emerge when constructs such as queer and heterosexual, and of color and White, are compared and contrasted with one another. Many of these criticalists argue that, rather than having sharp borders, race, gender, and sexual orientation (among other aspects of identity) have frayed edges that lend themselves to complex, rather than essentializing, analyses. As these concerns indicate, theories that challenge dominant ideologies are emergent and dynamic, influencing each other and a variety of fields of study as they continue to evolve.

Sherry Marx

See also Critical Theory; Postmodernism; Queer Theory; Realism; Social Constructionism

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CRITICAL REALISM

Critical realism offers an ontology that can conceptualize reality, support theorizing, and guide empirical work in the natural and human sciences. It views reality as complex and recognizes the role of both agency and structural factors in influencing human behavior. It can be used with qualitative and/or quantitative research methods. There are strong links between critical realism and other theoretical approaches, such as complexity theory, social emergence, and systems theory, variations of which can be underpinned by a critical realist ontology.

Background

Critical realism (alternatively termed *transcendental* or *complex realism*) is most closely associated with the early works of the philosopher Roy Bhaskar. It has been developed mostly in the social and health sciences, evaluation, and economics.

Critical realism is one of a range of postpositivist approaches positioned between positivism/objectivism and constructivism/relativism. Critical realism simultaneously recognizes the existence of knowledge independent of humans but also the socially embedded and fallible nature of scientific inquiry. Among other criticisms, positivism is viewed as failing to acknowledge the inherent social nature of knowledge development, the influence of underlying unobservable factors/powers, and the meaning-centered nature of humans. However, constructivist philosophies are also criticized for overprivileging these human perspectives and attendant problematic variations of relativism that cannot adequately resolve competing claims to knowledge or account for knowledge development.

To resolve these epistemological issues, the early work of Bhaskar conceived the existence of three realms of reality: the actual, the real, and the empirical. The *actual* domain refers to events and outcomes that occur in the world. The *real* domain refers to underlying relations, structures, and tendencies that have the power to cause changes in the actual realm. Most often these causal influences remain latent; however, under the right circumstances, factors in the real domain can act together to generate causal changes in the actual domain. These causal changes are neither uniform nor chaotic but are somewhat patterned. The *empirical* dimension refers to human perspectives on the world (i.e., of the actual and real domains). This could be perspectives of an individual or, in a wider sense, of scientific inquiry. The real and actual domains can be perceived only fallibly. Hence, this ontology advocates the existence of an objective reality formed of both events and underlying causes, and although these dimensions of reality have objective existence, they are not knowable with certainty.

Other tenets of critical realism tend to emerge from this ontological basis. A strong focus in theorizing and research informed by critical realism is placed on understanding causality and explaining events in the actual domain. This movement from events to their causes, known as abduction, is contrasted with other

common goals of research to describe, predict, correlate, and intervene.

Critical realism attempts to respond to and understand reality as it exists in the actual and real domains. Hence, being led by the nature of that reality is of overriding importance and takes precedence over disciplinary, methodological, or ideological predisposition because each of these could distort perceptions of reality. This results in a postdisciplinary vent that seeks to be led by reality in all its complexity and to avoid simplification, narrowness, and distortion.

In the realm of the real, critical realism views behavior as being influenced by both agency and structural factors. Although humans have a degree of agency, this is always constrained by wider structural factors that are viewed as surrounding the individual. Although culture can be conceived as being dependent on and created only through the existence of humans, critical realism argues that culture exists independent of individuals. Likewise, social phenomena are made possible by the presence of humans but are deemed to be external to individuals and have existence and the power to constrain whether this is recognized by individuals or not.

Suitability of Critical Realism for Qualitative Research

The strengths of critical realism for qualitative research lie in its desire to render complexity intelligible, its explanatory focus, its reconciliation of agency and structural factors, and its ability to recognize the existence of wider knowledge while respecting the importance of social meaning to humans.

Critical realism is particularly well suited to exploring research questions that relate to understanding complexity. Rather than controlling for or simplifying complexity artificially, the approach advocates that complexity must be embraced and explored. Although other research methods, such as the randomized trial, have control and artificiality as defining characteristics, critical realism advocates that phenomena must be understood in the real world. Understanding phenomena in this natural realm means that findings do not need to endure problematic generalizations from unnatural to natural settings.

Critical realism is also well suited to questions that seek to explain outcomes. A huge volume of research (mostly quantitative) describes outcomes in the

natural world. The demographics of death and disease, educational achievement, and health care are monitored systematically in many countries. Moreover, researchers often use trial interventions or programs in an effort to find out what approaches work best so as to improve outcomes in different populations. However, in both instances, little work is carried out to explain the patterns identified or understand the underlying phenomena. As a result, there is often difficulty in accounting for why trends exist or why programs perform as they do. There is nothing inherent in critical realism that directs researchers to theoretical, qualitative, or quantitative methods. The tenets of critical realism place overriding importance on understanding reality. Methodological decisions are secondary to this aim. Some critical realists advocate greater reliance on qualitative work; however, these arguments are based mostly on the assumption that qualitative methods are better suited to understanding complexity in the real domain.

Critical realism is also compatible with critical social science because it views individuals as having the potential for emancipation. Critical realism recognizes that humans can actively shape and change wider social phenomena through channels such as collective action, the arts, and research.

Applications of Critical Realism in Qualitative Research

Critical realism has been applied in qualitative research in a variety of ways. Its ontology may underpin empirical work irrespective of whether this is overtly recognized or acknowledged. Much qualitative research seeks to understand the causes of social phenomena through recourse to both individual and contextual factors. How closely authors of such research ascribe to or identify with the tenets of critical realism is open to debate. Arguably, a wealth of research that has come to be labeled as interpretive descriptive is underpinned with principles that are not dissimilar to critical realism. However, investigators are often reticent or unable to draw comment on the philosophies underlying their work.

In terms of method, critical realism can be used to guide empirical work as part of recognized approaches. For example, interpretations of critical realism can underpin variations of ethnography and grounded theory. Alternatively, approaches that are presented as

critical realist have been developed. Although there is no single critical realist method, these various approaches have some commonalities.

In common with many methodological approaches to qualitative research, critical realism places a strong importance on adequate conceptualization, rigorous description, and convincing explanation.

Given that reality is seen as independent of individuals, attaining an adequate conceptualization of phenomena being explored is very important. If researchers have an impoverished or incomplete conception of phenomena, the quality of the understanding likely to accrue from the research is compromised. Research must seek an accurate understanding of reality in all its complexities but also must avoid the imposition of the researchers' preconceptions or ideology on reality. This rationale informs the argument for postdisciplinary research. From a strong conceptualization, rigorous description and adequate explanation should follow. Again, both of these aims stem from the assumption that reality is complex and external to the individual.

Explanation should be rich and deep, invoking both agency and structural factors in a complex way to account for patterns in data. In this way, results are not descriptive but should provide an explanation of patterns identified in data. Interactions between factors should be described, and a sense of complexity should be to the fore. Different types of data can be relied on to provide a case for explanation, including lay accounts from different key groups or document analysis. These qualitative data can also be linked to quantitative data for corroboration or further explanation. The rationale for this multiplicity is that each method or perspective can provide evidence of what is occurring in the world.

There is a place within this for research exclusively into lay accounts. This follows from the recognition that knowledge of the world exists and that social structures influence human behaviors in the recognition of hermeneutical dimensions. The beliefs, understandings, and meanings of humans do matter—not because they determine what objective reality is but rather because they are likely to influence behavior. Although it is understandable that a patient with a fatal form of cancer might not believe he or she has cancer despite a range of biological indicators and symptoms that point to the contrary, the patient's beliefs do not determine objective reality; that is, they do not cause the cancer to disappear. It remains important to understand the cancer patient's perspective because this will have implications for his or her

self-care, but the patient's views should always be framed as an account of reality rather than being taken to determine reality. Hence, critical realism can be used to guide research into lay beliefs, accounts, and discourse with the broad caveat that data produced in these inquiries relate to accounts of reality that may or may not be accurate but do not determine reality. This is compatible with many forms of qualitative research, including phenomenology/lived experience research.

Sampling in qualitative research informed by critical realism retains the same concerns as do other methods, including saturation, typicality of sample, and purposive case selection. However, sampling should also be focused on using key groups to assist in the explanatory project. Careful selection of similar individuals with different outcomes can provide case-based comparisons that can illuminate factors in the real domain of prime importance. Sample sizes should be sufficiently large to allow meaningful comparisons to be made.

The Future of Critical Realism in Qualitative Research

In the rush to do research as a basis for intervention in policy and practice in health, education, and social services, solutions to well-established problems remain surprisingly and consistently illusive. Inequalities remain, performance is weak, and problematic patterns persist. All too often, the promising results of randomized trials or demonstration initiatives fail to be replicated in the real world or across different settings. Disturbingly consistent adverse patterns in health, education, and social well-being continue to be found internationally. After the initial faith that evidence-based practice could eradicate all such ills, more sophisticated and less reductionist approaches such as critical realism are increasingly seen as being needed by governments and organizations.

Critical realism retains the axioms that knowledge of the underlying complexities of the world can be not only accrued but also applied for human benefit. However, it views having a deep understanding of why patterns exist as a prerequisite to effective action. As such, its future in guiding work to address intransigent real-world problems may be a particularly fruitful area for its continued application.

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See also Ontology; Postpositivism

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CRITICAL RESEARCH

Critical research is a loosely defined genre of social inquiry whose central theme involves the problematization of knowledge. Knowledge is not simply a matter of representing and explaining reality but rather a social phenomenon itself, having substantive–constitutive relations to personal identities, social practices, institutions, and power structures. This includes knowledge produced by social researchers; therefore, critical research must profoundly include a self-reflexive or reflective component.

The list of contemporary forms of research that self-identify as critical includes most prominently critical ethnography, critical discourse analysis, feminist research, critical race studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, gender studies, social constructivist research, queer theory, critical hermeneutics, and critical psychology. The problematization of knowledge found in each of these research communities can be attributed to two broadly conceived perspectives: the critical theory tradition and poststructuralism/postmodernism. Both perspectives take issue with modernity, specifically with Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment concepts of knowledge, truth, and rationality. Critical theory bases its notion of critique on a paradigmatic shift in the concepts of universal reason, reflection, emancipation, and the human subject. In contrast, poststructuralism/postmodernism bases its notion of critique on the rejection of any universal features of these same concepts. Thus, although both perspectives are “critical,” they are fundamentally opposed when it comes to explaining the ultimate basis of critique.

Most critical research practiced at this time draws from both critical theory and poststructuralism/postmodernism despite the differences between them. This is possible because there are intersections

between critical theory and poststructuralism/postmodernism at the level of methodology and at many levels of sociocultural criticism.

Origins:

The Self-Contradictory Human Subject

Michel Foucault made the argument that by the end of the European Enlightenment, an epistemological thematization of subjectivity occurred for the first time in Western history, resulting in a contradictory notion of the human subject. The subject was taken to be both an object of knowledge and a condition for all possible knowledge. Critical research can be understood by looking carefully at this development.

The Human Subject as Object

As the 18th century drew to a close, empiricism was well on the way toward becoming the dominant epistemological framework for science. This framework became hegemonic for concepts of knowledge-in-general during the 19th century and remains so to this day. Empiricist reason, related to instrumental action, also became embedded within industrial and postindustrial social practices to produce what critical theorists have called “the dialectic of reason.” Instrumental reason resulted in technologies on which to base factory modes of production and, treating people like other objects of nature, organized work into fragmented menial activities. Greater poverty and less meaning and freedom were the result, as revealed in critiques by Karl Marx and Max Weber. Hence, Enlightenment reason appeared to lead to a society that was in contradiction with Enlightenment ideals. With human phenomena objectified and studied within a framework that makes predictions of measurable outcomes from measurable manipulable initial conditions, there is little room for concepts of freedom, choice, morality, and other notions dear to the Enlightenment.

The Human Subject as a Condition for Knowledge

On the other hand, Immanuel Kant developed what he called “critical philosophy” during the final decades of the 18th century to reveal limits to empirical knowledge. The human subject cannot fully be an object of study, according to Kant, because aspects of

it are a precondition for all other kinds of knowledge. To understand these preconditions, we cannot use empirical methods because these already presuppose the conditions. Instead, we must use reflection—transcendental argumentation. In particular, according to Kant, the “I” part of the human subject is presupposed by the unity of experience, by the fact that all experience internally contains the sense of being “my” experience, and by the fact that experience is always an experience *of* something, meaning that it involves something other than its objects. The “I” is not an entity, not an object, yet it is presupposed in all forms of experience. Thus, Kant showed limits to empirical knowledge and was able to defend morality as a rational activity by distinguishing between subject–object and subject–subject relations. Knowledge in general is then divisible into types, including empirical, reflective, and moral.

The relation of knowledge to power can be understood, therefore, in two broadly conceived ways. It can be understood as the result of mistakenly considering the human subject to be either an object of or a condition for knowledge. Then research as critique may proceed with the removal of this belief. Or the relation of knowledge to power can be understood in terms of an internal tension in the self between objectivity and subjectivity. Then research as critique will examine processes that systematically block full self-expression, self-recognition, and needs for self-development.

Poststructuralism and Its Critical Methods

Foucault argued that by his own time in history the philosophies and theories of modernity had exhausted all of the possibilities entailed by a contradictory notion of the human subject. Thus, the argument goes, a new era—a *postmodern* era—that features the “death of the subject” in its understanding of knowledge is under way. As in structuralism before it, poststructuralism rejects the idea of an intentional subject. In addition, any notion of universal reason is rejected. “Structures” internally construct forms of reason and subjectivity, and structures are not grounded in anything (hence *post*structuralism) but rather rise and fall, mutate and disseminate, intersect and network in simply accidental nondirected ways. Belief in universal reason and the human subject make it possible for knowledge and culture in general to be forms of oppressive power.

Critical Methods Informed by Poststructuralism/Postmodernism

Foucault’s research methods are called archaeology and genealogy. Both are ways to study knowledge in the human sciences as discourse practices that construct specific forms of the human subject internally (e.g., “the insane,” “the criminal,” “the sexual deviant”), mask the arbitrary form of these constructions, and then subjugate the constructed subjects to punishment, discipline, examination, and surveillance. People also apply such power and discipline over themselves when interpellated within a discourse practice. Concepts of reason and truth are similarly regarded as constructions internal to discourse practices, which themselves are viewed as objective forces. It is the false belief in essentialism that such constructed subjects are real and transcend the discourses about them that make discourse practices forms of power. Archaeology is a form of reconstructive analysis claimed to be nonhermeneutic because knowledge practices are treated like objective forces rather than like meanings.

Historically, discourse practices change dramatically and not as the result of learning processes, as when we say that a field of knowledge has improved and progressed, but simply through accidental splits, convergences, and intersections with other discourses. The study of these contingent and nonintentional historical relations is called genealogy of knowledge.

In other poststructuralist/postmodernist work, deconstruction as introduced by Jacques Derrida has been very influential. Deconstruction is used to implode theories and discourses from within. The commonsense notion of knowledge is that it consists of signs that systematically represent objective and subjective states of affairs. Accurate representation is then believed to ground the meaning of signs (e.g., words, symbols, languages). This ensures that repeated use of signs will mean the same thing to the extent that what they represent will be more or less stable. But deconstruction reverses this commonsense perspective, showing that it is the repetition of signs that generates belief in objectivity and subjectivity (as categories that transcend sign systems). Nothing is really outside of a text. And texts iterate, mutate, and shift without direction, intention, or purpose.

Deconstruction is an artful strategy rather than a method per se, for if it were formulated explicitly enough to be called a method, it would be deconstructable itself. It has been used to deconstruct highly

influential theories and philosophies that subtly privilege masculinity over femininity, science over art, mind over body, and other binaries that have supported/constituted power relations in modernity.

There are many examples of social research conducted along poststructuralist lines. *Troubling the Angels* by Patti Lather and Chris Smithies is exemplary. A collection of studies can be found in *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education*, edited by Elizabeth St. Pierre and Wanda Pillow.

The Critical Theory Tradition

Contradictions in the notion of the human subject as it emerged at the end of the 18th century are regarded as insightful—not condemning—by critical theory. Philosophies based on dialectical reason modified Kantian insights to argue that existence itself is contradictory. Freedom is a state of knowing one's self to not be anything objective, but self-knowledge requires objectifications from which to reflect. Hence, in different ways, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx developed theories in which the epistemic subject–object relation has an ontological status; knowledge is part of an existential spiral in which subjectivity acts to objectivate (“posit”) itself and then reflects from the objectifications to know itself and know itself as free. In Hegel and Marx, the subject is transindividual—a cosmic subject for Hegel and a species subject for Marx—and develops itself through history with the staged overcoming of alienated forms of self-understanding.

Most contemporary critical theory, however, rejects the subject–object framework of dialectics and relocates the essential tension in the self within the subject–subject relations of intersubjectivity. This shift in paradigm draws on insights from Wilhelm Dilthey (who modified Kantian theory to argue for the primacy of hermeneutics in the human sciences), George Herbert Mead (who distinguished between the “I” and the “me” components of self), and Ludwig Wittgenstein (who understood “meaning” as knowing how to respond to the acts of others rather than as having an object present to consciousness). Dilthey argued that humans have identity through being able to produce self-narratives yet are motivated to be recognized as the authors and critics of these self-narratives and, thus, be not fully absorbed by them. Mead argued that self-knowledge is mediated by

taking other social positions in relation to one's own acts, and these positions are culturally contingent. Hence, one can find one's subject status and needs for self-expression, self-development, and self-validation constrained, denied, and/or distorted if the identity categories supplied by cultural milieu are hierarchical with respect to things such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and class. The critical researcher further relates distortions in the milieu through which people must construct themselves to noncultural features of a social system such as the economy.

Accordingly, an ethical and moral principle embraced by many poststructuralists and critical theorists is to not fully represent another human subject in objectifying ways because to do so not only is epistemologically in error but also blocks needs for dignity and self-development. Essential tensions in the ontology of the subject—the “I” and “me” distinction—make sense of this moral principle that simultaneously implicates a standard for sociocultural critique.

Critical Methods Informed by Critical Theory

Critical theory has had a first generation, which emphasized dialectical reason but sought to combine it with Weberian social theory and the psychoanalytic tradition, and a second generation, which shifted from dialectics to intersubjectivity. The theory of communicative action developed by Jürgen Habermas has been most influential for contemporary forms of research informed by critical theory. Such research makes use of virtually all research methods available to the social sciences at this time, including empiricist methods, interpretive hermeneutic methods, critical hermeneutics, and systems theory. What makes research critical are not the methods employed but rather the theory of knowledge and society used in designing a study and interpreting results. A typical critical research project will artfully combine several methods.

Social research is generally interested in (a) patterned coordinated social action, (b) the conditions responsible for action coordination, and (c) people's experiences of life within or in relation to such patterns. Critical research adds an interest in evaluations of a form of life as made by participants in conversations with the researcher.

Unlike the patterns we find exhibited in nature, patterns in social life are not the result of causal relations but rather the result of contingent and criticizable

conditions within which action takes place. Conditions of action can be divided roughly into two types: those that are in principle under communicative negotiation and control (cultural conditions) and those that are not.

Cultural Conditions of Action and Power

The distinction between “I” and “me” is related to the concept of illocutionary force, which in turn is related to the fact that we hold other people and ourselves accountable—responsible—for what we say and do. The freedom of people to act otherwise, and thus to be able to separate themselves from their actions and statements so as to take responsibility for them and engage in self-criticism when appropriate, is a presupposition of social life. Thus, common situations of blatant power, when to act in certain ways would result in coercive sanctions, are ascertained to involve power by the constraint put on this sort of freedom. In contexts where coercive power is not obvious, action is coordinated in relation to illocutionary force. When people interact in any manner to communicate meaning, part of the meaning consists of claims or bids for a certain type of social relationship based on norms—presuppositions or explicit claims about what is appropriate, good, and right. The person to whom a meaningful act is addressed is in principle free to accept or reject the bid, and acceptance or rejection will be based on reasons a responsible human subject can and will articulate if appropriate. The normative claims that inform illocutionary force are, therefore, in principle criticizable.

But consent to illocutionary claims in daily life usually occurs for reasons other than a fully conscious assessment of reasons. We are socialized into cultural traditions that carry many implicit assumptions, beliefs, and values we simply take for granted. Moreover, norms are deeply linked to identity structures. Every meaningful act contains an identity claim at levels of foregrounding and backgrounding that vary. The unity of a self is also a claim brought about through an integration of routine identity claims within a self-narrative. Components to identity claims are drawn from the cultural milieu where they abide very often in hierarchical structures of mutually implicating terms such as male–female, white–colored, and heterosexual–gay. This means that it is often difficult to claim a self either as part of a meaningful act or in a self-narrative that is not dependent on there being other

kinds of selves of greater or lesser cultural value. It also means that it is sometimes difficult to claim a self that is fully embraced and recognized by the one who claims it. Consent to norms or criticism of norms both entail consequences for the identity of the actor—in many cases because culturally valid identities are tied to positions taken on norms. It is possible for cultures to separate identity from specific positions on norms and beliefs—an emancipating condition—but this is an exception rather than a commonality in most contexts. Hence, cultural power frequently works through identity structures to fix normative positions and make their criticism difficult and unlikely. Where this is the case, human needs for self-expression, validation, and development will be adversely affected, and this will manifest within the experiences of actors, albeit often at tacit levels that are hard to bring into articulation. In addition, possible criticisms of social institutions characterized by the second set of action conditions—those outside of communicative controls but still socially structured—are blocked. Sources of identity milieu include cultural traditions, the entertainment and news media, and educational institutions in contemporary societies.

A characteristic critical research project will begin with a study of culture using hermeneutic reconstructive methodology. The researcher must seek to attain an insider’s position as much as possible using ethnographic methods and/or maieutic interviewing with individuals and focus groups. Maieutic interviewing employs active listening, paraphrasing, and/or direct questioning to facilitate the articulation, by the participants themselves, of latent concepts, conceptual relations, and identity components in structured relations. The implicit intersubjective structures that participants make use of in their daily interactions with others and their self-monitoring activities are acquired by the researcher, such that he or she becomes more or less able to take positions with others as his or her participants do. This results in the acquisition of implicit forms of knowledge that the researcher then articulates into explicit discourse with his or her participants’ help. Validity is determined by the recognition by participants of their own and the researcher’s explications of the implicit cultural milieu. Resulting data are in the form of articulated norms, values, identity structures, stories, and self-narratives, all of which are themselves embedded within larger cultural structures such as discourses and narrative genres.

Simultaneously, the researcher will learn from participants not only how they live within their social and cultural contexts of life but also what it feels like to live this way. This sets the groundwork for critical analysis. To bring critique into the picture, participants must be engaged in conversations (e.g., interviews, focus groups) about their lives and experiences so that tensions between identity investments and expressive self-developing needs may become conscious to both participants and the researcher.

Relating Culture and Power to Noncultural Features of Society

The second set of conditions coordinating social action confront the actor from the outside such as market situations, economic resources and constraints, laws, formal organizational rules, and aspects of the physical environment. People in such situations find their freedom limited to instrumental forms in which essentially individuated choices are made in relation to a system of resources and constraints largely beyond their control. Examples include income distributions, the effects of laws on diverse groups of people, the formal rules of organizations, housing conditions, formal means of access to health care, and education. Where communicative processes do make a difference in social contexts like these, it is as mediated by political institutions—the amount of influence that public opinion can have on the formation of laws and policies. Critical researchers are most definitely interested in these features of social life that can be accessed through an objectivating, empiricist-like framework augmented with systems theory.

Critical research also seeks to access the legitimacy of social institutions like these. Many social groups are faced with unequal opportunities, unequal distributions of resources, poor housing, poor medical care, and meaningless work. A basic research question will always be whether or not such groups explicitly criticize these objectified features of social life and what means are at their disposal to try to change them. By comparing critical hermeneutic reconstructions developed through qualitative research with features of society that confront actors externally, the functions served by cultural formations for legitimating and/or reproducing other aspects of a social system can be revealed.

There are many examples of research informed by critical theory. *Learning to Labor* by Paul Willis is a classic text of this kind. *We Are All Equal* by Bradley

Levinson is an exemplary study. And “Reforming Educational Practice Against the Boundaries of (Re)iteration: A Critical Ethnography of the Hidden Curriculum of a Constructivist Charter School,” a book chapter by Barbara Korth Dennis, is particularly illuminating.

Phil Francis Carspecken

See also Deconstruction; Hermeneutics; Interpretive Research; Poststructuralism

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CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory is a foundational perspective from which analysis of social action, politics, science,

and other human endeavors can proceed. Research drawing from critical theory has critique (assessment of the current state and the requirements to reach a desired state) at its center. Critique entails examination of both action and motivation; that is, it includes both what is done and why it is done. In application, it is the use of dialectic, reason, and ethics as means to study the conditions under which people live. This entry describes the development of critical theory and its applications to a variety of research questions.

Background

Critical theory has a considerable history; from its beginnings with the Frankfurt School to the current time, it has undergone some changes. That said, its usefulness as a means of inquiring into questions of social structure and action is undeniable. Critical theory retains its fundamental postpositivist character even in its transformed state.

Origins

Approximately seven decades ago, Max Horkheimer articulated the foundations of the social-theoretic school of thought that would be called critical theory. Horkheimer, along with Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and others affiliated primarily with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt am Main, began to revisit Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and apply it to contemporary society.

The Frankfurt School founders drew to some extent from the idealism of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as well in their development of dialectical means of analysis. The Hegelian source was far less important, however, than were Karl Marx and Max Weber. The difference of their approach was to situate it in immanent (knowledge within the realm of possible experience) terms rather than transcendent (the condition of the possibility of knowledge) terms. The role of history was central to Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse. For that reason, historical examination was, for them, an important element of analytical method. The historical was not merely artifactual; it was essential to understanding of the social situatedness of contemporary social life.

Second Phase

Critical theory is usually separated into three stages. Following the work of the Frankfurt School

members, some transformation of underlying principles, and so methods, was begun. Jürgen Habermas studied with founders of the Frankfurt School; his early work demonstrated his intellectual and practical debts to them. His analysis of the public sphere was firmly historical in that he drew his analysis from the manifestation of public political and social behavior. Habermas then began to turn to communication and language as the analytical and normative bases for inquiring into social action. The normative aspect is important as a distinguishing mark between his work and that of others who are linked to a movement sometimes called the "linguistic turn." One element of consistency between the first and second stages of critical theory is the denial of relativism that can characterize other theoretical and methodological approaches.

Third Phase

Some students of Habermas further transformed some of the conceptual and analytical bases of critical theory. The third stage of work built on Habermas's critique of instrumental reason—something that he continued, but altered, from the Frankfurt School founders. During the third stage, the force of ideology and its influence on social action became more particularized. Analysis became, if anything, more immanent. The situatedness of specific human actors—and their historical development—was a methodological centerpiece. Also, the connection of ideology and the ethical analysis was strengthened.

Critical Theory and Method

Although there are three identified stages of critical theory, all three conceptions have methodological value. There are some conceptual and foundational differences among the three stages, but there are questions as to which methodological specifics of each stage can be applied. The realm of social theory generally is extremely broad; any historical, political, economic, and technological elements can be studied in depth. Furthermore, conceptions of ideology can be applied to analysis in numerous ways. Therefore, the changes to critical theory do not represent supersesive variables. Because of the breadth of critical theory's brush, many kinds of questions may be amenable to its application.

Historical Analysis

Because all of critical theory relies on a particular kind of historicism (the starting point that people are historical agents who are participants in action as well as being subject to action), the analysis of historical situatedness is an important methodological component. The historical analysis of critical theory is of a specific sort. Rather than being explanations of events, it is intended to be indicative of current states. Because much of critical theory owes a debt to Marx, the political and economic investigation that it supports depends on examination of the genealogy of capitalism. The historical analysis generally focuses on societal action and the impact of large-scale policies and decisions on the behavior of individuals in society. If a particular Marxian starting point is adopted, for example, the analysis might examine class differences and the distinctions of the ways in which people of different classes live. The Marxian approach is emblematic of the first stage of critical theory, but it is a bit less pronounced during the latter two stages. Although that emphasis is less pronounced, it still informs analysis to some extent. The historical examination could seek evidence for the loci of decisions that affect the study of society. A single decision could have varying effects on different segments of society; what benefits one group may be detrimental to another group. The kinds of differences, and their sources, are of interest to researchers.

Historical evidence comes substantially from documentation. Official documents are usually the most authoritative sources for the decision-making activities of the state. This sort of documentation can record policies relating to zoning, transportation, infrastructure, taxation, education, and other areas that have direct impacts on people's lives. The locations of schools and the paths of public transportation, for instance, are largely matters of public record and are open to examination. Other documentation, however, might be necessary materials for researchers to gain a purchase on deliberation and debates and on responses to the policies. Newspapers are among the sources that a researcher could consult. In the cases of more recent events, there might be archives of community access broadcasts that record public meetings and community-led discussions. The entirety of the documentary record might need to be consulted in an effort to understand the critical events and discourse that affect society.

Historical evidence is one building block of critique. That is, the critical theorist will interpret evidence in terms of effects on those individuals and segments of society that can be least likely to be positioned to influence policymaking. A tenet of critical theory follows from Kant's dictum that people should always be treated as ends—never as means—that guides interpretation. An implication of the tenet is that historical analysis is particular, not universal. Individuals' lives are affected by turns of events; the events themselves are brought about by humans. The particularistic historicism requires that, so far as possible, people's interpretations of their own states should be taken into account.

Observation

Methodologically, the understanding needed by the researcher can be achieved in part through observation. Daily lives of, say, the working poor can be followed. The observation consists of the living conditions of individuals, the kinds of work being done and the places where the work is done, and spatial limitations that effectively limit movement, living space, and other kinds of existence. The observation is informed (shaped) by critical theory. That is, the theory identifies restricting factors as well as potentialities for emancipation. The Marxian aspect of the theory is especially important in shaping observation. Living conditions (including, but not limited to, housing) are economically determined, but they may also be affected by several other social and other components. Race, as well as economic class, may also be a factor involved with circumstances affecting people's lived lives. The observation follows from the numerous instruments that influence much of life. Reason, underlying observation, enables the researcher to understand the "other." So, the individuals who are observed are not objects of study but rather people whose conditions are genuine.

Opportunities for observation in the critical theoretic framework exist in the normal course of events. For example, a city may plan to rejuvenate a downtown area that has fallen into a state of deterioration. The plan could involve housing, retail business, office space, and other elements. Initially, the plan will likely be subject to review at several levels, including community response. Hearings and meetings could help and could be observed as they occur. In keeping

with critical theory, the researcher could trace who speaks—where the individuals live, what their interests are, and so on—and what they say. Speakers may indicate what their interests are and how the plan will serve or disrupt those interests. Enactment of the plan probably entails dislocation of some people; the disposition of the people can be followed. The economic states of all involved in the plan can be observed as well, and the observation can be extended over time. There are numerous other conceivable examples that necessitate observation.

Interviewing

Observation, in the application of critical theory, is not sufficient even if it is necessary. Individuals, who are other selves, apprehend their lived lives in some particular ways. For instance, spatial limitations might be perceived not merely as geographic boundaries but also as social and cultural boundaries. The meaning of perceptions can be comprehended by researchers only by inquiring of the individuals. Asking people what they believe is open to them and what is closed is the practical application of reason by the researcher. The interviewing process also opens the potential practice of reason on the part of the interviewees. At this point, the act and product of critique is vital. Interviewees may be constrained in their perceptions and their interpretations of their own perceptions by instrumental reasoning. Their reasoning may be guided by the expression of interests other than their own. Once again, the Marxian character of critical theory provides the interpretive impetus for the researcher. Questioning may elicit responses indicating that interviewees do not perceive their labor as their own, that people's perceptions are influenced by capitalist culture, and/or that senses of value and belonging do not exist. The interviewing process must be open (as in not directed by the interviewer) so that forthright responses are given.

Public Participation

The second and third stages of critical theory, in particular, pay attention to people's lived lives. The second stage is especially influenced by Habermas's work in communicative action and discourse ethics. During this stage, a more pragmatic focus to inquiry is evident. Examination of what people say and how

they say it (especially in public) is frequently foremost. In terms of theory, the pragmatism of communication and discourse constitute norms. There are ideal ways in which to communicate, discourse is bound by reason, and there is an ethical imperative that guides people's discursive interactions. According to this normative theory, there is a gauge against which human action can be assessed. With regard to public discourse, human agents are bound to apply practical reason and ensure that ethical responses are given to others' speech. Such normative standards influence research practice.

Reason

One factor that pervades all three stages of critical theory is the recognition that reason is possible and necessary for human action. The practice of critique depends both on reason as a tool for the practice and on observation of practical reason. Reason as applied by the researcher entails the avoidance of engaging in human behavior and action as instrumentalities. From the inquirer's standpoint, this necessitates developing an understanding, informed by practices described subsequently, of difference. For example, the lives lived by the poor are materially and qualitatively different from the lives lived by others. The difference is likely to affect all aspects of existence. Reason is applied in defining not just the material differences but also the qualitative and other differences. What people do is important to critical theory, but why people do what they do—and also what they cannot do—is also important.

Reason also is intended to supply a link between the immanent and the transcendent. That is, throughout the entirety of critical theory, the actions of people should be guided by truth that is provided by the exercise of reason. Application of critical theory, in light of reason, is also intended to connect theory to the interests that people have. Critical theory, then, is not an abstraction; it is a way of examining normative elements of human action in terms of the many and varied material interests that lead to action. Critical theory is also a mechanism by which a researcher can assess honesty as well as truth, for example, can evaluate what people say they believe in and what they do. This form of evaluation permits the analysis of differences between practical reason and instrumental reason and the outcomes of the use of the one as opposed

to the other. A researcher's inquiry into the use of reason necessitates employing historical analysis, observations, and interviews as well as examination of some underlying social and communicative dynamics.

Ideology

Analysis grounded in critical theory includes examination of ideological forces and statements that influence human action. Once again, this aspect of critical theory signals its Marxian basis; capitalism is a major ideology that has been, and continues to be, the focus of much attention. During the first stage, capitalism was the dominant perceived ideology. During the latter two stages, the study of ideology was broadened to include many aspects of race, gender, class, and other things. The purpose of including ideology in analysis is, as always, critique. The existing conditions of people are the focus of analysis, as is the possibility for emancipation from current conditions. Study of the communicative actions of people can unveil some of the ideological presumptions that underlie what people say and do. For instance, the communication and discourse may reveal processes of inclusion and exclusion. Study can investigate who is given voice and who is not as well as the agency of the speakers (the extent to which their voices are heard and acted on).

The researcher is challenged by the study of ideology. The sources of belief might not be readily apparent because the ideological origin can be deeply rooted through history and situation. Analysis of ideology requires examining the discourse that is used in a variety of settings, perhaps especially official settings, and the definitions and applications of discursive terms. For example, in critical theory, "Enlightenment" carries ideological import that may shadow particular kinds of control. Other emblematic terms may also serve similar purposes. It is important to note that critical theory embraces much more than just the economic elements of life. All aspects of lived lives, including association, mobility, and schooling, fall under the purview of critical theory.

Challenges for the Research

Because critical theory has been developed and reshaped over several decades, the researcher must be aware of all the nuances and influences of the key figures. In fact, the researcher must apply historical analysis to critical theory itself so as to form the

clearest understanding of the framework it supplies. The most pressing challenge for the researcher rests with ideology. Any commitment to investigation of ideological underpinnings of human action necessitates initial inquiry into any potential ideological baggage that the researcher may carry. Ideology tends to be suffused throughout society; successful ideological forces are those that are less than conscious in their influence over action. The researcher may be required to engage in some self-critique—investigation into beliefs that are held and internal situatedness—prior to conducting analysis. Only then can the effects of ideological policies, discourses, and the like be fully comprehended.

The warnings that customarily apply to observational study, interviewing, and phenomenological research in general also apply with regard to critical theory. Errors or insufficiencies in those areas could have deleterious effects on the process and product of critique. Because critique is the intended outcome of investigation, it is essential that the researcher apply the theory with care and vigilance. This application of critical theory involves a substantive difference from grounded theory, which is inductive. There is a perspective that informs critical theory; the assumptions that reason can yield truth, that instrumental reason can subvert practical reason, and that ideology shapes the relations between people and between groups of people all provide epistemological and ontological starting points for inquiry. When it comes to methodology, there is an onus on the researcher to make the assumptions very clear. There is also an onus on readers of critical theory-based research to be aware of the point of view that the theory adopts. These challenges do not render critical theory irrelevant or impossible; rather, they position research rooted in critical theory within a particular political, social, economic, and dialectical framework.

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See also Interviewing; Observational Research; Phenomenology

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CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH

Cross-cultural researchers examine differences and similarities between different groups in society. A concern with culture and cross-cultural research permeates a range of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, cultural studies, and social work. However, within and across disciplines, there is controversy over the meaning of the term *culture*. Some researchers have interpreted it as referring to the set of values, beliefs, and concepts that a group shares. Others believe that this approach is essentialist; that is, it assumes that cultures determine how people behave and leaves them no agency in their own lives. They prefer to see the term *culture* as a heuristic device that allows researchers to interpret and understand behavior and to situate it in context. This allows researchers to investigate social life in practice in a way that does not assume that belonging to any group is unchanging or means the same thing to everyone.

Part of the difficulty in defining and separating cultures is that what they consist of can be based on a variety of characteristics, including race, gender, and age. There has been interesting research, for example, on youth culture, lesbian culture, and drug and gang culture. Cross-cultural research in these examples would refer to behavior and beliefs characterized by age, sexuality, and lifestyle. However, cross-cultural research is often seen as being about race, ethnicity, and (more recently) religious differences.

Even when a particular characteristic is the focus of research, there is no one set of perspectives within that culture that can be used to define what belonging to the group would involve. For example, what it means to belong to Indian culture may vary according to time of migration, age, where someone was born, gender, religious beliefs, and sexuality. What it means to belong may also depend on context in that characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and age used to define culture

might not always be relevant to how we think or behave. For example, being Catholic or Greek sometimes may influence what we say or do, whereas at other times it might not. Part of the context in which decisions about the nature of belonging to a group, or the group's significance, is informed by who is listening (i.e., the audience) and by the context of discussion.

Cross-Cultural Research: Doing It Yourself

Researchers have studied cultures using a variety of methods, including interviews and ethnographies. Interviews are usually loosely structured to allow participants to put forward their concerns and perspectives. Interviewers can use a variety of theoretical approaches to inform their interviewing, including the increasing use of biographical narrative theories to situate lives within the context of the culture they are examining. This involves asking people to talk about their life histories as well as their everyday lives and experiences. There is also an interest in reflecting on the role of researchers and participants in research findings and how people from other cultures are presented by researchers. For example, the influences of ethnicity, gender, and religion during the interview process are put under scrutiny.

Some of the issues addressed by cross-cultural interviewers are also of concern to ethnographers, and ethnographers may use interviews to collect some of their data. Ethnography is a method by which researchers participate, in varying degrees, in the lives of people they are studying to collect data. They immerse themselves in the culture of others to try to see it from the "inside." There are differing views about the period of time needed to study a culture in this way as well as the status of the findings. Some researchers believe that it is a way of finding "the truth" about a culture, whereas others suggest that it provides valuable data but is still dependent on the perspectives of those involved. Increasingly, ethnographers are situating their perspectives, values, and beliefs within their ethnographies to seek to understand how they define people as belonging to other cultures. The debates on the status of ethnography include the difficulties (already discussed) in dividing cultures and insiders from outsiders, the time needed to learn about differences within cultures, and concerns about the ethics of this kind of research. Due to the constant involvement of researchers in the lives of

others, there are concerns about participants becoming vulnerable as a result, for example, of not being constantly aware that they are talking to a researcher who is not necessarily a member of their culture.

Doing Cross-Cultural Research With Help: Community Researchers

This is an attempt to harness the knowledge of people who straddle different cultures, however defined. Someone defined as belonging to a culture, and thus with knowledge of it, may be employed to act as a “cultural broker.” When different languages are involved, these “community researchers/interpreters” will also help in communicating with participants. Community researchers may carry out the research themselves and then pass it on to the researcher or assist the researcher, for example, by acting as an interpreter. Therefore, their input and the impact on the research vary. They may be used solely to pass on what the researcher wants and have little input in the actual research. Alternatively, they may be actively engaged in debating concepts and formulating the questions that are asked, as is often the case in participatory approaches to research. There are a variety of ways of widening the baseline of analysis to actively involve community researchers. They include making certain that they have meaningful input in the research proposal at the outset rather than after the research questions and topics have been decided, are involved in debating the meanings of concepts used throughout the research process, and are included in report writing. Also, the influence of all the perspectives of everyone involved on the research should be examined.

There are many advantages to working with people who are insiders, particularly when access would otherwise be impossible due to language differences. Some researchers go farther and argue that, wherever possible, there should be “matching” of researchers and participants, usually along gender lines, when ethnicity is concerned. The argument is that matching helps to achieve some understanding and trust between people. However, no one person is ever an insider in terms of all social characteristics, and just because people share gender, for example, does not mean that they see their lives in the same way and will understand each other’s perspectives. There is also the question of which characteristics, and how many, to match on. For example, does one need to be a disabled Black woman to interview a disabled Black woman, or is being Black enough of a match? Asking the

participants themselves, rather than making assumptions about what people want, may be a more appropriate way of addressing the issue. Participants may prefer someone like them in some ways (e.g., for religious reasons), they may want someone who is not part of their community, or it might not matter to them.

Community researchers/interpreters may act as “gatekeepers” for populations and limit access to only those people whose views they approve of as suitable to define their culture. For example, community leaders may help gain access to people for the researchers, particularly because they are likely to know who is active within the community, but they might not put forward anyone who challenges their status or views. There is some evidence that restricting research to participants chosen solely via gatekeepers may result in limited engagement with the range of views possible within any community and that such a sampling strategy has consequences for the research findings. It has also been pointed out already that no one person can be expected to represent a culture. This has implications for research that limits itself to community leaders and people who are active in formal organizations. There may be many people who consider themselves to be part of a culture but who do not participate in the activities of formal organizations and/or are not known to community leaders. When working with community researchers and community leaders, therefore, it is important to investigate their position within cultures.

Moreover, no one person is completely an insider or outsider to a culture. For example, a female community researcher who knows the language and is active in the community may help to access the views of other women who are similarly active. Some women may, however, prefer to speak to an outsider due to issues of confidentiality. Therefore, insider status is not always an advantage. What we say, how we say it, and to whom we say it vary, but this does not mean that one account of belonging is more accurate than another; it may just be different. There are also differences between language users, with people who speak the same language living differently and people sharing values and lifestyle but speaking different languages. There is no simple relationship between language and culture.

When researchers are not able to speak the languages involved in research, techniques such as back-translation have also been put forward as a way of ensuring “correct” translations and interpretations from community researchers. Those who believe that

there are many possible translations and interpretations, depending on perspective and context, have questioned the status of these techniques. There are also concerns here about how people are represented. The researcher brings to the research a set of beliefs that others speaking another language might not hold. There is a danger here of ethnocentric assumptions being built into the research and of “linguistic imperialism” or “domestication” taking hold, that is, how concepts are defined in the researcher’s main language are used throughout the research without an analysis of possible differences in meaning. Various means have been suggested for addressing these issues, including an analysis of the processes of interpretation and translation to situate possible sources of differences in meaning that includes an analysis of who is doing the research and from what perspective.

Bogusia Temple

See also Community-Based Research; Essentialism; Ethnography; Insider/Outsider Status; Translatability

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CULTURAL CONTEXT

Cultural context consists of the broad background of beliefs and practices that guide the behaviors of both the researcher and research participants. Cultural context is an essential element of any research project because it affects not only the individual behavior of

the researcher and participants but also their interactions with each other. Understanding both participants’ cultural context and the researcher’s place within it can be essential for successfully recruiting participants, conducting the research itself, and analyzing the data.

Concerns related to cultural context should not be isolated for exclusive use in cross-cultural research; instead, they should be viewed as “best practices” for qualitative research in general. These issues do, however, require particular care when working with participants from foreign countries as well as when conducting research with minority groups or subcultures in the researcher’s own country. Although issues of cultural context are obvious when dealing with language differences, it is just as important to recognize the distinction between being “bilingual” and “bicultural.” For example, members of subcultures may share the researcher’s language and many of the same broad cultural assumptions at the same time that they use jargon and engage in practices that are completely “foreign” to the researcher.

When there is a substantial difference between the researcher’s and participants’ cultural backgrounds, there may well be a need to develop trust within the community of potential participants. This often begins during the process of gaining access to the participants, either by building rapport with already trusted community groups or by relying on a liaison person from outside of the community. When participant observation is the primary method for data collection, key informants often play an essential role in helping the researcher to recognize and deal with cultural differences. The same advantages can also apply when interviewing is the primary method by using informants to learn about sensitive topics, appropriate language, and proper behavior during the interviews. In addition, key informants can assist interviewers with issues of cultural context by reviewing the content of the questions and by recommending initial interviewees who will be relatively tolerant of the researcher’s “outsider” status.

Cultural context is also important in analyzing and reporting data. In most cases, the issues encountered during data collection will already have sensitized the researcher to the importance of the participants’ cultural context when interpreting the meanings of their words and behavior. Even so, it is crucial to recognize that the researcher’s own background and the implicit assumptions that go with it also create a cultural context that can affect the interpretation of the data. Many of these same issues carry over into writing up the results, where there is a need to recognize and deal with the difference between readers’ and participants’

cultural contexts so as to present the results in ways that facilitate an appropriate understanding of what was learned through the research.

David L. Morgan and Heather Guevara

See also Interviewing; Key Informant; Participant Observation

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D

DANCE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Dance can be content and/or form, process and/or product, in relation to qualitative inquiry. It may serve one or more of a variety of roles such as the subject matter for research, an aspect of methodology, and the format for presentation of findings.

Dance, dancing, and dancers have been examined as subjects of research during the past century and even before. Although dance scientists and some dance education researchers use primarily quantitative methods, a variety of qualitative, usually interdisciplinary, approaches have dominated dance research, with researchers invested in exploring dance and dancing as bodily experience, aesthetic object, and social and cultural process. Although different approaches and orientations are described in this entry, in practice the lines between them are often not easy to draw.

Although current dance research emphasizes interdisciplinarity, there is debate within the field regarding the need to develop research methodology intrinsic to dance rather than borrow from other traditions, and movement analysis has been put forward as a candidate for this role. Movement analysis is used to study human and animal movement as well as dance. The best-known system, based on the work of Rudolf von Laban, derives from perception of movement according to defined characteristics such as body action (*what*), space (*where*), and effort (*how*). As with all analysis systems, these parameters cannot be applied across cultures and reveal only certain kinds of information; researchers create new ways of attending to bodily sensations and the rhythmic and visual

organization of movement to meet the needs of individual research projects.

In the tradition of anthropologists, early 20th-century Western dance ethnographers, such as Beryl de Zoete and Franziska Boas, studied dance practices within cultures other than their own. Dance historians, such as Lincoln Kirstein and Walter Terry, wrote chronologies of Western dance and biographies of great artists. During more recent years, these once separate practices have fused, with dance scholars pursuing a hybrid, interdisciplinary “dance studies” approach. Joanne Kealiinohomoku’s classic essay, “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance” (originally published in 1969–1970), helped to change this landscape. Dance culture in theaters, classrooms, studios, clubs, competitions, and other community settings is now studied through participant observation, interviews, and analysis of texts, images, and dance works as well as through a variety of theoretical lenses. The writings of the late Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull (Cynthia Novack), Susan Foster, and Susan Manning, among many others, exemplify this approach.

Like anthropologists and historians, researchers grounded in dance education may use an ethnographic approach, including participant observation, interviews, and (sometimes) movement analysis; Susan Stinson initiated such work during the 1980s. Data may also include visual images (both moving and still) and other kinds of original materials found in the setting; Karen Bond pioneered the use of children’s drawings as data for dance education research. Interpretation of the source material is heavily dependent on the research tradition of the principal investigator. Action research, or research on one’s own



Dancer With a White Rope. This photographer describes his process as creating an environment in which dancers feel comfortable to experiment and the camera has appropriate lighting. In this photo of Carrie Denyer, the improvisation began with her desire to do something with a white rope. The movement depicted was being performed for the first time.

Source: Photo by Steve Clarke; used by permission.



Two Men Dancing. This photographer describes his process as creating an environment in which dancers feel comfortable to experiment and the camera has appropriate lighting. In this photo of Stafford Berry and Kemal Nance dancing, the improvisation was a continuation of a long choreographic partnership. The movement depicted was being performed for the first time.

Source: Photo by Steve Clarke; used by permission.

professional practice, has more recently become popular among practitioners, especially dance education researchers seeking to better understand and transform their practice. Qualitative approaches may also be used for research focused on evaluation and advocacy in dance education, although quantitative procedures may be demanded by external funding agencies.

Qualitative researchers with a personal dance history, such as Valerie Janesick, have used their understanding of dance processes such as warm-up, stretching, and improvisation to enhance their understanding of similar research processes and have recognized the variety of aesthetic decisions that get made in research. Other aspects of dance and dance making, or related bodily experiences, may also be used as metaphors for aspects of the research process.

Scholars seeking to integrate their “dancer-self” with their “researcher-self” often recognize the significance of the researcher’s body as an “instrument”

even when discarding instrumental language. Qualitative dancer-researchers may be acutely aware of their own bodies in the perception of data, using the kinesthetic sense to perceive other bodies. In the tradition of phenomenology, researchers such as Sondra Fraleigh emphasize their own bodily experience; some researchers ask participants to recollect bodily sensations in descriptions of their “lived experiences” that are then used as data. Use of one’s own body in movement and stillness in the process of analysis/interpretation and theory building may also occur as researchers seek ways to understand the concepts and relationships in the data; scholars may perceive a concept somatically before having the words to express it.

Although technological advances have made it easier to record and preserve this ephemeral art form, all dance researchers struggle to some extent with how to adequately present their findings in a way that is accurate and also as engaging as the practices they study.

Donald Blumenfeld-Jones, Mary Beth Cancienne, and Celeste Snowber are among the scholars in dance education who have pioneered alternative forms of presentation. Dance artists in higher education have long argued in forums at professional meetings and in appeals to their own institutions that choreography, performance, reconstruction, and other forms of artistic production should be accepted as the equivalent of scholarly research. After many years of advocacy, this is now the case at most universities. Although choreography and performance are widely accepted as valid research within dance departments in higher education, such ventures by those in other disciplines are still typically regarded as unusual by their colleagues, even when spoken text is included in a performance, and may become trivialized or romanticized. Because a dance performance as a research outcome is so rare in other disciplines, one dilemma faced by dance researcher-artists is that the audience may focus only on the performance itself and not on the content. Another dilemma is that print is still the primary mode of publication, and publication is viewed as essential in many disciplines. With the increasing popularity of electronic journals, moving images may become more integrated into print in the future, offering new possibilities for resolving this issue. This will also introduce new challenges with the new medium of presentation.

A vision of researcher as artist and research as an art form often rests on a vision of art as personally constructed. However, academic and aesthetic expectations of the culture/subculture of which the dance is a part are equally as important as the vision of the dancer-researcher who has created a performance to represent research findings. The body itself, as well as the performance, is a sociocultural construction, one that is in the foreground in dance art and research. Dance studies scholar Ann Daly has examined how the dancing body acquires meaning based on the expectations of audiences and on period understandings of nature, gender, sexuality, race, and nation. Ann Cooper Albright is known for her work in investigating social and cultural expectations of variously abled bodies. Again, interdisciplinary approaches offer the richest possibility for continued understanding.

Susan W. Stinson and Ann Dils

See also Action Research; Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Researcher as Artist

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DATA

The term *data* refers to a collection of information. A more detailed definition includes types of data that combine to be the collected information such as numbers, words, pictures, video, audio, and concepts. Many definitions of data include the word *fact*, or *facts*, but this implies an inference about the data and not the data themselves. This occurs more often in the physical sciences. One may also see the word *raw* as a descriptor of the data. This description is used to separate data such as the number 42 from information such as at 42 one is 5 years older than one's sibling. Once data are gathered, they are typically put into a format that can be analyzed by machine or human. The format can be a spreadsheet, notecards, or literary analysis software and serves to increase the ease of data analysis.

In the generic split of quantitative versus qualitative research, quantitative research gathers data that are in numerical form. The original data can be in nonnumerical form such as statements that are recoded on some specific numerical scale. Quantitative data separate into categories based on their measurement type—nominal (e.g., gender), ordinal (e.g., law school class rank), interval (e.g., degrees Fahrenheit), and ratio (e.g., degrees Kelvin).

Qualitative data are generally nonnumerical but have a greater variety of sources. Those data sources are generally categorized as verbal and nonverbal.

Data are verbal if the majority of what is being analyzed is words. Verbal data sources include items such as personal diaries, letters, media reports, surveys/interviews, and fieldnotes. Within the group of interviews the data can come from in-depth/unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, structured interviews, questionnaires containing substantial open-ended comments, focus groups, and so on.

Nonverbal data sources include items such as student concept maps, kinship diagrams, pictures, video, film, art, and print advertisements. Each type of data and how it was collected has different strengths and weaknesses in relation to the research questions and analysis techniques. For example, nonparticipant observations from video collected through surveillance cameras potentially allow the researcher to collect data without influence in the field, but there are issues with the ethics of these observations.

James B. Schreiber

See also Data Analysis; Data Management; Data Storage; Field Data; Raw Data; Rich Data

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DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an integral part of qualitative research and constitutes an essential stepping-stone toward both

gathering data and linking one's findings with higher order concepts. There are many variants of qualitative research involving many forms of data analysis, including interview transcripts, fieldnotes, conversational analysis, and visual data, whether photographs, film, or observations of internet occurrences (for the purpose of brevity, this entry calls all of these forms of data *text*).

For novice researchers, data analysis may seem like the most enigmatic and daunting aspect of qualitative research. On the one hand, there are so many pages of fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and/or images that the task seems overwhelming. On the other hand, no matter how much data one has, there is always the fear that there might not be anything of importance. The following features of data analysis affirm the dictum of "trusting the process."

Regardless of the perspective or paradigm one uses, the analysis of qualitative data involves a number of common features. These include simultaneous data collection and analysis, the practice of writing memos during and after data collection, the use of some sort of coding, the use of writing as a tool for analysis, and the development of concepts and connection of one's analysis to the literature in one's field. This entry discusses each of these features of data analysis.

First, the gathering of data and the analysis of those data are iterative processes. In its ideal form, early data analysis provides sufficient insight to shape the gathering of further data. Grounded theory, for example, features the constant comparative method, the conceptual interaction between analysis and data, as its chief strength. Researchers who conduct interviews may use early analysis to revise interview guides or to focus future interviews. Some field-workers do not settle on a research question until they have spent some time in the field and have observed and begun to analyze what is of theoretical interest in a particular social setting.

Second, both during and after collecting data, researchers engage in memoing. Memoing occurs when researchers take note of personal, conceptual, or theoretical ideas or reflections that come to mind as they collect and analyze the data. Early memoing may occur while researchers are writing up fieldnotes or transcribing interviews. In this situation, researchers embed memos within the text itself (usually marked off by special characters such as square brackets).

These memos may involve researchers' guesses about what is going on, questions raised by the data, or links to literature that may be useful in helping researchers to interpret the data and relate them to

other substantive areas that might involve similar generic social processes. For example, Deborah van den Hoonaard found that widows' descriptions of the work they did to maintain a good front when they were with their friends were comparable to the processes of emotion work and feeling rules that Arlie R. Hochschild described in her study of airline stewardesses, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Thus, a wider acquaintance with a body of literature can invoke insights that, in the end, might prove to be helpful in the analysis of the data.

Some researchers find it useful to embed memos into their actual fieldnotes or interview transcripts, whereas others find it more profitable to set up the memos separately. No doubt there are researchers who combine the two methods. Some researchers use memos themselves as material for coding, as described next.

Third, any analysis of data involves some form of coding. Coding reflects both the personal analytic habits of researchers and the general principles that flow from particular qualitative research methodologies and theoretical perspectives. In its most stringent form, the analysis of data can entail line-by-line coding of text whereby researchers capture every empirical and conceptual occurrence in each line. In conversational analysis, even the duration of pauses is measured and used as data. At the other end of the continuum, some researchers adopt a more flexible approach, perhaps coding whole paragraphs or groups of sentences at a time.

Researchers inextricably come to the question as to what ought to be coded. They may well conclude that coding at successive levels achieves the best analysis. In this case, researchers first indicate all empirical instances that seem to be related to the research question. This scanning of the text by researchers constitutes the first and second process of familiarizing themselves with empirical instances. The analysis, however, would remain a mundane exercise if researchers, searching for higher order concepts, stopped at the level of mere description rather than conducting subsequent scans.

At first glance, the data often seem opaque. However, through the process of multiple readings of the text, researchers gain confidence that it contains enough material to warrant discovery and analysis, moving first from empirical observations and finally to conceptual insights. It is often during early readings of the material that researchers develop a list of preliminary codes to try out. As coding continues, researchers may refine the codes to include more relevant categories.

Fourth, qualitative researchers arrive at a more profound analysis of the data when they engage in writing up the data as soon as possible. These short or lengthy writing bouts often yield insights that were not readily apparent even after the coding had been completed. Indeed, researchers may find that they need to go back to the data to recode for concepts that became apparent during the initial writing up of the data.

Fifth, all data analysis must move toward developing concepts or relating to already existing concepts. This final stage of data analysis is analogous to having a conversation with the literature of the discipline or what was found in other social settings.

Researchers, since the earliest days of qualitative research, have offered insights into the specific ways in which they have extracted findings and ideas from their text. Here, too, there have been many variants. Some used colored pencils, others used a numerical system, and still others used a given word to indicate the code. In these cases, the researchers made ample use of a wider right-hand or left-hand margin for this purpose. Some researchers found it more convenient to use single-spaced written text so that the context of items was more clearly visible and categorizable. It is helpful to remind oneself that in the more distant origins of qualitative research—at least when typewriters were still in use—researchers needed to make as many copies of the fieldnotes (or interview transcripts) as typewriters would allow and, in addition to keeping a “master file” of the text, copies would be cut up and sorted according to topic or concept.

These seemingly archaic approaches to analyzing data have had a pervasive effect on today's approaches. Many researchers still abide by some of these techniques of coding, whereas others have adapted them to computer-generated texts. Computers are powerful allies in the analysis of data. With the advent of word-processing programs, it became possible to use cut-and-paste methods along with maintaining separate files for data related to a particular code or concept. This technique maintained the philosophical underpinnings of the color coding or index card approach to data analysis.

More recently, researchers have seen the introduction of software, such as Ethnograph and NVivo, developed for the express purpose of managing and coding qualitative data. These programs, however, remain controversial and have influenced, and continue to influence, data analysis in unforeseen ways. They allow researchers to code large amounts of data

and have arguably led to researchers' conducting studies involving far greater numbers of participants than in the past. There is, however, no guarantee that the analysis is any better, because it may foreclose on the interplay among creative insights, memoing, and continuing development of codes that results from an ongoing connection with the raw data. Some argue that the software imposes a structure that may imperceptibly constrain the analysis. Some researchers who use qualitative programs have removed themselves from the coding process, handing it over to research assistants, and from the hands-on approach typical of earlier styles of qualitative analysis.

*Deborah K. van den Hoonaard and
Will C. van den Hoonaard*

See also Codes and Coding; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Constant Comparison; Grounded Theory; Interpretation; Memos and Memoing

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DATA ARCHIVE

A data archive is a resource center that acquires, stores, and disseminates data for secondary analysis for research, learning, and teaching. The prime function of such archives is to ensure long-term preservation and future usability of the data they hold. Data archiving is a method of conserving expensive resources and ensuring that their research potential is fully exploited. Unless preserved and documented for further research, data that have often been collected at significant expense may later exist in only a small

number of reports that analyze only a fraction of the research potential of the data. In the case of digital archives, within a short space of time the data files are likely to be lost or become obsolete as technology evolves. This entry focuses on digital archives for qualitative data.

History

The social science data archiving movement began in the United States during the 1960s within a number of key social science departments that stored original data of survey interviews. The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) is the U.S. national archive. The movement spread across Europe, and in 1967 a data archive in the United Kingdom (UKDA) was established by the U.K. Social Science Research Council. During the late 1970s, many national archives joined wider professional organizations such as the International Association of Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST), established to promote networks of data services for the social sciences and foster cooperation on key archival strategies, procedures, and technologies.

The first data archives of the 1960s collected data of specific interest to quantitative researchers in the social sciences such as opinion poll and election data, but as the trend for large-scale surveys grew, by the late 1970s the UKDA began to acquire major government surveys and censuses. Key British government series include the General Household Survey and the Labour Force Survey. In the United States, key government survey series include the Current Population Survey and the National Health Interview Survey.

By the 1990s, collections had grown to thousands of data sets spanning a wide range of data sources and including large national longitudinal studies, major cross-national series such as the World Values and European Values Surveys and the International Social Survey Program Series, historical data, and (in the United Kingdom) qualitative data. It was not until the early 1990s that the U.K. research community recognized the needs of qualitative researchers by funding the Qualidata service at the University of Essex. In 1995, a history data service was also established and devoted to the archiving and dissemination of a broad range of historical data. In 2003 in the United Kingdom, the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) was established to provide a long-term and

integrated strategy for preserving, processing, and disseminating all types of social science data with an enhanced focus on supporting and training users.

Qualitative Data Holdings

Typically, social science data archives acquire a significant range of data relating to society, both historical and contemporary, from empirically derived sources. Whereas most data archives typically collect numerical coded data that can then be analyzed with the use of statistical software, the UKDA also holds in-depth interviews, fieldnotes, audiorecordings, and digitized open-ended survey questions. Other data archives that hold collections of qualitative data include the Murray Research Center at Harvard University and the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD). Data sets from across the world are available through national data archives' reciprocal arrangements with other national data archives, although qualitative data are still in short supply.

Data Acquisition

A key concern for a data archive is to ensure that the materials it acquires are suitable for informed use and meet demand. All materials deposited are selected and evaluated and must meet certain criteria such as being documented to a minimum standard and, of critical importance, meeting any promises negotiated under informed consent (e.g., nondisclosure, preservation of anonymity). Copyright of interviewees' words or company information and third-party defamation or slander in research materials should also be taken into consideration before data can be assumed to be shareable. Acquisitions policies should be flexible and responsive to changes in both data and information needs of the research communities and in the rapidly changing climate of technology.

Long-Term Preservation

It is the responsibility of data archives to keep up with technological advances by monitoring hardware and software developments and migrating their collections accordingly. When technology changes, the data in their holdings are technically transformed to remain readable in the new environment. Computer programs are maintained to allow data to be easily transformed from an in-house standard to the various formats required by users.

Preparing Data for Archiving

Data-processing activities include first sorting and checking, for example, examining texts for the risk of identifying individuals. Data may be anonymized. Second, meta-data (data about data) are produced with the aim of producing high-quality finding aids and providing good user documentation. Meta-data cover information describing the study and the data, and a systematic catalog record is usually created, detailing an overview of the study, the size and content of the data set, its availability, and its terms and conditions of access. User guides contain further information on how the data were collected, the original topic guides, and how to use the data.

Providing Access to Data

Data supplied by data archives can be used for many purposes. Secondary analysis strengthens scientific inquiry, avoids duplication of data collection, and opens up methods of data collection and measurement. Reusing archived data enables new users to revisit rich descriptions; ask new questions of old data; undertake comparative research, replication, or restudy; inform research design; and promote methodological advancement. Finally, data can provide significant resources for training in research and substantive learning.

Users typically request data in a particular format such as a word-processing package or a computer-readable audio format. These days, data can be accessed via instant web download facilities and increasingly via sophisticated online analysis tools, where users can search and analyze data via a web browser such as ESDS Qualidata Online. Users are typically required to be registered and sign an agreement to the effect that they will not attempt to identify individuals when carrying out analyses.

Louise Corti

See also Data Management; Data Security; Data Storage; Ethics; Secondary Analysis

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Websites

International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST):

<http://www.iassistdata.org>

Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR): <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>

DATA COLLECTION

The term *data* often is misunderstood by quantitative researchers when engaging qualitative colleagues about their studies. To quantitatively oriented individuals, the term usually refers to numbers. They are numerical values used to apply statistics, showing significant differences between independent variables. Often quantitative researchers are surprised when listening to qualitative researchers describe their findings, based on “data,” given that frequently there are few numbers discussed in the study (“Where are the data?”).

For qualitative researchers, the term *data* most often is associated with words. Consequently, when qualitative researchers speak of “analyzing data,” they mean that participants’ words or other empirical evidence were assessed. As such, qualitative research is a means of empirical investigation—in the purest sense. Sometimes that phrase is used to indicate that a study was quantitative in design. Qualitative research examines evidence—sometimes visual and sometimes verbal—but the findings are not purely theoretical; they are grounded in empirical data. In short, it is the data collection process that separates qualitative research from speculative, philosophical, or archival research. There are many means that qualitative researchers use for collecting data. Four are highlighted in this entry.

What Are Data?

Interviews

Qualitative researchers typically ask questions of those participating in a study. While not denying the

potential for subliminal or subconscious processes, qualitative researchers use directive means of finding what people are thinking, feeling, and doing. In other words, if researchers want to know what is occurring with people, they ask them.

Words are of utmost importance to qualitative researchers. Not only are the general ideas salient, but also the richness in word choices, metaphors, and even slang is salient. Consequently, simply taking notes most often does not suffice for rigorous qualitative data collection. Rather, researchers audiorecord (or videorecord) their participants. Following this practice has multiple benefits.

First, researchers are free to think creatively while the interviews are taking place. Taking copious notes while participants are speaking makes it difficult to steer concentration and give appropriate focus to the intent behind what the speakers are communicating. In addition, tape-recording the interviews allows researchers to conduct later in-depth analysis of participants’ statements—comparing them with previous or future statements as well as with the interviews given by others. Third, recording participants’ words ensures integrity of the data. Social psychologists indicate that they tend to fill in gaps when information is missing. By audiorecording participants’ interviews, researchers are more assured that they are capturing the true essence of interviewees’ intents.

Fieldnotes and Memos

During the data collection phase in qualitative research, apt researchers are aware of the surroundings where information exists. Depending on the nature of the study, such data may include smells, sounds, graffiti, garb, tastes, and the like. For example, if a qualitative researcher is studying crack cocaine addicts, he or she may spend a period of time living in a “crack house” or hotel. Ethnographically, this would enable the researcher to better understand the milieu of the research participants as they experience their own worlds. The researcher, for example, potentially would become aware of mold smells, dripping faucets, crying, broken appliances, and unrepaired damage in the crack house. Each of these components would be “data” for later consideration by the researcher.

Memories are finite; we all forget. Consequently, qualitative researchers write down notes of what they encounter. When experiencing a foul smell repeatedly, for example, one may forget the impression rendered

the first time it was encountered. Consequently, recording these experiences, either with pencil and paper or with an audiorecorder, ensures that the data are not later overlooked or forgotten.

Memos are similar to fieldnotes in that they are generated throughout the data collection process. In general, however, fieldnotes involve recording information gathered by the senses. Memos, on the other hand, involve recording impressions, ideas, hunches, and potential codes or themes. Due to sensory overload, researchers later may forget these key insights, so they are recorded on the spot for future analysis in the form of personal memos to themselves.

Triangulated Information

Qualitative researchers generally believe their participants and take what they say at face value. Otherwise, there would be an unclear rationale for conducting interviews. Nonetheless, for the sake of integrity and enhancing the findings' internal validity, interview data are compared with information obtained from other sources. For example, a researcher studying a parochial school may listen to administrators and faculty members speak of how theological beliefs drive the daily activities of the school. Qualitative researchers would want to observe the school to see whether the pictures, statues, and other art forms substantiate that claim. Likewise, checking publicity brochures, websites, advertisements, meeting minutes, disciplinary records, bulletins, mailings, and other sources sheds light on the degree to which the interviews aptly reflect the reality that religion is portrayed in daily life. Participants can say anything to deliberately or unintentionally mislead a researcher. Ideally, interview data should be consistent with what the researcher observes from other sources related to the persons interviewed.

Member Checks

After qualitative researchers have drawn tentative conclusions about their findings, often they return to the study's participants and check their findings, garnering feedback. This does not imply that participants exercise veto power over the findings. Rather, they may illuminate them or give researchers reason to analyze the findings from multiple perspectives. But data collection in this context involves asking individuals to participate in the analysis process.

How Data Are Collected in Qualitative Research

Transcribed Interviews

Audiorecording is the most common method of capturing the words and experiences of the qualitative setting. Videotaping also is used in some situations. Qualitative researchers typically obtain prior permission from participants before recording them. This is important for both ethical and legal reasons. A transcription machine or transcription software typically is used by researchers to type up the words from the audio- or videorecording.

Chaining

In situations where researchers are new to a milieu or have no firsthand experience in it, they often do not know where to obtain all the needed information to complete the study. In the example cited earlier, for example, a researcher might never have been a crack addict or never previously lived in a crack-infested setting. Consequently, he or she likely would not know where the key data components exist at the outset of the study.

Data often lead to further data when conducting qualitative research. In other words, participants typically know who the key persons are for finding what the researchers need to know. Researchers explicitly ask for such references, and those individuals often provide names of additional key individuals. In this manner, the process of chaining occurs, whereby researchers advance from person to person, each time gaining new insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

The principle is true not only of key people but also of key data pieces. For example, even though an organization's secretary might not be on the list of persons to be interviewed, he or she may be able to provide astute observations of human dynamics in the organization. Secondary sources such as this also can be invaluable in discovering how to obtain key documents needed for triangulation and other purposes.

The point is that qualitative researchers often do not know at the outset of a study where they will find their most salient information. They depend on individuals in the research setting to provide assistance in making them aware of these key data sources. Most often one source leads to other sources, and over time researchers possess a collected patchwork of rich data.

Capturing the Phenomenon

As mentioned earlier, not all qualitative research data are obtained through interviews. Researchers audiorecord sounds and sometimes can videorecord surroundings depending on ethics, rules, laws, and other considerations. Researchers typically carry with them a small tape recorder and/or pencil and paper to write down important observations. Drawing schematics of room arrangements or locations of key items can later prove to be insightful when combined with other collected data.

An apt adage for qualitative researchers' data collection is "When in doubt, collect too much." Researchers can always discard or discount data after they are collected. However, many researchers end up wishing they had obtained more or different information when writing up their journal articles. Often the problem is that the desired data at the time of writing did not seem important when collection occurred in the field. Sometimes synthesis occurs (in a subjective manner) as components of a study are integrated. The whole truly is greater than the sum of its data-collected parts in qualitative research. As researchers gain experience, they typically grow more astute in the types of data pieces that most likely will be useful to them at the point of writing about their findings.

Michael W. Firmin

See also Documents; Field Data; In-Person Interview; Methods

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DATA GENERATION

Data generation refers to the theory and methods used by researchers to create data from a sampled data source in a qualitative study. Data sources include

human participants, documents, organizations, electronic media, and events (to name just a few examples). Qualitative data are products of the data sources and so include quotations, transcripts, observations, fieldnotes, and excerpts from documents such as images and newspaper articles. To generate data from a sampled data source, researchers interact with the data source using qualitative research methods within an overall strategy of inquiry. Many qualitative researchers recognize that by interacting with the data source, they cannot remain external to what is being studied and will have an effect on the data generated. The effect that researchers have on the data generated extends from the decisions that they make regarding the theoretical influences and design of the study as well as the beliefs, attitudes, values, and orientations of the researchers.

The term *data generation* is used in preference to *data collection* by researchers whose theoretical views about the nature of the social world and the production of knowledge extend to viewing data as a product of the interaction between the researchers and the data source during fieldwork. The term *generation* is intended to encapsulate the variety of ways in which the researcher, social world, and data interact in qualitative inquiry. Data are not considered to be "out there" just waiting to be collected; rather, data are produced from their sources using qualitative research methods. Researchers who hold such theoretical views reject the notion that the role of the researcher is simply that of a neutral detached observer of an objective reality. Rather, what is understood as "reality" is viewed as being socially constructed, and the role of the researcher is to actively construct knowledge of the social world using research methods and techniques that engage him or her with the data source(s).

Interviews are an example of a data generation method. An interview involves some degree of reflection by the participant in response to the questions posed by the interviewer. When reflecting on the questions during the interview, the participant may realize that he or she had not previously considered a question posed by the interviewer. Rather, the ideas generated in response to the question posed may have arisen only during the interview, or the ideas expressed may have been shaped in response to what had been said earlier in the interview, the manner of the researcher, or the tone or wording of the question. In some instances, it is possible that ideas would never have been formulated or expressed without the research interview. In light of points such as these,

data may be considered to have been created using intellectual, analytic, and interpretive activities during the interview rather than to have been collected.

Because it is not possible to select or observe everything that relates to a research topic, researchers must make decisions about what is to make up the sample of data for their study and how these data can be generated. Decisions regarding the method of generating data from a data source, and thus the resultant form of the data obtained, are shaped by the theoretical framework informing the study and the aim(s) or question(s) that the research is intended to address. For example, if the data source is human participants purposefully sampled to meet the aims of the study, data could be generated using any number of qualitative methods and strategies, including different forms of interviewing, focus groups, observation, drawing, photography, writing, and performance.

It may be that different forms of data are required to explore different aspects of the phenomenon being studied, so some studies include multiple data generation methods within a single research design. Examples include studies that use focus groups to generate issues to be probed in interviews and those that combine interviews with document analysis for discourse analysis. Because there are no set rules for combining multiple data generation methods, many creative possibilities are open to qualitative researchers. However, it is important that the data generated be integrated to meet the aim(s) of the study as opposed to an ad hoc unsystematic combination. Decisions about the processes and techniques used to generate data in a qualitative study are made as part of the construction of the research design. Therefore, it is important that researchers document how data were generated and justify the decisions that were made. This information can then be included in the research report, thereby allowing readers to make judgments about the quality and rigor of the research undertaken.

The judgments a researcher makes about the theoretical influences and design of a study, as well as the beliefs, attitudes, values, and orientations of the researcher, shape what is looked for or observed in the data source and how the data source is looked at or read. Consequently, the researcher also shapes what is *not* looked for or observed, and the way in which the data source is read or viewed will exclude alternative ways of reading or viewing. Given the same data source, different researchers (or the same researcher operating in a different way) could generate different

data for analysis depending on what they attend to and how that is interpreted given the aim or theoretical influences of the study. Because the researcher interacts with the data source and, thus, influences the data generated for a study, it is important that the researcher reflect on his or her position, including the values, assumptions, and theoretical views that he or she brings to the study. Such reflexivity adds depth and rigor to the research undertaken by clearly exposing the influences that have shaped the design and conduct of the research.

Bridget Garnham

See also Constructivism; Data Collection; Sampling

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DATA MANAGEMENT

Data management, as it relates to data created during the research process, comprises “what to manage” and “how to manage it.” It is not only data per se that need to be managed; accompanying information, such as documentation and other contextual and methodological information, also needs to be managed.

Data management is important because it ensures safekeeping or future proofing of data during the research process. Good data management reduces the risk of data loss, increases accuracy and verifiability, and reduces the loss of productivity if core staff members leave before the end of the project. It also offers greater potential for longer term data preservation and increases the ability to reanalyze older data sets.

This entry considers general principles of managing data that are pertinent to a wide range of qualitative

research projects creating data. It focuses on digital data but also briefly addresses nondigital formats.

What Materials Should Be Managed?

Data

Qualitative data usually include transcribed interview or focus group transcripts, fieldnotes, observations, and so on, and they may also include audiorecordings and videorecordings or photos. These data are increasingly being created in digital format.

Documentation and Meta-Data

Comprehensive and accurate documentation is essential for informed use of data. Key documentation describes how the data were created (e.g., sampling, fieldwork), prepared for analysis (e.g., transcribed, digitized), and subsequently collated and processed. The content of each file, such as an interview, should be clearly documented and should include information about who was being interviewed, when, where, and so on. Meta-data are information that describes the data set and its creation and are typically structured to common international standards such as the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI).

The Importance of Data Quality

Optimal data management relates to a combination of best practice procedures applied to high-quality data. Quality of interview data might include appropriate research question and sampling formulation, good interview technique, careful attention to audiorecording, and high-quality or systematic transcription.

Data Management Strategies

Data management encompasses five basic procedures: (1) data storage, (2) format conversion, (3) backup copies, (4) authenticity and version control, and (5) control of access and security. This section describes each of these procedures in more detail.

Storing Data

Digital data should be stored on secure computers or servers and on selected archival media. Magnetic media include cartridges and disks and provide a versatile and inexpensive storage medium with high storage capacity. Optical storage media, including CD-R and DVD-R,

are an increasingly popular method of storage. All media should be refreshed on a regular cycle within the lifetime for archival storage.

Converting Formats

Data should be stored as master copies in formats that are suitable for long-term digital preservation, typically meaning “open” formats as opposed to “proprietary” formats. For example, textual data should ideally be marked up using XML according to an appropriate document type definition (DTD) or schema, but rich text format (.rtf) is a format that is commonly used. Audio files are currently stored as Microsoft waveform (.wav) or audio interchange file format (.aiff). Qualitative data held in a computer-assisted, data-analysis software package are tied to that particular software, which might not be readable in years to come. While progress is made on developing export facilities, data should be exported out of these packages to enable longer term access.

Making Backups

The media used to store digital data are fragile. To reduce the risk of damage to or loss of data, they should be backed up at appropriate intervals and older backups should be stored. Although most institutions do have backup policies, it is prudent to maintain independent backups of critical files, with at least one copy being stored off-site. A backup should be validated with “checksums” (a count of the number of bits in the original and copy of a file), using robust and reliable backup media (e.g., tape, CD-R) and refreshing backup media regularly.

Ensuring Authenticity and Version Control

Digital data can be copied, altered, or deleted very easily. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate the authenticity of files. Files should have limited write access and a master file, and a checked master copy of the data should be kept. Copies may be preserved at certain stages of development, and changes to master files should be recorded, with old master files being retained. Different copies of files, materials held in different formats, and information that is cross-referenced between files should be version controlled. Files should be uniquely identified, and the version, status (e.g., draft, interim, final), and relationships between items should be recorded.

Controlling Access and Security

Computer systems holding data require adequate security, and unauthorized access to data should be prohibited for ethical and legal reasons. Confidential data, such as names and addresses, should not be stored on servers or computers connected to a network. Restricted access to rooms holding computers with data or media should be considered, and removal of media or hardcopy materials from store-rooms should be recorded. Relevant security-related upgrades and patches to operating systems and applications should be carried out regularly, and all project computers should have up-to-date virus detection software.

Nondigital Material

Research projects still commonly generate important nondigital material, be it data, documentation, or meta-data. The most common nondigital media are paper (e.g., photographs, reports, questionnaires, transcriptions) and analogue audiovisual material. Such materials need to be properly managed and, where possible, digitized. Nondigital media should also be clearly labeled with meaningful identifiers. All materials that form part of the project, such as signed consent forms and handwritten fieldwork notes, should not be routinely disposed of when the project ends.

High-quality media should be used for paper-based materials from the outset or for copies of originals, for example, using acid-free paper, folders, and boxes as well as nonrust paperclips (rather than staples).

Data Management and the Project Lifecycle

A data set typically has a longer lifespan than the research project that creates it. Data management by the research team occurs within the lifecycle of the project, but follow-up projects may subsequently be funded to continue to analyze or add to the data set. Professional data archives can take on the primary management role of preservation and dissemination of data after the originating project has finished and can provide advice on the most up-to-date recommended standards.

Louise Corti

See also Data Archive; Data Security; Data Storage; Secondary Analysis

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DATA SATURATION

Researchers commonly seek to collect data to explain a phenomenon of interest and then construct theories from the collected data. Theory construction takes place as the data are being collected. Saturation is the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges with respect to the newly constructed theory. Hence, a researcher looks at this as the point at which no more data need to be collected. When the theory appears to be robust, with no gaps or unexplained phenomena, saturation has been achieved and the resulting theory is more easily constructed. If the researcher does not attain data saturation, any resulting theory may be unbalanced, incomplete, and essentially untrustworthy. As a result, the data collection process is considered to be complete only when saturation has been achieved.

However, reaching saturation is considered to be somewhat relative in that if researchers perpetually collect new data and look for new information, eventually something novel and pertinent may emerge. Nonetheless, researchers do need to decide when collecting new data will result in diminishing returns, with new details adding little to the emerging theory. Some researchers consider a sample size of 15 to 20 as appropriate for saturation of themes during analysis; however, the sample size will vary depending on the context and content under study. Researchers also note that saturation cannot be achieved through frequency counts but instead must be achieved through an examination of the variations within the data and how these variations might be explained in the context

of the emerging theory. Therefore, it is essential at the early stages of analysis to consider each piece of data equally because this allows researchers to locate, understand, and explain variations within the sample.

Although there is some confusion and controversy about what it means to achieve saturation, a variety of strategies for reaching saturation have been established. First, saturation may be achieved more quickly if the sample is cohesive (e.g., if all participants are members of a particular demographic group). In this case, one is not trying to make the theory transferable to the general population, where great variability is likely to exist and more sustained data collection may be needed. Second, theoretical sampling is key to achieving saturation quickly. Here research participants are selected so that the resulting data help to build and validate the emerging theory. Researchers are cautioned against using a random sample because it is possible to randomly select individuals who simply repeat what everyone else has said or who simply have no relationship to the emerging theory (e.g., if one is building a theory about nurses, one does not necessarily want data from nursing assistants). Third, engaging in sustained field research can help to achieve theoretical saturation. Researchers who have been in the field for some time will better understand the nuances of the research setting, so it is more likely that they will develop a thorough understanding of the themes and their interrelationships. Finally, negative cases provide salient evidence of where gaps may exist in the developing theory, illustrating whether saturation has or has not been achieved.

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Grounded Theory; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Sampling

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DATA SECURITY

Data security is concerned with ensuring that valuable qualitative data resources are kept safe during the research process and beyond if data are to be formally

archived. Both digital and nondigital aspects of security should be considered by those creating, storing, and curating data. Security is a multifaceted consideration, spanning physical security related to access to buildings and disasters such as fire and flood as well as issues such as information technology security relating to access prevention of viruses and malicious code and the security of having multiple copies of preserved materials. Confidentiality is a particularly critical aspect of security for qualitative research data. This entry reviews a number of considerations relating to security of research data concerning the actual content of data to access, physical storage of data, industry standards for data security, security of data stored on computers, and destruction of data.

Confidentiality, Anonymization, and Data Linkage

Storage of qualitative data raises issues of confidentiality. Risks of identifying information that was agreed to be kept confidential at the time of consent negotiation are typically maintained through anonymization of data and provision of access through a robust rights management framework. Data archives, such as the United Kingdom Data Archive and the Murray Research Archive in the United States, run national social science data preservation and dissemination services that make use of depositor licenses, end user agreements, and authentication/authorization systems to ensure that access is controlled to suit the needs of each particular piece of data.

Data linkage to other sources of data brings greater risks of breaches of confidentiality and anonymity, but linkage can be successfully achieved while retaining anonymity. The most sensitive examples lie in the context of clinical patient records, biological samples, and genetic data, all of which could be potentially linked to qualitative data.

Physical Storage Security

Restricted access to rooms holding data (digital or nondigital) should be considered. Rooms should be locked when staff members are absent, and doors should be equipped with key entry or a code-protected keypad, preferably linked to an on-site alarm system and security office. A record should be kept of who has access or who holds keys/keycodes. Computer media or hardcopy materials should always be logged if they are removed from storerooms to avoid materials going missing.

Areas and rooms designated for storage of electronic and any physical materials should also be structurally sound and free from the risk of flood and, so far as possible, from the risk of fire. For obvious reasons, smoking should not be allowed in buildings storing data, and fire action notices should be displayed throughout the building. Machine rooms holding a preservation system should be protected by an argon or argonite gas-based fire-extinguishing system.

Other environmental considerations include temperature and humidity control. Both paper archives and machines require consistent temperature through cooling systems. Ideally, electronic logging of both these variables should be carried out to allow real-time monitoring of data and to trigger an alarm if out-of-range conditions arise.

Industry Standards

Ideally, a data preservation system should be based on industry standard operating systems and configured so as not to leave any known security holes. There is an international standard describing information security in an organization, namely ISO/IEC 17799:2005. This standard is intended as a common basis and practical guideline that can be implemented to meet the requirements identified by risk assessment such as asset management, human resources security, physical and environmental security, access control, and so on.

Computer Systems

Computer systems holding data require adequate security. Researchers will hold electronic data throughout the lifecycles of their projects, and data that are offered for sharing will typically reside on a preservation system in a data archive.

In instances where identifying information should remain confidential, restricted access to files should be ensured. A good example is the storage of consent forms and interview cover sheets from an interviewing project that will typically contain names, addresses, and signatures.

There is much ongoing research into computer techniques that aim to ensure that communication and applications meet reliable standards of security and confidentiality. A number of types of computer security should be borne in mind, including the following:

Restricting Computer Access. All computer systems holding data should be lockable by a log-on password

system to prevent unauthorized access in the case of a security breach of the room.

Firewall. All computer systems holding data should be protected by a firewall system.

Power Surge Protection. All computers and servers should be protected by power surge protection systems through a line interactive uninterruptible power supply (UPS) system.

Upgrades and Patches. Relevant security-related upgrades and patches to operating systems and applications should be carried out regularly, particularly in the case of virus detection software.

Network Security. Confidential data, such as those containing names and addresses, should not be stored on servers or computers connected to a network, particularly servers that host internet services (web or email). Where data archives disseminate qualitative data to users via internet means, a range of software solutions and procedures are employed, including protection, authentication, and authorization. The risks of intrusion and tampering, through ever-increasing efforts by hackers, provide a constant challenge. Increasingly, systems are offering early detection, correction, and damage limitation to deal with hacking.

Intruder Detection. Ideally, a preservation system should be equipped with a software detection system (e.g., TripWire) that ensures the security and integrity of files on the main preservation server (including operation system files) by reporting if, when, and how files have changed.

Data Synchronization Checking. When saving files to a preservation system, all copies should be compared for completeness. Preservation systems check the MD5 sum values, file size, and date to ensure the integrity of the files. Any off-site servers should be synchronized by secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) mirroring software.

Backups. All data should be backed up to avoid loss.

Destruction of Data

In rare cases, the kind of informed consent negotiated at the time of fieldwork necessitates destruction of data at the end of a project. This should be done in a consistent manner, with paper being shredded and computer files being permanently deleted from all systems.

Louise Corti

See also Data Archive; Data Management; Data Storage

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DATA STORAGE

Storage of data relating to research projects should be taken seriously from the outset to ensure that valuable qualitative data resources are kept safe during the research process and beyond if data are to be formally archived. Both digital and nondigital aspects of storage must be considered by those who create, store, and curate data. There are a number of considerations relating to data storage, including data preparation procedures, confidentiality of data, physical conditions, and security.

Data Preparation

Qualitative data usually include transcribed interview or focus group transcripts, fieldnotes, and observations, and they may also include audiorecordings and videorecordings or photos. These data are increasingly being created in digital format and should be prepared for longer term storage using best practice procedures such as those provided by the United Kingdom Data Archive (UKDA) and the Murray Research Archive in the United States. Where possible, data should be archived in future-proofed formats that meet long-term readability requirements. XML and ASCII text are two such examples, although rich text format (.rtf) and

Microsoft Excel (.xls) are widely used formats that are likely to be around for a long time.

Comprehensive and accurate documentation is essential for informed and accurate use of the data; thus, data should be accompanied by file and contextual documentation that describes how the data were created (including sampling and fieldwork practices), prepared for analysis (e.g., transcribed, digitized), and subsequently collated. The content of each data file, such as an interview, should be recorded, and the record should include information about who was being interviewed, when, where, and so on.

Nondigital materials include paper (e.g., photographs, reports, transcriptions) and analogue audio or audiovisual material. Such materials need to be sorted and properly labeled with respondent identifiers recorded on interview folders and on audiovisual recordings. Other materials that form part of the project, such as handwritten fieldwork notes, should be kept.

Confidentiality of Data

Storage of qualitative data raises issues of confidentiality. Risks of identifying information that was agreed to be kept confidential at the time of consent negotiation are typically maintained through anonymization of data and provision of access through a dedicated rights management framework. Data archives, such as the UKDA, which runs a national service for archiving and disseminating qualitative data, use licenses, user agreements, and authorization systems to ensure that only those who are allowed to view materials are able to do so. Signed consent forms that usually contain identifying information should be stored separately from the data, although an anonymous ID system that can help to link the two sets of materials together is required (e.g., for recontact purposes).

Physical Conditions

Areas and rooms designated for storage of digital or nondigital data should be suitable for that purpose. The conditions under which data are stored will significantly affect their longevity, and a good storage environment should be built into plans for longer term data storage.

Printed materials and photographs are subject to degradation from sunlight and acid (e.g., from skin and some kinds of paper). High-quality media should

be used for preparing paper-based materials from the outset or for copies of originals, for example, using acid-free paper, folders, and boxes as well as nonrust paperclips (rather than staples).

Physical materials should be well organized, easily located, physically accessible, and, ideally, placed on purpose-built shelving. Storage rooms should be structurally sound and free from the risk of flood and, so far as possible, from the risk of fire. Fire-extinguishing systems should be in place. Other key environmental considerations include low lighting levels, sealing against pollutants, and adequate control of temperature and humidity. Both paper-based archives and machines holding data require consistent temperature through cooling systems. Ideally, electronic logging of both these variables should be carried out to allow real-time monitoring of data and to trigger an alarm if out-of-range conditions arise.

Digital media are as fragile as, if not more fragile than, paper. They can be overwritten by mistake, and the media are prone to decay. Data formats and the computer platforms on which the data are stored might well become obsolete in a short space of time. Researchers or groups who wish to store data for their own needs should pay attention to backing up data, meaning keeping backup copies on-site and, ideally, also at an off-site location.

Formal data storage or preservation systems, such as those used by data archives, should be industry standard operating systems and adhere to international information security standards. It is the responsibility of data archives to keep up with technological advances by monitoring hardware and software developments and migrating their collections accordingly. When technology changes, the data in their holdings are technically transformed to remain readable in the new environment. Computer programs are also maintained to allow data to be easily transformed from an in-house standard to the various formats required by users.

Restricted access to rooms holding data (digital or nondigital) should also be considered, and computer media or hardcopy materials should always be logged if they are removed from storerooms to avoid materials going missing.

Security

Security concerns are an important part of storage requirements. Controlled access to buildings and rooms holding data may be necessary, and disasters such as

fire and flood must be anticipated when planning storage space. Theft or vandalism by staff members or unwelcome intruders should never be ruled out as a possibility.

Information technology security relates to backing up data, preventing unauthorized access, and preventing viruses. User access to data banks held on servers can be restricted using technical methods of access control.

In rare cases, the kind of informed consent negotiated at the time of fieldwork necessitates destruction of data at the end of a project. This should be done in a consistent manner, with paper being shredded and computer files being permanently deleted from all systems.

Louise Corti

See also Data Archive; Data Management; Data Security; Ethics; Secondary Analysis

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DEBRIEFING

There are six major types of debriefing in qualitative research: peer debriefing, debriefing the participants on completion of the study, debriefing the gatekeeper, debriefing among multiple researchers involved in the same study, debriefing focus group moderators, and a new type of debriefing involving debriefing the researcher. Each type is discussed in this entry.

Peer debriefing, the first type of debriefing, is a method for establishing credibility. This is undertaken

by the researcher discussing the study with a trusted and knowledgeable peer who can give informed feedback to assist the researcher in exploring aspects of the study that have, until that point, remained hidden. Through peer debriefing, the researcher attempts to keep her or his bias out of the study. Furthermore, peer debriefing can motivate the researcher to delve deeper into the data so as to understand more fully the participants' perspectives. Another purpose of peer debriefing is to resolve methodological issues. Analysis and interpretation of data can be discussed through peer debriefing either after the data analysis and interpretations have been made or as the data analysis and/or interpretations evolve. This can help the researcher to obtain trustworthy findings by ensuring that the findings are confirmable by the peer debriefer. Using peer debriefing in this way motivates the researcher to keep an audit trail, which represents a systematically maintained documentation system that includes a statement of the theoretical/conceptual framework underlying the study, a description of procedures used to collect and analyze the data, emergent themes, extracted data, interpretations of data, and memos. Peer debriefing can be conducted to enable the researcher to discuss political or ethical issues, to have a sounding board for confusing or uncomfortable issues, and to clear her or his mind.

A second type of debriefing involves the researcher debriefing the participants on completion of the study so as to explain the goals, purposes, and outcomes of the study. Typically, debriefing is conducted with the participants when there has been any undisclosed information about the study, but debriefing could be conducted to inform participants of the results. If the researcher senses any uncomfortable feelings or thoughts from the participants, debriefing at the end of the study can help to clear the air. Sharing the results at the culmination of a study shows respect for the time and energy that the participants gave to the study. The qualitative researcher could use debriefing sessions to reassure the participants that confidentiality will be maintained. Debriefing sessions also could be used to negotiate elements of the participants' stories that will appear in the final report.

In the third type of debriefing, the qualitative researcher should debrief (e.g., delineate findings to) the gatekeeper, who is the person from whom the researcher must obtain approval to gain access to a group or cultural site. Such debriefing should motivate the

gatekeeper to provide the researcher with future access to the participants.

A fourth type of debriefing is when more than one researcher is involved in a study. In this situation, the researchers should debrief each other regularly. Debriefing among researchers should occur in a comfortable private location where they can discuss issues that include thoughts about interactions with participants, the research focus, data collected, unexpected findings, ethical dilemmas that emerged, and/or whether a change in the research study's direction is warranted. Being able to discuss thoughts and perceptions with another researcher can create a "shared space" of investigation that can help researchers to move beyond the surface of the investigated phenomenon and delve deeper into the study, thereby enhancing understanding (i.e., increasing *Verstehen*) of the underlying phenomenon. Sharing memos with each other during debriefing also can be beneficial. Debriefing discussions should be audiorecorded because the information from these discussions can be considered as data that can help the researchers to understand the phenomenon under study.

A fifth type of debriefing involves moderators of focus groups. When there is a moderator and an assistant moderator, these two people should debrief one another immediately after the focus group interviews in a private location. Issues to discuss include initial perceptions of the focus group participants (e.g., whether one focus group participant dominated the group), noteworthy quotes, unexpected findings, and whether data saturation occurred (i.e., no new or relevant information emerged relative to previous focus groups). Furthermore, changes for future focus groups, including alternative techniques for creating a more open atmosphere, would be useful to discuss. Most important, debriefing between moderators gives researchers an opportunity to clear their heads so that they can start afresh with the next focus group. The debriefing session should be audiorecorded and used as data to help understand the topic under investigation.

A final type of debriefing involves debriefing, or interviewing, the researcher. Throughout the study, the researcher has a plethora of information, thoughts, and perceptions regarding the research. Unfortunately, the qualitative researcher often is alone in analyzing the data and in trying to understand the phenomenon under investigation and so might not take fully into account the information that has been stored in her or

his own head. Debriefing can help the researcher to promote reflexivity, that is, to reflect on her or his historical, sociocultural, and geographical situatedness as well as the biases the researcher brings to the study, her or his personal investment in and commitment to the study, and so on. To debrief the researcher, a person who is not involved in the study interviews the researcher. Possible topics for the questions that the interviewer might ask the researcher include the researcher's perceptions of the participants, the richness of the data, ethical/political issues that might have arisen during the study, and issues or dilemmas that emerged during the study. Most important, the interviewer should seek to help the researcher to reflect on and identify how the research study has had an impact on her or him, including how the researcher's self-perceptions have changed. The interview should be audiorecorded so that the information extracted can be used as data in the study. This process of interviewing the researcher can provide richer data that can add more meaning to the overall interpretation of the results.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Peer Debriefing

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DECEPTION

Perhaps no other research paradigm with human participants has such extreme variations in the use of deception as does qualitative research. The spectrum includes projects in which people are who they say they are and do what they say they will do; it also includes research in which people assume false identities and do not disclose the true purpose of their activities. This entry discusses common qualitative techniques such as naturalistic observation, interviewing, and participant observation, and it identifies some principles that mark out the ethical terrain of deception in research.

Naturalistic Observation and Interviews

Qualitative research projects vary in the degree to which they intrude into the lives of those they study. Deceiving participants about the nature of the research becomes a more serious issue as the research becomes more intrusive. Naturalistic observation is relatively nonintrusive. Standing at an intersection and watching whether people roll through stop signs is an example. Presumably, the behavior would occur whether the researcher is present or not. If the researcher dresses in a police uniform and stands on the corner watching, there is mild intrusion and mild deception.

Celia Kitzinger discussed “structured eavesdropping” as a method of data collection. Such research might be considered as deceptive if the researcher arranged to be invited to an event with the express purpose of listening to conversations.

Interviews may or may not involve deception. A researcher who cannot gain access to an executive may have a revealing “conversation” with the boss's secretary that yields the desired information. Other secondary informants may include court clerks discussing how judges behave and dental assistants talking about the billing practices of dentists.

Participant Observation

Participant observation always involves some intrusion into the lives of participants whether it is deceptive or not. Many projects are nondeceptive; for example, a researcher may ride in police cars to write about police work with no deception involved. But a researcher may also ask a police officer to describe a shift without telling his or her colleagues that they are being observed for research purposes.

A researcher may need to become immersed in the setting to understand it fully. William Whyte spent years in a working-class section of Boston interacting with a broad spectrum of people to understand their lives. The result was documented in his classic *Street Corner Society*. To the extent that not everyone he met, talked to, bowled with, and so on knew that he would write about his experiences, deception was involved.

Deception obviously compromises informed consent. In some situations, people would not participate if they knew that a researcher was involved. Medical

anthropologist Ralph Boulton tested the Belgian government's claim that it had been successful in persuading gay men to use condoms for casual sex. He went to places where such encounters took place and kept track of whether gay men suggested using a condom before they engaged in oral sex. The findings dramatically contradicted the government's claim.

The usual argument for deception is that the data cannot be gathered in any other way. The anthropologist studying sexual practices in Belgium argued that deception was essential; if he had told participants he was doing research, it would have changed behavior and reduced participation rates.

Participant observation permits the researcher to travel in someone else's shoes or even in their skin. John Griffith used chemical means to darken his skin and then traveled across the southern United States as an African American, reporting his experiences in the

famous *Black Like Me*. Recently, Nora Vincent used a similar technique to study gendered experience. She entered some situations as a woman and then used clothing and other techniques to experience the same situations when people perceived her as a man.

A researcher may feel the need to play a role to get a deeper understanding of a lifestyle that one could get from surveys or interviews. Barbara Ehrenreich worked at low-paying jobs to get data for her best-selling book *Nickel and Dimed* and then followed up with a similar method to study white-collar unemployment in *Bait and Switch*.

Researchers may believe that surreptitious role-play is necessary for an adequate test of their theories. Social psychologist Leon Festinger developed his theory of cognitive dissonance in controlled experiments. The theory predicts, among other things, that people who pay a high price for something will inflate its

Deception and the Study of Psychiatric Diagnoses

Many researchers argue that some topics cannot be investigated properly without the use of some deception. An example is David Rosenhan's work on the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses. Rosenhan hypothesized that what is considered sane in one culture may be considered insane in another culture. Even within a culture, the labels people are given will depend on the setting in which we see them. Furthermore, the same behavior will be labeled differently in different settings. For example, people who take a lot of written notes during the day will be viewed differently if we think they are journalists than if we see them as mental patients.

Rosenhan tested his hypothesis by having eight sane people gain secret admission to 12 different mental hospitals. He and his colleagues told staff members in admissions that they heard voices that said "empty," "hollow," and "thud." All of the other information they provided about their lives (except for disguising their professions) was factual. Once they were admitted, the pseudopatients ceased simulating any symptoms of abnormality.

It took an average of 3 weeks in a hospital before the pseudopatients were released. Nursing reports, which were obtained later, routinely described them as friendly, cooperative, and showing no abnormal reactions. Despite their normal behavior and failure to exhibit symptoms, they were still presumed to be mentally ill because of the setting in which they were observed. For

instance, all pseudopatients took notes. This behavior was coded as symptomatic by staff members who observed it, although actual patients tended to think that the pseudopatients were journalists or "checking up on the hospital."

None of the pseudopatients was detected. Even when the pseudopatients were released, it was because their conditions (usually identified as schizophrenia) were said to be "in remission."

The second phase of the study, also involving deception, came when the administrators and staff members of a research and teaching hospital who had heard of the earlier results said that such an error could not occur at their institution. Rosenhan told them that at some time during the following 3 months, one or more pseudopatients would try to be admitted. Each staff member was asked to rate each patient who came for admission or was admitted and on a ward.

Judgments were obtained on nearly 200 patients. Of these, 41 were identified as pseudopatients with high confidence by at least one staff member, with 19 being identified as pseudopatients by one psychiatrist and one other staff member. In fact, Rosenhan had not sent any pseudopatients to that hospital at all. This was a clever way to reconfirm the unreliability of psychiatric diagnoses and the importance of our belief sets in determining how we judge the behavior of others.

Source: For more information on this topic, see Rosenhan, D. L. (1973). On being sane in insane places. *Science*, 179, 250–258.

value to justify the cost to themselves. Students who have a hard time getting into a university, for example, will value the institution and the experience more than will those who get easy entry.

Festinger was interested in a real-world test of his theory. He read about a group that was preparing for the imminent end of the world. He had assistants join the group and keep notes on the reaction of various members when the world failed to end as prophesied. He was able to establish, as cognitive dissonance theory would predict, that significant sacrifice (selling all of one's possessions) was related to continued fervent belief in the prophesy even after it had failed.

Is Deception Harmless?

Deception violates the right to informed consent, but many researchers argue that it is both necessary and harmless. Sometimes, however, participants may be put in harm's way. Laud Humphreys studied impersonal sex in public places. His participants were family men who frequented public lavatories to engage in homosexual activity with strangers. His first deception was to set himself up as a "watchqueen"—someone who keeps an eye out for the police—in a public lavatory. After each assignation, Humphreys left the lavatory in time to note the car license of the participant(s). He represented himself as a market researcher to obtain the names and addresses of the car owners from the Department of Motor Vehicles. He waited a year and changed his appearance and then entered participants' homes as a member of a public health research team and interviewed them. Clearly, there was no informed consent, but was there risk of harm? So long as the information remained private, no harm was done. But the participants had no control over the security of the information. They were at the mercy of the researcher without knowing it.

In light of concerns about deception in the social sciences, several rules of thumb have developed to guide researchers who are considering the use of deception in research. The research question must be worth investigating, there must be no alternative nondeceptive way to answer the research question (or the deceptive procedure must add substantially to the answer), and there should be no risk of harm to the participants. If there is risk of harm, it must be weighed against the potential value of the research.

Patrick O'Neill

See also Informed Consent; Naturalistic Observation; Participant Observation; Privacy; Risk

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DECONSTRUCTION

When asked by *The New York Times* reporter Dinitia Smith to define *deconstruction*, the late Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) replied, "It is impossible to respond. . . . I can only do something which will leave me unsatisfied." I feel much the same way about writing this entry. An encyclopedia is designed to enclose, encapsulate, reduce, and simplify its subject matters, whereas deconstruction is oriented toward opening, expanding, amplifying, and complexifying them. To conform to the generic conventions of an encyclopedia entry, I must put deconstruction in a nutshell. But as John Caputo wrote in the ironically titled *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation With Jacques Derrida* in 1997, "whenever deconstruction finds a nutshell—a secure axiom or a pithy maxim—the very idea is to crack it open and disturb this tranquility" (p. 32). But Caputo also noted that when Derrida was called on to briefly characterize deconstruction, he often had recourse to the expression "experience of the impossible" and even suggested that this might be the "least bad" way to define deconstruction.

My approach to providing a least bad nutshell is first to provide a brief history of the term *deconstruction* in Derrida's work (and its travel into contemporary social science via literary theory) and then to offer an example of deconstructive reading from my own practice as a curriculum scholar. I trust that by *performing* deconstruction, rather than simply *representing* it, I may be able to share with readers something of the pleasure and generativity of experiencing the impossible.

Deconstruction: A Short History

In a letter to Toshihiko Isutsu, a Japanese scholar seeking assistance with translating *déconstruction* into Japanese, Derrida explained how he came to use the term, a word rarely used in French at the time, in *De La Grammatologie* (published in France in 1967 and later in English as *Of Grammatology*). Among other things, Derrida wanted to translate (and adapt to his own purposes) the German terms *Destruktion* and *Abbau*, as used by Martin Heidegger in a 1927 lecture series (later published as *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*). In these lectures, Heidegger asserted that phenomenology is a method of doing philosophy that has three steps: reduction, construction, and destruction. Although Heidegger argued that construction in philosophy is necessarily *Destruktion* (destruction), he elaborated his understanding of philosophical destruction by using another German word, *Abbau* (literally “unbuild”).

In his letter to Isutsu in 1985, Derrida explained that in Heidegger’s work both *Destruktion* and *Abbau* signified “an operation bearing on the structure or traditional architecture of the fundamental concepts of ontology or of Western metaphysics” (p. 2). But the French word *destruction* too obviously implied “an annihilation or a negative reduction much closer perhaps to Nietzschean ‘demolition’ than to the Heideggerian interpretation or to the type of reading that I proposed” (p. 2). Derrida recalled that the word *déconstruction* came to him somewhat spontaneously and that he checked to see whether it was “good French” by consulting “the Littré” (the common name for the four-volume *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* by Émile Littré first published in 1877). Derrida was pleased to find that the grammatical, linguistic, and rhetorical associations of the term—for which there were several entries—were “fortunately adapted to what I wanted at least to suggest”:

At that time structuralism was dominant. “Deconstruction” seemed to be going in the same direction since the word signified a certain attention to structures (which themselves were neither simply ideas, nor forms, nor syntheses, nor systems). To deconstruct was also a structuralist gesture or in any case a gesture that assumed a certain need for the structuralist problematic. But it was also an antistructuralist gesture, and its fortune rests in part on this ambiguity. Structures were to be undone, decomposed, desedimented (all types of

structures, linguistic, “logocentric,” “phonocentric”—structuralism being especially at that time dominated by linguistic models . . .). (p. 2)

In Derrida’s work, deconstruction is a complex response to a number of theoretical and philosophical movements, especially phenomenology, structuralism, and psychoanalysis. But in the English-speaking world, deconstruction has had a major impact on literary theory and criticism, with flow-on effects in the social sciences resulting from the narrative and textual turns in those disciplines. In these contexts, deconstruction can be understood as a theory and method of reading and analytic inquiry that aims to undermine the logic of opposition within texts. For example, in an interview with Imré Salusinsky in 1987, the literary critic Barbara Johnson responded to an invitation to define deconstruction as follows:

One thing I could say is that the training most people get from the beginning, in school and through all the cultural pressures on us, is to answer the question: “What’s the bottom line?” What deconstruction does is to teach you to ask: “What does the construction of the bottom line leave out? What does it repress? What does it disregard? What does it consider unimportant? What does it put in the margins?” So that it’s a double process. You have to have some sense of what someone’s conception of what the bottom line would be, is, in order to organize the “noise” that is being disregarded. (p. 81)

Thus, for Johnson, deconstruction is less an argument about the nature of signs than a vocabulary and a set of practices oriented toward uncovering what she called “noise”—that which our usual cultural and cognitive schemas disregard or marginalize. It is a disposition toward reading for subtexts, for textual contradictions, for textual blockages, for that which is textually suppressed or textually excluded. As Raman Selden wrote in 1989, deconstruction begins when we locate the point at which “a text transgresses the laws it appears to set up for itself. At this point texts go to pieces, so to speak” (p. 87). In other words, the structural distinctions that authors deploy subvert themselves.

In 1993, Cleo Cherryholmes offered a clear example of how one particular text, Fred Kerlinger’s

Deconstructive Reading: A Demonstration

What follows is a lightly edited version of the introductory sections of my essay review of William Pinar and William Reynolds's edited book, *Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text*.

Imagining an Erroneous Order

"I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe."

"But in imagining an erroneous order you still found something."

(Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, p. 599)

My first impression of the text under review was that the editors were "pursuing a semblance of order" by juxtaposing phenomenology and deconstruction in a curriculum text. (Whether or not they "found something" by "imagining an erroneous order" is a question I defer for the moment.) The following passages, which encapsulate the meanings Pinar and Reynolds ascribe to understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text, exemplify some of the discontinuities and tensions between these two orientations (and incidentally provide examples of some of the narrative strategies through which their semblance of order is maintained):

Curriculum understood as a phenomenological text communicates a story in which quantitative social science is an evil character whose effort to quantify the immeasurable is unethical and epistemologically unsound. Those elements of experience that are observable and measurable tend to be rather small and specific. The firmament in the positivist sky twinkles with precision and rigor. However, spaces between stars and those hidden by clouds recede and disappear. Phenomenology seeks to name those spaces, their relation to the stars and to us. (pp. 1–2)

Curriculum as deconstructed text acknowledges knowledge as preeminently historical. Here, however, history is not understood as ideologically constructed, rather as a series of narratives superimposed upon each other, interlaced among each other, layers of story merged and separated like the colors in Jackson Pollock's paintings. . . . To understand curriculum as a deconstructed (or deconstructing) text is to tell stories that never end, stories in which the listener, the "narratee," may become a character or indeed the narrator, in which all structure is provisional, momentary, a collection of twinkling stars in a firmament of flux. (p. 7)

Despite the continuity of the concept of story and the sky/star metaphors in these paragraphs, the comparison of curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text reveals a number of contradictions and tensions. (It also seems misleading to assert that "history is not understood as ideologically constructed" in deconstructive readings; one chapter in the text under review demonstrates that feminist poststructural analysis not only recognizes the constitutive force of ideological discourses but also problematizes the agency of the individual in taking up specific ideologies as her or his own.) For example, phenomenology's project seems pointless in deconstruction's "firmament of flux" insofar as it seems futile to attempt to "name" the "spaces between stars" in a universe where "all structure is provisional, momentary." Furthermore, the phenomenological aspiration "to name those spaces [and] their relation to the stars and to us" entertains the possibility of ultimate and essential truths—finite stories that will relieve us of the deconstructionist desire "to tell stories that never end."

Thus, although phenomenology and deconstruction share conceptual tools that allow them to accommodate a view of curriculum as text, this does not necessarily mean that they are commensurable; that would be like saying that we can accommodate Jackson Pollock and, say, Vincent van Gogh within the same critical framework simply because they both used paint to make pictures. I would argue that van Gogh's and Pollock's worlds (and worldviews) are incommensurable to the extent that we are unlikely ever to "see" van Gogh's starry, starry night in the universe Pollock (re)presents. Yet I can *imagine* Pollock's white cockatoo taking flight in van Gogh's sky. In a similar way, Pinar and Reynolds might have "found something" by "imagining an erroneous order" in the interrelationships of phenomenology and deconstruction.

This essay review tells something of what I "found" by reading the text under review, and it rehearses some of the possibilities for other readers' interpretations of it. My review assumes that *Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text* should be read as a deconstructed (or deconstructing) text and, therefore, that readers should go beyond a single interpretive act "to tell stories that never end." As Kenneth Knoespel wrote in 1991, "rather than reading a single text a single time, [deconstruction] promotes the reading of many texts many times for an ongoing confessional comprehension of how meaning is generated" (p. 116). This essay, then, is a series of incomplete stories featuring the text under review.

(Continued)

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Positioning This Essay Intertextually

One of the understandings I take from deconstruction is that the meaning of a text is impossible to recover unambiguously. Thus, as William Paulson wrote in 1988, the "very impossibility of doing so becomes the only 'meaning' literally recoverable" (p. 93). This position presents considerable difficulties for a book reviewer. For example, to demonstrate that I have understood *Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text* deconstructively, I need to demonstrate that it is "incomprehensible" in the sense that a text is "irreducible to any schema other than itself" (p. 184). As Morris Zapp (quoted in David Lodge's 1984 novel, *Small World*) said, "every decoding is another encoding" (p. 25), and what I am constructing here is not so much a decoding of the text under review as an encoding of the meanings, significances, ambiguities, and complexities that my reading of it has produced.

After reading this text, I am confident that it would have been easier (simpler and less complicated) to review it (generate meaning) from a phenomenological perspective than to attempt a deconstructive critique. However, my reading of the text has amplified my understanding of poststructuralism and multiplied the reasons for my belief that deconstruction irreversibly destabilizes phenomenology. Indeed, the more I understand curriculum as deconstructed text, the less I am able to understand it phenomenologically. Thus, although Pinar and Reynolds provide a number of logical reasons for linking phenomenology and deconstruction intellectually, and some genealogical notes that chart collegial interrelationships among phenomenological and poststructuralist curriculum scholars, the juxtaposition of these two orientations to curriculum inquiry in this particular text may very well facilitate their further disjunction. Perhaps the editors of *Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text* intended the title to be interpreted in poststructuralist jest, for although it appears to name unambiguously a proposition that readers might well

expect to be "literally recoverable" from the text, it also names a proposition that deconstruction reveals to be absurd, namely, that curriculum can be understood as both phenomenological and deconstructed text. In other words, a meaning that I have "recovered" from understanding *Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text* deconstructively is the very impossibility of understanding curriculum as both phenomenological and deconstructed text.

The two preceding paragraphs are a modest attempt to demonstrate some of the qualities of a deconstructive reading that many scholars find generative and illuminating but that others find infuriating and confusing. In deconstruction, iterative techniques and recursive looping are seen as ways to destabilize texts and make them yield unexpected conclusions—in this case, the conclusion that the text under review generates meanings that are antithetical to the proposition insinuated by its title—although the proposition that these meanings are antithetical to other meanings is itself not unambiguous. Deconstruction continually defers positive meaning, savoring complexity and favoring the positive value of making no positive interpretations.

The preceding comments deliberately position this essay as an artifact of the meaning production processes initiated by my reading of the text under review. They also signal my empathy for an approach to deconstruction that owes less to Derrida than to Henri Mensonge, who in Malcolm Bradbury's 1987 faux biography embodies poststructuralist concepts such as "the disappearance of the subject" and "erasure" so effectively that we do not have any unambiguous evidence of his existence. Via Bradbury, Mensonge provides a sense of what might remain after deconstruction has led us to dismantle our preconceived frameworks of consciousness and perception, to demythologize our ideas of the transcendent and the everlasting, and to demystify our senses of truth, essence, and reality. As Bradbury wrote, deconstruction "discloses to us a world of parody and pastiche, query and quotation; and having shown us all this, it teaches us how to enjoy it" (p. 5).

Source: Gough, N. (1994). Imagining an erroneous order: Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 26, 553–568.

once widely used textbook *Foundations of Behavioral Research*, subverts itself. In his introduction, Kerlinger wrote that the book "is a treatise on scientific research; it is limited to what is generally

accepted as the scientific approach. It does not discuss historical research, legal research, library research, cultural research, philosophical inquiry, and so on. It emphasizes, in short, understanding

scientific research problem solution” (p. viii). But as Cherryholmes pointed out, by asserting a structural distinction between what is scientific and what is nonscientific, Kerlinger introduced a problem that he failed to recognize, address, or resolve—namely, that research procedures, practices, and results must be interpreted (e.g., judgments must be made about validity, generalizability, and applicability), but the scientific status of interpretation remains unclear because interpretation may involve historical, linguistic, library, literary, or philosophical research. All research occurs in historical context, and theoretical constructs, hypotheses to be tested, and theories to be evaluated are objects of history. Moreover, the norms of scientific research require that theories of empirical phenomena be internally consistent and not contradictory. But decisions about consistency and contradictoriness are made by appealing to logic, and logic is a branch of philosophy. The scientific–nonscientific distinction deconstructs. Cherryholmes’s deconstructive reading of Kerlinger’s statement attended to the rhetorical play of meanings that the author concealed by imposing distinctions, categories, and taxonomies.

Concluding Note

To illustrate the intent of deconstruction, see the piece titled “Deconstructive Reading: A Demonstration” that accompanies this entry. Here, I model deconstruction with regard to specific texts to show how deconstruction “works” in this context. I will emphasize here that I intend my references to novels by Bradbury, Eco, and Lodge—all of which have parodic elements—to be instructive, because we can learn a great deal about deconstruction by studying parody. Indeed, Robert Phiddian (among others) argues that Derrida’s work might be the first fully developed theory to be couched in the parodic mode. Phiddian’s argument is not only that Derridean deconstruction is a serious theory couched in parody (that it constitutes a parodic theory of language) but also that it treats questions of language, truth, and referentiality as if they were already in a play of parody—that Derridean deconstruction is a theory of parodic language.

Noel Gough

See also Epistemology; Phenomenology; Poststructuralism; Structuralism

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DEDUCTION

Deduction is one of the three primary modes of reasoning, with the other two being abduction and induction. Of the three modes, deduction is the oldest and most venerable. Using the notation of Charles Peirce, and taking an illustration from a

famous example by Aristotle, deduction in syllogistic form has the following structure:

Rule (also known as the major premise): All men are mortal.

Case (also known as the minor premise): Socrates is a man.

Result: Socrates is mortal.

In its earliest formulation, in Greek philosophy, deduction was the mode of valid inference that drew implications from true premises. The power of deduction was this: If the premises were true, then the implications derived from the process of deductive reasoning were guaranteed to be certainly true as well. In fact, for centuries deduction was considered to be the only valid mode of inference. It was not until the work of medieval logicians that induction first began to be accepted as a mode of reasoning, and abduction did not make its appearance formally until the work of Peirce during the early 20th century.

With the advent of modern science, the scope and use of deduction began to expand. Deduction was no longer confined to inferences based on premises that were absolutely true. Instead, researchers began to use deduction to make implications from premises that were only empirically (and therefore probably) true. These resulting implications were themselves used as the basis for making further empirical tests and were called hypotheses. This overall process, known as the hypothetico-deductive method, is an important tool in scientific theorizing. When applied properly, the method works as follows. First, via the process of observation and data gathering, researchers inductively establish the likelihood that certain claims about nature are most likely true. These claims are used as premises, and implications are deduced from those premises. These implications then serve as hypotheses, which are tested to see whether they are most likely true as well. Once the hypotheses have been tested, they themselves can now serve as premises, and the cyclical process continues. This leads to the solid creation of hypotheses that are worth pursuing and an increasingly informed and subtle set of further hypotheses.

The method just described is at the heart of many quantitative research programs. The role of hypotheses, and hypothesis testing, has always been more problematic in qualitative research. Some qualitative researchers, especially those inclined to support

mixed methods approaches, argue that hypotheses can and should play key roles in qualitative research efforts. Others believe that the fundamental logic of qualitative research is different from that of quantitative research and that hypotheses play little or no role in qualitative inquiry.

The other side of deduction deals with the issue of argumentation. Starting with Aristotle, philosophers have used deduction as a tool for valid reasoning in developing valid arguments and for determining whether or not existing arguments are valid. Needless to say, the role of deduction as a means for determining whether or not arguments are valid is important for all forms of research writing, qualitative and quantitative alike.

Gary Shank

See also Abduction; Hypothesis; Induction

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DEPENDABILITY

One of the challenges of working within a qualitative context is the variability of the environment. Through extensive literature reviews and experience in the context, a researcher can create a pretty good theoretical understanding of what the environment will be like and then design appropriate methodologies for studying it. Once the researcher is out in the field, he or she may find it to be quite different from what was expected. This could affect research procedures such as what types of interview questions are asked and how many interviews are conducted. Dependability in a qualitative study recognizes that the research context is evolving and that it cannot be completely understood a priori as a singular moment in time. Dependability accounts for these issues through relevant methodologies.

A catalyst for research is the desire to have the study affect theory and/or practice on a broad scale.

This means that the results should be consistently linked to revealed data and that the findings should be an accurate expression of the meanings intended by the participants. For this to happen, there must be a research infrastructure to support a repetition or replication of the study that will have similar results. This condition, which is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research, requires that the researcher supply adequate and relevant methodological information to enable others to replicate the study. If a study design is so unique and specific that it cannot be replicated, the research will have limited impact beyond the context of the study and the dependability of the study design will be affected. An example of this would be interviewing the last two clients of a social services program that is ending. It would be very hard to repeat this study because there are no more clients and the program is completed.

Dependability also addresses the fact that the research context is open to change and variation. The researcher must be conscious of change and must track all of the nuances that differ from the design in the proposal. As part of this, the researcher should track the alterations to the research design made necessary by the changing context. This could include changes in methodology such as increasing the number of interviews required, tracking nonverbal cues as well as spoken text, including document analysis, increasing intercoder reliability by having more coders, and/or increasing contact time in the environment from 1 week to 2 weeks. Tracking this process is called an inquiry audit. An external agent will review the researcher's fieldnotes and log book to ensure that the various changes in the research design have both methodological and theoretical foundations and are linked to the revealed data. The transparency and relevancy of this process will increase the dependability of the study.

Devon Jensen

See also Document Analysis; Fieldnotes; Fieldwork; Inter- and Intra-coder Reliability; Literature Review; Reliability; Research Design

Further Readings

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DESCRIPTION

See RICH DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Description of the data collected in research is an important component for both the researcher and the reader. In both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the reduction of a large amount of data to an easily digestible summary is an important function. In qualitative research, descriptive statistics are typically observed in mixed method, action research, or other qualitative designs. More important, description lays the foundation for later analyses and interpretation of collected data.

When numerical data are collected, the description of these data is termed *descriptive statistics*. Descriptive statistics constitute a mathematical summarization of the data where a large number of observed values are mathematically converted to a few numbers. This is a variable-oriented approach where typically a large number of cases are involved versus a case-oriented approach where typically a few cases are involved. In qualitative research, descriptive statistics allow researchers to provide another context, a richer picture or enhanced representation, in which to examine the phenomenon of interest. The inclusion of quantitative data can also enhance legitimacy (e.g., validity, credibility, trustworthiness, transferability), although this might not be appropriate for many qualitative projects.

The simplest ways to categorize descriptive statistics are (a) numerical, such as measures of central tendency and variability; and (b) graphical, such as histograms, bar charts, and scatter plots. Descriptive statistics are different from inferential statistics, where the purpose is to infer from the sample to the population of interest.

To make meaningful inferences, descriptive statistics must be used properly, and that begins with understanding when to use each quantitative descriptive technique. Common descriptive statistics in multi-method studies are the three measures of central tendency: mean (\bar{x} , M), median, and mode. The three measures of central tendency provide a set of values that describe the typical score in a distribution of scores. The measures of central tendency are calculated from

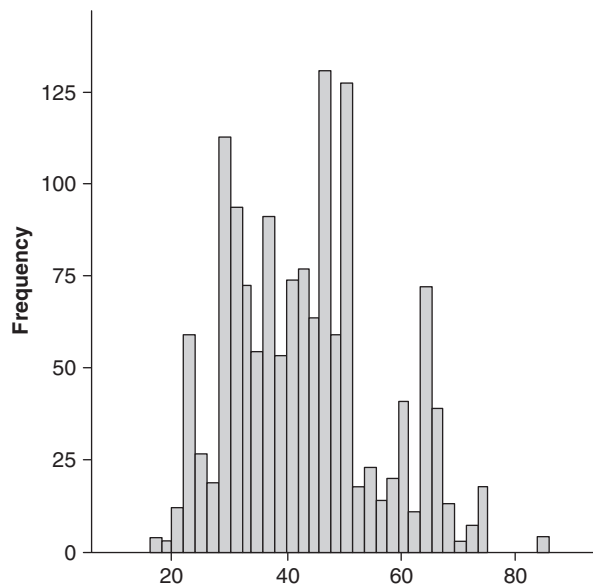


Figure 1 Histogram of Reading Achievement Scores

continuous data (e.g., test scores) and not categorical scores (e.g., gender identification). For example, in educational research a common variable is an achievement score such as reading comprehension, and in gambling research a common variable is the speed of play on a slot machine.

The mean, or average value, for the reading comprehension example is the summation of all scores divided by the number of test scores. The median is the middle score of all the ordered achievement scores. The mode is the most common, or highest frequency, achievement score. There can be more than one mode in a data set.

Measures of variability (i.e., score dispersion) are typically reported for continuous data and include the range, variance, and standard deviation of the scores. The range for a set of scores, or the distribution data, is calculated by subtracting the largest score from the smallest score. From the example of students' reading comprehension scores, this is the highest test score minus the lowest test score. The standard deviation (*SD*) is the average distance that scores are from the mean. The more dispersed the values, the larger the standard deviation. In a normally distributed data set (i.e., looks like

a bell curve), 68% of the values will be within 1 standard deviation above or below the mean. The standard deviation is more commonly provided because it is easily interpreted, whereas the variance simply indicates that variability in the observed scores exists. If the variance, and therefore the standard deviation, is zero, then all of the scores are the same. A fourth, albeit less commonly provided, dispersion descriptor is the interquartile range. The interquartile range is the distance between the 25th and 75th percentiles and indicates where the middle 50% of the values are located.

Many times during observations, researchers will note the number or frequency of behaviors of students or teachers. These frequency count data are considered as categorical in quantitative terms and are traditionally displayed using frequencies, proportions, or percentages (e.g., 5 of 20 students, 20% of the class, the gambler's pace at the slot machine is 120 "pulls" per hour).

Other common numerical descriptors in educational research are percentile rank, stanine, grade equivalent, and other converted or transformed scores. A percentile rank occurs when a single student is compared with a reference group and a rank is assigned to the particular student's score. For example, a rank at the 84th percentile indicates that the student's test score is equal to or greater than 84% of all other reference group members who took that test. A stanine score, which can range from 1 to 9, provides a rough approximation of performance that takes into account measurement error. Grade equivalent scores are commonly reported but are the most misinterpreted scores. For example, a fourth-grade student

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1 . 79
2 . 01222222223333444
2 . 55567778888888888889999999999
3 . 0000000001111111122222222333344444
3 . 5555566666666666666666677889999999
4 . 000000000011112222222222333344444444
4 . 55555666666666666666666777777777788889999999
5 . 00000111111111111111111111112223444
5 . 556778899
6 . 000001112344444444444
6 . 55556666666689
7 . 1344
8 . 5

```

Figure 2 Stem-and-Leaf Plot of Reading Comprehension Scores

Table 1 Faculty Gender by Race

	<i>Black Non- Hispanic</i>	<i>American Indian/Alaskan Native</i>	<i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>White Non- Hispanic</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Total</i>
Female	8	2	10	2	227	7	256
Male	5	1	4	1	160	2	173
Total	13	3	14	3	387	9	429

who has a grade equivalent score of 7.3 does not indicate the student can do seventh-grade work; rather, it indicates that the student performed as well as a seventh-grade student in the third month of seventh grade would perform on the fourth-grade test.

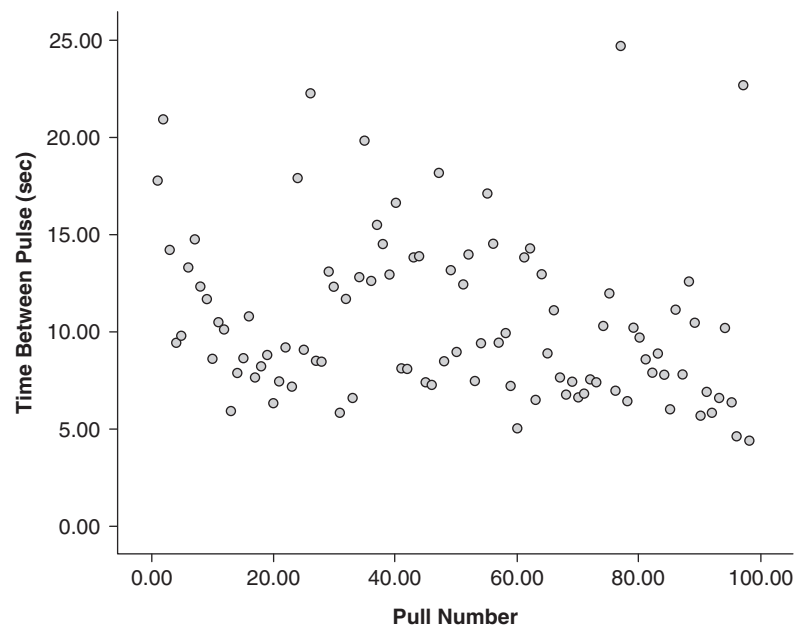
In addition to the many numerical descriptors, there are numerous forms of graphic descriptions. A few common ones are discussed in what follows. As with the mathematical summarization, the type of data affects the type of visual description needed. A bar chart provides a visual description with ordinal data values such as frequency counts of books being read and numbers of teachers with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The bars in this type of chart are not connected because there is no implied relationship among the categories.

Histograms (Figure 1), which are visually similar to bar charts, are used with data that are continuous or have an implied continuity to them and the bars are connected. Quantitative researchers commonly use histograms to examine data before conducting statistical analyses such as inferential tests.

Other graphic representations of data include frequency polygons, box plots, and stem-and-leaf plots. A frequency polygon is similar to a histogram but connects the data by points and lines instead of bars. A box plot marks the lowest value and then the lower whisker (the bottom 25% of values), the box (the middle 50% of values), and the upper whisker (the top 25% of values or 75th percentile and above). Scores that fall out of the whisker range are typically denoted by a star and are considered extreme values. A stem-and-leaf plot (Figure 2) takes part of the data values and uses them as a stem and uses the remainder part as the leaf.

The preceding numerical and graphical descriptions all concern looking at one variable. A correlation describes the linear relationship between two variables, that is, a bivariate relationship. The correlation coefficient describes the magnitude and direction of that relationship. The magnitude ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 implies no linear relationship and 1 implies a perfect linear relationship. The direction describes whether it is a positive or negative relationship. A positive linear relationship implies that as the values of one variable increase, the values of the second variable increase. The correlation and correlation coefficient are simply descriptions. Once tested against the hypothesis that the correlation coefficient is 0 (i.e., null hypothesis), this figure becomes an inferential statistic.

In addition to univariate graphs, there are two common bivariate descriptive statistic displays. The first, cross-tabulation, creates a table where two variables

**Figure 3** Scatterplot of Gambling Times

can be crossed and, for example, the frequencies can be examined. Table 1 provides an example of a 2 (gender) by 7 (race/ethnicity) frequency table that is commonly reported in university and college reports. There are 10 female faculty members with an Asian/Pacific Islander designation.

A second bivariate description is a scatterplot or scattergram. A scatterplot is used with continuous data and displays the linear relationship between two variables. The scatterplot is a graphic representation of a correlation. Figure 3 displays a scatterplot of a slot machine gambler's times between pulls by pull number.

Descriptive statistics allow the researcher to provide a succinct picture of the numerical data. This efficiency can add to the narrative by providing another line of evidence without overwhelming the reader.

James B. Schreiber

See also Statistics

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DIALOGUE

Dialogue is a mode of communication characterized by an open exchange of ideas and meanings. In qualitative research, dialogue has been conceived both as a data collection method and as an ethical means of conducting research regarding researcher-participant relationships and the construction of knowledge and understanding. Learning that occurs through dialogue is conceptualized as potentially transformative and empowering with, in some cases, a social reconstructionist intention. Within the qualitative research paradigm, there has been particular attention paid to the theoretical and practical implications of dialogue for evaluation as a participatory democratic process. These conceptions of dialogue in qualitative research and evaluation are informed by the writings of the European philosophers Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jürgen Habermas;

the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates; the Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin; and the quantum physicist David Bohm.

Theoretical Influences

The writings of the scholars just listed inform the more technical conception of dialogue in research as well as dialogue as an ethical practice and way of being. Each emphasizes the communicative role of dialogue as a relational learning process.

Dialogue as a Learning Process

The Socratic dialogue, which uses a questioning strategy to make the speaker aware of implicit knowledge or ways of thinking, is relevant to the interview in which the researcher asks a series of questions intended to draw forth a participant's knowledge or insight, or insight may be constructed during the dialogic exchange of the interview. Habermas's conception of dialogue recognized the role of speech in conveying knowledge but emphasized the moral importance of uncoerced, and thereby equitable, communication. Bohm also focused on dialogue as a form of learning through a nonjudgmental open exchange of ideas. Habermas's and Bohm's emphases on equity and open-mindedness (or the resistance to judgment) inform the researcher-participant relationship as collaborative instead of power-laden.

Dialogue as Relational

Buber defined a genuine dialogue as a reciprocal relationship between "I" and "thou" in which a mutual exchange of ideas promotes reconciliation. Bakhtin's theories are especially relevant to the researcher-participant relationship in that dialogue is integral to one's self-development; each person is inevitably influenced by engagement with another person.

Dialogue as Transformative

Gadamer also discussed the transformative quality of dialogue. Through dialogue, the researcher and participant exchange ideas and insights in a reciprocal process that may be mutually transformative through constructing understanding about the research topic as well as fostering each person's self-understanding. This relational and transformative quality of dialogue underscores the ethical practice of research and evaluation

both in terms of the research process as a beneficial (albeit possibly emotionally or psychologically painful) learning experience and in terms of the research process as one that may instigate change on the part of the participant, researcher, or reader.

Tracie E. Costantino

See also Ethics; Researcher–Participant Relationships

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DIARIES AND JOURNALS

As narrative methods gain popularity in the social sciences and other disciplines, so does the use of diaries and journals as valuable qualitative tools. The word *diary* is derived from the Latin *diarium* (daily allowance), and the word *journal* is derived from the Old French *jour* (day). Although both terms relate to first-person chronological records, each yields distinctive types of data. Diaries are generally used to track participants' daily activities and objective experiences, whereas journals capture writing that includes emotion, introspection, and self-reflection. This entry explores ways in which both diaries and journals can be used effectively in qualitative research projects.

Overview

Although written self-stories existed before the 10th century, it was at this time in history that personal diaries were popularized by Japanese women of royalty who secretly recorded their fantasies and fears in “pillow books.” These clandestine tomes heralded a new genre of writing that highlighted self-expression and feelings rather than mere historical or factual events.

During later centuries, the practice of diary keeping exploded as literacy and self-reflective practices increased across the globe. During the early 1900s, two influential figures advocated the benefits of reflective writing: Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung extolled the diary as a unique tool for recording dreams and exploring the unconscious, and Anais Nin's published

diaries encouraged women to pursue self-fulfillment and creativity through habitual writing.

The mass publication of Anne Frank's diary was followed by widespread marketing of pastel-colored books with tiny locks and keys during the 1950s. Although diaries were promoted as an adolescent female hobby, within two decades this trivialization of diaries would abate with the publication of Tristine Rainer's book, *The New Diary*, in 1978. Rainer emphasized that internal probing and consequent awareness of one's feelings, thoughts, and actions is inarguably beneficial and can increase lifelong happiness. Likewise, Ira Progoff's book, *At a Journal Workshop*, became immensely popular during the late 1970s and solidified the place of self-writing as a tool for transformation. From their rich historical beginnings to the current day, diaries and journals have been kept by both men and women across the globe for personal, professional, and academic purposes.

Diaries

In academic research, diary writing is beneficial in eliciting personal yet structured responses. Diaries have been used in the academic realm to study a large spectrum of human activities, including but not limited to sexual and dating practices, sleep habits, exercise routines, television viewing, social activities, food consumption, educational pursuits, eating behaviors, work interactions, internet habits, leisure activities, cell phone use, travel routines, menstrual and fertility cycles, and a wide range of physical and mental health events. Diaries are particularly appropriate in recording routine or everyday processes that are otherwise unnoticed if not documented. Researchers may want to employ diaries as a method when extant research data are useful but there is a gap in the literature pointing to a need for nuanced information that is best captured by hourly or daily responses over time.

Many qualitative studies use diary analysis to observe, improve, or enhance people's practices by tracking their patterns and cycles. Checklists are often used with formats resembling survey and questionnaire techniques. Such diaries can assist health care professionals in diagnosing patients' symptoms, adjusting medication type or dosage, and ensuring compliance with prescribed medical protocols. Regardless of the discipline in which they are used, diaries can provide researchers with enlarged and detailed “snapshots” of what people have experienced.

Although diary formats vary, usually they do not offer open-ended questions but rather supply participants with a specific set of fixed responses. These optional answers can be in a dichotomous (yes/no), scaled, or multiple-choice format. Likewise, diaries can be constituted in the form of logs, ledgers, or calendars.

When analyzing diaries, researchers have a variety of options. Diaries lend themselves to mixed methods while also offering rich subjective data. If researchers include open-ended questions in diaries, participant responses are usually coded thematically with an eye toward emerging themes and subthemes.

Journals

Using journals is one of the most effective research tools to mine the rich personal experiences and emotions of participants' inner lives. When sensitive or taboo topics are studied, journals often allow participants to feel comfortable with their degrees of self-disclosure. Likewise, introverts or those who have been marginalized may feel particularly comfortable when voicing their ideas in private writing. Research studies using journals as a method include but are not limited to topics related to sexual frequency and activity, child abuse, trauma, chronic and terminal illnesses, divorce, posttraumatic stress syndrome, unemployment, infertility, spousal death, eating disorders, depression, and hospice experiences. Journal use is also particularly valuable when little attention has been devoted to a topic and the study seeks to elicit fresh data from first-person experiences.

When analyzing journal entries, a system of thematic or content analysis is usually applied. This form of coding allows for categories and themes to emerge from the journal entries. Qualitative researchers read the journals looking for causal connections, patterns, recurring issues, and reactions; sub- or by-themes may also be noted and categorized. Although journal entries are often completely unstructured, researchers may also ask guided questions to encourage participants to write more specifically about a discrete experience or event.

Cyber Writing

Although a detailed account of cyber writing is beyond the scope of this entry, researchers should be aware of the burgeoning popularity of "blogs" (web logs) as a potential tool for rich data. One of the distinct advantages of studying online writing is the

ability to access more participants than is possible in traditional face-to-face studies. Furthermore, it is easier to pinpoint online communities that share common interests or serve as cyber support groups. Unlike traditional diaries and journals, blogs defy several aspects of time and space. They are written and read in reverse chronological order and also extend beyond the computer page to include hyperlinks, photos, videos, and responses by others.

Researchers' Writing

Whereas many qualitative researchers analyze others' diaries and journals, there is an increasing practice of researchers themselves keeping detailed journals. Traditionally, social scientists record fieldnotes to document their observations. However, Carolyn Ellis, a pioneer in the field of autoethnography, promotes using first-person and introspective journal keeping as a tool for capturing researchers' lived experiences. Kim Etherington, another advocate of reflexivity (ongoing self-awareness), keeps a researcher diary that records her personal feelings, insights, and experiences that are later incorporated into her academic findings. Researchers can use detailed journals or diaries to record and reflect their own behaviors, attitudes, feelings, and thought processes to provide a multilayered facet to their academic studies.

Ethics

Diary or journal writing often evokes introspection, and precautionary measures should be considered. One concern is that participants may recall painful memories or become overwhelmed by emotions while writing in their diaries or journals. Making sure that participants have access to mental health professionals will assist in the event that participants need help in processing their emotions.

Researchers should always ensure that participants give signed informed consent and that minors have their parents or guardians approve of participation in the study. In studies involving the use of private diaries, and particularly in studies involving a "vulnerable population," formal approval must be granted through the appropriate ethics review board.

Another concern in using diaries and journals as data sources is the issue of confidentiality. Although participants initially may have agreed to have their writing published, they may have written with the understanding that a researcher or only a select few

would be the “audience” for their responses. In this regard, it is important to be mindful of what is divulged about participants and others involved before publicizing the study.

Several techniques are useful in protecting the anonymity of participants. Diaries or journals may be submitted in person, mailed in, or gathered from a drop-off location, giving participants options for safeguarding their writing. Researchers may also use pseudonyms or assign numbers to respondents. When publishing, researchers may further protect participants’ identities by combining data into composite responses or discussing general themes rather than particular entries. Diaries and journals are unique and valuable tools for qualitative researchers, yet regard should always be given to the ethics of participants’ well-being and care.

Kendall Smith-Sullivan

See also Autobiography; Autoethnography; Emergent Themes; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Lived Experience; Reflexivity; Thematic Coding and Analysis; Virtual Research

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DICTION (SOFTWARE)

DICTION is a dictionary-based language analysis program that analyzes the implied meaning of a text

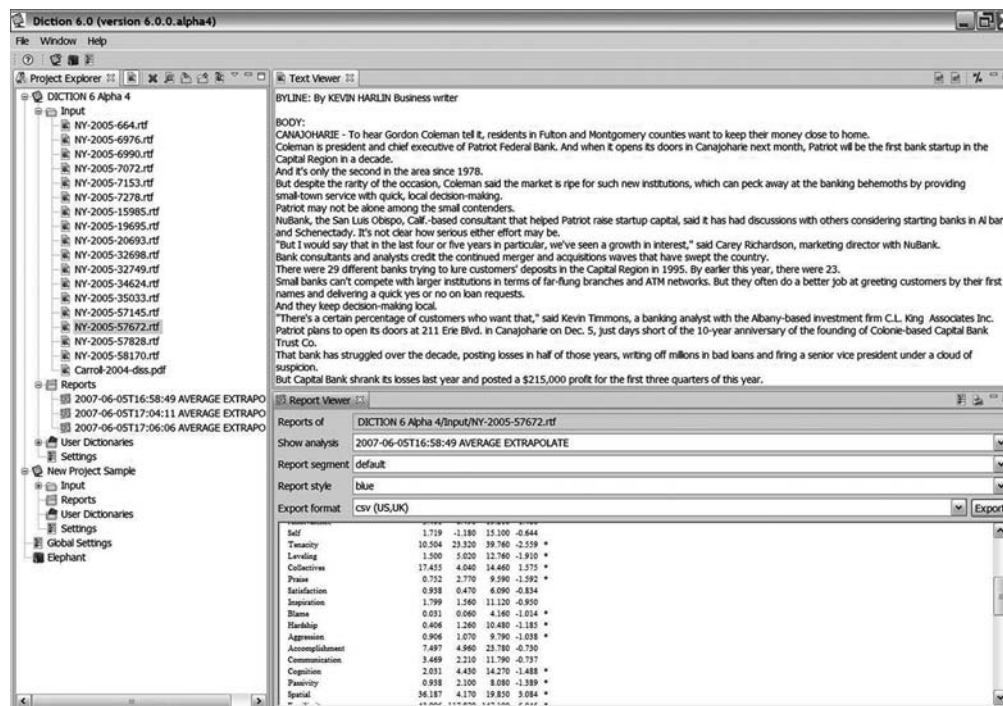


Figure 1 DICTION 6.0: Project View

Note: DICTION 6.0 operates on Windows XP, Vista, Macintosh, and Linux platforms.

by searching it with the assistance of some 40 dictionaries or word lists. DICTION's corpus consists of 10,000 search words, none of which is duplicated in its search routines. DICTION provides an unusually comprehensive examination of a given passage by comparing it with a 25,000-item sample of contemporary discourse. Although the dictionary scores are individually interpretable, the program also creates five master variables: *optimism* (language endorsing some person, group, concept, or event or highlighting its positive entailments), *activity* (language featuring movement, change, the implementation of ideas, and the avoidance of inertia), *realism* (language describing tangible, immediate, and recognizable matters that affect people's everyday lives), *commonality* (language highlighting the agreed-on values of a group and rejecting idiosyncratic modes of engagement), and *certainly* (language indicating resoluteness, inflexibility, and completeness as well as a tendency to speak ex cathedra). Correlations among these master variables are largely nonexistent, thereby affording five independent examinations of each passage analyzed.

The current version of the program, DICTION 6.0, was developed in Eclipse using Java 5.0 and operates on Windows XP and Vista, Linux, and Macintosh platforms. It processes 2,500 text files within 1 minute and produces both project output and alphanumerical files for subsequent statistical analysis (Figure 1). The program accepts PDF, RTF, Microsoft Word, and HTML input files for processing. Users can also supplement the program's built-in search features with up to 30 customized dictionaries of their own creation. DICTION 6.0 comes with a file management system so that users can group texts based on semantic commonalities, highlight specific textual regions for inclusion or exclusion, and identify (via color coding) different speakers or passage segments.

DICTION has been used to study political messages, media reportage, corporate annual reports, historical and literary documents, religious sermonizing, economic forecasting, medical documents, crisis communications, and (increasingly) websites and internet traffic. Unlike other programs, DICTION is largely "deductive" in that its dictionary structure has been conceptually derived and it compares all output with a normative data bank, thereby highlighting a given text's rhetorical distinctions and permitting immediate cross-comparisons with other DICTION-processed texts.

Roderick P. Hart and Craig E. Carroll

See also Content Analysis; Discourse; Document Analysis; Rhetoric; Textual Analysis

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Websites

DICTION: <http://www.dictionsoftware.com>

DISCOURSE

Discourse, in the most general sense, is the study of language as it is used in society expressed either through conversations or in documents. However, the term *discourse* also carries with it various historical traditions influencing the definition employed and the type of research conducted. The major disciplines that have contributed to the development of these traditions include diverse fields such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and linguistics.

The two major approaches to discourse analysis are influenced by either ethnomethodological or Foucauldian traditions. Regardless of the approach, discourse analysis can be distinguished from strict conversation analysis and other forms of linguistic analysis by its focus primarily on the meaning of talk (or text) rather than on the linguistic organization of the components of talk (e.g., grammar, sentence structure, word choice).

Ethnomethodological discourse analysis has its roots in the ethnomethodological approach of Harold Garfinkel that seeks to understand the implicit rules governing human conduct. An ethnomethodological approach to discourse assumes the same aim. Often referred to as non-Foucauldian discourse analysis, ethnomethodological discourse analysis is concerned primarily with the structures of interaction that produce meaning. Assumptions that underpin this approach include expectations that communication is structured, stable, contextual, organized, and sequential. Researchers aim to uncover the rules of language in a particular context to determine both the structure

of conversation and the resultant meaning of what is said. An example research question could focus on how language is used by teenagers to create shared meanings about the social acceptability of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.

Foucauldian discourse analysis shares a focus on the meaning of talk or text with ethnomethodological discourse analysis. In contrast, however, a Foucauldian approach to discourse, rather than exploring the rules that govern meaning-making, focuses on the power inherent in language and seeks to understand how historically and socially instituted sources of power construct the wider social world through language. For example, researchers employing a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis would be more interested in how language is used by doctors, parents, the media, and governments to subordinate and marginalize the views of teenagers with respect to substance use. They would also be interested in the discourse of teenagers as a form of resistance to the hegemonic discourses of the cultural mainstream. As such, Foucauldian discourse analysis assumes a more critical approach and focuses on how power is operationalized through language.

Kay E. Cook

See also Conversation Analysis; Critical Discourse Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Foucauldian Discourse Analysis; Historical Discourse Analysis

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis (DA) is best seen as a cluster of related methods for studying language use and its role in social life. Some of these methods study language use with a particular interest in its coherence over sentences or turns, its role in constructing the world, and its relationship to context. Others take discourses to be objects in their own right that can be described and counted. This entry identifies a range of terminological confusions, discusses some of the origins of DA, and describes the main contemporary approaches.

Terminological Issues

Different forms of DA have emerged in different disciplinary environments—linguistics and sociolinguistics, sociology and social psychology, philosophy, education, and so on. This can lead to confusion that can be compounded by the different senses in which the term *discourse* is used. At its most general, the term is used to refer to virtually any language use or even to related semiotic systems; however, other work uses the term specifically to refer to a linguistic object that can be described and counted.

Using the specific definition, a study might, for example, attempt to identify a discourse of medicine and a discourse of counseling operating side by side in a medical consultation. Under the broader definition, discourse analysis covers large areas of sociolinguistics and linguistics, much cognitive science concerned with language use, social semiotics, and work on educational interaction as well as areas of work such as discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis, and simply discourse analysis.

There is also a strand of work associated with post-structuralist thinking, particularly the work of Michel Foucault, that is often referred to as continental discourse analysis (sometimes Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida are included in this definition). Confusingly, this work is rather different from Foucauldian discourse analysis. DA has developed as a contested terrain where different books with “discourse” in their titles can exist with no overlap in content.

Historical Developments

The earliest use of the term *discourse analysis* is probably in Zelig Harris’s linguistic research during the

early 1950s that focused on the attempt to explicate sentence meaning in texts by relating the sentence to surrounding sentences. Since that time, the first sustained approach to explicitly use the term was developed by linguists John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard in studies of classroom interaction. Their aim was to build a systematic model of how interaction is organized in the classroom. The prototypical pattern they identified was the “initiation–response–feedback” sequence. This has the following form:

Teacher: What are five fours? (initiation)

Pupil: Twenty-four miss. (response)

Teacher: Close, Julie. Have another go. (feedback)

Sinclair and Coulthard had the ambitious aim of explicating the interaction structures of different settings by comparative work. In this aim, it prefigured more recent work on institutional interaction by conversation analysts. Although the analytic materials are simplified and the analytic categories are relatively undeveloped, this work was a departure from a linguistic approach that worked with invented materials or written sentences.

A separate linguistic tradition focused on the way in which sentences are linked together in coherent discourse. One strand in this work involved studying the way in which terms such as *however* and *but* work to generate coherent discourse. This work has merged with a tradition of research called discourse processes that attempts to join linguistic and psychological concerns. This tradition considers questions about how psychological experiences become transformed when they are reconstructed into verbal narratives and, conversely, how mental scripts are used in the understanding of narrative. In its research practice, the work on linguistic coherence typically used standard linguistic methods, drawing on invented examples and considering whether they were “well formed” or “anomalous.” The more psychological work has drawn on a range of approaches; sometimes records of interaction are coded for statistical regularities and contrasts, and sometimes experimental manipulations are used. Work in this tradition is often published in the journal *Discourse Processes*.

Foucault and Discourse Analysis

A very different tradition is associated with the cultural historian and poststructuralist Michel Foucault. He

treated discourse as “a set of statements.” Although this might seem to be a linguistic definition, his account owes much more to philosophy and sociology. For him, statements have a constructive role; they come to constitute objects and subjects. For example, the discourse of medicine may produce objects, such as “bile” and “HIV,” as distinct and countable things. At the same time, that discourse works to produce the identities of doctors and patients, each with their own distinct knowledge and authority. In analytic terms, Foucault’s work aimed to identify discursive practices. In the example of medicine, this would include the historically evolving discourses that help to shape the development of medical practices, the procedures of investigation and diagnosis, the practices for dividing the ill from the healthy, the procedures of medical record keeping and surveillance, and the very architecture of wards, consulting rooms, and so on. Although Foucault’s work has been enormously influential, it does not offer a method as such. His work tends to involve theoretically guided historical (or “genealogical”) interpretations of institutions.

Sociology of Science and Discourse Analysis

A further influential tradition of DA emerged within sociology, specifically sociology of scientific knowledge. The focus here was neither linguistic nor genealogical. Rather, the key focus was epistemic, and the analytic focus was on the role of talk and texts in constructing the social world. In an intensive study, Michael Mulkay and Nigel Gilbert suggested that scientists’ discourse is put together using two contrasting interpretive repertoires (interrelated vocabularies of terms and linguistic constructions, often organized around a central trope or metaphor). The *empiricist* repertoire was dominant in research papers/articles and was used to warrant scientists’ own claims in the manner of textbook science. The *contingent* repertoire was a much more fragmentary set of ideas used in interviews and other informal settings to explain away claims that were inconsistent with scientists’ own claims by making reference to a wide range of social, political, and psychological influences. The key point here was that scientists drew on both of these repertoires to produce an orderly picture of the world; neither was sufficient on its own.

This style of DA was developed and applied to a range of social science topics by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell. For example, they provided an

alternative way of understanding racist discourse and a respecification of the notion of attitudes. They developed the methodological approach for dealing with interview transcripts and documents by drawing more explicitly on ideas from poststructuralism, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis. This work offered a distinct perspective on social constructionism focused on the way in which talk and texts are used to produce versions of events that can sustain particular practices. This influenced discourse analytic research in a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, organizational studies, medicine, and communication.

The emphasis on people producing versions out of contrasting interpretive repertoires was used in Michael Billig and colleagues' notion of ideological dilemmas. These authors suggested that the emphasis on ideologies being effective because of their consistency was flawed. Instead, in practical settings, it is the tensions and contradictions between the different repertoires that make them so powerful for constructing versions of the world. Thus, in the case of scientists, it is not the familiar textbook image of science embodied in the empiricist repertoire that sustains their claims; rather, it is the *combination* of this repertoire with the alternative contingent repertoire that sustains their claims.

The notion of interpretive repertoires has been analytically fertile, offering an account of complex, historically developed organizations of ideas that could be identified through a systematic analysis of interviews, records, and texts. The notion builds an appreciation of the flexibility needed if a repertoire is to be fitted into a range of different practices in formal and informal settings. Thus, it has some advantages over some neo-Foucauldian uses of the notion of discourse. Nevertheless, it has been criticized as failing to fully accommodate the complex and locally organized nature of human conduct.

Contemporary Developments in Discourse Analysis

DA has become a lively and contested field since the mid-1990s. It is common to distinguish the subfields of critical discourse analysis (CDA), Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), and discursive psychology (DP). CDA is a collection of approaches to discourse that are given coherence by an emphasis on social critique and the use of analytic concepts from linguistics,

in particular Michael Halliday's functional grammar. This style of work often aims to reveal the ideologies and discourses that underpin different forms of talk and text and, importantly, sustain relations of inequality.

Some CDA work draws on Foucauldian ideas. However, a distinct tradition of Foucauldian discourse analysis has emerged recently. Like CDA, it focuses on issues of social critique; however, unlike CDA, it tends to work with interview material rather than with texts. This work is best treated as being inspired by Foucault's notions rather than as strictly applying them. Foucault himself did not analyze interviews, and it is not clear whether he would have seen such analyses as profitable. Moreover, in his break with hermeneutics, Foucault specifically rejected the kind of focus on meanings that is common in FDA. In addition, he was concerned about decomposing the idea of individual subjectivity by considering the institutional practices through which individuality and subjectivity are produced. This does not sit easily with FDA's common focus on subjectivity itself. Much FDA appears to build more on the tradition of analyzing interpretive repertoires than on Foucault's concepts or genealogical style of research.

DP developed out of the constructionist tradition of DA associated with Mulkay, Gilbert, Potter, and Wetherell. Its focus is on the way in which psychological issues become live in human practices. It typically starts with records of interaction in everyday and institutional settings rather than with interviews or texts, and it has generated a very different vision of what psychology is to mainstream social and cognitive psychology. DP has put practices, rather than individual cognition, at the center of its analysis, and it has increasingly drawn on the analytic rigor of conversation analysis to ground its claims.

There have been some important debates over the relative merits of poststructuralist and conversation analytic approaches to discourse and the value of the neo-Foucauldian notion of subject positions. There are live issues regarding the extent to which discursive structure reflects conceptual organizations or is a by-product of the patterning of situated practices, and there are particular sharp differences between CDA and DP. Although its critical potential is not signaled in its name as it is in critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian discourse analysis, discursive psychology has generated a sustained critique (at the level of method and theory) of traditional approaches to psychology while also contributing to studies of gender,

race, and ideology. Work in these traditions is often found in the journals *Discourse & Society* and *Discourse Studies*.

Despite the challenging and complex weave of different, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives that make it up, DA is a vibrant and fast-changing field of endeavor that has stimulated methodological and theoretical innovation.

Jonathan Potter

See also Constructivism; Conversation Analysis; Critical Discourse Analysis; Discursive Practice; Discursive Psychology; Foucauldian Discourse Analysis; Poststructuralism; Rhetoric

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DISCOVERY

From the standpoint of social science, discovery is both process and result. As process, it refers to the several ways in which social scientists attempt, employing certain procedures, to find new ideas about the social world. As a result, it is what these attempts or procedures produce or lead to—the ideas they generate.

Bridging process and product in discovery is the creative or innovative moment during which the scientist intuitively and imaginatively comes up with a novel idea. C. Wright Mills's *The Sociological Imagination*, an influential essay on discovery, revolves around such intuition.

Discovery can be either intentional or unintentional. It can also be either deductive or inductive. Unintentional discovery, exemplified in this entry as serendipity, is inductive. Although scientists intending to discover something, whether working deductively or inductively, consciously employ certain procedures in their quest, they have at most only a general idea of what their efforts may produce. In general, the novel ideas intentionally sought or accidentally found during social scientific discovery bear on phenomena such as actions, activities, groups, processes, and cultural items regarded as important to the people whose actions, activities, and the like they are.

Deduction

There are at least three types of deductive discovery. For each type, deduction is the principal logical process framing the scientist's attempt to find new phenomena. Moreover, because deduction is ideational, no direct contact with people or their material culture is required. Deductive discovery is a conscious, intentional, and systematic process. The classic type, referred to here as *theoretical deduction*, proceeds according to standard deductive logic. In this type, the scientist strives to discover something new by deducing one or more corollaries from basic premises or propositions (e.g., boredom is a coerced condition; leisure is an uncoerced activity; therefore, boredom is not leisure).

The *metaphor* constitutes another type of discovery. A metaphor is not intended to represent the phenomenon under study in the same way as resulting theory will (or at least should); rather, its purpose is preliminary—to suggest, by deducing from premises of the metaphor, fruitful paths leading to discovery of the nature of that phenomenon. This process eventuates in new data, concepts, and propositions related to the phenomenon. With a metaphor, this is accomplished by orienting thought and research using one or more of the concepts comprising the metaphor, in effect converting them into what Herbert Blumer labeled as sensitizing concepts. Such concepts are heuristic; they guide open-ended discovery research

on new groups, activities, and so on. In brief, applying metaphors is a fruitful and distinctive way of generating grounded theory.

The *dialectic*, fashioned by Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, is a third type of deductive discovery. In rudimentary form, it states that Social Condition A (thesis) leads to an opposite Social Condition B (antithesis), thereby creating a tension leading to its resolution in Social Condition C (synthesis). Thus, Marx theorized that capitalist exploitation of workers (A) would lead to revolution and a classless society (B) followed by dictatorship of the proletariat (C).

Induction

Discoveries can also be made by way of inductive argument, whose ambit is substantially broader and more open-ended than the closed circle of logic found at the heart of deductive argument. Inductive logic rests on comparatively free-ranging direct observations of the empirical world (e.g., people's activities, situations, groups, material culture) and the conclusions (sometimes called generalizations) inferred from these observations. There are at least four types of inductive discovery.

Andrew Abbott discussed *trial and error* and how later trials are mounted when errors prove earlier ones to be ineffective. Trial and error is, at bottom, a type of intentional inductive discovery in that it proceeds by trying to discover, through direct observation of people or their material culture or both, a feasible alternative that comes to the discoverer's attention and that offers an effective solution to the problem at hand. Abbott's approach to discovery is an active one, unlike the passive approach of its cousin, serendipity.

Serendipity is unintentional discovery. Robert Stebbins defined it as the quintessential form of informal experimentation, accidental discovery, and spontaneous invention. Serendipity, like other inductive procedures, springs from direct contact with the empirical world. Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber observed that serendipity can refer either to finding something of value while searching for something else or to finding something sought after in an unexpected place or manner.

Exploration is broad-ranging intentional discovery. Stebbins defined it as systematic data collection designed to maximize discovery of generalizations based on description and direct observation of an area of social or psychological life. Most commonly,

researchers who explore generalize from the shared ground they find in sets of observations usually made over several instances of the object of investigation. This meaning of exploration differs from that of exploring to become familiar with something by testing it or experimenting with it. A second sort of exploration is that conducted by artists, inventors, and innovators. In still another sense, exploring means traveling over or through a particular space for purposes of discovery and adventure. A final sense of the concept is to examine a thing or an idea for diagnostic reasons—to search it systematically for something. This meaning suggests that because explorers here already know what to look for (e.g., oil, cancer, toxins), they need only hunt for it methodically.

Construction of the *ideal type*, a fourth kind of inductive discovery, works in ways similar to exploration in that both rest on direct observations about an aspect of life. But ideal-typical observations are unsystematic even if they are generalized and integrated into a single hypothetical concept. Ideal types have guided a range of exploratory and verificational inquiry, including Max Weber's idea of power, defined as one person in a relationship being able to realize his or her own will despite the other person's resistance.

Today the most common types of discovery appear to be theoretical deduction and inductive exploration. Use of metaphors and the dialectic is also reasonably common. Trial-and-error research, serendipitous research, and ideal-typical research are infrequent. These are estimates, however, for no one has surveyed the literature on the matter. Scientifically, all types of discovery must be seen as antecedent to verification of the newly found ideas. Discovery contributes empirically grounded valid concepts and propositions with which verificational scientists then work.

Robert Alan Stebbins

See also Deduction; Exploratory Data Analysis; Exploratory Research; Induction; Serendipity

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DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

Discursive practice has at least three important and distinct senses in current qualitative research. It appears as a major technical term in the work of social theorist and analyst Michel Foucault. It is used more loosely in a wide range of analytic work that is often described as Foucauldian discourse analysis. It also has a technical sense in conversation analysis.

In Foucault's "archaeological" study of psychiatry, for example, the term *discursive practice* is used to refer to the broad constellation of statements that embody the founding of psychiatry as an institution and its subsequent history, the "dividing practices" through which the sane are separated from the insane, the procedures of psychiatric testing, and the very buildings in which the insane are incarcerated. All of these things are treated as elements that come together to constitute psychiatric knowledge. A discursive practice can also encompass the rules for the formation and transformation of these things and, in particular, the procedures through which particular subjects (e.g., the sane) and forms of subjectivity (e.g., delusional) are constituted. Foucault's studies are more influential in their visionary linking together of issues of knowledge, psychology, power, and institutions than through the details of their analytic apparatus. Few other analysts, in their studies, have sustained the full and challenging complexity of Foucault's notion of discursive practice.

More commonly, the notion of discursive practices has been used in a restricted sense in Foucauldian discourse analysis. Such work tends to use a broadly linguistic focused treatment of discourse and often starts with materials generated in a set of open-ended interviews. Foucault's own studies were historical and did not use interviews. Moreover, Foucault specifically contrasted his analysis with studies of a linguistic nature that foreground participants' meanings. Such studies often draw on the form of discourse analysis developed by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell that attempts to show how a weave of discourses or "interpretive repertoires" is drawn on to legitimate

particular social arrangements or undermine the claims of minority groups.

In the subdiscipline of conversation analysis, discourse (the coherent production of talk-in-interaction) is studied as something interactionally achieved. Conversational actions can be produced by different discursive practices. For example, Emanuel Schegloff considered the way in which certain kinds of repeating practice (e.g., repeating some of the prior speaker's words) can be used to accomplish the action of initiating repair to something that has been said by a prior speaker. The term *practice* here is used to emphasize that there is not a simple speech act category for what was done, nor is it easily seen as the product of an individual's strategic understanding.

These three different styles of research draw on very different senses of discursive practice. Even experienced researchers can become confused over these differences, particularly over what is involved in doing Foucauldian analysis.

Jonathan Potter

See also Conversation Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Discursive Psychology; Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

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DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Discursive psychology (DP) starts with psychological phenomena as things that are constructed, attended to, and understood in interaction. It is not just psychology as it appears *in* interaction; rather, it understands psychological language, and broader "mental practices," as organized *for* action and interaction. It is a specifically *discursive* psychology because discourse—talk and texts—is the primary medium for social action. Part of its focus is on the organized resources used to build actions.

DP works with three fundamental principles in its approach to discourse:

1. *Action orientation.* DP analyzes discourse as the primary means through which actions are done and interaction is coordinated. Actions are seen as typically embedded in broader practices. This focus on action rather than cognition differentiates it theoretically from cognitive psychology and underpins the analytic focus on discourse rather than experimental comparisons of input and output.

2. *Situation.* DP treats discourse as situated in three complementary senses. First, it is organized *sequentially*, such that the primary environment for any utterance is the immediately prior utterance and the new utterance provides the context for what comes next. Second, discourse is situated *institutionally*, highlighting the potential relevance of institutional identities (e.g., counselor, client) and tasks (e.g., assessing trauma, offering advice). Third, discourse is situated *rhetorically*, such that any description can be inspected for how it counters relevant alternative descriptions (often from the immediately prior talk).

3. *Construction.* In DP, discourse is understood as both constructed and constructive. Discourse is constructed from resources (e.g., words, membership categories, rhetorical commonplaces, interpretive repertoires). Discourse is constructive of versions of the world, including versions of events and actions, settings and structures, psychological entities and experiences. DP studies both the actions done with these constructions and the way in which these constructions are built to be stable, objective, and independent of the speaker.

Methodologically, DP performs intensive qualitative studies of audio or video records of interaction in everyday and institutional settings. Research will typically study a corpus of examples of some phenomenon and will work simultaneously with the digitized video or audio and a full Jeffersonian transcription (named after its developer, Gail Jefferson). Increasingly, DP has drawn on the analytic power of conversation analysis. Notable research areas have included counseling and therapy talk, helpline interaction, mediation, police interrogation, food, and interaction. At the same time, DP has offered new approaches to familiar social science topics, such as race and gender, attitudes and scripts, social representations and emotion, and also

has formulated new topics, such as the role of descriptions in the formation of actions, the management of stake and interest in delicate circumstances, and the way in which talk is organized to display psychological states.

DP can be illustrated through Derek Edwards's research on script formulations. Traditional social psychology treats scripts as mentally encoded templates that guide action. DP focuses on the prior issue of how descriptions are produced to present actions as following standardized routines. Consider the following fragment from a couples' counseling session:

Counselor: Whe:n: (.) bēore you
moved over here hbw was
the marriage.

(0.4)

Connie: o↑ ↓. (0h2) I- (.) meo
all alo:ng, (.right up
to now, (0.2) my marriage
was rock sold.

(0.8)

Connie: Rock solid.= Wehad argu
ments likeeverybody else
had arguments, (0.4huthh
(0.2) tome there wasno
major problems.

Jefferson's transcription system has been used here. It marks features of the delivery of talk that have been found to be relevant to interaction in a large body of conversation analytic work. In this extract, underlining is used for emphasis; colons mark extensions of the preceding sounds; arrows show marked upward or downward pitch shifts; dashes mark cutoff sounds; numbers in parentheses show delay timed in seconds; and equals signs mark hearably fast transitions or rush-throughs.

Note the way in which Connie depicts the arguments that she and her partner have as the routine sort that everybody has. Although arguments might be viewed as a problem with a marriage, Connie "script formulates" them as actually characteristic of a rock solid marriage. The orderliness of action and interaction is accomplished as such in interactions of this kind. DP here focuses on the locally organized practices for constructing the world to serve relevant activities (in this case managing the live question of who is to blame

Conversation Analysis: An Example of Transcription in Discursive Psychology

In discourse analysis, a detailed transcription is often used to record features of speech such as volume change, pauses, and overlaps. The point of this transcript is to enable the researcher to see on the page features of the delivery of talk that are often crucial for how the participants understand it. Failure to transcribe can lead to highly misleading representations of interaction.

The Jeffersonian scheme is most widespread in discourse and is named after its developer, Gail Jefferson. In the following fragment from a couples' counseling session, for example,

- underlining is used for emphasis;
- colons mark extensions of the preceding sounds;
- arrows show marked upward or downward pitch shifts;
- dashes mark cutoff sounds;
- numbers in brackets show delay timed in seconds; and
- equals signs mark hearably fast transitions or rush-throughs.

Counselor: Whe:n: (.) bēore you
moved over here hbw was
the marriage.
(0.4)

Note: For the best exposition of the Jeffersonian system, see Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 13–31). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Connie: 0↑ ↓. 0.2) I- (.) me: all
alo:ng, (.) right up tnow,
(0.2) my marriage wasrock
solid.
(0.8)

Connie: Rock solid.= We hadarguments
like everybody else had
arguments, (0.4)buthh (02)
to me there wasno major
problems

For example, the 0.8-second delay after “rock solid” is an occasion where the counselor might have come in. The transcription allows us to see something that is not there but might have been. However, the equals sign after the second “rock solid” is a “latching” that holds off other speakers. The counselor would need to compete in overlap to take a turn at this point. We can also note that the emphasis that Connie puts on “me” (in two places) is hearably suggesting a potential contrast to her co-present partner.

Other systems of transcription exist, but Jefferson's has increasingly come to be seen as the “gold standard.”

Blake D. Poland

and who needs to change in the counseling). In the DP vision, scripts are an inseparable part of the practical and moral world of accountability.

DP is a vibrant research program now being conducted in a number of centers worldwide. It aims to offer a postcognitive psychology that is grounded in a direct study of people's practices rather than the more common indirect approach via open-ended interviews or experimental studies.

Jonathan Potter

See also Constructivism; Conversation Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Rhetoric

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DISENGAGEMENT

Qualitative researchers are encouraged to become fully engaged and invested in their research site by immersing into the day-to-day routines of the group members being investigated and becoming familiar with their rituals and experiences. Ethnographers begin their

research as investigators of a social phenomenon or query with the objective of developing and answering research questions once they gain entry to the field. In the same way as relationships must be initiated and developed to begin a research project, researchers must also negotiate the closure or end of the research project. Disengagement refers to the process and experience of leaving the field after a research project is completed. Disengagement marks the end of the research project and refers specifically to the closure that occurs once a research project has ended.

David Snow, a sociologist, was one of the first scholars to mark disengagement as an under-investigated process of participant observation research and a phenomenon of researcher–participant relationships. Researchers are often unprepared and untrained for the process of disengagement, which can sometimes be problematic when researchers experience anxiety about leaving the field or leaving the participants with whom they have developed relationships. It is also problematic when researchers question whether or not they have collected enough information during the duration of their research period.

The level of disengagement researchers will experience depends largely on the details and obligations of the study. The more time invested and spent in a community and with a group of research participants, the greater the intensity of personal relationships. The greater the intensity of personal relationships, the more difficult it is to leave the field and return to separate lives.

Research or field relationships are understood to be temporary relationships that will last only as long as the research project. Disengagement becomes necessary to mark the end of the researcher–participant relationship even if the researcher maintains a relationship that is established during research. Disengagement allows a transition from the researcher–participant relationship whereby the researcher is no longer investigating the “other.”

Disengagement refers specifically to the process of the researcher leaving the field but does not consider the process of being left in the field. Further research could determine how the process of disengagement affects the participants and community members who have been actively involved in the research project. Participants are equally likely to develop attachments and investments in the research project and researchers and, thus, to be affected when the relationship ends or changes.

The process of disengaging from the field, however, should not be abrupt. Researchers should take the time to confirm their information by conducting final analyses and should settle moral obligations with their participants.

Robin M. Boylorn

See also Leaving the Field; Prolonged Engagement; Research Diaries and Journals; Researcher–Participant Relationships

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DISINTERESTEDNESS

The concept of disinterestedness comes from the discipline of aesthetics. It refers to a necessary detachment from subjective feeling that permits an accurate appraisal of beauty. Thus, the concept of disinterestedness, as commonly used in aesthetics, is closely linked to objectivity.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant first used the term *disinterestedness* in 1790 in the *Critique of Judgment*. Kant argued that the problem of rendering a judgment of beauty is the powerful presence of subjective desire. Kant claimed that this is different from a cognitive problem of reason, where objectivity alone rules. Therefore, to make a judgment of taste, it is necessary to overcome one's own attraction or repulsion toward the object under consideration and to strive for an indifferent stance. Only through such a position of disinterestedness could one render a judgment that was more than personal preference. In fact, through disinterestedness, a judgment of taste could become a rule to which others should rightly adhere. For Kant, disinterestedness is a mental stance that recognizes the necessary presence of subjectivity and strives to keep it in check. This is different from objectivity, which rejects subjectivity completely.

Postmodern philosophers such as Pierre Bourdieu have challenged Kant's framework for aesthetic

analysis. Bourdieu suggested that disinterestedness produces only cultural capital—objects that have no intrinsic worth to individuals but are useful in the advancement of social status. It also provides a framework for excluding the working class, whose members are unsophisticated enough to genuinely value those objects that they find attractive or beautiful. Furthermore, postmodern semiotic theory suggests that there is no essential quality or character to be grasped through disinterested analysis. Therefore, disinterestedness is best regarded as an oppressive tool that facilitates totalizing and colonizing theories.

Hannah Arendt and Clifford Geertz offered a different postmodern interpretation of disinterestedness as guiding moral action within liberal democracy. In this view, disinterestedness allows reflective analytic action to come out of felt response. Rather than attempting to force their feelings to conform to an external moral guide, individuals respond to their own feelings in a dispassionate and authentically moral manner.

Geertz sees disinterestedness as an exquisite balance between the tensions of subjective aesthetics and mechanical objective scientism. He maintained that real science can occur only in the space between these two tensions. Research that swerves too far into either rudderless subjectivity or narrow scientism is ultimately flawed and potentially morally irresponsible.

Interpreting Kant's concept of subjectivity as a valuable presence that must be rigorously disciplined, and seeing the tension of the presence of subjectivity as essential to the ethical conduct of science, has influenced the late 20th-century qualitative methodologies of educational criticism, narrative storytelling, portraiture, and a/r/tography.

Richard Siegesmund

See also Aesthetics; A/r/tography; Connoisseurship; Objectivity; Portraiture; Subjectivity

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DIVERSITY ISSUES

The issue of diversity has surfaced in the qualitative literature as a major topic area during the past decade and has been discussed largely in terms of race, gender, and class. The appropriateness of giving such attention to diversity in qualitative research rests on two points. First, qualitative research is foremost a research design, method, and tool that involves uncovering and discovering meaning about a particular phenomenon as it occurs in its natural setting. Second, the researcher is the primary instrument as the one who designs and conducts the research and presents the data. Given these two critical factors and the role of race, class, and gender in Western society, it is important to thoroughly examine the phenomenon of diversity and how it could affect a research process involving human instruments and human participants. Although race, class, and gender are social constructs, they are real in terms of the social power and privilege attached to them even though the ways in which they determine how Western society functions and influence lived experience may be invisible.

Qualitative research and its methods are conducive to understanding and validating the lives and experiences of women, minorities, and other disenfranchised groups in that within the qualitative paradigm there is a departure from positivist research traditions that emphasize objectivity and rationality as well as separating the researcher and participant from the social context. This line of thought parallels the underlying beliefs and values of researchers who engage in feminist research, who move away from male-dominated research paradigms and create space for relationships between the researcher and the participants, thereby attempting to address the inherent hierarchical power disparities in the research relationship.

Insider/Outsider Perspective

The insider/outsider relationship is one of the primary discourses or perspectives in qualitative research where power and matters of diversity are considered. The term *insider/outsider* refers to the relationship or position of the researcher to the researched and takes into account whether the researcher stands as an outsider or as an insider relative to the group being studied. The location of the researcher to the researched

has been characterized in the anthropological literature in several ways—endogenous and exogenous, the native and the colonizer, the observer and the observed, the participant observer and the participant. But the stance of the researcher is not easily defined despite obvious oppositional pairings of terminology. The experience of the researcher as an insider or outsider cannot be a fixed one given that one's position and identity are not static and are context specific. In addition, the perspectives of the researcher can be multifaceted and susceptible to shifts influenced by interactions with others, the changing research context, time, and other variables.

Feminist researchers made a significant contribution to the insider/outsider discussion by adding an analysis of power relations between the researcher and the participants. Although researchers ultimately hold the power in terms of analyzing and interpreting the data, feminist research posits that researchers should make it a point to attempt to equalize equal power relations. James Banks, in his 1988 article "The Lives and Values of Researchers: Implications for Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society," contributed a fixed four-part typology that recognizes the complexity of the researchers' position: the Indigenous insider, the Indigenous outsider, the external insider, and the external outsider. The first part of his binary pairings refers to the circumstance of researchers as being Indigenous or external members in relationship to those being studied. The second component references the political and cultural position of the researchers. Do they share the values, beliefs, and views of the people they are studying? Banks's sociologically based definitions are extensions of Robert Merton's insider/outsider concept, which was first introduced in his 1972 essay, "Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge." Patricia Hill Collins's outsider within concepts were contained in her 1990 article, "Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," and were introduced in her text, *Black Feminist Thought*. Using the earlier research on the insider/outsider perspective as a base, more recent qualitative literature acknowledges that research conditions are dynamic, standpoints can shift, and power can intervene to complicate data collection and postfield analysis.

One position set forth within the insider/outsider perspective is that the common bonds of gender, race, and class provide groundwork on which to construct trust and dialogue. Therefore, this perspective provides

the researcher with an assumed empathetic base within these boundaries. There are three types of the outsider/insider statuses widely recognized and discussed in the qualitative literature: people of color discussing how they research within their own groups, Whites reflecting on their research on people of color, and women discussing how they research within their gender given the various intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

Each position has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Common issues affecting the researcher's perspective are ethnocentrism, assumed understanding, an ahistorical viewpoint, lack of knowledge about the researched, bias, assumed objectivity, and assumed subjectivity. There are no definitive answers to whether researching within the culture is less intrusive, less harmful, more politically correct, or more politically astute. The major areas of discussion are certainly that the groups on the boundaries of research are there because of existing societal power disparities. In the final analysis, reconciling power and positional statuses seems impossible to accomplish with any degree of finality and is dependent on the researcher's skills. A synthesis of the qualitative literature sets forth that the following are essential tools: respect for the research participants, an ethic of care, humility, power sharing, and an appreciation of lived experience.

Issues of Representation

A second major component of the discussion of diversity in qualitative research is the issue of representation. Overwhelmingly, the literature suggests that the researcher has an obligation to be ethical and empathetic regarding representation, considering questions such as whether the participants will recognize how they are portrayed, whether the participants have a say in how the data are presented or interpreted, and whether the participants' voices or stories are the central focus of the research or are subjugated to the researcher's voice or analysis.

An equal concern regarding matters of representation is whether the researcher provides a politically aware and responsible representation. For example, does the researcher reinforce stereotypes regarding the participants, or does the research provide a portrait of the researched set in a multifaceted context that would explain an unflattering depiction? The key inquiry posed by the qualitative literature on representation of the diverse "other" research remains:

How can researchers present their data in a way that honors the subjective experiences of the participants while ensuring that the audience is aware of their personal subjectivities and relation to the research?

Using the Theoretical Frame to Inform Research

A diverse array of theoretical perspectives informs qualitative research methods. Any type of research, whether qualitative or quantitative, is guided by the researcher's beliefs about what constitutes knowledge of and within a particular subject area or the researcher's epistemological positioning. Epistemology, which informs the theoretical perspective, concerns the ways of knowing and creating knowledge. The researcher's epistemological stance also emphasizes the relationship of the researcher to the research population or participants. A variety of epistemological foundations inform the work of qualitative researchers. Major goals of many qualitative researchers include the movement from more positivist research positions to those that emphasize relativism and the socially constructed nature of reality.

Qualitative researchers who employ positivist research methods believe that there is an objective reality that can be discovered or ascertained, that there is one essential measurable "truth," and that this truth is available to researchers if the appropriate research tools are used. In contrast to positivist perspectives, social constructionist views place emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality. This social constructionist perspective is often employed by qualitative researchers who represent and research issues surrounding race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Specifically, this perspective also suggests that there is not one reality but rather multiple realities and truths that are constructed by researchers throughout the entire research process.

In addressing the myriad ways of knowing and constructing knowledge in qualitative research, qualitative researchers employ a variety of theoretical perspectives. The major perspectives used include critical, feminist, and postmodern perspectives. These theories emphasize relativity, the shifting and changing nature of reality and identities, and employ methods that address power, language, and social change. Qualitative researchers informed by critical and feminist theory often engage in projects that highlight inequity, critiques of power structures, and individual

and collective agency among individuals and groups in addition to the study of social institutions such as the family. The methods used by critical qualitative researchers reflect the foregrounding of critique of social systems with an end goal being a type of change or transformation.

Also concerned with issues of diversity and equity, feminist research is more than a method; it is a perspective that lends itself to addressing the significance of gender in shaping women's realities. Qualitative methods informed by feminist perspectives can also provide a way of establishing a sense of connection between the participants and the researcher while leaving room for the participants to guide the interview process. There are several other issues involved in the process of feminist research, particularly concerning interviewing, that include issues of language, friendship, relationship building and reciprocity, managing power dynamics, and attending to the researcher's feelings about the process.

In addition to critical and feminist theory, women and qualitative researchers of color have developed and use perspectives informed by their experiences with race, gender, and class oppression. These include, but are not limited to, critical race theory, Black feminism, and other feminist theories developed by women of color. Regarding issues of diversity, critical race theory has also evolved as a perspective developed within the study of race and law. Critical race theorists present the centrality of race in the lives of people of color and suggest that using a race-based lens is integral to studying racial and ethnic minorities. Qualitative researchers informed by critical race theory privilege narratives and highlight the significance of storytelling from racial and ethnic minorities. Critical race theory then can be used to examine how the research participants engage race to resist oppression and become empowered in their everyday lives.

Relating to racial and ethnic diversity in qualitative research, feminists of color often engage feminism from their perspective of being on the margins of society. Theories such as Black feminism, Indigenous feminism, and Chicana feminism, for example, highlight women of color's experiences with and responses to oppressive situations. To illustrate, qualitative research from a Black feminist perspective emphasizes the intersecting forces of race, gender, and class in the research situation and in the research participants' lives. Black feminism also highlights the

significance of Black women's diverse cultures and defining the self in an oppressive society.

Postmodern methods differ somewhat from critical and feminist research methods in that the former involve critiquing the ways of thinking about the topic at hand as opposed to having a goal of social change or transformation. Postmodernists critique essentialism and other aspects of modernist Enlightenment ideals such as the search for any sort of "grand truth." Postmodern qualitative researchers emphasize subjectivity or the beliefs, experiences, and values the researcher brings to the research setting. Postmodern researchers also address the power of language to shape reality and the significance of the various contexts of the research situation. The beliefs, values, and assumptions of the qualitative researcher guide the entire research process, from initial design and preparation to the final write-up of the data. In qualitative research, the researcher's epistemological stance and accompanying theoretical frameworks are significant in that they inform and provide a lens through which to view and guide the research process. In addition, these theories reflect the shifting and ever-changing researcher perspectives to the qualitative research project.

Data Representation in Diversity Research

Qualitative researchers are currently expanding their modes of data representation in an effort to be more inclusive and representative of diverse populations. This is especially important when women, racial and ethnic minorities, and the socially and economically disenfranchised are studied because in research conducted prior to the 1990s their experiences and voices were often misrepresented, misappropriated, and devalued. Qualitative researchers can represent their data in a variety of ways such as thematically and as narrative text. With qualitative research, written text is the most widely used method of representing and presenting data. Thematic presentation of data, for example, continues to be the most common form of representing qualitative research findings. However, there is a growing concern and questioning of these more traditional methods of data presentation.

The concern about representation in addressing diverse populations has centered on introducing methods that place the participants as the center of consideration, that give voice to the participants, and that incorporate reciprocity or exchange into the research

process. This important growth area in qualitative research includes alternative ways of representing data that often include narratives, poems, and dialogically driven methods. Narratives, particularly constructed narratives, are often used in the study of marginalized populations such as women and minorities. The use of narratives can present women's stories in a nonlinear and holistic manner so that their stories are brought to the center of the inquiry. For instance, constructed narratives, where the data are organized and presented as a long, cohesive, and coherent story without the researcher's questions, is used by feminist and postmodern researchers. As a mode of representation, narratives not only are examined for story content but also move away from the traditional, fragmented thematic representation to a more holistic portrayal of the participants' words. The use of narratives privileges and centers the voices of the research participants.

Many qualitative researchers are also using drama, fiction, and performance-based formats to illustrate the potential for diverse representation formats. Performance, for instance, is becoming a commonly used form of creative expression to represent qualitative data. Those engaged in feminist and critical research often present their text as performances through plays, skits, poetry, music, and dance. The use of representational formats permits qualitative researchers to stretch and challenge the boundaries of more customary formats. Although these forms of representation are becoming more acceptable in academic research, issues of rigor and substance continue to be brought into question. The literature on representation makes explicit the personal subjectivities of the researcher and the researcher's relation to the research and the research participants.

Diversity and Qualitative Researcher Subjectivities

Addressing diversity in qualitative research methods also includes the discussion of researcher subjectivities. Subjectivity or bias, as a commonly used term in quantitative research, is typically described as something that poses a threat to the validity and reliability of the research. However, many qualitative researchers posit that researcher subjectivities are to be continuously scrutinized throughout the process so as to highlight how they inform and guide the study.

According to many qualitative researchers with postmodern, critical, and feminist perspectives, the

researchers' individual lives and subjectivities are never isolated from the text, which is produced from the qualitative interviews and/or observations. It is suggested in the qualitative research literature on subjectivities that research topics are quite often extensions of researchers' subjective experiences with or surrounding their particular topics. Addressing researcher subjectivities is a central aspect of the qualitative research process and must be taken into account when discussing diversity issues in qualitative research.

The values, belief systems, and worldviews of qualitative researchers inform the entire research process and will inevitably affect the methods and tools researchers use to collect, interpret, and present the data. For example, data collection in qualitative research frequently involves the use of interviews and observations. Feminist researchers often develop questions that incorporate the individuals' life experiences but also account for how the experiences are situated within various contexts as well as what their stories reveal about larger social processes surrounding gender, race, and/or class. The researchers' goals for the study and their epistemological stances, whether positivist or constructionist, affect and shape the types of questions the researchers will ask participants. Interpreting research findings also requires qualitative researchers to address their subject positions given that the lenses through which they interpret are also shaped by their subjectivities.

Juanita Johnson-Bailey and Nichole M. Ray

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Gender Issues; Insider/Outsider Status; Narrative Analysis; Otherness; Representation

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DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Although documents often serve as key sources of social scientific data, their role in social research is rarely highlighted. Indeed, consideration of their use is sometimes subsumed under the amorphous heading of "unobtrusive" methods. In contrast, there are many well-defined approaches to the analysis of speech. Although there is no obvious way to account for the differing fortunes of speech and writing in research practice, it is worth noting that Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, in their renowned description of grounded theory, considered documents as on a par with an anthropologist's informant or a sociologist's interviewee.

The standard approach to the analysis of documents focuses primarily on what is contained within them. In this frame, documents are viewed as conduits of communication between, say, a writer and a reader—conduits that contain meaningful messages. Such messages are usually in the form of writing but can engage other formats such as maps, architectural plans, films, and photographs.

Although documents invariably contain information, it is also quite clear that each and every document enters into human activity in a dual relation. First, documents enter the social field as receptacles (of instructions, obligations, contracts, wishes, reports, etc.). Second, they enter the field as agents in their own right, and as agents documents have effects long after their human creators are dead and buried (e.g., wills, testaments). In addition, documents as agents are always open to manipulation by others—as allies, as resources for further action, as opponents to be destroyed or suppressed. (We should not forget that people burn, ban, censor, and forge documents as well as read and write them.) Given these multiple facets of documentation, it is not surprising that multiple methods are appropriate for their analysis.

The most straightforward approach to document content involves the adoption of some form of content analysis. At its simplest, content analysis concentrates on word and phrase counts as well as numerical measures of textual expression. More sophisticated approaches to document analysis using strategies derived from the analysis of speech transcripts—involving, for example, notions of grounded theory and thematic coding schemes—can also be applied to the written word. At another level, discourse analysis is feasible.

The concept of discourse is a complicated one. Perhaps the best intellectual starting point for a qualitative researcher is in the work of Michel Foucault (1926–1984). Although not an adherent of discourse analysis in the methodological sense, Foucault was essentially interested in the ways in which sets of ideas and concepts in science, medicine, and everyday culture tended to cohere into determinate ways of seeing the world. More important, such “discursive formations,” as he called them, were crucially linked to specific forms of social practice. In short, Foucault argued that what is written is inextricably locked into what is done. So, there is assumed to be an essential connection among documents (and their contents), practical action, and sites of action—all of which express aspects of a discursive formation. With this in mind, we can consider three specific moments of documentation in social action: moments of production, consumption (or use), and circulation.

The production of documents, such as statistical and other reports on crime, health, poverty, and the environment, has figured as an object of study in numerous areas of social science research. The standard research stance is to use such reports as a resource for further study—as, say, a source of data on crime or health. Following the work of ethnomethodologists, however, it is quite clear that documents as reports can also be usefully studied as a “topic.” In the latter frame, the key questions revolve around how reports and accounts of the world are actually assembled by social actors. What kinds of conceptual and technical operations become involved in their production, and what range of assumptions is deployed so as to achieve the end result of a “report”?

Issues concerning the consumption of documents often turn on matters of use and function. In this frame, what is important is a study of the manner in which people use written (and nonwritten) traces to facilitate or manage features of social organization—whether they be transitory episodes of interaction or the ongoing functioning of a hospital, a business, or a school. For example, in the field of medical sociology, there have been numerous studies directed at showing the ways in which patient identities and diagnoses are often shored up through the use of written traces in medical “charts” and patient files. The creation of identity through documentation is also something that has figured prominently in the wider history of qualitative social science.

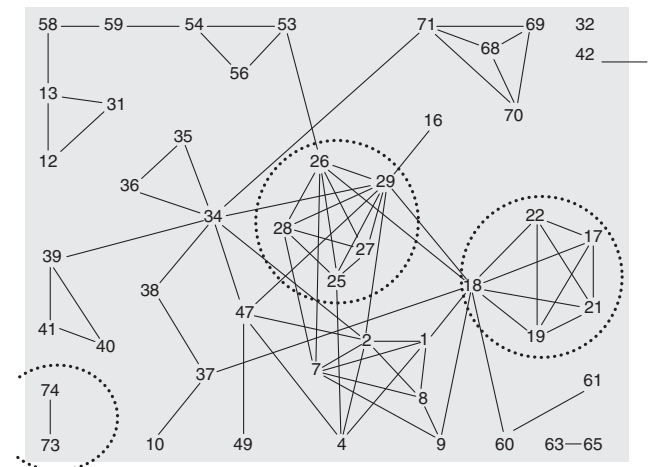


Figure 1 Email Contacts Among General Practitioners in South Wales in 1999

Note: The trace of the documents outlines a network.

In the circulation or exchange of documents, whether they be greeting cards, memos, or business files, it is possible to see the development of social networks and the emergence of identifiable human groupings. For example, studies of citations in scientific papers have been used to identify patterns of interaction (at least at the intellectual level) between groups of scientists. Similar work using web-crawlers has been used by information scientists to identify emergent research networks in specific scientific fields. By implication, it is conceivable that a sociological study of e-mail contacts and text messaging contacts among the ordinary public may also demonstrate how the exchange of text and documentation functions to both define and to cement social groupings (Figure 1). It is, above all, in this context—and in the light of actor–network theory—that documents may be conceptualized as actors in their own right, shaping and channeling forms of interaction every bit as much as do humans. Indeed, actor–network theory, commonly associated with the work of sociologists such as Michel Callon and John Law, essentially argues that the networks of action that arise in everyday life cannot be reduced to purely social relations, for “things” (e.g., documents, machines, chemical compounds, currency) invariably function as intermediaries between humans. As such, the task of the sociologist is to understand and determine how things, as well as people, “act” through the network.

Lindsay F. Prior

See also Content Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Ethnomethodology; Grounded Theory; Thematic Coding and Analysis; Unobtrusive Research

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DOCUMENTS

A document is a text-based file that may include primary data (collected by the researcher) or secondary data (collected and archived or published by others) as well as photographs, charts, and other visual materials. Documents constitute the basis for most qualitative research. Primary data documents (PDDs) include transcriptions of interviews; participant observation fieldnotes; photographs of field situations taken by the researcher as records of specific activities, rituals, and personas (with associated locational and descriptive data); and maps and diagrams drawn by the researcher or by field assistants or participants in a study (with accompanying explanations). These documents are filed systematically so that they can be readily recovered for classification, coding, and analysis. Most PDD archiving systems are computerized, although hard copies of materials also are kept. Researchers should choose data management programs that allow for inclusion and coding of most types of PDDs.

Secondary data documents (SDDs) are materials that are important in describing the historical background and current situation in a community or country where the research is being conducted. They include maps, demographic data, measures of disparity in health or educational status (records of differences in types of surgery, disease distribution, graduation rates, etc.), and de-identified quantitative databases that include variables of interest to the researcher. Some forms of research, such as studies based on spatial data, rely primarily on SDDs or secondary databases, which must then be integrated and overlaid in geographic information system (GIS) software to display hypothesized differences in the distribution of

variables in space. Historical research also depends heavily or entirely on SDDs. Other types of qualitative studies, however, do not depend solely on SDDs.

Certain types of SDDs can be very helpful at the start of a study. For example, obtaining well-drawn or digitized maps of a study community early in a study can assist in the development of study samples and can provide the basis for orienting the researcher in space. Censuses, other national surveys, and/or local educational or health databases can be used to explore hypothetical linkages among study domains prior to the collection of additional qualitative data and can provide guidance in formulating in-depth interview questions. Archived photographs can be important in illustrating changes in built environment or life conditions.

Acquiring and preparing SDDs for use in a study requires considerable time, patience, and communication/negotiation skills. Although national or other secondary data sets are easily obtained, they may be large and need considerable manipulation, including the formation of new variables relevant to the study. Obtaining medical or educational records is subject to local and national regulations and may also require participant permission. Historical documents and photographs may be properly archived in libraries or museums or may be stored in basements or other “unofficial” places, and both personal and professional relationships may be required to access them. Unlike other types of SDDs, these materials may be considered as important cultural capital, and care must be taken in negotiating how they are represented to the public.

Jean J. Schensul

See also Historical Context; Methods; Textual Analysis

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DRAMATURGY

Dramaturgy refers to a specific approach to the understanding of social interaction put forward by Erving Goffman. This approach, rooted within the traditions

of symbolic interactionism, focuses on actors' performance of everyday social activities. A dramaturgical approach to understanding social interaction embraces the Shakespearian notion that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." From this standpoint, people can be seen to actively manage their social performances to construct impressions and evoke desired responses in their audience.

Continuing the theatrical analogy, performances are given on the frontstage, whereas rehearsals, costume choice, and scripts are managed backstage away from the audience's view. As such, rather than presenting the unproblematic view of social interaction put forward by traditional symbolic interactionists, dramaturgists propose that social interactions can be calculated, manipulative, and open to audience skepticism. When an unconvincing performance is given (e.g., by not looking the part, by using inappropriate language), an actor's frontstage character is betrayed and embarrassment or exposure as a fraud ensues. Thus, the actor's desired audience response is also in jeopardy.

An example of an unconvincing performance may be a clean-shaven man in a business suit begging for money on the street. His costume, script, and performance do not make sense to the audience; therefore, he may be unsuccessful in eliciting the desired audience response. However, dramaturgists would argue that social behaviors that appear to be unconvincing from one social position may be entirely convincing when viewed from an alternate position. The businessman may be begging for money because his wallet was stolen and he needs change to make a phone call. When the audience has access to the social context in which to view the performance, the subtext of the performance can be better understood. As such, it is often the actor's job, as part of his or her performance, to make this social context explicit, for example, by the businessman stating to each passerby, "I've been robbed—can you give me change for a phone call?" Of critical importance are the social norms that underpin the context in which the actor's performance occurs. It is most relevant to examine why the businessman must note that he has been robbed and to document the social norms governing why this tactic will enhance the success of his performance.

Although Goffman's dramaturgical approach provides a useful approach with which to understand social interaction, it falls short of providing an explicit method for documenting and appraising social performance. Dramaturgical analysis relies on actual social

interaction, and observation, interviews, and naturally occurring talk are the most useful kinds. Dramaturgy can be applied to a wide variety of social interactions—from micro-level encounters, to group interaction, to roles within institutions. Each level of interaction remains underpinned by social norms and conventions that outline which types of performances will be successful within a particular social context.

Kay E. Cook

See also Symbolic Interactionism

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DUOETHNOGRAPHY

Duoethnography is a relatively new research genre that has its genealogy embedded in two narrative research traditions: storytelling and William Pinar's concept of "currere." Its approach is to study how two or more individuals give similar and different meanings to a common phenomenon as it was experienced throughout their lives. Created by Rick Sawyer and Joe Norris, duoethnography avoids the hegemonic style of the meta-narrative found in autoethnography by critically juxtaposing the stories of two or more disparate individuals who experience a similar phenomenon. Like currere, which conceptualizes one's history as a composite of learning experiences and thus makes it an informal curriculum, duoethnography examines how individuals have acquired beliefs that influence their actions and the meanings they give them. Norris uses currere to assist graduate students in examining their life histories to determine how their curriculum of a concept, such as beauty, size, what to fear, quality, or life/death, influences their beliefs and behaviors. Andrew Foran used the framework in his dissertation, *Teaching Outside the School: A Phenomenological Inquiry*, to examine how attitudes toward the outdoors are taught and learned. Whereas

Differences in Researchers/Writers in Duoethnography

Whereas most of duoethnography is written as dialogue, this excerpt demonstrates how differences in researchers/writers broaden the landscape of the research.

For Joe, a heterosexual male, it is a present absence perspective. He was initially taught that homosexuality was a shame, a disease, a sin. Slowly, through experience, he came to see beyond his initial curriculum as he met those who identify with the orientation. He began to know them as individuals as lost and found in life as he and believed that their choice of sexual partner(s) was as legitimate as his.

For Rick, his currere, or curriculum of life, was occasionally an absent presence in the formal curriculum in the classroom but always close and personal in the hidden curriculum. As with many marginalized groups, this aspect of his identity played out on different levels in school. A hidden minority member, Rick learned early to use a dual lens when confronted with dissonance between perceptions of self and school. This lens included both an insider's and an outsider's view.

Source: Sawyer, R., & Norris, J. (2004). Null and hidden curricula of sexual orientation: A dialogue on the curreres of the absent presence and the present absence. In L. Coia, M. Birch, N. J. Brooks, E. Heilman, S. Mayer, A. Mountain, & P. Pritchard (Eds.), *Democratic responses in an era of standardization* (pp. 139–159). Troy, NY: Educators International Press.

currere examines an individual's perspective on a concept, duoethnography extends currere by employing multiple voices in dialogue. Its purpose is to explore how the life histories of different individuals affect the meanings they give to experiences.

The investigation is loosely based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's belief that consciousness and culture influence experience and that experiences are always mediated by the meanings given to past experiences. Duoethnography is an examination of the process through which individuals make meaning out of a particular phenomenon. Pinar claimed that currere is a regressive, progressive, analytical, and syncretical process with the aim of reconceptualizing oneself and the world in which one lives and that duoethnography employs these elements. Duoethnography not only reports the participants' stories but also interrogates them in a collegial conversation.

Each author of a duoethnographic piece is both the researcher and the researched. The team employs storytelling to simultaneously generate, interpret, and articulate data. Stories beget stories and—like interview questions—the stories enable the research-writing partners to recall other past events that they might not have remembered on their own. Their stories weave back and forth in juxtaposition to one another, creating a third space between the two into which readers may insert their own stories. Tom Barone claimed that a story acts as an evoker of the meanings of others, enabling readers to both recall and reexamine their own experiences of the phenomenon in the light of the written discussion. Duoethnography, as Norman Denzin suggested about all qualitative research, has a pedagogic element. Readers witness the authors in conversation with one another as the writers analyze both their own meanings and their partners' meanings. This dialogic element models analytic reflection to readers, inviting them to engage in the conversation and teaching them the act of self-interrogation. Unlike Clifford Geertz's concept of "bracketing out," Norris and Sawyer considered the personal to be essential and called for a "bracketing in."

But this does not mean that duoethnography is egocentric. Antoinette Oberg encourages autoethnographers to situate themselves within their research as the sites—not the topics—of their research. Following Oberg's suggestion, duoethnography explores the informal and formal curriculum of a topic focusing not on the individuals themselves but rather on their experiences of a phenomenon. For example, the phenomenon of beauty is examined through the individuals' experiences. The participants are the sites, but the concept of beauty and how it is made manifest in society and within individuals is the topic. Its aim is to provide multiple stories that intersect and, at times, contradict one another. The monologue in autoethnography becomes dialogue in duoethnography, extending the text beyond one individual's perspective.

Examples of Duoethnography

Sawyer and Norris, a gay male and a straight male, examined their own personal curricula of sexual orientation. They discussed how their views toward homosexuality changed through life experiences and conversed over how their upbringings influenced their behaviors. It is a sociological study as well as an

autobiographical study. Darren Lund and Rachel Evans, a straight male and a queer female, also examined sexual orientation through their political involvement in a small town. They weaved in aspects of their personal lives as they explored their own curricula of sexual orientation. Jim Greenlaw and Joe Norris, one an avid reader and one not, examined their encounters with creative writing. One found reading and writing to be a painful and lonely experience, whereas the other thoroughly enjoyed it. They showed multiple pathways to finding the creative spirit that elicits voice for themselves and their students. Donna Krammer and Rosemarie Mangiardi interrogated the process of schooling through the concept of the "hidden curriculum" of meritocracy, relating how the system teaches alienation and shame. Others also have shown interest in the methodology. Rick Berault has examined the currere of male elementary teachers, and Nancy Rankie Shelton and Morna McDermott have explored their learned concepts of beauty.

Basic Tenets of Duoethnography

As duoethnography develops, basic tenets and approaches that frame the method have emerged. The first is that the methodology must remain open to avoid becoming prescriptive. As John Dewey stated in 1934, "If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind" (p. 54). Although Sawyer and Norris initiated this methodology, they laid no claim of proprietorship. Each group of researchers can and will adapt the method to their unique circumstances using the basic tenets as a guide. The aim of duoethnography is to promote and articulate research conversations in dialogue. Making it overly prescriptive is antithetical to its dialogic nature.

The second tenet is that each individual voice is made explicit. Most of the text is written as a conversation and like a play script, so readers can distinguish who is writing what. Readers witness the two or more individuals in a quest for understanding self and others as they compare their experiences with one another. The aim is not to reduce a concept to universal statements gleaned from the conversation; rather, the conversations present both thesis and antithesis, enabling readers to form their own synthesis. The format of distinguishing individual voices makes this possible.

Building on this, a third tenet is that a change of perspective is central to the methodology. Emphasis is on the quest or questioning; it is not on uncovering meanings but rather on creating and transforming them. Once trust is established between the researchers/writers, this becomes possible. Throughout the conversation, one or more of the researchers/writers may change their opinions and add to or discount parts of their original stories; the researchers/writers are open to (re)storying their own lives. These emergent changes are not edited out to create a conclusive text; rather, they are made explicit to readers who witness these emergent changes in the individuals as they converse with one another. Emmanuel Levinas claimed that we need the other so as to understand the self. Self, then, is defined not as a fixed entity but rather as a fluid one. Readers will witness an emergent and organic progression of meaning-making. Such writing invites readers into the conversation.

Caution is taken by the researchers/writers not to situate themselves as either the hero or the victim. These positions tend to polarize and fix the storyteller. Placing self in one of these roles reaffirms a preestablished meaning. In conversation with one's research partner(s), these meanings can be challenged and transformed. Readers should witness the researchers/writers searching for meanings rather than preaching preestablished ones. The methodology is underpinned with the belief that individual perspectives are socially constructed. Hero or victim sagas tend to be positivist and not receptive to change.

The fourth tenet purports that differences between the researchers'/writers' points of view are a strength. Because duoethnography is not looking for universals but rather examines how different individuals give both similar and different meanings to a shared phenomenon, it looks to the margins to create a range of meanings. The gay/straight difference between Sawyer and Norris and the different attitudes of reading and writing between Norris and Greenlaw increased the range of perspectives, making such differences a strength. The quest for reporting differences between researchers/writers is encouraged; however, similarities are not excluded.

In summary, duoethnography is a literary style that provides stories of insights containing theses and antitheses of two or more individuals between which readers can form their own synthesis. It is a dialogic approach to meaning construction.

Methodological Approaches

To date, two methodological approaches have assisted in the development of duoethnography. One approach is the integration of data collection and analysis processes within the writing itself. The storytelling (collection) and discussion (analysis) are part of the writing process, not discrete phases. The rigor rests with the many revisions during which each partner contributes to the analysis of the other's thoughts and adds additional stories.

The second approach is a review of scrapbooks, photo albums, report cards, saved letters, and/or other memorabilia that can be strong memory prompts. Writers are encouraged to reexamine their entire life histories as evoked by such artifacts. Sawyer and Norris included pictures of friends, schools, work, and historical sites in their telling of the curriculum of sexual orientation. These assisted in both memory recall and the style of narrative presentation.

Joe Norris

See also Autobiography; Autoethnography; Bracketing; Co-Constructed Narrative; Collaborative Research;

Everyday Life; Identity; Meta-Narrative; Narrative Inquiry; Oral History; Reality and Multiple Realities; Storytelling

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E

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Researchers who describe their research as “ecological” generally share two interests. One is a concern for the environment, the relation of the environment to humans, and the impact humans have on environmental health and sustainability. A second commonality stems from the belief that the phenomenon of interest needs to be understood in context; that is, in relation to other actors, events, practices, and policies within the local and global settings where it occurs. In this way, the methodology claims to be nonreductionist and founded on the theories and philosophies of ecosystems, cybernetics, chaos, and complexity. For many researchers, ecological research is inherently critical of the dominant Western materialistic ethos. Its critical perspective derives from concerns for the well-being of future generations, a stance of stewardship for the earth, and the relationship of humans with all living things.

The past few decades have reflected considerable interest in ecological research by natural and social scientists, philosophers, and educators, especially those wishing to understand environmental problems, human learning, and societal change through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. However, not all researchers are referring to the same thing. As a methodology, ecological research can vary depending on the intents and purposes of the research and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used. This entry reviews four different types of ecological research and also describes research methods used in this field.

Types of Ecological Research

Ecological research can refer to several types of research, including research that is done from a worldview emphasizing the interrelatedness of all forms of life, research that integrates ecology with the social sciences, research that focuses on a philosophical understanding, and research that focuses on an understanding human knowing, learning, and action as they occur in particular settings.

The Ecological Worldview

One type of ecological research embodies a particular worldview, also described as research from an ecological perspective. The worldview is nonreductionist, refusing to separate the focus of inquiry from its context, and is concerned with the way in which the object or event is embedded in and reciprocally related with natural and social environments. Researchers value all living things and consider humans to be only one part of the large integrated web of life.

This type of ecological research seeks to understand complexity and the emergent nature of knowledge and how this relates to the well-being of future generations. The research is driven by the belief that humans can learn from the study of ecosystems that are sustainable communities of plants, animals, and small organisms. The promise is that by understanding the principles of organization of ecological communities, humans can revitalize their social and cultural communities based on ecological principles. The basic principles of ecology are both descriptive and normative. First, interdependence suggests the mutual reliance of all living things on

each other through nonlinear networks of feedback and cycles. Second, cycles are the essential nature of ecological processes. Third, interdependencies are marked by cooperation, partnership, and co-evolution—processes of change and learning. Fourth, flexibility enables a system to adapt to change and maintain itself. Fifth, diversity within a system enables resilience through a complex network that adapts to change more easily.

The main concepts in this type of ecological research are chaotic attractors, fractals, dissipative structures, self-organization, and autopoietic networks. Chaotic attractors enable patterns or shapes to form, representing seemingly random data or repeating patterns that are never identical. Fractals refer to shapes that occur in nature when the whole is constituted by repetitions of the part. Dissipative structures demonstrate characteristics of nonequilibrium, nonlinearity, instability, and indeterminacy—characteristics of all living systems. Self-organization refers to the emergence of new structures and modes of behavior in open systems characterized by nonequilibrium and nonlinear patterns. Autopoiesis refers to the life of living systems and the processes through which they make themselves from their different components and at the same time produce those components.

Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research

A second type of ecological research is inter- and transdisciplinary; for example, involving both ecology and social science researchers. This research seeks to understand the interrelationship between natural ecological systems and society so as to create solutions to current sustainability problems. This research can be identified in the community of researchers whose writing appears in the journal *Ecology and Society*. Their work applies ecological perspectives to research projects and seeks to formulate long-term socioecological research strategies essential to building a new sustainability science. Although they borrow and adapt concepts from the ecological perspective outlined in the previous section, their interest is in producing knowledge to solve current sustainability problems. Their interests are in investigating the state of the environment and changes in natural ecosystems as well as the effects of ecological change on society. Furthermore, they are interested in creating solutions to the problems investigated.

Within this research approach, four themes (metabolism, land use, governance, and communication) and

three meta-principles (design, socioecological transitions, and research process and participants) are considered as essential to an operational model of society–nature interaction. Metabolism recognizes processes of production, reproduction, and consumption and is measured through stocks and flows of materials and energy. Land use encompasses the social and economic histories of a region, the changes in biophysical conditions, and the consideration of drivers affecting these changes over time. Inquiry into governance focuses on discrepancies between policies and actual practices through a focus on local actors. Communication encompasses the investigation of discourses, knowledge formation, and communication through critical analysis and through the participation and communication of stakeholder groups. The latter recognizes that research has a responsibility to inform those who will be affected by an environmental problem and to participate with them in bridging gaps between stakeholder perspectives and influencing the future.

The meta-principle of design calls for inquiry that focuses on the interaction of processes in social and natural systems, a process of co-evolution of two structurally coupled systems. The meta-principle of socioecological transitions locates inquiry in the present and past, particularly in the intertwined changes in the relationships of society and nature. The meta-principle of research process and participants calls for research that is a transdisciplinary endeavor; that is, an endeavor that involves researchers trained in different disciplines and a self-reflective process that considers the perspectives and dominant narratives of researchers, citizens, and managers.

This socioecological research is not to be confused with the social ecology of Murray Bookchin that is considered to be a radical view of ecology and social/political systems. It explores the contradiction between competitive society and the natural world so as to change both economic relations and the cultural, ethical, aesthetic, personal, and psychological areas of inquiry—an anticapitalist standpoint. Bookchin did elaborate the notion of thinking ecologically, and this is further developed in a third type of ecological research current today.

The Search for Philosophical Understanding

The third type of ecological research is constituted by the search for philosophical understanding. This research critiques the preceding types of research and

conceptual work and seeks a more defensible conceptualization of ecology on which to ground research, learning, practices, and policies. These writers critique the worldview type of research described earlier for modeling humans and human social systems on mechanistic reductionist theories borrowed from the natural sciences and mathematical modeling. In addition, they accuse the worldview researchers of ignoring axiology that they claim needs to be restored to ecological thought. The philosophical writers develop the concept of ecological thinking to construct a foundation for an ecological worldview. They use dialectical logic to capture the tension and dynamic between the human and nonhuman natures. They argue that humans are not equal to all other living creatures because of humans' ability to conceptualize, reason morally, and empathize deeply with all living forms. Different ways of knowing are considered to be different modes of attuning to the world. Humans are regarded as loci of valuing activity, with an obligation to respect and protect the conatus (conditions of freedom in nonhuman nature) and a responsibility toward nonhuman nature. Research in this perspective is a kind of eclectic art employing multiple perspectives, insights, and analyses to arrive at a coherent grasping of the world.

Understanding Human Knowing, Learning, and Action

A fourth type of ecological research is focused on the search for understanding human knowing, learning, and action in particular settings; for example, in education, health, economics, and psychology. These researchers, whose work appears frequently in the *Journal of Learning Sciences* and *Educational Researcher*, draw on concepts from theories of complexity, situated learning, and ecology with the purpose of creating an ecological theory of knowing. Concepts central to this effort include affordance networks, lifeworlds, and effectivity sets. Affordance networks designate the possibility for action and may encompass information, material, or people that can be activated in reaching a particular goal. Lifeworld refers to an individual's environment that contains current intentions and goals. Effectivity set refers to actions an individual takes in creating and activating an affordance network. Knowing is conceptualized as an activity, achieved in a context or setting by engaging in meaningful actions or practices in that environment.

Other Perspectives

These four types of ecological research represent the dominant arenas of the current burgeoning interest in ecological research. Beyond these, other uses can be found in many disciplines and practice fields. Researchers who identify with disciplines of community sociology or environmental sociology are also working from ecological perspectives to understand the relationship between humans in social communities and between humans and the biophysical environment. Researchers of social work practice have conceptualized a human development–ecological framework to study the ways in which people shape and are shaped within historical and cultural systems that are complex and dynamic and that involve sociological, psychological, and biological personal systems. Anthropologists are employing ecological perspectives in inquiry into current and past cultures. Human ecology is a diverse field with the primary interest of understanding the interrelationships between people and their environments. It employs ecological perspectives and draws the foci for inquiry from fields ranging from home economics, to landscape architecture, to geography.

Research Methods

The methods used by ecological researchers are eclectic, drawn from a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Methods of data collection can include interviews, participant observation, and surveys. Data may include archival documents, statistical records, historical artifacts, visual records, and material traces. They may be generated through a range of participatory methods such as dramatizations, focus groups, conversations, group dialogue and decision making, search conferences, journals, and public performances. Strategies of analysis and representation may include comparative case studies, visual representations, public performances, narrative constructions, and event/action modeling.

Linda Peterat

See also Action Research; Context-Centered Knowledge; Historical Context

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EDUCATION, QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN

This entry provides an overview of key topics and methods in education research. The nature of inquiry concerning the use of qualitative research methods continues to evolve over time; for example, from positive to critical theory research paradigms. However, the role of qualitative methods comes in the wider discussion of where methods reside within the educational research process. Methods are used to collect data that have been shaped by literature reviews that ultimately address a research problem. Although the primary focus here is on education, many of these points also apply to other social science disciplines; the entry is written in general terms to apply to these broader contexts as well. First, key topics concerning research process, peer support, and research improving practice are described. Then the qualitative methods of the questionnaire, interviews, and participant observation (three of the most commonly used methods in education research) are examined. Strategy is as important as method within education research because the researcher needs to decide how productively methods can be used within practitioner methodology. The strategies and use of methods discussed in this entry are designed to appeal to a general social science audience and are not geared specifically toward education.

The Importance of Education Policy

Before we examine key topics and qualitative methods, it is important to analyze how the literature in the subject area of education policy connects with qualitative methods and other subject areas. The literature on

education policy is vast, so this entry provides readers with only a taste of what is “out there” within the international literature. Martyn Hammersley examined research and evidence-based practice and drew on the similarities and differences between education and medical research that could shape policy. Peter Baldock and colleagues examined the reflective method when examining “early years” education policy. Marilyn Cochran-Smith called for cross-disciplinary, multiple methods research that can be cross-institutional and longitudinal within policy shaping teacher education. Finally, Les Bell and Howard Stevenson highlighted the importance of case studies and interviews in their policy analysis concerning citizenship and social justice. All of these examples use qualitative methods concerning education policy but can also be applied to other subject areas. All education-related subject areas are vast, but this entry highlights the importance of key elements in the choice of methods (both qualitative and quantitative) and also reviews qualitative methods that can produce data for analysis across many education-related subject boundaries.

The Research Process

The research proposal for students of both university- and outside-funded research is the stage when the education researcher needs to choose what subject category within education is going to be researched. The proposal covers research design and an idea of the research question to be addressed during the research process. Qualitative methods also need to be chosen, and an early idea of an evolving methodology is useful at this stage. Subject category choices (e.g., education, health studies) that concern funded research may be limited due to the demands of a sponsor; however, this discussion focuses on strategic considerations relating to proposals to undergraduate and postgraduate students. A good place for a junior undergraduate researcher to start a piece of education-related research is with a contents page that allows thinking and reflection on the research focus. The aim here is to develop structure and coherence. A research question is important within education research, but a researcher must consider how this will shape the construction of a literature review on the subject in question and the methods that the researcher will use in the field. Qualitative methods need to be chosen at this stage when considering what empirical data to collect, and researchers need to engage with the methods

literature to decide which methods to use in collecting data for analysis. The development of the literature review helps with these decisions. Education studies (e.g., sociology, criminology) is a vast area that encapsulates many different and varied themes. A researcher must decide which specific theme—history, philosophy, policy, sociology, special needs, inclusion, gender, (under)achievement, and so on—to choose. Literature reviews help to make this choice and also assist in the choice of qualitative methods (e.g., can an education researcher use participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, or a combination of all three? Which data presentation and analysis techniques will be used within the research project?).

Making the Right Research Choices: Peer Support

All researchers can benefit from setting up a peer support network because such a network can enhance and develop research processes and also lead to constructive debates when choosing methods and discussing evolving research methodology. Researchers who organize collaboratively and use critical friends when designing research proposals and frameworks, choosing which qualitative methods to use, and collecting, presenting, and analyzing data nearly always produce more coherent research projects and findings. Tutors or supervisors need not be replaced or have their roles redefined; however, a more informal approach of peer networks can increase the understanding of concepts, theories, and qualitative method techniques within the research process at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Although formal support may come from different countries and tutors, groups of education researchers who have come together at times during their master's studies may also gain from that interaction and collaboration. When team and group work are encouraged at the undergraduate level, students can develop and refine skills and techniques that can be useful in qualitative education studies.

Research Improves Practice

Teachers at all levels who conduct research should be encouraged to address issues that they encounter not only in the classroom but also in the school staff room and within senior management teams. Practitioner researchers, not only in educational contexts but also in areas such as health and social work, have a

responsibility to carry out research that uses research methods that focus on elements of practice and make constructive changes that produce positive outcomes. Of course, there are practical restraints that hinder research opportunities (e.g., do practitioners have enough time in the day to carry out action research?). An interesting debate concerns whether findings from action research projects produce “action” that modifies existing practice or “research” that produces practical recommendations but that also adds to existing debates within education research. What needs to be highlighted again is that either practitioner or action research (however the latter concept is defined) can improve classroom, school, and institutional practice. Indeed, if we are to apply the notion of “lifelong learning” to education, this is one way of not only allowing more practitioner research but also retaining colleagues in universities and schools for longer periods. Practitioner research is becoming more visible within many social research areas. However, it is important to consider what opportunities are actually being given to practitioners within the global profession to carry out research on social issues such as gender, class, and social inequality within qualitative education studies.

Choosing a Qualitative Method: The Questionnaire

Many education researchers, especially students and other junior scholars, choose to use a questionnaire because it is believed to be easier to compile and carry out than are many qualitative research methods. This has shaped, and continues to shape, university and funded research projects at all levels. Researchers may prefer a questionnaire because they perceive it as a more efficient and less time-consuming way in which to gather data. All methods are technical in the sense that the more preparation that is put into the design of a research instrument, the more data that can be obtained. But a questionnaire is limited by the number of questions that can be asked, and the questionnaire may fail to provide the researcher with the amount of relevant detail that can be obtained through qualitative methods such as participant observation in the field of education.

The researcher's choice of a questionnaire may indicate a lack of time but also may reflect the reluctance of many researchers to develop relationships in schools or social care units. The choice of a questionnaire may also result from the reluctance of a school

or hospital to provide teachers, doctors, and nurses with sufficient time for research given the demands of their workloads. However, contacting the school and getting permission from senior management, teachers, and parents to distribute a questionnaire are time-consuming for everyone involved. Because access to school and medical environments can be difficult, some researchers use a gatekeeper to gain access to a school. Interestingly, the gatekeeper can be as simple as a family member or friend. But what strategies do practitioner researchers use if they do not have this form of access?

Using time strategically is a crucial issue for all researchers, and more time makes it possible to develop a more coherent approach to the topic of investigation. Therefore, it is important for researchers to use the questionnaire to gather relevant data that test the research question. Students tend to focus on a general topic within questionnaire design, but some neglect the focal question. Questionnaire layout, question ordering, sampling, pilot study, and distribution and return are the main issues in questionnaire design. Creating a pilot questionnaire for a health care worker or criminologist, for example, and giving it to a small sample is a good research strategy. Distributing the questionnaire is perhaps the most interesting issue, with the use of electronic communication to get a questionnaire to a larger sample. This can partly solve the issue of time, or the lack of time, but preparation is still important here. If a student does get access into any institution whereby permission is granted to contact respondents electronically, there is still no guarantee that health care workers, teachers, or administrators will respond because they might not have the time to do so. The questionnaire is still one of the most economical means of obtaining data, and it can be used in conjunction with qualitative methods (e.g., interviews).

Choosing a Qualitative Method: Interviews

Interviews are perhaps the most fashionable and common method of data collection in qualitative methods within education. Time periods are problematic for undergraduate researchers because they not only must organize and carry out interviews but also must transcribe them. Will researchers in social work or health transcribe only the data that will be used for analysis? Typically, the opportunity for one-on-one discussions

with a supervisor arises only after students reach the level of doctoral studies; until that point, they may lack supervisory guidance on methodology, data presentation, and analysis of an interview script. Time constraints hinder, rather than encourage, junior researchers throughout the social sciences to fully transcribe and use all of the data available to them. If they have more time, there are more methodological and data analysis possibilities.

Choosing a Qualitative Method: Participant Observation

A very useful qualitative method within the social sciences (including education) is participant observation. This is perhaps the most productive method practitioner researchers can employ within a number of different environments (e.g., health, social work). Researchers can adopt an observing role in which they take part in activities that they examine. Participation by researchers enables them to record their own perceptions of events, feelings, and thoughts as processes expressed verbally and through actions. This information is a useful complement to the other records of participant perceptions.

Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research

Interesting ethical considerations arise for all practitioner researchers. Anonymity of patients or children can be guaranteed, but permission needs to be obtained from both parents and the institution to carry out the qualitative research. Practitioner preparation begins in the workplace, with the teacher deciding which colleagues can be approached for consultation. Informing senior management within the institution is also an important step not only because institutional or (inter)national ethical guidelines (if any) will need to be followed but also because many researchers will be reporting their findings to these very people, so it is very strategic to get these people involved at the start of the research project for constructive and institutional advice. Senior management can also advise on how to approach parents in asking permission for children to be used within a qualitative project.

Anonymity is not the only ethical issue a qualitative researcher must consider. The sensitive nature of some questions needs to be reflected on and possibly changed during the research process, depending on

the respondent and the nature of the question. The data obtained from the interview need to be analyzed and presented in a professional, agreed-on way. The recommendations taken from the data might be presented to colleagues in oral and written presentations. Practitioner research is about changing practice, but the strategies researchers need to devise outside of the research process can be as complex, and perhaps as important, as changing practice in different social and cultural environments. Effective research employing qualitative methods should produce practical recommendations that build on existing school policies. Researchers technically look for an original angle, and it is important to remember that coherent research findings build on existing practice and that this applies to all practitioner and research environments.

One personal example of participant observation research that comes to mind was how a postgraduate student, in examining special education needs, used participant observation and photographs of a playground not only to gather data but also to show what was going on with children at play as well as playground interactions between children and members of the staff. The student researcher raised an interesting ethical consideration. Would the student be visually showing her respondents' images, and could they be identified? My response was that so long as the student had permission from the school and parents to use the images, it should be fine. One has a moral obligation to those being studied—a responsibility to the participants—and showing the pictures was ethically justified. To justify showing the pictures, the researcher needed to take into account ethical responsibility to the participants in the study. In such cases, it may also be appropriate to ask the children themselves for consent to use the images. In this case, the student moved the images into a data analysis chapter within the dissertation, and I believed this increased understandings of playground interactions in a project concerning special needs. Observations in this case were used to triangulate data obtained from qualitative methods from several schools.

Conclusions

This final section summarizes the most important topics, strategies, and issues in relation to using qualitative methods in education. Research preparation and the constructive and effective choice of qualitative methods are crucial and have shaped what issues and

subjects have been researched in many subject areas. Although time constraints often do not allow researchers the opportunity, having sufficient time can help to cement research design, the research question, the introduction chapter of a thesis, and the choice of which qualitative methods to use in a research project. The research proposal should be completed before the final dissertation begins, and many education undergraduate programs have research modules that focus on qualitative methods and process. Using time strategically means that qualitative research can be more coherent, structured, and even fun. How qualitative methods are used to obtain data to test the research question is also crucial. Choosing methods and creating a methodology are very strategic and are up to the social science researcher. The objective is to use qualitative methods productively. This can produce practical recommendations that not only improve practice but also contribute to ongoing debates within the social sciences and other subject areas (e.g., education, human rights, sociology, citizenship).

Richard Race

See also Action Research; Applied Research; Ethics; Literature Review; Research Design; Research Literature; Research Proposal; Research Question; Social Sciences, Qualitative Research in

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EMAIL INTERVIEW

Email interviews emerged during the late 1990s as one of a number of online qualitative methods. Such interviews differ from face-to-face (FTF) interviews because of the features of asynchronicity, reduced cues, and anonymity.

Asynchronous communication allows both the researcher and participants to respond at a time of their choosing rather than in “real time.” They can also respond in a setting of their choice. These factors may suit participants who are marginalized because they cannot attend FTF interviews due to distance, chronic health issues, impairments, work or personal commitments, and/or discomfort with discussing sensitive topics. Asynchronicity allows more time for reflection, and this may produce a richer quality of data. Prolonged engagement is also possible; however the spontaneity of FTF interviews is sacrificed.

The lack of FTF contact in email interviews is referred to as “reduced cues” because the interviewer and participants cannot see or hear each other and the primary mode of communication is text. This feature has been criticized as a threat to rapport, although recent studies have disputed this claim. Nevertheless there is a heavier reliance on the sensitivity and skills of the “researcher as instrument” than there is in FTF interviewing, particularly in relation to vulnerable participants who may need support when discussing sensitive issues. Therefore, ethics review board applications may need to address support options for online participants given that the interviewer is not physically present to respond in the case of participant distress.

In email interviews, lack of FTF contact can provide a sense of anonymity even though recruitment forms, individuals’ email addresses, and/or signatures can provide identifying details. Anonymity may encourage participants to feel more comfortable about self-disclosure and provide a leveling ground for people who may feel stigmatized or inhibited in FTF settings (e.g., people with disabilities). However, anonymity

may encourage false representation, and recruitment procedures may need to address the authenticity of participants.

Technological failure is a common problem with online methods, which may disrupt rapport and affect participant confidence and commitment. Therefore, it is essential that the email interviewer have a level of technical competence to solve potential difficulties.

Email interviews can include persons who may be marginalized from FTF interviews; however, this method has also been criticized as undemocratic due to “digital divide” factors. For example, the cost of internet technology, service provision, and computer maintenance, as well as discomfort with technology due to illiteracy and/or lack of appropriate training, may exclude some individuals from participation. Recruitment procedures need to consider these barriers.

Email interviews can be both economical and time-efficient by reducing travel costs and transcription time (i.e., as email transcripts are copied directly into data files). However, the method can be time-consuming because the frequency of participants’ responses is unpredictable. In addition, data richness may be affected by individuals’ email communication styles (i.e., lengthy prose vs. question-and-answer form). Finally, although some participants may feel more reassured by FTF contact, email interviews are an important adjunct to the range of qualitative interviewing methods.

Jennifer Egan

See also Internet in Qualitative Research; Researcher as Instrument

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EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE

Embodied knowledge situates intellectual and theoretical insights within the realm of the material world.

Embodied knowledge is sensory; it highlights smell, touch, and taste as well as more commonly noted sights and sounds. Knowledge grounded in bodily experience encompasses uncertainty, ambiguity, and messiness in everyday life, eschewing sanitized detached measurement of discrete variables. Such an epistemology, or way of knowing, resists the Cartesian mind–body split that underlies Enlightenment philosophy and its persistent remnants, including the scientific method and the glorification of objectivity. Embodied knowledge is inherently and unapologetically subjective, celebrating—rather than glossing over—the complexities of knowledge production. Fieldwork, interviewing, writing, and other qualitative methods involve embodied practices performed by actors occupying specific standpoints or positions within cultures. The researcher’s body—where it is positioned, what it looks like, what social groups or classifications it is perceived as belonging to—matters deeply in knowledge formation.

The normative erasure of researchers’ and participants’ bodies from conventional disembodied accounts of qualitative research yields deceptively tidy accounts of data gathering and analysis. Research reports typically follow strictly scientific conventions that obscure the author’s agency via passive voice (e.g., “data were collected . . .”) or represent a sanitized “I” that reports completed actions without any thick description of the bodies involved. The resulting invisibility of bodies in accounts of qualitative research shapes our understanding of interaction and meaning-making in real-world contexts. Feminist researchers contend that such writing conventions reaffirm the mind–body split and the association of males and masculinity with mind and the association of females and femininity with body. Western cultures deeply privilege the mind over the body, positing a sharp distinction between mind, equated with self, and body, the (potentially unruly) property of the (higher) mind. An alternative perspective blurs the boundary between the mind and body. For Trinh Min-ha, the body is not a possession of higher mind to be manipulated and controlled; rather, the body and self are one, and that one generates inherently embodied knowledge. With the “narrative turn” in social sciences, health, and education, positivist assumptions about objectivity have been decentered in favor of realistic positioning of scholars as imperfect, embodied social actors. Edited collections and journals that focus on interpretive methodology, such as *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Journal of Contemporary*

Ethnography, publish embodied knowledge in narrative and interpretive research, reflecting what sociologist Laurel Richardson called “creative analytic practices.” Rather than apologizing for subjectivity or simply stating one’s “biases,” qualitative researchers can generate rich accounts of embodied knowledge both through using creative forms of representation, such as narratives, poetry, and autoethnography, and by including thick description of bodily experience in mainstream research reports.

Laura L. Ellingson

See also Autoethnography; Feminist Research

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EMERGENT DESIGN

Emergent design involves data collection and analysis procedures that can evolve over the course of a research project in response to what is learned in the earlier parts of the study. In particular, if the research questions and goals change in response to new information and insights, then the research design may need to change accordingly. This flexible approach to data collection and analysis allows for ongoing changes in the research design as a function of both what has been learned so far and the further goals of the study. Within the broader framework of qualitative research, emergent design procedures are closely associated with the broad goal of induction because success in generating theories and hypotheses often depends on a flexible use of research methods.

An emphasis on emergent design marks an important difference between most approaches to qualitative research and those to quantitative research. In particular, quantitative research is typically based on a fixed set of stages, starting with research design decisions that specify a set of predetermined data collection procedures that must be completed before data analysis can begin. Thus, survey research cannot redefine its

sample or change its questionnaires midstream, and experimental interventions are equivalently locked into a set of design decisions that cannot be altered during data collection or analysis. In contrast to this “linear” set of well-defined stages, the emergent design approach in qualitative research is often summarized as a circular process. This means that new data are continually being analyzed as they are collected, so that both the research procedures and questions can be adjusted in an iterative fashion in response to what is being learned in the field. Ethnography is a useful illustration of this process because the ongoing analysis of fieldnotes leads to a shifting interpretation of both which issues are relatively well understood and which issues require further observations, so that ethnographers make design decisions—on an almost daily basis—about how to pursue their emergent interpretations.

Despite the importance of emergence in qualitative research, it would not be prudent to overstate the dominance of emergent design. Even the most flexible qualitative study begins with some ideas about what to observe, where to find sources for those data, and how to collect the relevant information. The prior ideas and beliefs that researchers bring to the field are sometimes known as “sensitizing concepts.” Hence, no research design can be fully or completely emergent; instead, emergent design allows for an ongoing reassessment of how to conduct the research based on what has been learned from prior data collection and analysis.

Emergent Aspects of Data Analysis

In comparison with the role of emergent design in data collection, issues related to the emergent aspects of data analysis typically receive more attention due to the heavy reliance on emergent procedures in nearly every form of qualitative analysis (with the notable exception of forms of content analysis that are based on predefined codebooks). In particular, many forms of qualitative analysis move from an initial stage of relatively descriptive or open coding to the creation of a broader set of emergent themes and concepts that then become the basic elements in the process of theory creation. This process of abstraction by moving from raw data to theorized conclusions is a central aspect of the link between emergent procedures and induction. Because the connection between emergence and induction is widely discussed within the literature on qualitative analysis, most of this entry concentrates on issues

related to data collection, where emergence receives less explicit attention. There is, however, at least one aspect of analysis and emergence that deserves more attention.

Although some qualitative studies appear to segregate data analysis as a separate task from data collection (e.g., by not starting the formal analysis until “all the data are entered in the computer”), most of those designs still involve an informal process of emergent interpretation that occurs throughout data collection. One way to grasp how deeply qualitative analysis is embedded in the data collection process is to ask the following question: When does the analysis process begin in qualitative research? The most basic answer is that researchers begin their analysis as soon as they learn something that affects their interpretation of the data. For example, the first discussion that a moderator hears in a focus group may either reinforce or challenge existing preconceptions, and the first few days of observing a field site can have the same effect. The emerging interpretations from this “informal analysis” process can affect the data collection itself (e.g., by producing subtle changes in which topics are probed or pursued in which ways). Even more important, the emergent interpretations from informal analysis will inevitably influence what happens during subsequent, more formal analysis activities.

Emergent Aspects of Data Collection

Emergent aspects of data collection focus on two decisions: choices about which data sources to include in the study and about which techniques to use for gathering data from those sources. With regard to the emergent selection of data sources, the best-known approach is the use of theoretical sampling. In this process, the tentative conclusions from ongoing analyses serve as the basis for selecting a new set of data sources according to what would be most useful for either building on or challenging those emerging conclusions. For example, a tentative theory about the experiences of dying patients based primarily on observations from a surgical ward in a hospital might lead to a new set of observations investigating whether the same processes occur during terminal care in a nursing home. Although the term theoretical sampling arose within grounded theory, it is actually a highly general procedure that can be applied to most forms of qualitative research. The broad value of this approach reflects a general connection between theoretical sampling and induction,

whereby new observations are sought as a basis for building on earlier observations and interpretations.

Moving from the evolving selection of data sources to flexible aspects of collecting the data, one key aspect of emergence involves shifts in the topics that the study pursues. This process can move in one of two classic directions: either expanding the research focus to bring newly discovered topics into the study or narrowing the research focus to gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of things that are already part of the study. In the case of discovery, emergent designs become more open and less structured so as to include things that were not anticipated when the study was originally designed, especially in the case of exploratory research. Alternatively, narrowing the focus requires shifting to a more structured pursuit of topics that require more attention than the original design anticipated. Indeed, when qualitative researchers propose an emergent approach to their research design, they often mean that they cannot predict in advance either what new things they might discover or which existing topics might require more thorough attention.

The actual data collection techniques, as well as the topics covered, can also shift and evolve as part of an emergent design. As the previous discussion suggested, this could involve a change toward either a more structured or a less structured approach to data collection depending on the needs arising from the earlier observations and analyses. One common timeline for this kind of emergence begins with a more open-ended approach to data collection that emphasizes the discovery of relevant concepts and experiences. During the next phase, the data collection procedures would be altered to examine those previously discovered issues in more depth and detail. Finally, in an idealized form of this style of research, a highly focused round of data collection would target any topics that were less well understood while also pursuing theoretical insights that emerged from previous analyses.

Designing for Emergence

The importance of emergence as a principle in qualitative research can lead to a questionable claim that it is impossible to design qualitative research because there is no way to know in advance either what will be important or which methods will be most appropriate for studying those emergent topics. One immediate problem with such a claim is that it ignores the researcher's prior ideas and implicit theories about the

subject of the research—a fallacy that is referred to as treating the researcher as a blank slate or *tabula rasa*. One way to avoid this problem is to design for emergence. In particular, the initial research design can make the researcher's assumptions explicit—in the form of tentative statements about what to observe, where to find it, how to elicit it, and so on.

Thesis proposals from graduate students are one common situation where questions about how to design for emergence arise. In this case, there is a tension between a student's desire to pursue an emergent design and faculty members' need to know what the study will be about before they approve it. One solution is a format where the proposal begins with a description of the initial research activities that the student anticipates on entering the field accompanied by descriptions of likely scenarios that might emerge from that initial work as well as statements about how the student would pursue the emergent design in each of those scenarios. This format allows faculty members to approve undertaking independent research that relies on emergence when students demonstrate both a realistic knowledge of the field to be studied and a mastery of the skills that are necessary for research in that setting. In many cases, students will encounter a situation that is close to one of their anticipated scenarios and can proceed as planned; however, there will always be some situations that are well outside the original plans, and the best policy in those cases is to submit a revised proposal based on the newly emergent design.

A different issue in designing for emergence is the possibility of creating research designs that are built around the goal of emergence itself. One such design could be based on the three-part data collection timeline described in the previous section—beginning with an exploratory phase, followed by pursuing a more in-depth understanding of the results from the earlier phase, and concluding with targeted data collection that moves the project toward completion. For example, in a project using focus groups, the first round of groups could be a relatively open-ended and unstructured set of discussions that were aimed at learning the participants' perspectives on the research topic. Analysis of those groups would lead to decisions about which participants and topics should be the basis for a second set of groups that would pursue the issues raised earlier. The last set of groups would again consider which data sources and which topics would be most useful, where the goals in this case

would typically be to expand coverage of material that was poorly understood and to enrich the understanding of emergent conclusions from the previous groups. As this example illustrates, it is quite possible to propose a research design that specifies the activities of the research team in some detail while still allowing for a broad process of emergence in selecting both the topics to be investigated and the most appropriate ways to collect data on those topics.

As a final note, it is also important to recognize that the degree of emergence will vary from one qualitative study to another. In particular, for cases where the goals are relatively predetermined, it may well make sense to use a relatively fixed set of procedures to collect the data and then emphasize emergence during data analysis. Because qualitative researchers have a range of options with regard to emergent design, it is important to provide explicit justifications for how any given design meets the needs of a specific project. Ultimately, questions about both the extent of and the nature of emergence in qualitative research designs need to be addressed in terms of the purposes that the research is pursuing.

David L. Morgan

See also Codes and Coding; Content Analysis; Emergent Themes; Ethnography; Exploratory Research; Grounded Theory; Hypothesis; Induction; Open Coding; Quantitative Research; Sampling; Theoretical Sampling; Theory

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EMERGENT THEMES

Emergent themes are a basic building block of inductive approaches to qualitative social science research and are derived from the lifeworlds of research participants through the process of coding. Inductive approaches exist within positivist, postpositivist, and

social constructionist paradigms. Some qualitative researchers believe that emergent themes are part of the process that leads to generalizable theories of human society, whereas others use emergent themes to provide rich and detailed insight into the micro and meso levels of intersubjective experience. Themes emerge from the close analysis of any data source, including fieldnotes, ethnographic and reflective memos, interview transcripts, and various print, visual, and digital media.

To prepare to develop themes from research data, researchers often start by engaging with the data through interactive reading, which facilitates the analysts' connection with the data. An accompanying practice is memo writing, which may range from personal notes, to methodological observations, to analytic formulations, with their main purpose being to enrich subsequent analysis. Another practice involves a process of abstraction—creating categories from the complexity of the data. Researchers should avoid the temptation of forcing preestablished distinctions onto the data. Emergent themes must be grounded both empirically (in the data) and conceptually (linked to the wider analytic context).

The actual process of theming entails a bit-by-bit or line-by-line coding. As analysts group bits of data, they need to be “attentive” enough to allow redefinition, reduction, subdivision, or expansion of themes as the analysis proceeds. Emergent theming formalizes analytic connections among pieces of data but does not constitute the end of analysis. Having identified themes, analysts then must assemble them to establish substantive connections. Looking for patterns in the data, identifying regularities or irregularities, constitutes an important activity in making substantial connections.

Grounded theory, in both its positivist formulations (e.g., work by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss) and its constructivist reframing (e.g., work by Kathy Charmaz), is strongly committed to inductive analysis and emergent themes. Grounded theory encompasses a core set of analytic strategies beginning with open coding and followed by an iterative process between theoretical sampling and constant comparison of data among and within emergent categories. The goal is to reach saturation, a point at which no further insight can be gained through additional data analysis. Researchers engage in writing memos to explore emerging theoretical ideas that will facilitate the development of themes (also called conceptual models). There is disagreement as to the role of theoretical influence prior to the research process. In the strictest sense, themes may

emerge from data regardless of researchers' theoretical biases so long as a grounded theory methodology is adhered to rigidly. This position has been critiqued by constructivist scholars who argue that theoretical bias is inevitable and, therefore, must be considered as themes are developed.

J. Patrick Williams

See also Analytic Induction; Grounded Theory; Induction; In Vivo Coding; Thematic Coding and Analysis

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EMIC/ETIC DISTINCTION

An emic perspective is the insider's view of reality. It is one of the principal concepts guiding qualitative research. An emic perspective is fundamental to understanding how people perceive the world around them. Qualitative researchers often begin by asking people open-ended questions about how things work from their perspective. This allows an individual to frame the concept, idea, or situation and then elaborate on it. This provides a more accurate depiction of the individual's "mental map" or cultural understanding. This can be followed up with more fine-grained questions for additional depth and questionnaires to help determine how representative the viewpoint is in the culture. An emic perspective is grounded in a phenomenological view of the universe in comparison with an a priori set of assumptions about what people think and why they act the way they do. Adopting an emic perspective allows for "multiple" realities depending on the role and/or perspective of the individual in the community. An individual's view of the world might not conform with "objective" reality. However, there are real-world consequences for people's perceptions of reality, shaping how they behave in social situations ranging from their families to communities-at-large. Moreover, the validity of an emic construct is based on the native

informant's or community member's views, not on the external social scientist's views. Emic perceptions are shared views of cultural knowledge from the insider's "normative" perspective.

An etic perspective is the external social scientific perspective on reality. The validity of etic descriptions or analyses is based on logical scientific analysis. Etic descriptions or analyses conform with rules of science, including falsifiability, logical consistency, and replicability (when possible and appropriate). Most qualitative researchers start collecting data from the emic or insider's perspective and then try to make sense of what they have collected in terms of both the native's view and their own scientific analysis. An external view without an emic or external foundation is unusual and is uncharacteristic of qualitative work. The etic perspective is typically adopted after multiple, and often conflicting, emic or insider views are collected. The etic view involves stepping back from the insider's views in an attempt to explain how groups are communicating or miscommunicating. Etic knowledge is the foundation of most cross-cultural work, often referred to as ethnology.

David M. Fetterman

See also Reality and Multiple Realities

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EMOTIONS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Contemporary researchers have transformed the place of emotions in qualitative research. Emotions no longer receive short shrift as subjects of research, and many qualitative researchers now recognize that emotions

provide critical resources for data collection and analysis. In the past, positivist researchers eschewed emotions, considering them to be emblematic of the irrational volatility of humans and, therefore, inappropriate for social scientific research. In addition, most researchers attempted to set aside or ignore their own emotional responses so as to emulate the professional ideal of affective neutrality.

Qualitative researchers have historically contended with the criticism that their ongoing and frequently close involvements with research participants render their studies unscientific and subjectively biased, as if the lack of social contact with participants—common in quantitative research—automatically yields objectivity. Due largely to the efforts of qualitative researchers who examined participants' situated emotions and realized their significance for understanding interaction, emotions gradually drew attention as research-worthy phenomena. And with this shift, some field researchers realized, by extension, that rather than strive to erase evidence of their emotional involvement in their work, they could turn their emotional responses into a source of data that would help them to gain a greater understanding of their research participants and the research process itself. Paying greater attention to their emotions by incorporating them into their data ultimately permits qualitative researchers to analyze their subjective responses and unpack the assumptions they carry rather than ignore emotions and pretend that they have no impact on researchers' findings.

Qualitative Studies of Emotions

Qualitative researchers have contributed greatly to our understanding of emotions. The concept of "emotion management," which captures how people try to change, suppress, or evince feelings or expressions in themselves or others, applies to a wide variety of populations and research settings, no matter the size of the group or its levels of interaction. Perhaps most well known is Arlie Russell Hochschild's study of flight attendants and their required—but unpaid—emotional labor. Hochschild's findings inspired a proliferation of studies that track what happens to workers who attempt to manage their emotions under challenging working conditions (often in professional and service occupations).

Through a variety of techniques, qualitative researchers have provided valuable information on

emotions such as fear, anger, shame, sadness, grief, love, desire, sympathy, excitement, suspicion, aggression, frustration, and boredom. Qualitative researchers have contributed greatly to our understanding of how emotions are socially constructed by examining how emotional experiences and the meanings attached to them may vary widely across different cultures and subcultures. They have clarified how the expression, or display, of emotions carries different meanings based on individuals' social statuses and the definitions of the situations in which they interact. For example, qualitative researchers have observed that when someone with high social status (e.g., privileged by sex, class, or race) expresses anger, others may respond as if that anger has a greater intensity and impact than when someone with lower status expresses anger. Someone with high social status may also enjoy immunity from the emotional demands of subordinates. Consequently, emotional privileges accompany the invisible privileges and unearned social rewards that benefit members of high-status groups.

Another important way in which qualitative researchers have learned more about emotions in the course of their investigations comes from their focus on how people learn to be members of social groups. Not only do new members learn what groups define as normative behavior, but they also must learn to feel and express themselves emotionally in ways that other group members expect, understand, and respect. Studies of "emotional socialization"—how people of all ages are taught and learn the "emotion norms" that help them to perform roles and take on new identities and social statuses—add greatly to our understanding of emotions in social life. Qualitative research efforts to track how participants' emotions change over time, and with what consequences, have yielded a greater appreciation for how people come to join, sustain, and leave intimate relationships, therapeutic settings, self-help groups, jobs, subcultures, and social movements.

Emotions as Tools for Qualitative Research

Through their innovative efforts to understand the emotional worlds of others, researchers gained a vocabulary of emotions that could be applied to their feelings about their research and those they researched. Because qualitative methods are predominantly interactive, some researchers realized that their emotional responses to participants—and to

themselves—offered valuable data on the social conditions that help to shape emotions and social life more generally. Analyzing those emotional responses yields both methodological and theoretical benefits.

Treating researchers' emotions as data takes several forms. In some cases, when researchers wonder how a situation or procedure actually makes people feel, they can put themselves in that situation and record the results by taking reflexive notes about what they experience. Sue Estroff famously ingested psychotropic drugs to understand how such medications made psychiatric clients diagnosed with schizophrenia feel and why taking medicine to treat mental illness seemed to be a more powerful stigma than mental illness itself.

In Candace Clark's study of sympathy, rather than limiting her data collection to observing and interviewing other people about their experiences with sympathy, she also carefully recorded her own emotional reactions to ongoing events, interactions, and personal experiences that might or might not trigger sympathy. She studied cultural and material products, such as fiction, commercial "get well" and condolence cards, and published ethnographies, and she recorded introspective fieldnotes after paying attention to when feelings of sympathy arose, to what degree, under what conditions, and with what characters as well as to when sympathy was withheld.

The greatest potential for collecting in-depth data on researchers' emotions is present in autoethnographic research. Carolyn Ellis demonstrated how researchers who engage in "systematic sociological introspection" could improve their understanding of how people experience and process emotions subjectively in the course of their daily lives. Systematic introspection yields valuable insights into how people experience and interpret their emotions physiologically as a part of their everyday meaning-making. Moreover, it is instrumental for investigating how individuals may experience emotions multiply and sequentially as an intertwined process.

The connection between emotions and qualitative research goes much further than researchers' efforts to introspectively collect information on emotions. Emotions have also proved to be vital to qualitative researchers' attempts to gain approval and entry, maintain rapport and access, and exit research settings when their studies approach completion. For example, the abundant literature on obtaining and maintaining research rapport chronicles the critical importance of role-taking emotions, such as trust and empathy, and the

social conditions that enhance or threaten these feelings. Establishing trust and feeling empathy are not ends in themselves; they serve as tools for discovering how and why participants feel and act toward researchers as they do, how participants regulate group membership, and how participants socialize new members. Empathy, in addition, offers a rich opportunity for researchers to understand how participants feel about a range of shared experiences, from commonplace to extraordinary. However, rather than assuming that they have gained insiders' perspectives by striving to feel exactly what participants feel or by attempting to feel deeply for them, researchers fare better if they make an active effort to gather participants' self-reports, compare them with their own observations and reactions, and then consider what those findings mean.

Emotions also offer clues when researchers' efforts stumble; for example, when potential participants refuse to allow access by acting evasively or even forcefully or, after researchers gain entry, when participants suddenly "clam up," respond angrily, or cancel interviews. Some researchers have been expelled from productive research settings and have seen their requests for further contact be rejected. In such cases, the sources and meanings behind participants' distrust and suspicion deserve careful examination and review, as does these researchers' own sense of disappointment and frustration.

But even if participants gradually warm up to the idea of being studied or if they enthusiastically accept an invitation to be studied, qualitative researchers benefit from cultivating a feeling of skepticism. Deciding whether or not to conduct projects, ask particular questions, explore leads, contact interviewees, uncover contradictions, and check out working hypotheses all are places where skepticism may provide a payoff. A small measure of skepticism may serve researchers well by helping them to avoid jumping to conclusions or forging blindly ahead without considering the consequences.

However, sometimes researchers go beyond cautious skepticism and instead feel deep distrust or dislike toward participants and regard their actions and belief systems as mistaken or harmful. Occasionally field researchers expect at the outset to feel distancing emotions such as disgust and anger, particularly if they study groups whose goals differ radically from their own such as members of right-wing racist or sexist social movements. But other times researchers' dislike of some participants catches researchers by surprise, leading them to worry that they are deficient

researchers because they lack empathy that they think is required for “good” field research. Rather than interpreting a lack of empathy as a research failing (and trying to fake it), qualitative researchers can instead use this absence of emotion as an analytic prod and explore the assumptions that unintentionally guide their research. Likewise, unpleasant emotions such as anger can serve as clues about inequalities that deserve further attention. If researchers’ sense of injustice is provoked while conducting research, that feeling may signal more than empathy for certain participants and antipathy for others. Analyzing the conditions that provoke feelings of injustice and considering alternative conditions that would not trigger the same reaction can help researchers to understand the beliefs, assumptions, and interactions that shape inequalities in participants’ social worlds.

Ultimately, researchers’ emotions can be critical for analyzing data—made easier if researchers record their emotions while collecting data in the first place. Noting how, when, what, for whom, and under what conditions researchers feel particular emotions during their studies can open multiple opportunities for research discovery and sharper analyses. To interpret their emotional responses, researchers should examine the background identities, roles, and political ideologies they bring to their studies. By analyzing how their worldviews may differ from or resemble those of participants and by trying to put those differences or similarities into context—topics that some investigators discuss openly with participants—researchers gain analytic insights relevant to their projects that extend far beyond simple self-awareness.

A final source of emotions data that bears relevance for analysis can be found in how other people react emotionally to the topics and populations researchers study (and how researchers feel as a result). These reactions may mirror how influential outsiders view and constrain participants’ lives—especially when those participants belong to subordinate groups—and so may provide additional clues and questions for researchers to pursue.

By treating participants’, outsiders’, and their own emotions as valuable data from the beginning of a project to its close, qualitative researchers can enrich their research processes and deepen their analytic insights.

Martha A. Copp

See also Autoethnography; Empathy; Rapport; Reflexivity; Systematic Sociological Introspection

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EMPATHY

Research with human subjects can often involve conflicting emotional responses on the part of the person conducting research. The researcher, for example, may feel a sense of aversion to what she or he sees and hears. More commonly, however, the researcher may develop a sense of empathy with the research participants that involves feelings of identification with participants’ life problems. When research techniques such as participant observation and other similar qualitative methods are employed, the researcher often attempts to see the world from the participants’ perspective and tries to develop an ability to take the role of the “other.” Such empathetic role-taking between humans suggests that most people have a desire to understand what life is like for those who are different from themselves. Qualitative researchers who employ such methodologies involving interviewing, observation, and ethnography do so to better understand how participants interpret and give meaning to their own experiences. Developing empathy for the social and

personal lives of research participants facilitates a deeper understanding of social life in general.

One of the possible difficulties of developing empathy with the subjects of qualitative research is that one's objectivity may diminish. Rapport with research participants helps to understand their attitudes, feelings, and lived experiences, but it also may lead to overidentification. In anthropology, for example, some researchers have crossed the line of objectivity to the extent that they have chosen to live permanently in their research settings and not return to academic life. Under these sorts of circumstances, the scientific value of their ethnographic research could be lost altogether, especially if they chose not to publish the results of their study. In sum, developing rapport and showing empathy for the subjects of research, usually called "informants" in anthropology, can lead to useful insights into the lived experiences of local peoples, but it can also lead to a diminished objective viewpoint that may hinder placing the results of one's research in a wider context. In fieldwork settings that can be far removed from universities and other centers of scholarly activity, and may involve long periods of isolation for the social scientist, it is important to remember the initial goals and reasons underlying one's research activity so as to maintain a proper perspective.

Edward J. Hedican

See also Lived Experience; Participant Observation; Rapport

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EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Empirical research, following the tenets of empiricism, is grounded in the belief that direct observation of phenomena is an appropriate way to measure reality and generate truth about the world. Within the realm of qualitative research, then, empirical research has been redefined to challenge traditional notions of

"truth" and "evidence" while still maintaining the basic premises of acknowledging the materials under study as "empirical." This entry reviews the development of empirical research in the social sciences, describes the role of qualitative methods in the field, and considers ways in which qualitative researchers have sought to redefine rigor and find new criteria for evaluating research.

Empirical Research and Logical Positivism

Empirical research in the social sciences has been shaped by logical positivism, an ontological framework that assumes social phenomena can be studied scientifically when modeled along the objective, experimental, verifiable, and generalizable methods of the natural sciences. The philosophical assumption in positivist research is that of foundationalism—that all knowledge has a secure foundation and that following the right procedures leads us to "truth." From its origins, social science has been enmeshed with the Enlightenment ideas about human reason. From Francis Bacon to David Hume, to Auguste Comte, to Émile Durkheim and several others after that, the focus has been on facts (defined as an observable reality "out there" that is independent of the researcher and that the researcher can capture by being objective and following certain methods) and the causal explanation of facts. Logical positivism insists that value is not a part of science, primarily because it cannot be observed and is not part of an "objective" philosophy. Human subjectivity in knowledge creation is typically sealed off. Only observations are important, and methods are designed to control biases and prejudices. The main goal of this kind of research is to generate universal explanations and predictions of social phenomena. It is assumed that there is always a causal explanation for phenomena. In traditional empirical research, human action is constrained and shaped by factors and forces (including external stimuli) that must be observed correctly and objectively if knowledge is to be created. Positivist and much post-positivist practice defines knowledge as a product of something we use (techne/method).

However, contemporary naturalism accepts that no unequivocal procedures/criteria for choosing among different competing knowledge claims is possible. Also, facts and values are no longer entirely separated, and it is now accepted that observation is theory laden, thereby creating more similarities with the anti-naturalist stand.

Empirical Research Within Qualitative Research

Qualitative methods texts outline various approaches to conducting empirical research within this paradigm. For example, John Creswell outlined five methodological approaches to qualitative empirical research: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research. Similarly, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln discussed several sources of, and techniques for, gathering empirical data: observation, interviews, analysis of cultural and archival records, visual methods, autoethnography, data management and analysis techniques, computer-assisted analysis, focus groups, applied ethnography, and conversation and cultural analyses. All of these approaches address the central goal of empirical research—to observe phenomena in the social world so as to generate knowledge about these phenomena.

Rigor in Empirical Qualitative Research

Empirical research is based on ideals of credibility, confirmability, and other core tenets of rigor, all of which are interconnected and engaged with the researcher's own objective or subjective stance. In qualitative research, traditional notions of objectivity, reliability, generalizability, and validity (central to rigor in quantitative projects) have been challenged and redefined. Unfortunately, many scholars in the quantitative realm misunderstand the nature of rigor in qualitative research, and this has led several empiricists to question whether qualitative research and qualitative methods can be truly considered “empirical” and, therefore, adequately scientific. What warrants subjectively mediated meanings? This issue is discussed greatly by qualitative empirical researchers, both in defense of their underlying philosophy and in improving their practice of research, by making clear that an “anything goes” approach to knowledge is not acceptable.

Qualitative researchers have proposed several approaches that offer alternative ways of achieving validity. These include contextualized (“thick”) description, catalytic (validity) criteria, and triangulation.

In contextualized thick description (formulated mainly along Clifford Geertz's ideas and in ethnographic research), the goal is to understand what

“goes into” the phenomena in question by “searching out” and analyzing symbolic forms, such as words, images, institutions, and behaviors, in terms of how people actually represent themselves publicly. The main issue here is how the context is described and taken into account through the research. Thus, descriptive validity can be achieved by keeping the data linked to issues of interpretive validity.

Catalytic validity directs us to the possibility of the research moving to help those researched so as to transform their world and experiences. Therefore, as has been argued by many, the criterion for this kind of validity will focus primarily on the effect of the inquiry process in changing reality. Triangulation refers mainly to the multimethod focus of qualitative research. The use of multiple methods helps in gaining greater rigor and more in-depth understanding of the issues or phenomena in question. It adds to the overall richness of the research and provides a much more varied set of data as compared with the use of one single method.

Challenges to Positivism

Thomas Schwandt described the “crisis of legitimation” that has emerged through the challenges to claims that a text is an authoritative account of experience. From a positivist empirical perspective, the knower and the known are separate and distinct, and knowledge claims are warranted by the appeal to the use of proper methods. Proper methods ensure that claims depict the world accurately and objectively without the biases of the observer/knower. In contrast, a constructionist empirical stance is grounded in the belief that observations are theory, value, and perspective laden and that the knower and the known are inextricably intertwined. No particular set of methods is epistemically privileged.

Critical theory, feminist stances, and some social constructionist stances would state largely that issues of epistemological criteria must be considered within a larger political framework where power relations, in particular, are addressed. In postmodern qualitative work, for example, rhetorical and aesthetic persuasion and coherence may play a key role in shaping the work, leading to a shift in dissemination toward literature and performance as representational forms.

A strong postmodern stance and radical skepticism/nihilism would state that understanding and meaning-making are relative constructions, rendering definitive notions of “validity” obsolete. According to Ian

Stronach, for example, one can only engage in the endless play of difference rather than locating and reflecting common experiences. Some qualitative researchers would say that we need to bring open-ended, constantly evolving lists to the project of judgment—lists of characteristics relevant to that text—and that we must be intentionally polyvocal. Criteria, then, must be context specific.

According to a Gadamerian hermeneutic position, research is not about epistemic criteria but rather about dialogically engaging in open, morally relevant conversations about understandings of appropriate practice. We need to offer our reasons for analyzing and making research determinations based on our knowledge claims and engage in conversations about them, for judgment is inherently social and shared.

The Politics of Empirical Research

Scholars working in areas such as feminist research, Indigenous research, African American studies, South Asian studies, queer studies, cultural studies, and a number of other disciplines have tried to redefine traditional understandings of what constitutes “valid evidence” by questioning what and how knowledge is re-produced and re-presented and for whose benefit. Empirical research in this context, then, is politicized by these critical qualitative groups of scholars across the globe and by other “scientific” scholars who continue to claim to be proponents of truth and the ways of achieving it through empirical research.

Indeed, traditional patterns of exclusion (e.g., of lived experiences of marginalized communities) can be further supported by the state through funding, supporting, and setting standards for research. The concept of empiricism is often politicized in this manner when the state defines standards by which to determine what scientific interventions are “working.” In the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as in parts of Europe, a global movement toward an audit accountability culture shaped by state funding of scientific research tends to emphasize evidence-based social science research projects modeled along the biomedical sciences. This approach raises new questions for qualitative scholars in the debate around what constitutes “valid,” and therefore “fundable,” research.

Himika Bhattacharya

See also Disengagement; Empiricism; Objectivity; Validity

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EMPIRICISM

The central claim of empiricism is that experience is the foundation of knowledge and that the project of gaining access to a reality other than experience is problematic. However, like *positivism*, a term with which it is closely associated, *empiricism* has been used to designate different claims and tendencies during its

long history, and the concept has evolved to such an extent that those who are now regarded as copybook empiricists—for example, the British empiricist trio of John Locke, Bishop George Berkeley, and David Hume—were strongly inclined to reject that description of themselves. Both terms suffer from radical ambiguity, for just as positivism cannot be identified with a single view uniquely defining a distinctive position, so too is empiricism extremely difficult to pin down precisely, especially as many of the ideas routinely labeled *positivist* could, with as much or as little justification, be equally described as *empiricist*. It might, therefore, be sensible to read this entry alongside the corresponding one on positivism.

The entry begins with a review of empiricist ideas in philosophy and then considers the impact of these ideas on the social sciences, specifically the way in which they are reflected in qualitative methods.

Empiricist Claims in Philosophy

Historically, there are a number of beliefs and attitudes that have been attributed to empiricist authors. Most frequently cited, perhaps, is the claim that the only source of knowledge is experience. However, there are ambiguities in this sort of formulation, and it gains in precision only as alternative views are specified and rejected. For example, granted that experience is the only source of knowledge, does an empiricist permit operations to be performed on experience—and, if so, what kind of operations? Some empiricists think that the only permissible type of operation is simple numerical induction; others, such as John Stuart Mill, reject this stringent limitation and argue for more sophisticated inductive methods (including, in Mill's case, the methods of agreement and difference) capable of identifying causes and effects. In Mill's terminology, it is empiricism that he was repudiating, although he took himself to belong to the "school of experience" rather than to the "school of intuition." The irony is that, according to modern typologies, he would be classed as an empiricist par excellence.

Bacon's Insects

Mill's use was inherited from Francis Bacon, who compared empiricists to ants, "merely collecting and using," and contrasted them with dogmatists or "spiders" who "spin webs out of themselves." But according to *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*,

published in 1905, Bacon's preferred insect was the bee, which gathers "flowers from the garden" and then "by her own powers transforms and digests them; and the real work of . . . [science] is similar" (p. 288). The empiricist tendency to which Bacon metaphorically objected, then, was the mere aggregation of "findings" as opposed to the kind of intellectual work that does something creative with them—although it is equally opposed to dispensing with empirical data in favor of philosophy, dogma, and religion.

Innate Ideas

Next is a claim that differentiated the 17th- and 18th-century British empiricists from the continental rationalists. Locke, for example, argued that the mind is originally a *tabula rasa* and that all ideas are the result of experience literally imprinting itself on this blank sheet. This is in contrast to Gottfried Leibniz, for example, who believed that the mind is more like a block of marble, with innate ideas already threaded into it and ready to be sculpted by whatever experience brings. This distinction is clearly very different from the one between spiders, ants, and bees. It refers not to any methodological alternatives but rather to a view about the nature of the mind. Moreover, it is clear that the two distinctions are independent of each other; it would not be any more inconsistent for Bacon's ant to believe in innate ideas than for the spider to believe in *tabula rasa*. This observation anticipates a problem (which is typical of positivism as well as empiricism); the views associated with the label do not necessarily need to belong together. The ant, for example, is an empiricist in Bacon's sense, but not necessarily in Locke's sense.

Nominalism

Another aspect of Locke's doctrine is his nominalism. This is the view that general descriptive terms refer not to real structures or qualities in the world but rather to ideas derived purely from sense experience. Locke's claim was that we can form abstract ideas on the basis of the particular things we experience but that the words associated with these ideas do not refer to anything beyond experience itself. There is an "external" fundamental reality that underlies our experience, but it is not something to which we can have access, and the general terms we use do not apply to it. In other words, concepts reflect only the

organization of experience; they do not reflect the way in which reality is “carved at the joints.” Locke, then, rejected the view that it is possible to know the “real essences” of things (although in fact there are real essences) and argued that the objects of knowledge are “nominal essences”—the various combinations of experience to which we give names. In Locke’s form of empiricism, there is an unknowable reality as well as experience. In other forms (e.g., Berkeley’s), there is no unknowable reality because the only reality is experience itself.

Against Certainty

A significant corollary of nominalism is the view that experience is always specific, never general. We apprehend particular things, not universal properties, and still less universal truths. It follows from this that any general claims we do make must, by definition, go beyond the particularity of experience and, therefore, are less than certain. So not only is it true that we can never know about an underlying reality, but also generalizations about experience cannot be guaranteed either, although they may be assessed in terms of probability or, in Locke’s terms, “likeliness to be true.” To this extent, therefore, empiricism represents a principled resistance to speculation about the real world, appeals to entities and forces that cannot be observed directly, and the assumption that some things can be known with certainty.

Because empiricism takes all legitimate beliefs to be derived from experience, it is normally regarded as a foundationalist position. Even here, however, there is something of an ambiguity. Empiricism is quite clearly foundationalist in the sense that all knowledge must ultimately be referable to experience, but that is only one rather weak criterion. A stronger criterion is that, for a belief to count as knowledge, it must be possible to demonstrate its correctness, starting with particular experiences and deriving the belief from them according to some rule of inference. This is obviously a more ambitious project, and not all empiricists have aspired to it. Locke, for example, could not be classified as a foundationalist in the second sense because his rejection of the claim that generalizations can be known with certainty shows that he did not believe that demonstration of this kind was possible (at least for that type of belief). So the idea that empiricism is intrinsically foundationalist should be treated with caution.

Observation and Theory

Still, empiricism does require a distinctive account of theory and theoretical ideas. Scientific theories, especially in physics, seem to refer to entities that do not occur in experience (e.g., subatomic particles). So, if the empiricist believes that all knowledge is derivable from experience, she or he must explain how this is possible. A number of solutions to this problem have been proposed. The classic solution involves claiming that all theoretical concepts are reducible to (i.e., definable in terms of) observational language. Wherever a theoretical term is used, it can in principle be translated into claims about what has been, or might be, observed—even if such a translation is unlikely to be forthcoming in practice. If this solution can be made to work, theoretical concepts simply become convenient forms of shorthand, ultimately equivalent to sets of actual and possible observations.

One of the main reasons this does not work, however, is that it implies a certain type of distinction between observation and theory. Specifically, it implies that there must be experiences that can be identified and described independent of theory (because all theory is reducible to the language of observation). But the overwhelming consensus in philosophy of science during the past 40 years or so is that observational terms are “theory laden”—that it is impossible, in other words, to describe even the simplest observation without making reference to some theory. So, the classic solution, it is now universally agreed, fails.

The idea that all observation is theory laden has another apparent implication—that “plain observation” is unable to adjudicate between competing theories simply because observation statements have theory built into them and so cannot (after all) be “plain.” But if that is correct, then it would seem to follow that it is futile to attempt to determine the truth of any matter because there is no neutral, theory-independent way of adjudicating between theories. This view seems to lead to some form of relativism and has had a significant impact on methodological writing in the social sciences.

Summary

On this account, then, the claims most commonly attributed to empiricism are that experience is the only source of knowledge (although there are different views about what sorts of operation on experience are permitted, ranging from mere ant-like aggregation to

intellectual procedures of varying degrees of sophistication); experience is the foundation of all knowledge (opinions differ on how strong a claim this is); there are no innate structures in the mind; we experience particular things, not universal truths; we have no access to reality (unless we take experience to be the only reality) and cannot know things with certainty; theoretical statements are ultimately a form of shorthand, translatable into accounts of what has been, or might be, observed; and observation can hope to adjudicate between competing theories and determine which of them is more likely to be true.

Empiricism and Social Research

It is presumably true to say that the majority of social scientists are empiricists in the weakest sense of the term, which involves the claim that experience, in the form of observation, is the ultimate source of knowledge without any specific implications about what forms that observation should take or about the nature of the relation between observation and theory. But this is only to say that most social scientists are committed to empirical inquiry and that very few of them believe that significant conclusions can be drawn on the basis of pure speculation, theology, philosophy, or unsupported intuition. In a similar way, the existence (or not) of innate ideas plays virtually no part in methodological thinking (although many cognitive scientists believe that the mind has innate, or innately channeled, processing systems). So, for the purposes of this discussion, these characteristic tenets of rationalism can be left to one side.

Dust Bowl Empiricism

However, other elements of empiricist philosophy do surface in writing about sociological method. For example, Bacon's complaint about empiricist "ants" is reflected in rather similar objections to the "mere collection" of social facts, an approach to inquiry that is likewise dismissed as empiricist. It is argued that arid accumulation of this kind is atheoretical; it offers no explanations, tests no hypotheses, solves no intellectual puzzles, suggests no interpretations, and therefore provides no real understanding of the social world. This is sometimes called "dust bowl empiricism," a metaphor derived from the term used to describe the dry, dust storm-ridden plains of Texas, Kansas, Colorado, and Oklahoma during the 1930s. The idea

is that, in the absence of theory, a heap of unconnected facts is as barren as the American Dust Bowl. (On the other hand, it could be argued equally well that in some areas of social research, such as market research and public sector statistics, empiricist fact collection is justifiable.) Although this "abstracted empiricism" is most commonly associated with quantitative methods, it can also take a qualitative form. Indeed, some phenomenological researchers make a point of being purely descriptive, collecting accounts of respondents' experiences in a manner that is self-consciously uninformed by theoretical considerations. Arguably, this is no less "dust bowl empiricism" than the stacking up of bare statistics.

Empiricism and Qualitative Methods

Fact gathering is the form of empiricism that both Bacon and Mill rejected. But if empiricism, taken less narrowly, begins with experience and derives theories and explanations inductively from data (as in Mill's own account), then commonly adopted methods in qualitative social research can evidently be classified as empiricist. Grounded theory is an obvious example. The whole point of grounded theory is to build theory out of data, with theoretical terms defined in terms of codes emerging from the analysis of data and, therefore, semantically bound to evidence. In this respect, grounded theory is a qualitative version of operationalism, the empiricist strategy more frequently associated with quantitative methods, in which theoretical concepts are defined by how they are measured. In qualitative work, measurement is not in question; however, if the meaning of a theoretical concept is tied strictly to the procedures for analyzing data as in grounded theory, then the link between observation and theory is comparable. In a similar way, the analytic induction tradition, extending from Mill to Charles Ragin, generates explanations on the basis of purely logical relations between qualitatively defined variables without any reference to external theoretical constructs.

The contrast here is with independently defined theoretical terms and inference to the best explanation (sometimes called "abduction"). The recent interest in social mechanisms provides an excellent example of an approach—largely qualitative—that is certainly not empiricist because it postulates mechanisms (conceivably unobservable themselves) underlying observable phenomena and finds evidence for their existence, and the nature of their operation, by testing corresponding

hypotheses during data collection. Although there are several variations on this theme, they all are rooted in an explicit critique of empiricism and positivism. By the same token, they are realist in orientation, taking as a premise that there is a knowable reality behind appearances (in opposition to Locke), a reality that cannot be identified just with our experience of it (in opposition to Berkeley). Qualitative methods suited to this approach have been discussed, particularly in the context of evaluation research and case studies.

Observation as Theory Laden

The view that all observation is theory laden complicates matters and has encouraged many writers to reject both empiricism and realism. Because observation, according to this view, is not neutral and cannot be described independent of prior theoretical commitments, the operationalist strategy of grounded theory is blocked (the antiempiricist argument). At the same time, however, it is impossible to adjudicate between competing realist theories given that observation cannot provide an independent court of appeal (the antirealism argument). This line of thought leads to constructivism, interpretivism, and hermeneutics because the only strategy left open is the exploration of various accounts of experience, each of which will embody different theories, different interpretations, and different preconceptions. These positions imply that the researcher's own account is just one interpretation among others, one that cannot be shown to be more "accurate" or more "true" than any other, for this would require neutral, non-theory-laden observations to test competing accounts—and that, according to the premise, is impossible.

Or so the argument goes. But one familiar counterargument should be mentioned. This recognizes that observation is theory laden but points out that the theory being tested is not necessarily the same as the theory that is built into the observation (in fact, this is highly unlikely). The project of adjudicating between theories need not be abandoned, therefore, because there is no circularity involved.

Parallels Between Empiricism and Constructivism

Despite their rejection of some empiricist claims, constructivists and interpretivists are very close to empiricism in other respects. They share with the classical empiricists a skepticism about "universal truths" and

generalizations, preferring to focus on the particularities of unique situations and experiences. Like Locke, they are hostile to the idea of reality, the aspiration to certainty, and the assumption that it is ever possible to check for a "correspondence" between reality and theory. Like Berkeley, they believe that (interpreted) experience is all there is, although their idealism is more extravagant than Berkeley's because they favor multiple realities instead of just one reality. The concepts they develop cannot be identified with Locke's real essences but instead are nominal essences, as "constructed" as the concepts used by their research participants. Only in studies allegedly based on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (especially in nursing research) is there any ambiguity about whether the "essential structure" of a phenomenon is essential to somebody's experience or is essential to something (the phenomenon) that is independent of that experience.

Conclusion

Empiricism, then, is a family of claims, with not all of them compatible with one another, and to that extent it makes little sense to either reject or embrace empiricism *tout court*. As with positivism, however, the assumption that it represents a single, coherent unified paradigm has taken hold over the past 40 years or so, making it more difficult to evaluate individual claims on their own merits. The unexamined view that all of these claims stand or fall together has tended to polarize methodological and epistemological discussion and creates the impression that the empiricist "package" can only be rejected in its entirety. Still, perhaps the recent reexaminations of the history of both empiricism and positivism in philosophy will loosen some of the more rigid beliefs, and prompt qualitative researchers into recognizing that they do not necessarily need to abandon every empiricist idea just because they have rejected one.

John Paley

See also Constructivism; Induction; Paradigm; Positivism; Realism

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EMPOWERMENT

An ethical stance in qualitative research is to create an empowering space in which research participants share power with researchers. Empowering methodologies have the ability to promote social transformation by turning upside down the traditional hegemonic relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Researchers can move toward equalizing the inherent power differential in their relationship with research participants by paying attention to issues of voice, interpretation, interactions, dialogue, and reflexivity; by making a conscious effort to include the voice and feedback of all system of care participants; and by seeking to understand participants' own meanings and interpretations and using these interpretations of reality rather than their own. Empowering methodologies have the ability to represent multiple voices in a collaborative co-constructed manner. However, there is a difference between voice and empowerment. It is certainly possible to include participants' voices in a research project but to still not empower participants.

Empowering research takes place in collaborative dialogic processes that examine the research relationship

itself and seek to understand the role of the researcher and the researched as co-participants in the research process. In addition, methodologies that let research participants have a say in how the research is conducted by exerting or influencing control over the conversations have the potential to tilt the balance of power in the research relationship from the researcher to the participants. Participatory action research is an example of one methodology that attempts to break down power relationships between the researcher and the researched by letting the stakeholders define the problem and work toward solutions. True participant empowerment would imply giving research participants status that is fully equal to that of researchers. Creating full empowerment in a research relationship requires major shifts in thinking and behaving—inviting participants to formulate the original questions, design the methodology, facilitate the data collection, and lead the analysis efforts. It might require moving the research into the community. It most certainly requires disengagement on the part of “professional” researchers to allow “nonprofessional” researchers room to engage. This is not an easy task. Professional researchers must be willing to let go—to step away from the process—so as to open a space for the other participants to have power.

Therefore, although participant empowerment is certainly a worthy and ethical goal of qualitative research, full empowerment of participants is almost impossible. Inviting people to participate in research that has already been designed, organized, and set up by professional researchers will not likely succeed in truly affecting the power relationship inherent in a research project. Research findings written for the academy marginalize and subordinate voices that are not academic. Thus, experience has shown that, despite attempts to empower participants as co-researchers, participants seem to experience critical homeostasis—the return to traditional power dynamics in the researcher–researched role.

Christine S. Davis

See also Action Research; Hegemony; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Representation; Voice

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EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION

Empowerment evaluation is the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination. Empowerment evaluation is designed to help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection. Program participants—including clients, consumers, and staff members—conduct their own evaluations, with an outside evaluator often serving as a coach or an additional facilitator depending on internal program capabilities. By internalizing and institutionalizing self-evaluation processes and practices, a dynamic and responsive approach to evaluation can be developed.

The roots of empowerment evaluation are in action anthropology and community psychology. This evaluation approach is shaped by traditional ethnographic concepts and techniques, including adopting an emic or insider's perspective, remaining nonjudgmental, contextualizing the data, and applying a cultural interpretation. In addition, it relies on qualitative and quantitative data.

There are three steps involved in helping others learn to evaluate their own programs: (1) developing a mission, vision, or unifying purpose; (2) taking stock or determining where the program stands, including strengths and weaknesses; and (3) planning for the future by establishing goals and helping participants to determine their own strategies to accomplish program goals and objectives. In addition, empowerment evaluators help program staff members and participants to determine the type of evidence required to document and monitor progress credibly toward their goals.

Baseline Comparison and a Culture of Evidence

The “taking stock” step creates a baseline self-assessment of the program. The “plans for the future” step represents the intervention or “treatment.” Conventional evaluation tools, such as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and observations, are used to

determine whether the strategies are working or accomplishing the group goals. These mini-tests represent an ongoing feedback mechanism, providing corrective feedback for decision making. Program staff members and participants can make midcourse corrections before “it is too late.” If the strategies are not working based on the evaluative feedback, then it is time to change the strategies. Approximately 3 to 6 months later, another formal “taking stock” session is conducted. The first “taking stock” findings are compared with the follow-up or second “taking stock” findings to document change over time. Once again this is used for corrective feedback, confirming the effectiveness of certain strategies that should be maintained or enhanced and the ineffectiveness of other strategies that need to be revisited and changed. The cyclical process helps to internalize the logic of evaluation and builds an evaluative folk culture as well as a culture of evidence.

Principles

Empowerment evaluation is secondarily about methods and specific activities. Communities may adopt a 3-step approach, as discussed earlier, or a 10-step approach, such as the Getting to Outcomes model. In addition, there are many specific tools and methods that can be used to conduct empowerment evaluations, ranging from online survey software to video storytelling. However, these are tools to accomplish only specific objectives. Empowerment evaluation practice is a reflection or manifestation of empowerment evaluation principles and values.

The 10 principles of empowerment evaluation are the following:

1. Improvement
2. Community ownership
3. Inclusion
4. Democratic participation
5. Social justice
6. Community knowledge
7. Evidence-based strategies
8. Capacity building
9. Organizational learning
10. Accountability

These principles guide every part of empowerment evaluation, from conceptualization to implementation. The principles of empowerment evaluation serve as a lens to focus an evaluation. For example, the principle of inclusion recommends erring on the side of including rather than excluding members of the community, even though fiscal and scheduling constraints might suggest otherwise. The capacity-building principle reminds the evaluator to provide community members with an opportunity to collect their own data, even though it might initially be faster and easier for the evaluator to collect the same information. The accountability principle guides community members to hold each other accountable and also situates the evaluation within the context of external requirements. The community is accountable for reaching specific standards or delivering specific results, products, and/or outcomes.

Process Use

In an empowerment evaluation, members of the community, organization, and/or program conduct their own evaluation. Moreover, they are engaged in various aspects of the evaluation, ranging from the conceptual direction to specific data collection, analysis, and reporting responsibilities. This is at the heart of process use and knowledge use. The more community members participate in and control the evaluation, the more likely they are to embrace the findings and recommendations because they own them. However, not every community member engaged in the evaluation needs to conduct a survey or write a report. The group

may elect or appoint representatives. They (the individuals, groups, or representatives) must be involved in a substantive component of the evaluation and take control of the direction of the effort, but there are no absolute mandates concerning specific rules of engagement or the percentage of time on task.

Theories of Action and Use

One of the primary tasks in an empowerment evaluation is the reduction in the gap between what people say they want to do and what they are actually doing in practice. The aim is to reduce the gap between what is intended and what actually happens. To accomplish this objective, empowerment evaluation relies on the reciprocal relationship between theories of action and use. A *theory of action* is usually the espoused operating theory about how a program or an organization works. It is a useful tool that is generally based on program personnel views. The theory of action is often compared with a *theory of use*, which is the actual program reality or the observable behavior of stakeholders. People engaged in empowerment evaluations create a theory of action at one stage and test it against the existing theory of use at a later stage. Similarly, they create a new theory of action as they plan for the future. Because empowerment evaluation is an ongoing and iterative process, stakeholders test their theories of action against theories of use during various microcycles to determine whether their strategies are being implemented as recommended or designed. The theories go hand in hand in empowerment evaluation.

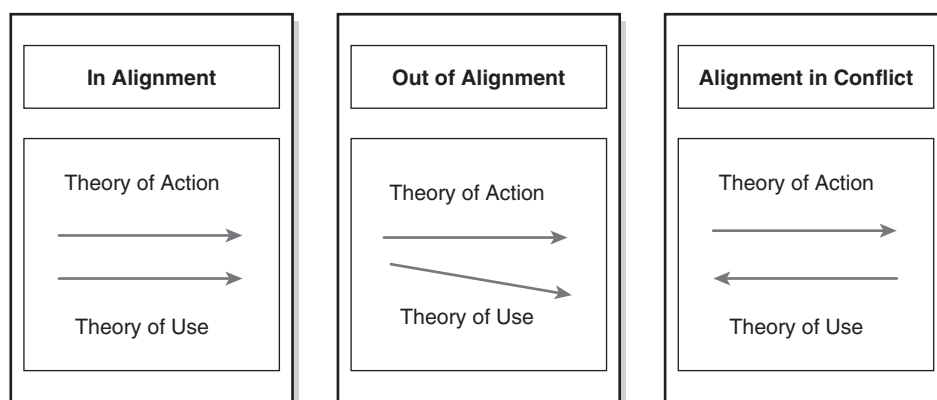


Figure 1 Contrasting Patterns of Alignment

Source: Fetterman, D. M. (2005). A window into the heart and soul of empowerment evaluation: Looking through the lens of empowerment evaluation principles. In D. M. Fetterman & A. Wandersman (Eds.), *Empowerment evaluation principles in practice* (p. 14). New York: Guilford. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press.

These theories are used to identify gross differences between the ideal and the real. For example, communities of empowerment evaluation practice compare their theory of action with their theory of use to determine whether the two theories are even pointing in the same direction. Three common patterns that emerge from this comparison are in alignment, out of alignment, and alignment in conflict (Figure 1). *In alignment* is when the two theories are parallel or pointed in the same direction. They may be distant or close levels of alignment, but they are on the same general track. *Out of alignment* occurs when actual practice is divergent from the espoused theory of how things are supposed to work. The theory of use is not simply distant or closely aligned but actually off target or at least pointed in another direction. *Alignment in conflict* occurs when the two theories of action and use are pointed in diametrically opposite directions. This signals a group or an organization in serious trouble or self-denial.

After making the first-level comparison, a gross indicator, to determine whether the theories of action and use are even remotely related to each other, communities of empowerment evaluation practice compare their theory of action with their theory of use in an effort to reduce the gap between them. This assumes that the two theories are at least pointed in the same direction. The ideal progression is from distant alignment to close alignment between the two theories. This is the conceptual space where most communities of empowerment evaluation strive to accomplish their goals as they close the gap between

the theories (Figure 2). The process of empowerment embraces the tension between the two types of theories and offers a means for reconciling incongruities. This dialectic, in which theories of action and use are routinely juxtaposed in daily practice, creates a culture of learning and evaluation.

Conclusion

Empowerment evaluation is similar to many forms of evaluation. Many of the same tools are used, including interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and observations. The only difference is that it places conventional evaluation and wisdom on its head. The group is in charge of its own evaluation instead of the evaluator being in charge. The evaluation is a collaboration instead of an individual or external enterprise. The evaluator is a coach or critical friend rather than an external expert. The focus is on self-determination, capacity building, internal accountability, and program improvement. At every step, the evaluation process becomes more responsive to the context and culture of the group. Diversity is a valued contribution, adding to the effort instead of subtracting from the effort.

Empowerment evaluation adheres to evaluation standards. It does not operate in a vacuum. It is conducted within the context of existing external standards and requirements. In addition, internal or empowerment evaluation and external evaluation are not mutually exclusive. They work together very well. They strengthen each other. The difference between

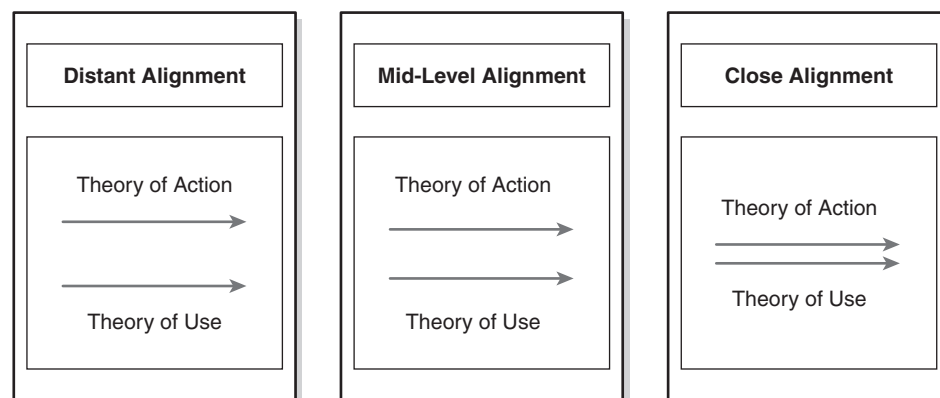


Figure 2 Aligning Theories of Action and Use to Reduce the Gap

Source: Fetterman, D. M. (2005). A window into the heart and soul of empowerment evaluation: Looking through the lens of empowerment evaluation principles. In D. M. Fetterman & A. Wandersman (Eds.), *Empowerment evaluation principles in practice*, (p. 15). New York: Guilford. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press.

empowerment and many forms of conventional evaluation, however, is that program staff members and participants take charge of their own lives. They act as self-motivated and actualized individuals with intermediate objectives associated with larger group or organizational goals. They internalize and institutionalize evaluation. They create a dynamic and creative learning organization that can be sustained in one format or another for a lifetime.

David M. Fetterman

See also Ethnography

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Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation
Topical Interest Group: <http://www.stanford.edu/~davidf/empowermentevaluation.html>

EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is the theory or science of the method and ground of knowledge. It is a core area of philosophical study that includes the sources and limits, rationality and justification of knowledge. Its etymological roots are Greek from *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (explanation). Although it is an ancient concept, the term *epistemology* first appeared in English use during the mid-19th century; this gives it modern meaning. The following three questions are basic to epistemology. What is knowing? What is the known? What is knowledge? These questions have wide interest

for fields of inquiry but are central to the sciences broadly defined, including qualitative research. Because of its disciplinary base, this discussion deals only with matters that have concerned philosophers. Because of its modern importance, it deals primarily with relatively recent philosophy and concentrates on the 20th century and today. Following overview discussions, a central section on exemplary epistemologies suggests the underlying position of this entry—that the meaning and application of “knowledge,” as a history of philosophy suggests, has always been (and still is) dynamic, diverse, and “at bottom” diffuse. Another purpose of the entry is to introduce readers to the language of philosophy.

Foundations

A history of Western epistemology reveals that the principal philosophical occupation has been what American philosopher John Dewey called “the quest for certainty.” A first aspect of this quest, or the search for foundation, has been to align philosophy with other organized bodies of inquiry that were thought to be “certain.” Across millennia, these have included religion, mathematics, logic, and science. During the 20th century, the foundations of knowledge were sought in mathematics, in the natural sciences (especially mathematical physics), and in the structures and uses of language.

A second dimension of the search for foundation has been in posing philosophical systems. Historically, many philosophical systems were posited—with each apparently thought to be *the* answer to the quest. The idea of a system is that a set of “founding premises” serves as a basis for asking subsequent epistemological questions. Modern but traditional examples include rationalism and empiricism, idealism and realism. Not discussed elsewhere in this encyclopedia, the rationalism of René Descartes serves as an illustration. For him, philosophy is a process in which the mind turns inward seeking foundation through reason. Employing a method of doubting all that he knew, Descartes came to a clear and distinct idea—a truth. Two were revealed: the cogito or consciousness and God. Descartes’s framework is the dualistic separate relationship of self and object. With the writings principally of Descartes, David Hume, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant, epistemology rather than metaphysics became central to modern philosophy. In general, questions arising across foundational systems focus on

the relationship of person to world and to other persons, of inner immaterial mind or minds and outer material world. Additional questions include source, authority and form of knowledge, process of making a claim, and domain of application.

Perhaps the important philosophical contribution of the past century was to “give up” the quest; that is, to generally acknowledge that there is no one and only one system that founds knowledge. “-Isms” or traditions within philosophy are still posited but with a nonfoundational status. This shift basically occurred through discussions of the related roles of language and truth. A contemporary position known as “foundationalism” still holds that there are basic propositions from which nonbasic propositions can be inferred. Its contrasting position is “coherentism,” the denial of any such base.

A final point about epistemological foundations is that across Western thought and culture there have always been “other,” nonfoundational formulations. Consideration of them begins with a note about history and its contingency. It is often said that the development of philosophy, and within it epistemology, began with and has since been a footnote to Plato. It is well recognized that Plato’s views were a response to his own historical situation—to one of societal and personal political crisis. Plato’s system, thus, was an exclusionary system in which domains and processes of knowing and knowledge were theoretically possible above a “dividing line” and were not possible below the dividing line. Philosophy and absolutism were “in,” and rhetoric and sophism were “out.” And arts and poetics were “way out.” The division has continued to this day. Interestingly, there have been times when Plato’s hierarchy was reversed, or at least when the line was blurred, as in the Renaissance and the era of the Romantics and as the focus of C. P. Snow’s debate between the “two cultures” indicates.

Units, Kinds, and Processes

From Plato’s time onward, philosophers have described knowing and knowledge through a series of synonyms; that is, of what constitutes knowledge. Today, in common sense, knowledge is facts and information; today, in philosophy, knowledge is the purview of propositions or discourse. Historically, many other “inputs” and “outputs” have comprised knowledge. Philosophical questions concerned input source and output manifestation and much later concerned integrative

processes of consciousness. Recognizing both external sensations and internal initiations, knowledge was perfection with units prior to modernity that included ideal forms and God’s words. These were available to “man” as imperfect appearances or ideas. Input units across time have included external perceptions and “sensa” as in Locke’s view during the 18th century. Reason has always been central to knowing and became an end in itself, for instance, in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s view during the 19th century. In more recent times, process units of experience and belief have resulted in product units of being, meaning, judgment, and even inference and interpretation. In contemporary traditions, belief and experience remain mediated or accessible through language. Today, language units comprise discourses that themselves are defined as knowledge; still other units related to language are game and practice.

Distinctions among kinds of knowledge have also interested philosophers. An early distinction was that between perfection and imperfection. Others include distinctions between explicit and tacit, direct and indirect, and private and public formulations. The first two pairs concern justification of knowledge, especially in the presence or absence of self-consciousness. The last pair is significant in that early modern philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes posited that external inputs placed ideas in a mind but then did not account for how private ideas became public. The key insight of Ludwig Wittgenstein during the 20th century was to deny the existence of private knowledge. A second distinction, between a priori and a posteriori knowledge, was proposed by Kant as an attempt to resolve debates between rationalism and empiricism. Related to this is that different combinations of the operation of mental faculties result in truth, goodness, and beauty. In these formulations, the latter two are derivative of the first one—intellectual formulation. Today, a priori knowledge is still defined as independent of sensory experience that defines a posteriori. Related is another distinction arising once knowledge is conceived as propositional; this is of analytic and synthetic propositions. The former are true by meaning as opposed to true based on fact. Much debate has ensued over relationships of these two paired forms of knowledge. Emerging as “setting the standard” is knowledge as propositional and tested by experience. A final example of distinctive kinds of knowledge is between “knowing that” and “knowing how.” Credited to Gilbert Ryle and for him related to consciousness,

the first describes states of affairs and the second describes procedures. A recent formulation subsumes many different statements of knowledge under “knowing that.” These include facts and persons as well as states such as which, whether, and when. Qualifications also name “acquaintance knowledge,” that which is indirect by inference, and knowing how as “ability knowledge.”

Continuing from knowledge kinds, modern philosophers have attended to two basic processes of knowing. One involves the exercise of “mind” alone, and the other involves the mind’s operation on perceptual stimuli. Evolving from rationalism and empiricism, various idealisms and realisms are much stronger than Kant’s knowledge kinds because each was determined to be the source for all knowing, both of internal consciousness and of external materiality. During the past century, various philosophers also have attended to mental processes that today are thought of as intuition and cognition. Of note, except for a contemporary critical realism in social science, within philosophy these systemic processes have been supplanted by influence of the linguistic turn (discussed in the next section).

Contemporary Traditions

Twentieth-century philosophy saw a blurring, somewhat and for some theorists, of Western traditions, often named as Anglo-American and continental. It is arguably more instructive to identify two approaches to knowledge. First, the analytic approach has focused on, and continues to focus on, the rationality of knowledge; philosophers of this approach have largely explored logical and linguistic conditions of knowledge claims. Second, those from the “social” approach instead have focused on conditions of the societal function of knowledge. In common, both approaches acknowledge and work variously from what has been called the linguistic turn. Historically, two phases can be identified. A first phase sought foundation in language function and use. Developing out of a modern realism, Bertrand Russell’s analytic foundational move from mathematics to language structures is illustrative, and Ferdinand de Saussure’s continental structuralist theory of the basic linguistic sign is another example. Related to various “postmodernisms,” a second phase turned to the openness of language. Two contributors are the neopragmatist Richard Rorty, for whom knowledge and philosophy itself are conversation, and the poststructuralist

Jacques Derrida, for whom a deconstruction of language, knowledge, and philosophy always operates. Across traditions today, knowledge is envisioned to a lesser or greater degree as language and as ambiguous, tentative, and fallible.

The first approach is analytic philosophy, initially identified with Russell, G. E. Moore, and Wittgenstein. It has been the dominant philosophical tradition in Anglo-American thought since the mid-20th century. Analytic philosophers posit the “standard view” of epistemology and define knowledge as justified true belief. Once the debate about truth was generally informed by Alfred Traski’s semantic theory, philosophical considerations within this approach have concentrated largely on issues of justification. The second approach, the social approach, understands knowledge as historically and discursively contextualized and, thus, as influencing its use. Here “-isms” continue to be identified, but this practice is largely inaccurate because individual philosophers are so different from each other. One subtradition is the classical pragmatism of C. S. Peirce, William James, and Dewey related today to a strong neopragmatism. For Dewey, pragmatist knowledge is “warranted” through persons’ enactments in environments where both are changed as a result. A second subtradition receiving much intellectual attention today is that of French poststructuralism. Like pragmatism, it is composed of philosophers sharing “family resemblances.” Key figures include Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Derrida. Too simply put and with a nod to Foucault, for them knowledge is a societal construction that often is imbricated with inequitable illusive manifestations of power.

A long-standing “nonepistemological tradition” also deserves mention. Descended from Plato’s adversaries, this is rhetoric. Historically, it is the art of fine speaking, of persuasion, grounded not in abstract truth or goodness but rather in its own form. Rhetoric also is fundamentally social. Enjoying a renewal of interest today, knowledge can be described via rhetoric—perspectival, partial, incomplete, infected by partisan desires, interests, and projects, and in recent times relative to discourses. Those for whom a rhetorical tradition has relevance believe that, indeed, all knowledge is “uncertain” in just these ways.

Epistemologies

Working from the two broad approaches to epistemology presented in the previous section, a principal purpose of this entry—to indicate both variety and evolution—is

served through illustration. Out of the analytic approach, four examples are from Russell, Wittgenstein, Willard Quine, and Edmund Gettier. During the past decades, other important writings on epistemology include those by Karl Popper, Donald Davidson, and Alvin Goldman.

British logician Bertrand Russell (1872–1920) was generally named a realist for whom all knowledge is based in experience. He posited two processes: knowledge by acquaintance (in which there is direct inference of sense data) and knowledge by description (in which there is indirect inference of sense data). Positing logical atomism, he searched for an ideal isomorphic language with which to map the world but came to see his own search as unsuccessful. His foundational analyses of mathematics and language structure initiated the modern analytic tradition.

Countering Russell in his work, Viennese-born Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) was the founder of the movement in ordinary language philosophy within the analytic tradition. Two ideas are especially important from him. One is that a word may well refer to multiple entities, and the other is that words relate to each other in family resemblances. Wittgenstein's idiom of "language game," that language use occurs in particular social and linguistic contexts, has had a huge influence across Anglo-American and continental philosophical traditions.

Central to analytic philosophy, Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000) was influenced by Wittgenstein and contributed these two ideas: a denial of the analytic–synthetic distinction in propositional content and an underdetermination and holistic interconnection of theories. Quine's perspective came to be known as "naturalistic epistemology," in which he argued that the empirical science of psychology ought to replace philosophy as the basis for knowledge. His view that all that can be known is the sensory cause of belief has been discredited, but a contemporary modification of his naturalism remains well respected.

Also influenced by the later Wittgenstein, the last contributor is little known outside of analytic philosophy. Edmund Gettier's (1927–) name is attached to the "Gettier problem" from a brief article published in 1963. Its impact was to call into question knowledge as justified true belief. In a series of examples, he argued that beliefs can be both true and justified yet still not be knowledge. Much work, as indicated earlier on the issue of justification, has been written since Gettier's argument was published.

Out of the social approach, four examples are from Dewey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and

Foucault. During recent decades, other important contributors include U.S. philosophers Donald Davidson, Rorty, and Hilary Putnam; French philosophers Lyotard and Derrida; and the important German critical theorist Jürgen Habermas. In what follows, Dewey is a classical pragmatist, Heidegger's philosophy is best named a phenomenology, and Gadamer offers a present-day hermeneutics. Foucault then stands in for the diverse tradition called poststructuralism.

With influences from British empiricism and idealism, American John Dewey's (1859–1952) epistemology cannot be divorced from his political philosophy. Knowledge, or "warranted assertability," is a process of continual inquiry in which utility is posed and justified in consequences, in action. His "reconstruction" process has traces of a Hegelian dialectic in which a particular problem, temporary solution, and new problem form the epistemological situation. Ideally, inquiry takes place within a democratic society, one that Dewey posited as the interconnecting advances of science and society.

German Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology has had a significant impact on much of continental social theory. Influenced greatly by Edmund Husserl, his major contribution concerns the meaning of "being" as "in itself" misunderstood across the history of Western thought. Being, always already temporally situated, points to the prefigured existence of all knowledge. His writings also attend to "technology," a basic but potentially dangerous mode of human existence. Heidegger's reattention to classical thought also is a model for subsequent philosophers.

German Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), a student of Heidegger's, offers a significant project via the linguistic turn in updating classical hermeneutics, biblical/textual interpretation that sought true meaning. He posits that history, culture, and tradition fuse as "horizons" to bound any interpretation. With a method that is discursive, dialogic, and conversational, Gadamer has written across many topics for which knowledge matters; these include poetry, literature, art, politics, and ethics.

French philosopher-historian Michel Foucault (1926–1984) is identified by an English-speaking audience, arguably inappropriately, as a poststructuralist. Like all European theorists, his writings relate in some ways to humanist, phenomenological, and critical traditions—but his are a unique alternative. Foucault's studies of social institutions reveal epistemological interconnections of discursive and nondiscursive

formations in his idiom of “power knowledge.” In effect, “regimes of truth” come to be constituted and stabilized; of them, different historic eras produce different underlying rationalities. It is these that matter as knowledge use.

Conclusion

In this encyclopedia, entries related to the results of research are primary for qualitative researchers; knowledge and what philosophers have had to say about it are indeed central. This entry has introduced a complex topic of which other aspects are similarly interesting and important. Extensions include a study of the meaning of truth and recent movements in “alternative epistemologies.” Among these are contributions from feminist and minority scholars. Readers and researchers are encouraged to read further as they consider epistemological implications for and from their own work.

Lynda Stone

See also Critical Hermeneutics; Critical Pragmatism; Critical Realism; Knowledge; Phenomenology; Rhetoric

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ESSENCE

Essence in general means the reality of things as disclosed to rational thought. The idea of science as an organized body of knowledge depends on the presupposition of a distinction between a world of appearance and an underlying universal reality of basic elements and forces.

The philosophical development of the idea in Plato and Aristotle added an irreducible normative dimension. For Aristotle, the essence of things was not simply the universal definition that stated the intrinsic nature of things; it equally expressed the unique set of possibilities that those things ought to realize. Hence, essence combines “is” (that which grounds the division of reality into classes of things) and “ought” (the content of the “good” for each class of things). The concept of essence is distinguished from all of the other categories of Western philosophy and science by this synthesis of the normative and the descriptive.

The revolution in physics in the work of Galileo, René Descartes, and Sir Isaac Newton eliminated this idea of essence from natural science. The concept of essence was subsequently reserved for judgments of human life. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx were crucial to keeping the concept of essence alive in social and historical philosophy. They rejected the static conception of a set of essential possibilities for all humans for a conception of the human essence as necessarily historical. Instead of the idea of a timeless universal form lying behind the apparent diversity of human cultural practices, the idea of the human essence that emerges from Hegel and Marx focuses on the ever-developing self-creative capabilities of humans.

The use of the concept of essence as an objective basis of social criticism itself became the object of criticism during the 1960s. Philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, drawing on the arguments of Friedrich Nietzsche, argued that the idea of essence is always linked to definite strategies of exclusion. In their account, the critical function of the concept of essence was charged with being another form of power whose aim was to legitimate itself by

delegitimizing other forms of understanding. There could be no essence, whether historical or not, lying behind appearances because everything, including what counts as appearance and what counts as essence, must be stated in language. The concept of essence tries to free theory from the plurality of meaning typical of language, but because it too is meaningful only in language, it must itself succumb to the pluralism it tries to control.

This so-called postmodern critique of the concept of essence has proven to be powerful into the contemporary period, so much so that “essentialism” is now almost universally regarded as a theoretical strategy that must be avoided. The concept remains an important methodological tool, however, whenever qualitative research needs to ask foundational questions, especially regarding different social interests. Unless the concept of essence (in some form) is employed, it is not clear how the legitimacy and relative value of competing social interests are to be established.

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See also Critical Humanism; Essentialism; Postmodernism; Poststructuralism

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maintain, first, that all objects and concepts can be defined by reference to certain core properties that make them what they are and, second, that it is instructive and useful to inquire into the nature of these essential features. The view that there are certain properties essential to humans, such as a “core self” that defines us as people, is often referred to as “humanism.” Essentialist philosophy has exerted a significant, if sometimes covert, influence over many of the widely accepted and sometimes taken-for-granted tenets of qualitative research, including key issues such as validity, reliability, sample selection, and generalization.

The Origins of Essentialism

The belief that certain properties of things (where “things” include objects, concepts, experiences, etc.) are essential to our understanding and definition of them can be traced back at least as far as Plato, for whom every object or quality in the physical world was derived from a divine, invisible, changeless transcendental “form.” Platonic forms are “ideal types” or essences that exist outside of time and space and of which objects and concepts in the world are merely pale imitations. Let us take as an example the form of the “good.” Some aspects of this transcendental “goodness” can be said to lie at the heart of all good people, and it is this goodness that we perceive when we describe someone as good, although no good person could ever display the good in its essential form because the forms transcend the temperophysical world.

The relevance of this transcendental type of essentialism to research becomes apparent when we consider that, for Plato, all people have had a prior acquaintance with the eternal and divine forms before their births. We can all recognize worldly goodness when we see it because we have all previously had experience of the form of the good. Thus, knowledge of the essence or true nature of things in the world comes not from our senses, which merely show to us the many imperfect manifestations of the form as they exist in the world, but rather from our memories of the forms themselves. Knowledge of the essential nature of everything in the physical world is a priori (prior to experience), and thus research is a process of reacquainting ourselves with what we already know but have forgotten. This gives rise to the so-called Socratic dialogue method of discovery (or perhaps of “recovery” or “research,” the search for something

ESSENTIALISM

Essentialism is the philosophical doctrine that certain properties of an object or a concept are necessary or essential rather than contingent or accidental. Thus, we might say of a person that being good is accidental because it is possible not to be good and yet still be a person, whereas occupying space is essential because it is impossible to be a person and yet not occupy a physical space in the world. Essentialists

that has been lost) in which the teacher does not attempt to impart knowledge but rather asks a series of questions to draw out the knowledge that the pupil already possesses. As Socrates said to Meno, “The soul has learned all things. . . . Enquiry and learning are entirely recollection.” If we accept this radical form of essentialism, then research is merely uncovering what is already known and does not rely to any extent on empirical observation of the physical world; indeed, such observation is more likely to confuse and confound than to enlighten.

A similar essentialist philosophy can be seen in early Judeo-Christian culture right up to the Renaissance. In this version of essentialism, all knowledge is related back to God and in particular to the idea of *logos* as both the word of God and the principle of rationality. This dual meaning can be seen in the opening verse of John’s Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God,” and at various junctures in the Old Testament such as Adam’s naming of the animals in the Book of Genesis. The word (*logos*) brings order out of chaos; to name something is to impose order on it, and to know the name of something is to know the thing itself. The French philosopher Michel Foucault observed that, according to the Old Testament, language was a gift to humankind by God himself, and as such it was an absolutely certain and transparent sign for things in the world, so that the name of a thing and the thing itself were indivisible. Foucault argued that, right up until the 16th century, there was an underlying belief or episteme that words retained a resonance of God’s original language to the extent that it was possible to know something of the essence of a thing simply by knowing its name. Thus, the word *lion* somehow summoned up the essence of *lionness* and the word *good* articulated *goodness*.

Essentialism and the Scientific Method

However, by the 17th century, a distinct move away from this reliance on innate knowledge could be detected. The philosopher John Locke laid the foundations of scientific empiricism by distinguishing between the “nominal” essence of an object and its “real” essence. Although the real essence or fundamental truth of an object could be investigated only through inner contemplation, Locke held that it was nevertheless possible to determine facts and laws concerning

its nominal essence or surface properties solely through the senses. This turn to the senses as a primary source of knowledge ushered in the so-called Age of Reason or Enlightenment and with it a splitting of the sign from what it signified. Language was no longer seen to be intrinsically linked to the world; rather, it was merely a representation of it. Thus, the essence of a thing could no longer be discerned simply by knowing its name or even by rational contemplation; to determine its essential nature, it became necessary to examine the thing itself.

David Hume pushed Locke’s empiricism to the extreme, arguing that all attempts to discern the real essence of an object (apart from the abstract objects of mathematics) through inner contemplation or pure reason were doomed to failure. What is believed to be “innate” knowledge about the essence of things is, in fact, derived in subtle ways from the senses. Thus, Hume famously argued that any book that was not concerned with empirical experimentation should be committed to the flames because it could contain “nothing but sophistry and illusion.” We can see, then, that the rise of empirical science during the 17th century ushered in a new approach to essentialism at centered on discovery of the true nature or essence of things in the world through observation and experimentation.

Scientific research, therefore, continued the search for the essential properties that constitute the core of a physical object or an abstract concept but shifted the focus of this search in a significant way. This shift can be seen, for example, in the contrast between the pre-scientific study of astrology and the science of astronomy. Astrologers were concerned with the search for the distinct and unique essence of each individual planet; for example, to distinguish between the warlike influence of Mars and the peaceful influence of Venus. Furthermore, these essences could be discerned through contemplation of the inner “nature” of the planets. In contrast, astronomers and other early scientists turned their gaze outward to the planets themselves and employed inductive or cumulative research methods to categorize objects into groups based on similarities. Astronomers wished to formulate general laws that explained the behavior of all planets because this enabled them to make predictions about the existence and movements of other as yet unknown planets. The search for essential properties continued but shifted from inner contemplation to outside observation and from the individual to the universal.

Nevertheless, the notion of logos, the confluence of naming, organizing, and knowing, continued to be a major feature of the work of many early scientists, for whom the practice of science was largely a program of labeling and ordering the natural world.

Essentialism and the Human Sciences

The search to understand, predict, and control the essential properties of the world continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and played a major role in driving the industrial revolution in Europe. However, a different focus of essentialism emerged toward the end of the 19th century when the scientific gaze turned back inward toward people themselves as subjects of study rather than as the dispassionate and disinterested objects that conducted the study. Prior to this reflexive turn, the scientist as the observer and experimenter stood largely outside of that which was being observed and experimented on. As Foucault noted, classical rationalism accorded humans a privileged objective position in ordering and making sense of the world, but the person was not recognized as a potential subject of this scientific study. The shift in focus to conduct research into the essence of what it is to be human ushered in the “human sciences,” such as sociology and psychology, during the latter part of the 19th century.

This particular focus of essentialism is known as “humanism,” which argues that humans in general can be defined in terms of a core “human nature” that is common to all. By conducting research into human nature, the behavior of people could be understood, predicted, and controlled. The method of the early human scientists, such as Émile Durkheim and John Stuart Mill, was to imitate the scientific rationale and methods of physics and chemistry in the hope of reproducing their successes. Thus, the person became both the subject of study and the object that studied, resulting in a form of “objective subjectivity,” an attempt at a quantitative study of self and others from an objective and impartial perspective. However, a number of philosophers and sociologists, such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber, argued that such an objective “scientific” approach was untenable and pressed for a qualitative approach that went beyond a scientific explanation (*Erklären*) to accomplish something that Weber argued is never attainable in the natural sciences, namely, the subjective understanding (*Verstehen*) of the action of the component individuals.

This call for an “insider” subjective understanding of the essential nature of the person to counter the “outsider” objective explanations derived from the methodologies of the physical sciences was taken up by, among others, Edmund Husserl, who proposed a phenomenological philosophy as a “viewing of essences.” Although Husserl’s approach to phenomenology began as a descriptive subjective psychology, he later developed it as a form of transcendental idealism where all meanings and essences are already embedded somehow in what he referred to as the “transcendental ego.” Idealists hold that reality “takes place” within individual consciousness; therefore, the project of transcendental phenomenology, as devised by Husserl, was to suspend all empirically derived assumptions about things in the world so as to arrive at an inner understanding of their essential nature. The suspension of experiential knowledge (*epoché*), therefore, results in a reduction down to the “pure phenomenon” or “absolute data” of an experience that somehow contains the “intrinsic character” or essence of the thing in question. What remains is “pure subjectivity” or the essence of our sense data stripped of all prior assumptions and beliefs.

In many ways, the aim of Husserl’s subjectivity is an extension of Hume’s empiricism and has parallels with the scientific ideal of objectivity—to see things as they really are, to uncover their essential nature. Furthermore, although Husserl’s position is intensely subjective, it is not solipsistic. Whatever it is possible for one person to intuit through this phenomenological reduction is also open to everyone else. This point is of utmost importance to qualitative researchers because it suggests the possibility of a scientific method for the subjective study of essence. There are clear similarities here with Plato’s forms (although Husserl rejected this comparison); each posits a transcendental “world” of pure phenomena, each suggests a method by which individuals can gain access to these essences, and each recasts epistemology as a branch of ontology. The difference is that whereas Plato located the essential forms outside of the person (indeed, outside of the physical and temporal world), Husserl regarded essences as buried deep in the individual’s psyche. Ultimately, then, phenomenology is a way of “essential seeing” (*Wesenserschauung*); it is an empirical science rather than an a priori recollection.

Although transcendental phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and descriptive psychology, it was enthusiastically adopted and adapted by qualitative social researchers during the last quarter of the

20th century. The various attempts to employ what was originally an intensely subjective and introspective method of empirical reduction to the study of other people cannot help but undermine Husserl's original project. First, the object of study inevitably shifted from the "inner" experiences of the investigator to those of the subjects (or, more accurately, the objects) of investigation. Second, when phenomenology is employed as a social research method, reduction or bracketing operates on the verbal accounts of those experiences as told by the objects of the study rather than directly on the experiences themselves. This has prompted a number of critics to point out that phenomenological reduction has been misunderstood and misapplied by most qualitative researchers. Whereas Husserl wished to reduce sense data themselves to their pure and uncontaminated essential form, most phenomenological researchers accept without question the experiences of the objects of their research and instead apply reduction to their own perceptions of the research objects' reported accounts of their experiences. This, claim the critics, is not phenomenological reduction as Husserl advocated; rather, it is merely a form of positivist objectivity disguised as subjective social science.

An Essentialist Paradigm of Qualitative Research

Although phenomenology might be regarded as the foundation, or even as the essence, of essentialist research, its influence has spread from simply a method for doing research to encompass a broad and mainstream paradigm of qualitative research. This general essentialist influence is particularly apparent in the way many qualitative researchers think and write about issues such as validity, generalizability, and reliability.

If validity is taken broadly to be a concern with the truth claims of research findings, then essentialist researchers will begin from the assumption that the essential nature or truth is somehow and somewhere lodged in every single example of the object of their inquiry. This belief in a common essence is held not only for external objects and internal concepts but also for the experiences of individuals. For example, the transcendental phenomenologist might elicit the "lived experiences" of a number of individual respondents, but the aim will be to arrive at common themes and categories to answer the question posed by Denise Polit and Cheryl Tatano Beck in 2005, "What is the

essence of this phenomenon as experienced by these people?" (p. 219).

Research (in keeping with the Platonic view), therefore, is a process of uncovering that truth or essence, of *recovery* or *discovery*, of what is already there. The aim of the researcher is to reveal the essence of the object of inquiry (whether an external object, an internal concept, or a personal experience) without contaminating the truth by imposing his or her own preconceptions, which are put in "brackets" for the duration of the study. This objective subjectivity is usually achieved by the research community agreeing on an appropriate method and following it rigidly with a minimum of deviation. For essentialist researchers, therefore, validity is closely connected with rigor because rigorous adherence to a predetermined method offers the best hope of producing research findings that are uncontaminated by the views or influence of the researcher. Rigor is monitored in essentialist research by the careful documentation of the procedures followed by the researcher (sometimes referred to as an "audit trail"), often in conjunction with a research diary in which any indiscretions and deviations are presented and accounted for.

The essentialist paradigm also influences decisions about the selection of research informants or respondents. Unlike most quantitative researchers, for whom sample selection is an issue of statistical generalization, and nonessentialist qualitative researchers, for whom generalizations can be made only on a case-by-case basis, essentialist researchers argue that all cases of a particular phenomenon will contain the essence or truth of the object of inquiry. The researcher, therefore, is free to make a purposive selection of respondents based on criteria such as the breadth and depth of their experience of the relevant phenomenon and their ability to articulate this experience. For the essentialist researcher, therefore, sample size is determined by the number of respondents required to fully uncover the essence of the object of inquiry rather than by considerations of representation of some wider population. The essentialist researcher is able to make an analytic generalization from one or more discrete cases to a theory or other universal statement, much as a natural scientist can test and confirm a theory from a single observation. In an ideal situation, one very experienced and articulate respondent will suffice, but in practice data collection continues until no new information is forthcoming, at which point saturation is said to have occurred.

Multiple respondents are also necessary to satisfy the criterion of reliability or trustworthiness. Essentialist researchers in search of the stable essence of their object of inquiry would expect to uncover very similar facets of the same unchanging truth of the matter regardless of when and by whom the study was conducted. Therefore, reliability (the degree of trust placed in the accuracy and consistency of the findings) can be tested and confirmed by repeating the data collection method at varying times and with different researchers and respondents. Similarly, essentialists would claim to be able to confirm the accuracy with which they had collected their data by returning the raw data for checking by the respondents and returning the analyzed data to the respondents or to another researcher for confirmation of the themes and categories. The assumption behind these checking techniques is that the essence of the object of inquiry remains unchanged over time and fluctuating circumstances and that this essence, in the form of themes and categories, will be perceived in much the same way by whoever analyzes the data.

Although essentialist philosophy has exerted a significant influence over the development of many of the key concepts and practices of qualitative research, it should be noted that some researchers adopt a nonessentialist approach founded on a substantially different set of assumptions.

Gary Rolfe

See also Bracketing; Categorization; Content Analysis; Empiricism; Epistemology; Essence; Generalizability; Humanities, Qualitative Research in; Knowledge; Nonessentialism; Objectivity; Ontology; Phenomenology; Purposive Sampling; Subjectivity

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ETHICS

Ethics is the part of human philosophy concerned with appropriate conduct and virtuous living. This entry considers ethics and its related constructs, kinds of ethics, and ethical issues in qualitative research. Research in general and qualitative research in particular are viewed by most qualitative scholars as moral ethical endeavors because they are human endeavors.

Ethics and Related Constructs

The formal study of ethics is associated with the ancient Greeks. Ethics in this tradition is both the study of the frameworks underlying judgments of what is appropriate conduct and the substance of the judgments themselves. Some scholars, however, prefer to use the term *ethics* for the study of frameworks for judgment (e.g., consequentialism) and to use the terms *morals* and *morality* for specific injunctions (e.g., “do no harm”). Europeans conventionally view ethics and morality in binary terms such as right and wrong, good and bad, and doing the right thing and avoiding wrong action. Other cultures have formulated appropriate conduct differently. Some view it as balancing complementary or competing forces such as the Chinese yin and yang. However ethics is defined, human societies everywhere have ideas about what is appropriate conduct and how to live an exemplary or virtuous life. When these are codified into rules enforced by authority, they are considered to be laws.

Values, the study of which was called *axiology* by the Greek philosophers, is a broader category of what is considered to be important and significant. Values include ethics and morality but also other kinds of standards such as aesthetics or what is considered to be beautiful, manners and mores or what is considered to be socially acceptable, and taste or what individuals prefer in the choices they make. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Principles for aesthetic judgments may also have implications for ethical judgments. Ethics and values are attributes of all human

societies. However, what differs from one group to the next, as well as among individuals within any group, is the nature of those values and how they are conceptualized. Furthermore, because virtue and appropriate conduct are central to religious and spiritual ideologies, some people view ethics as tied inextricably to religion. The development of scholarship on ethics in the West since the Enlightenment reflects, in some respects, an effort to detach supernatural arguments from moral theories and ethical decision making and to focus ethical thought on the conduct of human relationships and on individual well-being.

Kinds of Ethics

The study of ethics can be divided into two areas. First, the common area most influential in research practice is called normative ethics or moral theories. These are frameworks used to decide what is preferable to do among the choices available. The second area is called meta-ethics. These are the assumptions and values underlying normative ethics and moral theories. Meta-ethics, as discussed later, is often associated with research epistemologies and ontologies or the assumptions about what constitutes knowledge and reality and how knowledge is best developed.

Normative Ethics and Moral Theories

Normative ethics and moral theories are frameworks organized around either principles to guide decision making or relationship dynamics to guide human conduct. However, the more traditional influence on the Western practice of the social, human, and professional sciences has been the ethics of principle, centered on some guiding doctrine. Arguably the most commonly used in research ethics have been justice-based ethics, duty-based or deontological ethics, consequence-based or utilitarian ethics, and virtue-based ethics.

The guiding principle of virtue-based ethics, explored by Aristotle more than two millennia ago, requires that people act virtuously toward one another, typically with ideals of character such as honesty and integrity, respectfulness, wisdom, justice, and compassion. In some respects, virtue-based ethics was the guiding assumption of 19th- and early 20th-century scholars. Their education was assumed to foster virtues that would make them competent and trustworthy investigators of the human condition in their public

lives. In devoting themselves to the pursuit of knowledge and undergoing the intensive training required for admission to the academy, these researchers were thought to be wiser and more dispassionate than ordinary folks and to be able to project the consequences and implications of decisions better than others. However, by the middle of the 20th century, enough egregious acts had been committed in the name of research by the highly educated in Germany, the United States, and elsewhere that philosophers, policymakers, and researchers themselves questioned whether the reliance on character development in scholarly training was sufficient to ensure the ethical practice of research.

The codes of ethics for research practice that have been developed by government bodies and professional scholarly associations during the past 60 years or so are based on a mix of elements from justice-based ethics, duty-based ethics, and consequence-based ethics. Justice-based ethics, as used here, is an amalgam of the principle of individual human rights and the principle of fairness. Because they are human, individuals are entitled to certain basic expectations of treatment by others. The justification for these rights can be supernatural or ensured by a deity, natural or assumed integral to human nature, or social and ensured by contractual agreements. Two typical statements of human rights are the presumption of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness from the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the various rights endorsed by the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Rights must be protected, however, and justice or fairness in the treatment of others is the imperative that everyone's rights must be equitably observed. The right to liberty assures people that they have the right not to be studied if they elect to decline an invitation to participate in research. The right to privacy assumed in many 21st-century societies assures people control over their personal information and the authority to decide when information may be made public, which information they are willing to share confidentially, which information they are willing to share anonymously, and which information is not to be shared at all. The right to justice means that individuals can expect a fair distribution across human groups of the risks and benefits of research.

Duty-based or deontological ethics is based on the principle that humans have obligations or duties to their fellow humans, their communities, and themselves. Deontology can be viewed as the human responsibility

balance to human rights. It requires that humans act toward others in such a way as to meet obligations and avoid wrongdoing. Kant, the most influential deontologist in Western thinking, developed the categorical imperative that specifies human duty in two ways. First, individuals must treat others always as ends and never merely as means. Acknowledging humans as autonomous decision makers means, among other things, respecting their refusal to participate in research and informing those who do participate of what is involved. Second, individuals are enjoined to always act as though each action were the universal template for all such actions. This aspect of the categorical imperative requires scholars to define their obligations as researchers and to carry out these obligations consistently.

The third principle-oriented category of normative ethics influential in research ethics is consequence-based or utilitarian ethics. Consequential ethics is decision making based on the anticipated outcomes of a choice. Utilitarianism, a kind of consequential ethics developed by British philosophers during the late 18th to mid-19th centuries, specifies the greatest good for the greatest number as the best ethical choice. Like the directive to “do no harm,” cautioning researchers to consider and avoid negative effects of their research activity, the concern to balance benefits and risks in research activity is grounded in utilitarian ethics. Consequences matter. Researchers might not be fortune-tellers, but they are expected to anticipate the results of what they do and inform their participants of these expectations.

A normative ethic organized around relationship dynamics rather than principle was developed by the psychologist Carol Gilligan and the philosopher Nel Noddings during the last quarter of the 20th century. The ethics of care is grounded in the supportive relationships among people. Caring requires a balance of attention to the best interests of all involved in the relationship—self and others. The ethics of care directs qualitative researchers to conduct themselves toward others naturally and directly and to support relationships based on positive feelings and concern for each other. The ethics of care has been especially influential in recent qualitative scholarship conducted by feminists and other researchers using critical frameworks who have also addressed how ethics and morality are affected by power imbalances in human relationships and the inherently political nature of human interactions.

Meta-Ethics

These relational and principled bases for ethical choices, as influential as they have been, are incomplete sources for ethical decision making if researchers lack awareness of the meta-ethics that underlie how normative ethics is applied. Meta-ethics and its epistemological linkages have become particularly relevant to postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial challenges to conventional Western thinking about ethics.

Meta-ethics is the assumptions individuals make about their moral theories and their ethical decision making. Epistemological positions, such as objectivism, subjectivism, intersubjectivism, and constructivism, and ontological positions, such as materialism, realism, and idealism, are as relevant in the ethics of research as they are in other conceptual and methodological areas, and readers are referred to those entries elsewhere in the encyclopedia. However, three facets of meta-ethics bear discussion here.

One dimension of meta-ethics is how firmly frameworks apply to decisions. Some view ethical frameworks as absolute; others view such frameworks as relative—either as relative to the cultural setting or as situation dependent even within the same cultural milieu. Consequently, cultural relativism, the recognition that cultures vary in ideologies, is not always the same as moral relativism, the position that moral choices cannot be assessed by a unitary standard. Some cultural patterns are either universal or so common as to be nearly universal such as incest taboos, prohibitions on lying, and some restrictions on killing other humans. The source of universally absolute positions may be supernatural (a deity wills it), natural (conforming to a presumed human nature), or even social (convention requires it). Furthermore, people vary in when they assume situational, relative, and absolute positions; some norms may be taken as absolutes, whereas others are viewed as relative or situational. For example, how absolutely researchers should respect people’s right not to be studied becomes relevant when societies’ needs for knowledge conflict with this individual right. This is likely most pressing for qualitative researchers in the health professions when the need to prevent or manage threats to community health urges coercive measures for research participation.

A second facet of meta-ethics is the assumptions made about the locus of decision making. Since the European Enlightenment, most Westerners view decision

making as an autonomous individual's choice, although elsewhere in time and space, important decisions have been considered to be a community prerogative. The continuum of individual-to-communal decision making maps, to some extent, over a similar rights-to-responsibility continuum. All human groups are composed of individuals who interact as some kind of community, so all ethical decision making involves both individuals and their communal associations. Individuals have rights but also responsibilities to others. Where the lines are drawn varies considerably across groups. In the United States, for example, individuals whose autonomy is considered to be limited by youth, incapacity, and/or incarceration are considered to be vulnerable; responsible others must consent before the vulnerable can assent. In contrast, prior to approaching even adults for consent, researchers must first seek tribal or group approval for their research studies on many Native American reservations.

A third facet of meta-ethical thinking is represented by assumptions about how ethical decisions ought to be justified. Some ethicists believe that decisions ought to be made on the basis of rational argument alone, whereas others permit various degrees of affect, intuition, and emotion in the decision-making process. The principled versus relational normative ethics discussed previously differs partly over the admission of emotional concerns into ethical decisions. However, in the day-to-day ethical decisions that researchers report, some combination of reason, emotion, and intuition comes into play.

Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research

Research ethics and ethical decision making in research draw, then, from both normative and meta-ethical frameworks. Although early social, professional, and human scientists were expected to rely on the character development and virtues assumed to be emphasized in their educations as scholars, these communities of researchers were very small and members did exert moral influence over one another even though disagreements occurred. A case in point is the censorship by the majority members of the Executive Council of the Anthropological Society of Washington in 1919 of Franz Boas, later acknowledged as the "father of U.S. anthropology," for his public objection to intelligence gathering by some members of the anthropological community. This is

one of the earliest instances in which scholars publicly disagreed about the moral purposes of research.

Ethics in qualitative research, currently often associated only with the relationship of researchers to those they study, is an integral aspect of all decision making in research, from problem formulation to presentation of results. Policymakers, journalists, and members of the public sometimes appear to believe that scientific research and scholarship generally is supposed to be value neutral, disinterested, and free of moral or ethical positions. However, few researchers share this view. Research purposes serve some moral intent, research designs are expected to have integrity, research conduct is required (in some cases by law) to observe certain principles of humane consideration of participants, and research presentations (the representation of results) must observe the ethical conventions common to the venue of the reports.

Qualitative researchers produce studies intended to contribute to knowledge, improve practice, and transform the lives of participants. Although this emphasis on consequences predominates, other normative moral theories are also relevant to reflections on purpose. Participatory action theorists and critical theorists, including many feminist qualitative scholars, sometimes appeal to the ethics of care in formulating their goals. Others in the same traditions stress the ethics of justice, and they seek to uncover social ills and inequities in their research.

The censure of Boas was due partly to a difference of opinion about the purposes to which scholarship should be directed.

However, research ethics also addresses the integrity of the research activity. Honesty, openness, and candid revelation of a study's strengths and limitations according to commonly held standards of practice are typical indicators of the integrity of the scholarship. Some consider any covert work conducted in secrecy, for whatever purposes, to lack integrity because it is not amenable to the checks of peer review. More recently, the challenge to better protect participants in research has led to withholding or limiting public access to fieldnotes, transcripts, and other information collected in communities despite pressures from the media, the courts, and policymakers for full disclosure. Research integrity is most influenced by the ethics of virtue and the ethics of duty. Both, however, depend on standards for virtuous and dutiful research conduct, and these are contested in qualitative research practice.

Nevertheless, the ethical concern in qualitative research reported and discussed most frequently is the issues that arise because qualitative researchers work with participants face to face, over lengthy times, and (sometimes) in very intimate situations. Unlike most survey and experimental researchers, qualitative scholars learn what they seek to know by developing relationships with their participants. The extent to which these relationships can be caring and just while not exploiting participants is debated. Reporting the research then presents new issues for a world where many, if not most, research participants have access to whatever is published or presented about them. Here the ethics of consequences becomes the most common principle applied, although researchers also consider the justice of their presentations. In addition to how participants view themselves as represented, scholars consider how these representations of people in various walks of life convey morally legitimate images to the public. Thus, qualitative researchers must address the moral implications of their representations to those they study, to their scholarly colleagues, to policymakers, and to the media and the public. These competing interests and the varying moral priorities of researchers themselves mean that the ethical conduct of qualitative research is complex, evolving, and contingent across the course of a study and is a matter of continuing debate in the qualitative research community of practice.

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See also Ethics Codes; Ethics Review Process; Informed Consent; Institutional Review Boards; Integrity in Qualitative Research

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ETHICS, RELATIONAL

See RELATIONAL ETHICS

ETHICS AND NEW MEDIA

New media of communication, such as computer networks, portable digital technologies, and email, offer qualitative researchers numerous possibilities for implementing traditional methods with novel adaptations and for shaping new research strategies. This entry reviews ethical concerns raised by the use of these media with respect to the impact on participants, the role of informed consent, expectations of privacy, and the need for security of data.

Alongside interest growth over the past decade, there has arisen much uncertainty, debate, and disagreement over ethical considerations surrounding research and new media. Whereas a handful of organizations

have adopted standardized ethical regulations, other scholars find that research ought to be informed by existing codes of ethics written before the advent of the new communication technologies. A third group continues to oppose codes altogether, preferring to make case-by-case decisions informed by the value of avoiding harm to research participants. The latter party finds that standardized procedures and regulations impede judgment rather than aid it and also impose uniform norms that are blind to the diversity of contexts, the dynamics of groups under study, the nature of the topic, the research approach, and the will of participants.

Impact on Participants

Notwithstanding their attitudes toward the institutionalization of codes, qualitative researchers who use new media of communication to conduct their research should, regardless of the research site, design, and objective, carefully examine the potential impact of their research on the experiences of the participants. Researchers should minimize or avoid altogether disruptions of existing social worlds or individuals' lives and should provide participants with informed consent whenever possible. There are three main types of research conducted through new media: textual analysis, interview research, and participant or nonparticipant observation. Most ethical issues around informed consent, privacy, and security are common to all of these research methods, yet some differences exist.

Informed Consent

Qualitative researchers doing work on new media need to be careful to avoid narrative appropriation—the stealing of personal stories. The procedure of informed consent is designed in part to avoid such a problem. For example, informed consent is not needed (although permission to reproduce copyright material might be) for the content analysis of publicly accessible websites. Research projects whose design is limited to the analysis of such easily available information are also typically exempt from institutional ethical reviews. Nevertheless, problems may arise when the intent of writers is not clear and when websites are password protected but still easily accessible. In both cases, information may be relatively easily available, but the intended audience may exclude researchers. On the other hand, individual or group interviews conducted through new media, as well as

electronic ethnographies (of both the participant and nonparticipant observation variety), should always be preceded by the granting of informed consent. To be sure, exceptions to the need to receive informed consent do exist. First, as previously noted, informed consent is generally not needed for analysis of the content of websites to be available to anyone. Second, informed consent is not always needed, or even desirable, in those cases where the mere request of consent could constitute a significant disruption of naturally occurring interaction on the research site unless that research site is owned or moderated by an access-granting group or individual. Third, informed consent is generally not needed when the type of information collected is not sensitive (i.e., does concern “intimate” or “private” information) and there is no possibility of indirectly identifying its author(s).

Privacy

Because participant observation studies generally require a high degree of interaction between researchers and informants, ethical issues surrounding privacy often arise. Therefore, researchers typically should clearly disclose their identities, roles, and objectives from the very beginning of their research. “Lurking” uninvited on a group's activity may be possible due to the nature of the medium, but it is clearly not always appropriate to do so. Researchers should remain open to receiving feedback from participants and should periodically inform the group of their identity and role so as to notify new members who may have only recently joined the group under study. Creating a website that explains the nature of the research, and making the website address known in a public profile, is also a particularly good idea. Even though consent might not be needed, some researchers also generally make every possible effort to disguise the identities of the people under study. This can be done by assigning fictitious names instead of using actual screen names, by never mentioning the name or URL of internet websites, and by paraphrasing instead of quoting (given that exact quotes can easily be retrieved with the help of search engines). Nonparticipant observation studies, conducted through lurking as it were, are ethically feasible only when the group is meant to be easily accessible, when the researcher's presence would be disruptive if publicized to the group, when the information collected is not sensitive, and when the group's location and

confidentiality can be safely preserved. Ethnographic researchers conducting participant or nonparticipant observation should finally consider the degree of “popularity” of certain groups. Several studies have shown that members of groups whose activities traditionally attract the interest of scholars and students (e.g., self-help groups) are beginning to openly reject researchers’ presence, having grown tired of continuous requests for participation.

Security of Data Ownership and Exchange

Finally, research studies may cause concern regarding issues of security of data ownership and exchange. For example, email communication is amenable to interception and is easily copied and forwarded. Researchers must give careful consideration to strategies of preventing data loss, unauthorized access, inadvertent disclosure, and modification. These concerns may require advanced technical expertise for their solution, and it behooves researchers to seek the help of experts whenever needed. Issues of copyright may also complicate data collection. For example, who owns a message posted on a bulletin board or exchanged in a chat room or via a listserv? What should one do when message authors cannot be traced and contacted? Answers vary from case to case, and researchers should investigate these issues carefully before data collection.

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See also Confidentiality; Ethics Codes; Ethics Review Process; Informed Consent

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ETHICS CODES

Ethics codes are directives specifying what is right and good, as well as what is wrong and bad, in research. Nations such as Canada and the United States have developed policies for the ethical conduct of research, administered as codes of research conduct. More detailed ethics codes have been adopted by professional societies to guide members in their research activities. Because many of these codes were designed to cover the range of research designs from biomedical to social-behavioral, and from quantitative to qualitative, researchers attempting to apply them have reported some difficulties and challenges.

Prescriptions and proscriptions, injunctions to engage in or refrain from specified behaviors, are as old as human records. What is recent is the codification of injunctions for researchers. Ethics codes for researchers originated during the post-World War II era with the 1949 Nuremberg Code and the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki, developed in reaction to Nazi medical experimentation on concentration camp inmates and to questionable research conduct in Western democracies such as the U.S. Public Health Service syphilis studies among African Americans in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Ethical conduct of federally sponsored research in the United States is guided by the Belmont Report of 1979 and in Canada is guided by the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) of 1998. Other countries have developed comparable guidelines administered by a variety of agencies, but all national research codes of ethics focus on protecting the public. The Belmont Report, for example, mandates three principles for ethical conduct of research: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These are commonly translated into procedures ensuring informed consent and protection of vulnerable populations, balancing of risks and benefits, and equity in the distribution of risks and benefits.

Concurrent with the development of national ethics codes have been the various codes of research ethics developed by professional associations. In addition to protection of human subjects, these codes address the quality or integrity of the research, intellectual property rights and scholarly relationships, and the moral conduct of researchers as means to maintain the discipline’s public standing. Unlike national ethics codes, usually enforced by peer review of research plans

before studies may begin, professional codes are often considered to be educative rather than disciplinary. Professional organizations rarely take on review and resolution of ethical disputes, leaving these actions to other institutions such as the universities or agencies employing those charged with violations.

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See also Ethics; Ethics Review Process; Informed Consent; Institutional Review Boards

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ETHICS REVIEW BOARDS

See INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

ETHICS REVIEW PROCESS

Many countries are experiencing continuing growth in qualitative research, especially since the early 1990s, involving numerous disciplines and fields. At the same time, the ethics review process has gained prominence in these same countries. The ensuing engagement between qualitative research and the ethics review process has not been easy. This entry presents the sources of these difficulties and their impact, identifies key ethical issues, and presents current debates and actions.

Sources of Difficulties

Some of the difficulties reside in the fact that policies related to research ethics—national in scope—are premised on biomedical research and inadvertently promote an epistemology that is in conflict with paradigms associated with qualitative research. Moreover, membership on (local/university) ethics committees is represented by disciplines that do not naturally gravitate toward qualitative research. These two distinct facets of the ethics review process present qualitative researchers with an abundance of obstacles in receiving approval for their work.

The other set of difficulties arises from the diversity of disciplines and the variety of methods employed by qualitative researchers. As a consequence, it is difficult to formulate a coherent, one-format approach to ethics review for qualitative research proposals. Some disciplines, such as nursing, stand far closer to the medical model of research, whereas other fields, such as adult education (which might use autobiographical narratives), are far removed from the biomedical model.

A third source of the problem involves communication and can be traced to power differentials between those who promulgate ethics codes inspired primarily by concerns in biomedicine and those who practice qualitative research. Qualitative researchers are required to articulate their distinctive approaches, strategies, and paradigms in a language familiar to the dominant positivist model of research. This articulation is made more problematic by the fact that qualitative research is diverse. There is no one voice. By way of analogy, it is comparable to the many diverse Indigenous tribes who must express their wishes with one voice.

Impact of Difficulties

No doubt, the diversity of approaches within qualitative research has meant that the impact of the ethics review process has been felt unequally by those disciplines. There is very little empirical research on this impact, although there are a number of published, usually personal, accounts of qualitative researchers. The Qualitative Analysis Conferences in Canada, for example, have seen a decline of subcultural research that is a natural home for qualitative research. Research ethics boards issue many cautions about doing research on vulnerable or marginal groups or on groups engaged in questionable illegal activities. Researchers perceive such cautions as obstacles. Also in Canada, field research has suffered a significant decline over the past

10 years or so. In sociology alone, the proportion of master's theses using research participants dropped from 57% in 1995 to close to 42% in 2004. When one considers that the proportion of master's theses using fieldwork through 2002 averaged 21% per year, one notices an immense drop of such theses after the introduction of the national research ethics codes, with an annual average of 5.5%. In anthropology, Will van den Hoonaard and Anita Connolly also discovered that Canadian master's theses have increasingly come to rely on interviews, rather than fieldwork, as the sole data-gathering technique (47.9% in 2004). Disciplines relatively new to qualitative research do not see anything unusual in this trend. In conventional fieldwork, however, formal interviews were not a main component of research, although conversations, chats, and the like

were more common at that time than they are now. No doubt, other pressures on students, such as time limitations on completing their degrees, have exacerbated this trend toward more simplified models of research, pushing field research to the back.

These findings underscore the process of the homogenization of methods—a research situation where several disciplines have adopted one data-gathering technique; namely, the interview method. The decline of field research would lead one to conclude that we are also witnessing a pauperization of the disciplines; history, society, and culture are pushed to the background, and although the “voices” of the participants are privileged (and no one can deny their importance), without placing them in a historical and social context, the voices carry less power.

Two Contrasting Examples of Ethics

Mitch Duneier's *Sidewalk* (published in 1999) does not follow ethics guidelines advocating anonymity. The book features photos of all 28 people Duneier interviewed or observed. Except for a very few minor instances, there is no attempt to cover the identity of the people featured in this ethnography. It is a study of the social structure of sidewalk life in New York City—an area of three city blocks. Duneier asserts that the lack of anonymity allows readers and researchers to verify his findings. It is striking that his research covers a “vulnerable” group. It is also notable that participants were particularly enthusiastic about and interested in Duneier's research. Some interviewed each other when Duneier was absent at times; others expressed their gratitude that their names and photos would appear in the book so that they would have something to show their families as having accomplished something in life. Two research participants became part of a university course as presenters.

Whereas *Sidewalk* represents a form of scholarship and research liberated from the shackles of anonymity and confidentiality, Timothy Diamond's book, *Making Gray Gold: Narratives of Nursing Home Care* (published in 1992), involves covert research and intricate relationships with all those with whom Diamond came into contact when he worked as a nursing assistant in three different nursing homes in Chicago for 3 to 4 months each. Several chance encounters with exhausted and complaining nursing assistants in a local coffee shop had aroused his curiosity about life and work in nursing homes. As his research moved along, the circumstances

of the nursing homes forced him to conduct undercover research. However, he was the only White person on staff and, as such, his presence would evoke questions. He confesses, “In this atmosphere [of poorly paid work and tension], since the workers had viewed me with some suspicion in the first place, it became increasingly impossible for me to reveal to management that I hoped to write about my experiences.” The suspiciousness of the climate and the divisions of power between management and staff prevented him from disclosing his work. “Eventually,” Diamond confesses, “I disclosed to some residents that I hoped to write about nursing-home life,” and then they proceeded to give him advice. A number of nursing assistants asked him whether he was writing a book, and he truthfully said that he was. His scribbles during his work as a nursing assistant led to the question: “What are you doing, Tim, writing a book?” He came up with a reply, fearing a rejection, but his disclosure resulted in people saying, “Hey, good luck.” The nursing assistants even said that he should not forget to put this or that item in his fieldnotes.

Both Duneier's and Diamond's accounts are significant in the annals of social research. Their research is demonstrably highly ethical, as is evident from the profound respect toward research participants and from the researchers' attempts to bring injustice and the plight of the human condition (homeless street vendors, the indignities suffered by nursing home residents, and the abysmal working conditions of nursing assistants) to the attention of the broader public.

Sources: For more information on this topic, see Diamond, T. (1992), *Making Gray Gold: Narratives of Nursing Home Care*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Duneier, M. (1999). *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.

It is tempting to attribute (wholesale) these changes in qualitative research to the ethics review process. However, disciplines (both individually and collectively) are also undergoing changes as a result of developments in the larger context of culture, society, and the economy. A heightened sense of individualism and pressures on professional advancement through grants, for example, also play a significant role in shaping qualitative research.

Key Ethical Issues

Among the more serious distinctions that qualitative researchers might find troubling in ethics policies is the emphasis on individualism. Policies emphasize the importance of humans as organic entities—a legacy of their biomedical origins—rather than as social and cultural beings. How can consent of the group be predicated on such a model? Does the use of written (and signed) consent forms vitiate the relationships and personal trust on which field researchers rely? Is confidentiality a nonnegotiable item in ethics review of research? Qualitative researchers recognize a number of settings where research participants insist that their voices be heard and that their names and contributions be recognized. Similarly, requiring research participants to sign forms has a coercive element. Qualitative researchers might find the use of an “information sheet” more appropriate for their research settings; while containing basic information about the research, the information sheet puts the ethical onus on the researchers and is less likely to engender distrust because it is only the researchers who sign the sheet, not the research participants. In participant observation research, consent forms (and even information sheets) are impossible to use given the large number of people involved in everyday settings. Another fundamental issue concerns the open-ended nature of qualitative research that qualitative researchers see as its strength. The notion of “hanging out,” or of having just exploratory questions guiding the interviews or research, does not fit into the ethics review process mold. Yet these issues drive at the heart of qualitative research.

Among the more minute distinctions includes the coinage of terms that are unfamiliar to qualitative researchers. The use of the term *human subject* was a hotly debated issue that seems to have resolved itself because biomedical researchers themselves are now using the term *research participant* as a matter of course. The term *protocol* constitutes another distinction between dominant research and qualitative research paradigms. In this case, the switch has gone

in the reverse direction. Qualitative researchers use the word *protocol* more frequently to describe their plans for research, although in a strict sense the term refers to a measurement that is not subject to interpretation. The qualitative research approach is more iterative than what the term *protocol* suggests.

Publications constitute another significant area not directly covered by the ethics review process. Whereas in biomedical research data have already been anonymized by the time they reach the publication stage, in qualitative research it is unlikely that data are anonymized to the same extent. This condition forces qualitative researchers to consider more carefully the nature of identifiable data and persons in the publication of research findings. National research ethics codes do not offer guidance in this respect, leaving qualitative researchers to educate themselves and each other.

Current Debates and Actions

A number of countries are undertaking the task of bringing qualitative research more visibly into national research ethics codes by an explicit recognition of its methods, epistemology, and approaches that are at variance with the medical model of research. This task is receiving obliging support from those responsible for developing national research ethics codes, especially in Canada and Australia.

Still, obstacles to fully integrating the models of qualitative research into research ethics policies remain. The discourse on interdisciplinarity, for example, insists that the language of qualitative research needs to conform to the dominant one. This discourse makes it more difficult to focus on the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research because it takes the thrust away from the particular needs of qualitative research. The challenge, then, is to admit the importance of interdisciplinarity without letting go of the distinctive problematique of ethics vis-à-vis qualitative research.

What the future of qualitative research and the ethics review process will bring is hard to predict. The ethics review process is an inexorable one, and new researchers see it as normative. If the paradigms of qualitative research find a voice in research ethics policies, one must surmise that other fields will stand to gain given that they too must acknowledge that some of their work is more inductive than they formally advocate. The key to change, then, is to acknowledge that when the ethics review process takes qualitative research seriously, the whole research enterprise will stand to benefit.

Will C. van den Hoonaard

See also Deception; Ethics and New Media; Integrity in Qualitative Research; Risk

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ETHNODRAMA

An ethnodrama is the written transformation and adaptation of ethnographic research data (e.g., interview transcripts, participant observation fieldnotes, journals, documents, statistics) into a dramatic playscript staged as a live, public theatrical performance.

More than 50 terms synonymous with or related to ethnodrama have been coined and include variants such as ethnographic performance text, performance ethnography, documentary theater, docudrama, nonfiction playwriting, theater of reenactment, and reality theater. For purposes of this entry, *ethnodrama* refers to the written playscript, whereas *ethnotheater* refers to the production and live performance of the playscript.

Anthropologist Victor Turner experimented with traditional ethnographies that were dramatized and performed improvisationally by students in classrooms to gain a deeper understanding of a culture and its

members. His studio exercises in “ethnodramatics” preceded more formally staged ethnotheatrical productions by scholars and artists. Various academic disciplines have explored ethnodramatic approaches to research and include fields such as education, anthropology, sociology, and health care. The professional commercial theater has also developed a few successful works that are ethnodramatic in nature such as interviews of a New York City fire captain's grief and healing after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in Anne Nelson's drama *The Guys*, a musical adaptation of Studs Terkel's book *Working*, and Eve Ensler's raucous one-person show *The Vagina Monologues*.

Purposes and Goals of Ethnodrama

Ethnodrama, as a form of arts-based research, is a representational and presentational mode of ethnographic reporting chosen by the researcher or artist when the dramatic genre and theatrical medium will create the most credible, vivid, and persuasive portrait of the participants' culture and lived experiences and, hence, an informative, emotion-generating, and aesthetic experience for its readers and/or viewers (assuming a well-developed script, sound production values, and a receptive audience). Producers of ethnotheater may have varied goals for their work, ranging from basic education of its audiences about a particular culture, to social change agendas for motivating discussion and action toward the unjust, to artistic yet for-profit ventures produced by the commercial theater industry.

Ethnodramatic Playwriting

Ethnodramas are as varied in style as the historic and contemporary canons of dramatic literature. Some ethnodramas may be scripted as verbatim, slice-of-life naturalism to replicate authentic social interaction on-stage. Others may be scripted and produced as direct address presentations, incorporating theatrical devices such as abstract movement, poetic choral speech, projected media, and evocative background music.

Ethnodrama, like traditional dramatic literature, is most often composed as monologue and/or dialogue and is usually accompanied with stage directions. The primary sources of an ethnodramatic text are the participants' lived experiences, which can emerge from the researcher himself or herself as autoethnographer, to qualitative or ethnographic fieldwork with everyday citizens whose lives and perspectives have been documented and then adapted into dramatic narrative form.

Playwrights of ethnodramas must consider the balance between naturalistic authenticity and the creative interpretation of reality—each a legitimate style for the staged performance of social life, but artistic choices that may affect the production's and research project's credibility and aesthetic impact on its audiences.

As a brief example of naturalistic reconstruction of dialogue, refer to the sidebar with an excerpt from the ethnodrama *Street Rat*. This conversational exchange among three teenage girls orients the audience to the culture of runaway youth. (Their references to “Roach” and “Tigger” are about teenage boys who also live with them.) *Street Rat*'s primary data sources were interviews with homeless youth in New Orleans conducted by Susan Finley during the late 1990s coupled with her son Macklin Finley's personal observations, lived experiences, and evocative poetry of street life in the city. Johnny Saldaña, as primary adapter and director of the ethnotheatrical production, reassembled the Finleys' body of nondramatic creative work into playscript form and, after conducting participant observation fieldwork in New Orleans, staged the play

with authentic regional artifacts, music, and costuming to represent the cultures depicted in the drama.

Examples of Ethnodrama

Although some members of the academic community question ethnodrama's legitimacy as a form of research representation and presentation, the commercial theater has successfully produced ethnodramatic work since the 1980s. Selected examples of ethnodramas from the commercial canon include (a) Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, a series of monologues adapted from interviews with Los Angeles residents about the April 1992 riots prompted by the Rodney King verdict; (b) Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project's *The Laramie Project*, a collage of monologues and small group scenes of citizens from Laramie, Wyoming, reflecting on the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard; (c) Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen's *The Exonerated*, the stories of six innocent people on death row who were falsely accused and convicted for crimes and then exonerated; (d) Doug

Excerpt From an Ethnodrama

An excerpt from Scene 2 of the ethnodrama *Street Rat* by Johnny Saldaña, Susan Finley, and Macklin Finley:

(lights rise and music fades as JEWEL and QUIZ enter, escorting GENIE, about seven months pregnant and a worn tote bag strapped on her shoulder; they are orienting her to the life of a street rat at The Fortress, their squat)

JEWEL: Sometimes it takes a while before you find a squat.

QUIZ: You'll look around and find a place, and then find out that somebody's already squatting there.

JEWEL: Either that, or a place will be really dirty and you have to clean an area, pull all the trash.

QUIZ: Try to find a squat where there are already other squatters and then stay, because it's safer, as long as there aren't too many people.

GENIE: (sitting and looking at the property) The first place I stayed was this cool old house. It was abandoned. We slept in the attic.

JEWEL: This complex is condemned. The city is supposed to tear it down eventually.

QUIZ: Roach decides who can live here.

JEWEL: That means he can decide what'll happen to you. He kicked his girlfriend out during a raid, and she was afraid she would run out there and get arrested.

QUIZ: Most people don't give a fuck what Roach does. For one thing, he won't even hit girls. If he just dislikes you, he doesn't care if you stay here, but if you do something to piss him off, you don't even want to stay here. Roach and Tigger had to chase three people out last week. They beat Scooby up a couple of days before that. (showing GENIE) All these holes in the wall? They put his head through it.

JEWEL: Roach owns The Fortress. But you want some protection, some kind of squat boss. Every single room is open—take your pick. We call the courtyard the pit. If you're going to fight, you take it to the pit.

Source: Saldaña, J., Finley, S., & Finley, M. (2005). *Street rat*. In J. Saldaña (Ed.), *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality theatre* (pp. 139–179). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira. Used by permission of AltaMira Press.

Wright's Pulitzer Prize-winning *I Am My Own Wife*, a one-man show based on interviews with gay German transvestite Charlotte von Mahlsdorf; and (e) Emily Mann's *Still Life*, monologues of a veteran marine, his wife, and his friend's struggles to cope with the traumatic aftermath of the war in Vietnam.

Selected examples of ethnodramas from the scholarly literature include (a) Joni L. Jones's *sista docta*, an African American woman's complexities as a professor in European American academia; (b) Gail Campbell and Diane Conrad's *Arresting Change*, observations of incarcerated 12- to 18-year-old male offenders in Alberta, Canada; (c) Johnny Saldaña's *Finding My Place: The Brad Trilogy*, an adaptation of Harry F. Wolcott's anthropological case study of a paranoid schizophrenic; (d) Brad Vincent's *The Silence at School*, a readers theater collage of boys' stories about growing up gay in Texas elementary and secondary schools; and (e) Ross Gray and Christina Sinding's *Handle With Care?*, a profile of women's experiences with metastatic breast cancer.

In addition to the work of Victor Turner, scholars such as Dwight Conquergood, Norman K. Denzin, D. Soyini Madison, Jim Mieniczakowski, Johnny Saldaña, and Richard Schechner are generally viewed as principal writers of ethnodramatic theory and practice.

Johnny Saldaña

See also Arts-Based Research; Performance Ethnography; Readers Theater; Researcher as Artist

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ETHNOGRAPH (SOFTWARE)

Developed by U.S. sociologist John Seidel and first launched in 1985 by Qualis Research Associates, Ethnograph was among the first wave of computer software packages that facilitated the electronic management of qualitative data (transcribed words). Like the majority of these types of packages, it can be used for storing, searching, retrieving, reorganizing, and selectively viewing qualitative data input into text files. Ethnograph frees researchers from the time and effort involved with needing to manually perform these tasks—often formerly done by physical cutting and pasting of hard copy—and consequently gives them more time to focus on understanding their data and theory development. Other potential strengths include making data more accessible, more secure, and less likely to be lost or confused. Ethnograph has a good reputation as being reliable and user friendly, with a good network for assistance and training. It can be obtained through individual private purchase or accessed through institutions that hold an appropriate license. The latest version of Ethnograph introduced in 2007 (Version 6) includes a range of improvements related to functioning and ease of use (Figure 1).

Beyond performance comparisons with rival packages, no serious criticisms have been leveled specifically at Ethnograph. All software management packages, however, have been collectively subject to the same general criticisms. Some academics have noted that they are based on, and thus are far more suited to, the analytic process used in grounded theory. Others have noted that they reduce traditional manual approaches to inferior status—when in fact there is no evidence to suggest that they are inferior. In turn, it is thought that their use can be motivated by the perceived need to legitimize the analytic process within publications. Other critics have claimed that they make qualitative data analysis far too procedural and routinized, which can have two negative outcomes. One is

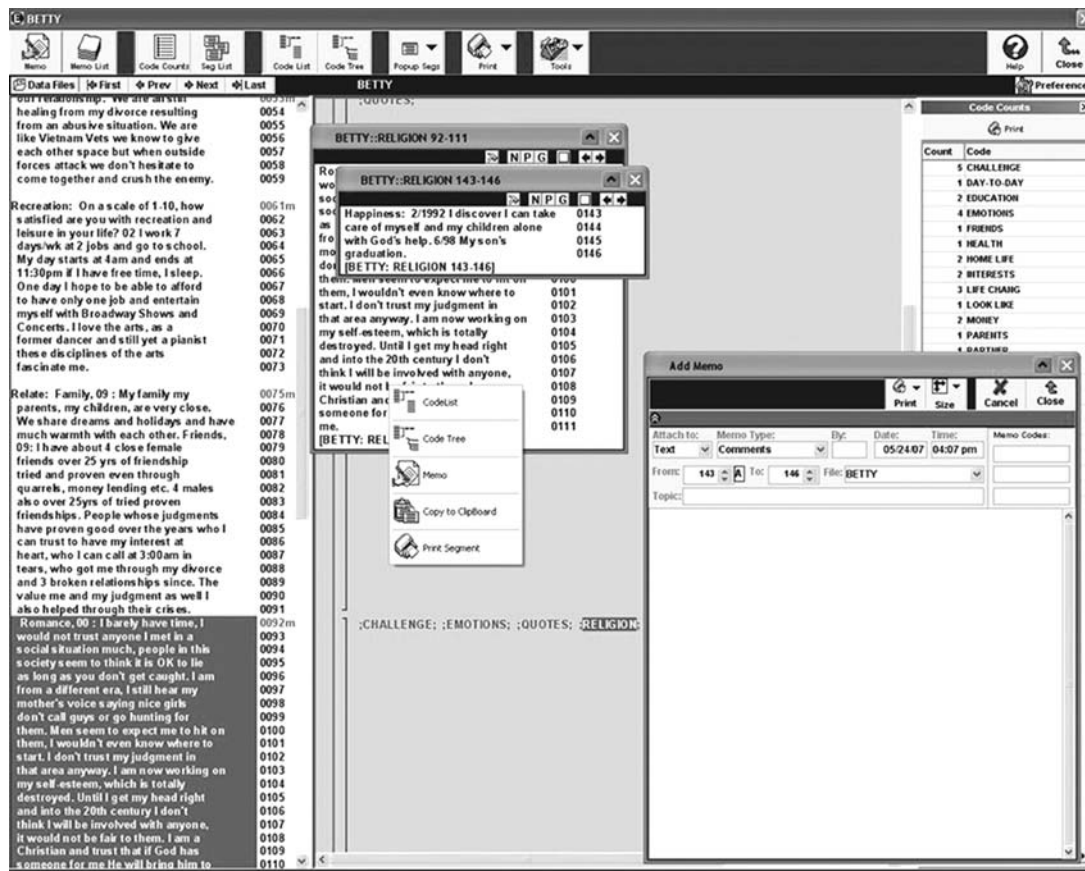


Figure 1 Ethnograph: The Coding Module in Ethnograph (Version 6)

Source: Used by permission of Qualis Research.

“coding fetishism,” whereby a software management package’s structural emphasis on coding makes coding become an obsessive end unto itself. A second negative outcome is that this encourages researchers to look for patterns in their data, rather than their meaning, potentially distancing researchers from “understanding” their data well. Overall, however, strong sales of Ethnograph and similar packages over two decades suggest that researchers find them to be of great use.

Gavin J. Andrews

See also Codes and Coding; Grounded Theory

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Software

Ethnograph: <http://www.qualisresearch.com>

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference (EQRC), formerly known as the Ethnographic and Qualitative Research in Education Conference, originated in 1988 at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The conference was created to provide a forum for the dissemination of qualitative research studies. It subsequently moved to Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City. Thereafter, the conference was hosted at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. EQRC moved to the State University of New York at Albany in 2004. In 2005 and 2006, the conference moved to

Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio, and plans are to continue hosting it there for several more years. Information regarding the past and present conferences, including electronic proceedings, remains posted on the respective university websites.

Moving EQRC to Ohio helped make the conference more accessible to potential participants from midwestern U.S. institutions. Located just outside of Dayton, the current location also is within driving distance of Cincinnati and Columbus airports. Consequently, accessibility is optimal with respect to both driving and air transportation.

The conference historically has been held around the first or second weekend in June. This allows professors to finish their semesters—and also to complete write-ups of papers they have developed over the course of the academic year. The conference has been hosted on university campuses, rather than in hotels, to make the experience feasible for graduate students and other researchers with limited travel funds.

EQRC draws more than 100 presenters annually. Papers are presented both in oral formats and via poster presentations. Presenters are drawn from a wide spectrum of institutions, ranging from Ivy League faculty members to graduate students. Results from doctoral dissertations and master's theses are presented regularly. Research projects are shared from all traditions of qualitative inquiry as well as conceptual and methodological papers.

Following the 2005 and 2006 conferences, selected peer-reviewed papers were published in a book by Cambridge Scholars Press under the title *Ethnographic and Qualitative Research in Education* (Vols. 1 and 2). A new peer-reviewed (print) journal has been established for publishing future selected EQRC papers. It is titled the *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research*.

In sum, EQRC has a distinguished history and has become a place both to hear paper presentations of cutting-edge research and to network with other qualitative researchers. The 2-day conference now provides a publication forum for scholars to place their research articles into print. The call for papers typically is issued in February on the EQRC website (<http://www.cedarville.edu/eqre>).

Michael W. Firmin

See also International Association of Qualitative Inquiry;
International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry; Publishing
and Publication

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ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) refers to an integrated method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, and analyzing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning. The emphasis is on discovery and description of contexts, underlying meanings, patterns, and processes rather than on mere quantity or numerical relationships between two or more variables.

A document is defined as any symbolic representation and meaning that can be recorded and/or retrieved for analysis. Document analysis will expand as recording technologies improve and become more accessible, including print and electronic media, audiotapes, visuals (e.g., photos, home videos), clothing/fashion, internet materials, information bases (e.g., Lexis/Nexis), and fieldnotes.

ECA involves emergent and theoretical sampling of documents from information bases (including those developed by researchers, e.g., fieldnotes), development of a protocol for systematic analysis, and constant comparisons to clarify themes, frames, and discourse. For example, if one is interested in studying television violence, it is not an act of violence per se that is socially significant but rather how that act is linked to a course of action or scenario as part of an entertainment emphasis (e.g., bad guys get shot by good guys to achieve justice) or how the use of violence is somehow linked to bravery, cunning, skill, and (of course) sex. The latter are themes or general messages that are reiterated in specific scenarios. The aim, then, is to query how behavior and events are placed in context and what themes, frames, and discourses are being presented. Steps include the following:

- Pursue a specific problem to be investigated.
- Become familiar with the process and context of the information source (e.g., ethnographic studies of newspapers and/or television stations). Explore possible sources (perhaps documents) of information.
- Become familiar with several (6–10) examples of relevant documents, noting particularly the format.

Select a unit of analysis such as each article (this may change).

- List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol (data collection sheet).
- Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents.
- Revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol.

A dynamic use of ECA is that of “tracking discourse” or following certain issues, words, themes, and frames over a period of time, across different issues, and across different news media. Initial manifest coding incorporates emergent coding and theoretical sampling to monitor changes in coverage and emphasis over time and across topics. For example, in a study of fear, a protocol could obtain data about date, location, author, format, topic, sources, theme, emphasis, and grammatical use of *fear* (as a noun, a verb, an adverb, etc.). The contexts for using the word *fear* are clarified through theoretical sampling and constant comparison with delineate patterns and thematic emphases. Materials are enumerated, charted, and analyzed qualitatively, using a word processor and a qualitative data analysis program (e.g., NVivo), as well as quantitatively.

David L. Altheide

See also Content Analysis; Document Analysis; Ethnography

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ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. The ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not with an empty head. Before asking the first question in the field, the ethnographer begins with a problem, a theory or model, a research design, specific data collection techniques, tools

for analysis, and a specific writing style. A series of quality controls, such as triangulation, contextualization, and a nonjudgmental orientation, place a check on the negative influence of bias.

The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic or insider’s perspective. The ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist; the closer the readers of an ethnography come to understanding the native’s point of view, the better the story and the better the science.

Fieldwork is the heart of the ethnographic research design. In the field, basic anthropological concepts, data collection methods and techniques, and analysis are the fundamental elements of “doing ethnography.” Selection and use of various pieces of equipment—including the human instrument—facilitate the work. This process becomes product through analysis at various stages in ethnographic work—in fieldnotes, memoranda, and interim reports but most dramatically in the published report, article, or book.

Concepts

The most important concepts that guide ethnographers in their fieldwork include culture, a holistic perspective, contextualization, an emic perspective and multiple realities, an etic perspective, nonjudgmental orientation, inter- and intracultural diversity, and symbol and ritual.

Culture

Culture is the broadest ethnographic concept. The classic materialist interpretation of culture is the sum of a social group’s observable patterns of behavior, customs, and way of life. According to the cognitive approach, culture includes the ideas, beliefs, and knowledge that characterize a particular group of people. Ethnographers need to know about both cultural behavior and cultural knowledge to describe a culture or subculture adequately.

Many anthropologists consider cultural interpretation to be ethnography’s primary contribution. Cultural interpretation involves the researcher’s ability to describe what he or she has heard and seen within the framework of the social group’s view of reality. A classic example of the interpretive contribution involves the wink and the blink. A mechanical difference between the two behaviors might not be evident. However, the cultural context of each movement, the relationship between individuals that each behavior suggests, and the contexts surrounding the



Figure 2 Yeshiva in the Inner City With Graffiti

Source: Photo by David M. Fetterman.

condensed expressions of meaning that evoke powerful feelings and thoughts. A cross or menorah represents an entire religion. A swastika represents a movement, whether the original Nazi movement or one of the many neo-Nazi movements. A flag represents an entire country, evoking both patriotic fervor and epithets.

Symbols may signify historical influences in a community. For example, a Jewish star or Star of David on a building marred by graffiti and broken glass marks the historical presence of an orthodox Jewish community (Figure 2). This symbol of the past provides some insight into the roots of current tensions between young African Americans in the community and older Orthodox Jews.

Rituals are repeated patterns of symbolic behavior that play a part in both religious and secular lives. Ethnographers see symbols and rituals as forms of cultural shorthand. The next section details the ethnographic methods and techniques that grow out of these concepts and allow the researcher to carry out the work of ethnography.

Methods and Techniques

Fieldwork is the hallmark of research for both sociologists and anthropologists—working with people for

long periods of time in their natural setting. The ethnographer conducts research in the native environment to see people and their behavior given all the real-world incentives and constraints. This naturalist approach avoids the artificial response typical of controlled or laboratory conditions.

One of the benefits of fieldwork is that it provides a commonsense perspective to data. For example, in a study of schools in the rural South, David Fetterman received boxes of records indicating very low academic performance and high school attendance. This was counterintuitive and contrary to his experience in working with schools in urban areas where students who received poor grades dropped out of school. However, traveling to the school while watching cotton, rice, and soy fields pass by, mile after mile, it became clear to him that the data made sense. There was nothing else to do but show up at school.

Participant Observation

Participant observation characterizes most ethnographic research. Participant observation is immersion in a culture. Ideally, the ethnographer lives and works in the community for 6 months to a year or longer, learning the language and seeing patterns of behavior over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher to internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations of the people under study.

In applied settings, participant observation is often noncontinuous, spread out over an extended time. In these situations, the researcher can apply ethnographic techniques to the study but cannot conduct an ethnography.

Interviewing

The interview is the ethnographer's most important data-gathering technique. General interview types include structured, semi-structured, informal, and retrospective interviews.

Formally structured and semi-structured interviews are verbal approximations of a questionnaire with explicit research goals. These interviews generally serve comparative and representative purposes—comparing responses and putting them in the context of common group beliefs and themes. A structured or semi-structured interview is most valuable when the fieldworker comprehends the fundamentals of a community from the insider's perspective.

Informal interviews are the most common in ethnographic work. They seem to be casual conversations,

but where structured interviews have an explicit agenda, informal interviews have a specific but implicit research agenda. The researcher uses informal approaches to discover how the people conceptualize their culture and organize it into meaningful categories.

Retrospective interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or informal. The ethnographer uses retrospective interviews to reconstruct the past, asking informants to recall personal historical information. All interviews share some generic kinds of questions. The most common types are survey or grand tour, detail or specific, and open-ended or closed questions.

Key Actor or Informant Interviewing

Some people are more articulate and culturally sensitive than others. These individuals make excellent key actors or informants. Key actors become performers in the theater of ethnographic research. Key actors can provide detailed historical data, knowledge about contemporary interpersonal relationships (including conflicts), and a wealth of information about the nuances of everyday life. Anthropologists have traditionally relied most heavily on one or two individuals in a given group. Ethnographers establish long-term relationships with key actors who continually provide reliable and insightful information.

Questionnaires

Structured interviews are close approximations of questionnaires. Questionnaires represent perhaps the most formal and rigid form of exchange in the interviewing spectrum—the logical extension of an increasingly structured interview.

Online surveys and questionnaires provide an efficient way in which to document the views of large groups during a short period of time. The questions are posted on the web and include yes/no, all that apply, open-ended, and 5-point Likert-type scale questions. Respondents are notified about the location of the survey on the web (with a specific URL), enter their responses, and submit their surveys online. The results are calculated automatically. The responses are often visually represented in a bar chart or similar graphic display as soon as the data are entered.

Unobtrusive Measures

The ethnographer attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible to minimize effects on the participants' behavior. A variety of measures, however, do not

require human interaction and can supplement interactive methods of data collection and analysis such as outcropping, and these unobtrusive measures allow the ethnographer to draw social and cultural inferences from physical evidence.

Outcropping is a geological term referring to a portion of the bedrock that is visible on the surface—in other words, something that sticks out. Outcroppings in inner-city ethnographic research include skyscrapers, burned-out buildings, graffiti, and syringes in the schoolyard. The researcher can quickly estimate the relative wealth or poverty of an area from these outcroppings.

Equipment

Notepads, computers, tape recorders, cameras—all the tools of ethnography—are merely extensions of the human instrument; that is, aids to memory and vision. Yet these useful devices can facilitate the ethnographic mission by capturing the rich detail and flavor of the ethnographic experience and then helping to organize and analyze these data. Ethnographic equipment ranges from simple paper and pen to high-tech laptop and mainframe computers, from tape recorders and cameras to digital camcorders. The proper equipment can make the ethnographer's sojourn in an alien culture more pleasant, safe, productive, and rewarding.

Analysis

Analysis is one of the most engaging features of ethnography. It begins the moment a fieldworker selects a problem to study and ends with the last word in the report or ethnography. Ethnography involves many levels of analysis. Some are simple and informal; others require some statistical sophistication. Ethnographic analysis is iterative, building on ideas throughout the study.

Triangulation is basic in ethnographic research. It is at the heart of ethnographic validity, testing one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove a hypothesis.

Ethnographers look for patterns of thought and behavior. Patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability. Ethnographers are more confident about the accuracy of their descriptions when they see patterns of thought and action repeat in various situations and among various players.

Writing

Ethnography requires good writing skills at every stage of the enterprise. Research proposals, fieldnotes,

memoranda, interim reports, final reports, articles, and books are the tangible products of ethnographic work. The ethnographer can share these written works with participants to verify their accuracy and with colleagues to review and consider them.

Performance writing often drives good ethnographic writing. It involves writing for an audience, caring about audience members, and hoping that one's work will make a difference to them. It is relational in that it treats the readers like a gyroscope or a compass whereby the writer's words revolve around them.

Writing is part of the analysis process as well as a means of communication. Writing clarifies thinking. In sitting down to put thoughts on paper, an individual must organize those thoughts and sort out specific ideas and relationships. Writing often reveals gaps in knowledge.

Ethics

Ethnographers subscribe to a code of ethics that preserves participants' rights, facilitates communication in the field, and leaves the door open for further research. This code specifies, first and foremost, that the ethnographer do no harm to the people or the community under study. In seeking a logical path through the cultural wilds, the ethnographer is careful not to trample the feelings of insiders or desecrate what the culture calls sacred. This respect for social environment ensures not only the rights of the people but also the integrity of the data and a productive enduring relationship between the people and the researcher. Professionalism and a delicate step demonstrate the ethnographer's deep respect, admiration, and appreciation for the people's way of life. Noninvasive ethnography not only is good ethics but also is good science.

Ethnographers must formally or informally seek informed consent to conduct their work. Ethnographers must be candid about their task, explaining what they plan to study and how they plan to study it.

Ethnographers need the trust of the people they work with to complete their task. Ethnographers who establish a bond of trust will learn about the many layers of meaning in any community or program under study.

David M. Fetterman

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Fieldwork; Key Informant; Naturalistic Inquiry

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ETHNOGRAPHY (JOURNAL)

Ethnography, published by Sage, was launched in 2000. The current editors are Loïc Wacquant (University of California, USA) and Paul Willis (University of Keele, UK). *Ethnography* has an international editorial board with representatives from the United States and the United Kingdom but also Brazil, Denmark, France, India, Korea, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The journal's website outlines its scope. However, this was also set out in the "Manifesto for *Ethnography*" published in the journal's first edition. Four distinguishing features of *Ethnography* are articulated. First, the journal seeks to promote "theoretical informed-ness" rather than the pursuit of increasingly self-referential "grand narratives" of the social sciences or, on the other hand, merely descriptive research. Second, *Ethnography* seeks to recognize the centrality of culture in the broadest sense rather than narrowly discursive sense. Third, the journal seeks a critical focus on research and writing. Fourth, *Ethnography* promotes an interest in cultural policy and politics.

Consistent with its interdisciplinary focus, *Ethnography* has produced several special issues focusing on topics of scholarly interest that invite participation from disparate disciplines: "Global Ethnography" (2001, Vol. 2, Issue 2), "Dissecting the Prison" (2002, Vols. 3 and 4), "Pierre Bourdieu in the Field" (2004,

Vol. 5, Issue 4), “Phenomenology in Ethnography” (2003, Vol. 4, Issue 3), “Grounds for a Spatial Ethnography of Labor” (2005, Vol. 6, Issue 3), and “Worlds of Journalism” (2006, Vol. 7, Issue 1).

In 2003, *Ethnography* and the Center for Urban Ethnography at the University of California, Berkeley, held a conference on “Ethnography for a New Century: Practice, Predicament, Promise.” This brought together academics from anthropology and sociology, with one aim being to clarify the standards of the journal.

Ethnography does not appear in the *Journal Citation Reports* and, hence, has no impact factor. Its website does, however, usefully provide a monthly updated list of the 50 most frequently read articles (based on hits received by articles archived on the site) and a list of the 50 most frequently cited articles (based on citations from articles in HighWire-hosted journals). For example, for the month beginning November 1, 2006, the two most frequently cited articles were Michael Burawoy, Pavel Krotov, and Tatyana Lytkina’s “Involution and Destitution in Capitalist Russia” and Burawoy’s introduction to the special issue on global ethnography, “Manufacturing the Global.”

Anna Madill

See also Ethnography; Publishing and Publication

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the taken-for-granted “methods” used by members of collectivities to maintain a local sense of social order. It can be seen as a respecification of sociology as conceived by Talcott Parsons and as inspired by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Aron Gurwitsch, and Alfred Schutz. Ethnomethodological studies require a deep immersion into the details of members’ practices in their local specifics through close observation ethnographically and/or by using audio- or video-recordings. At the same time, the researcher should “bracket” pre-given conceptions and evaluations of the character of the activities to be studied. Such studies cover an enormous variety of practical activities, ranging from ordinary conversation to highly specialized professional investigations. Ethnomethodology has been a major influence in the emergence of conversation analysis, whereas another offshoot, membership categorization analysis, is gaining more prominence. Because of its principled difference from other kinds of sociology, it offers a major challenge to social theory and sociological research practices.

Ethnomethodology’s Interest

To understand ethnomethodological studies, one must realize their specific interest. This differs so much from the taken-for-granted interests in the other human sciences that reading such studies without understanding what drives them only leads to confusion. What is basically at stake is the local achievement of accountability. The general idea is that in anything they do, people (as members of society) design their actions in ways such that their meanings are made available to other members. The empirical interest, then, is to explicate how this is achieved—how the sense of actions, their accountability, is made observable in situ.

Consider a simple action such as greeting. There is an enormous range of activities, such as gestures and sayings, that can be done to “do a greeting.” The way it is concretely done can be taken by recipients or others as somehow significant, say as warm or routine or reluctant. Timing in relation to other events and the fit in the situation will be essential. Any deviation from “greeting as usual” can be consequential for the relationship in which it occurs. For instance, a slow greeter can be held accountable: “Are you angry?” When less simple actions are studied, such as in the work of airline pilots to be considered later in this entry, similar interests will be pursued—the selection

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Ethnomethodology is the somewhat confusing label for a specific “alternate” sociology developed during the 1960s by Harold Garfinkel. Its mission is to study

of concrete modes of doing things, their fit in the local situation, their routine character or deviations from routines, timing, previous actions, later uptake, and so on.

For ethnomethodologists, specifying a culture's repertoire for doing particular actions is not enough. They want to know more about the circumstances and the concrete details of the local application of a culture's possibilities. Furthermore, they are not particularly interested in some of the aspects that many others in the social sciences want to know about, such as frequency distributions in terms of external variables, or various mental attributes, such as cognitions or attitudes that are often proposed to "underlie" specific actions.

In short, ethnomethodology asks "how" questions rather than "why" questions; its interest is procedural rather than explanatory.

Ethnomethodology's Methods

Ethnomethodology cannot be said to have one specific method. Instead, the methods that ethnomethodologists would use in a particular case should be adapted specifically to the character and circumstances of that case in the light of ethnomethodology's interest. Following from that interest, however, they do have certain (dis)preferences. The core data for ethnomethodological studies tend to be observations, either directly as ethnographic observations or indirectly by studying audio- or videorecordings. A major difference with most other qualitative researchers is that ethnomethodologists tend to avoid using interviews as their major data. In other research traditions, interviews are often used to gather self-reports, expressions of opinions and attitudes, and/or descriptions of scenes that the researcher has not observed directly. For an ethnomethodologist, these are "accounts" that for them can be interesting as such, as ways in which members bring off interview reports as situated actions, but not as a resource to study nonobserved events or "inner states." Only as aids to understanding particular specialized practices can interviews be useful.

The analytic process in ethnomethodology can be seen to occur in two steps. The ethnomethodologist first must understand the actions of the participants in a scene as they understand it. The second step is to analyze that understanding in procedural terms—how, by the use of which concrete methods, have the participants

achieved the actions as understood? To be adequate in these two aspects of ethnomethodological research, the researcher must develop a double-sided competence. On the one hand, he or she must be competent in understanding or even acting adequately in terms of the local culture, which involves practical common sense in local terms. But the researcher must also be able to use that understanding in an analytic way to explicate the procedures used in the actions observed.

Studies of Work

Using one's commonsense competence to understand a greeting does not seem to be very problematic, at least for scenes that are not too much different from one's own experiences. For situations that are not familiar, however, understanding may require a rather extensive period of getting to know the local ways of doing things. Maurice Nevile, for instance, collected his core data by videotaping the activities of flight crews on scheduled flights by commercial airlines to study "talk-in-interaction in the airline cockpit." But before he even approached the airlines to ask for their cooperation, he prepared his research by extensively reading whatever he could find about the operation of commercial airlines, training and operations manuals, official accident reports, and so on. He also watched available information videos showing pilots at work, visited conferences, and talked to research psychologists working with flight crews and accident investigators. In this way, he developed what he called a "disciplinary competence" in his field of interest; without this, he would have understood hardly anything that was happening in the cockpit. This is in line with what Harold Garfinkel called the "unique adequacy requirement of methods," meaning that for any particular topic of ethnomethodological study, the researcher must be "vulgarly competent" in the local practices and adapt his or her approach to what turns out to be necessary in the situation at hand.

Nevile's research is an example of what has been called "ethnomethodological studies of work" or, more generally, "workplace studies." Such studies are often done by a combination of ethnographic field observation and the detailed analysis of videorecordings made during the fieldwork. The ethnographic phase of the research is used mainly to acquire the local competence necessary to understand the practices that constitute "work" in the setting, whereas the recordings are used for the actual ethnomethodological analysis of

those practices. Ethnomethodology's preference for recordings is related to its interest in the details of the local social orders as are actually realized in situ. Ethnomethodological studies of work show that although most specialized work activities are based on a pregiven plan, protocol, or set of instructions, actually working according to the plan involves more than is, or can be, specified in the plan. A plan or script may specify the steps to be taken to do some kind of work in general terms, but doing the work involves adapting the instructions to local circumstances and realizing the work by using one's voice, one's body, various material objects, and so on. Cooperation at work, especially, requires following the activities of co-workers and fitting one's own activities into the situation as it develops. This may involve following the direction of a co-worker's gaze to understand what he or she is attending (e.g., a computer display) or over-hearing a telephone conversation and, on the basis of what one hears, taking a next step in a work sequence. Repeated viewing of a videotape shot in a work setting provides the researcher with access to the lived details of work that would not be available in a "one time through" ethnographic observation written down later in the day.

Ethnomethodological studies, then, require an intense immersion into the details of actual social settings. The results of such studies cannot be reported in

generalized formal accounts. What is presented is rather the analytic description of one or more "cases," events, or practices. Such description can be read as instructions to see "more than the plan"—what is ignored or glossed over in any official rendering of the work. Official accounts are done "in terms of the plan" rather than as a concrete report of the work activities. This does not mean that the pregiven plan or the ultimate accounts in terms of it are themselves ignored in ethnomethodological studies; rather, it means that they are studied in the ways they are involved in the actual work of "following instructions" or "producing accounts."

Although ethnomethodologists will take the lived details of the actual practices very seriously, externally formulated official "versions" of that work tend to be held at a distance, so to speak. This is part of a strategy known as ethnomethodological indifference, which refers to a "bracketing" (to use an expression taken from phenomenology), or preconceived notions and evaluations about some activity, so as to be able to study it in its own terms as it is actually accomplished. Such pregiven notions and evaluations can stem from common sense, the social sciences, engineering, or managerial theories; whatever their origin, they are to be bracketed in favor of a close study of the phenomena at hand. This strategy, then, marks a fundamental difference between ethnomethodology and most other social sciences.

An Ethnomethodology Example: "Pilot-Speak"

In Maurice Nevile's book, *Beyond the Black Box: Talk-in-Interaction in the Airline Cockpit*, a major aspect of his analysis of pilots' talk is the use of pronouns. In fact, it takes him two chapters to report his findings on this aspect. The general issue is that by choosing a particular pronoun, such as "I," "you," or "we" (and its derivatives), a speaker relates the utterance in which it occurs to himself or herself to the addressee or to a locally relevant collective. In the case of cockpit talk, there are two pilots, a captain and a first officer, and for any flight there is a division of labor, where one is the "pilot flying" and the other is the "pilot-not-flying." For any action that is announced in speaking, it must be clear who is responsible for it. That is where the choice of pronouns comes in. The work of pilots is based on extremely detailed protocols, which may also prescribe

particular pronouns to be used on particular occasions. Chapter 2 details the use of "prescribed pronominal forms," and Chapter 3 reports on "nonprescribed pronominal forms." Both function to help pilots make explicit the distribution of duties and responsibilities. "I" can be used to claim an action, whereas "you" assigns it to the other. "We," on the other hand, can be used to stress a team identity and, for instance, a team achievement. These functions are recognized by the airlines and, therefore, are prescribed for certain occasions. In their daily practice, however, pilots often add pronouns where they are not prescribed, and in so doing they personalize their exchanges and, thereby, their "actions-in-coordination." A captain who often uses "we" rather than "I" may be seen as fostering a sense of partnership between the pilots.

Source: For more information on this topic, see Nevile, M. (2004). *Beyond the black box: Talk-in-interaction in the airline cockpit*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Ethnomethodology's Mission

In workplace studies, as discussed in the previous section, the specific features of ethnomethodology—its interest and methods—can perhaps be seen most clearly. These include the requirements to attend to details, to immerse oneself into the local relevancies, and to acquire enough of the competencies to understand what is going on from the perspective of the workers while putting external conceptions and evaluations at a distance. Ethnomethodology in its current shape is not limited, however, to the study of specialized work settings. Similar requirements can, for instance, be formulated for the study of observable practices of severely handicapped persons, as David Goode's work makes clear. And although the study of less exceptional situations may make immersion and acquiring local competencies less spectacular, attending to details to understand "competencies in use" remains essential.

When the idea of ethnomethodology was being developed by Garfinkel, its topic—the seen but unnoticed features of ordinary action—was so hard to get in focus that he used very specific procedures, the so-called breaching experiments, to make them "visible." Although he continued to use some of these purposeful disturbances of ordinary situations as a pedagogy, they are no longer necessary as a general study policy today. Closely observing some utterly routine doings, such as greeting and (for pilots) arranging take-off, can provide a basis for understanding what goes wrong in exceptional situations, such as in "cold" encounters and airplane accidents, respectively. To maintain situations, whatever their kind, as in some way "orderly," work must be done systematically and routinely but adapted to local circumstances. Explicating that work is the task that ethnomethodology has set for itself.

Paul ten Have

See also Conversation Analysis; Membership Categorization
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ETHNOPOETICS

Dennis Tedlock defines ethnopoetics as the study of verbal arts in all languages and cultures, focusing in particular on the oral communication of proverbs, laments, prayers, praises, prophecies, curses, and riddles shaped by the spoken, chanted, or singing voice. Such studies aim at translating, transcribing, interpreting, and analyzing oral performances to make them cross-culturally accessible as works of art, hoping in the process to free all poetries from the constricting traditions of Western literature and thereby helping to transcend the artificial boundaries of language and culture that modern thinking harbors in separating itself from what it sees as the "others" of the world.

This effort was launched as a special genre of inquiry when Tedlock teamed up with Jerome Rothenberg to create the radical magazine *Alcheringa/Ethnopoetics* in 1970. Although similar work had been done piecemeal for several years, the magazine concentrated on ethnopoetics as a unifying theme. It was strongly committed to exploring new techniques of translating the poetries of tribal societies, especially the work of Indigenous verbal artists from Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. *Alcheringa/Ethnopoetics* is no longer published, but its goals and methodological experimentalism have continued to characterize the field since it began.

Narrative Verse

One important early development in this field was the recognition of narrative verse patterning—the idea

that Native American oral performances were organized by poetic line phrasings rather than by the sentence/paragraph forms imposed on them by Western transcribers. Pointing out that ethnopoetics is, above all else, committed to understanding the ways in which narrators choose and group words, Dell Hymes asserted in the process that the stories of Native American oral discourse are a form of poetry to be said and heard in lines—an idea he first had in 1960 while working on some of his Northwest Coast materials. Tedlock concluded much the same thing in his influential study of Zuni oral performances in 1972. He and Hymes disagree in part on how to identify the lines themselves, what is actually lost through dictated texts (e.g., not necessarily all paralinguistic features), and what might be saved through phonetically transcribed texts or, perhaps best of all, sound recordings of actual performances. Focusing on the body of the presentation itself (what is said *and* how it “sounds”), Tedlock puts a great deal of emphasis on the timings of sounds and silences in performances. Hymes says that identifying pauses as line breaks is not available for all narratives. He seeks poetic line identification primarily by identifying recurrent particle patterns in narrative structures. Nonetheless, both of them find empowering knowledge in treating oral narratives as dramatic poetry, thereby marking many translations as distortions of the originals forced by the dictation process, defeating the idea that form and content are independent, erasing presumptions of fixed boundaries between poetry and prose, and applauding new techniques of recording together with a sense of oral art as performance “events.” With this innovative thinking at hand, knowledge of Native American oral traditions has been greatly enhanced by the work of both scholars.

Dialogics

It is important to remember the dialogic character of all such communications and to keep in mind Mikhail Bakhtin’s wisdom that language never moves through uncluttered space. Discourse is heteroglossic and mutually constructive in all utterances—in all contexts of development, reception, and discovery—and context is practically everything for determining meaning. Translation (with its attendant nuanced, cultural, aesthetic, intellectual, and mechanical problems) escapes none of this as an activity. In fact, it helps to bring the role of the observer to the fore more readily than in most other domains of ethnographic

research. Ethnopoets want their work to be faithful to the grammatical and semantic patterns, styles, figurative speech and imagery, acoustics, rhythms, and associated paralanguage (including pausing and intonations) of original performances. But they must also see themselves as part of the cross-cultural equation. They know that they are an audience of a different kind. They are imposers and interpreters potentially loaded with distorting subjectivities, favoritisms, biases, inclinations, and cultural presuppositions about the nature of the world and their place in it. Moreover, because performance narratives are bound to be multivocal and polyvalent at one level or another, they are always subject to context-sensitive interpretations that cannot always be determined for the original performers in the case of *representations* or *rereadings*. The very action of *revisiting* and *reimagining* such circumstances creates original material and, thus, another potential source of distortion in the effort to render authenticity.

Getting to some authentic emulation or understanding of traditional oral performances of any kind, but particularly those considered to be “not our own,” forces the issue of meanings in fundamental ways and makes the effort truly an “artful science.” It raises the questions of what is lost from, or created and added to, discourse whenever it is moved from one person or culture to the next by anyone, not just by specialists. It is hard to overestimate the value of that kind of information for linguists, anthropologists, and the applied social sciences, particularly as they engage the rapidly expanding world of global commerce and postcolonial international relations.

Literacy

These “slow motion explosions” of expanding urban frontiers (as Gary Snyder likes to call them) not only call to mind the more or less synchronic changes inherent in the translation process—what to study and how to study it among our living contemporaries—but also serve as reminders that cultures and their associated behaviors have deep roots. Literacy itself, the invention and spread of writing and reading across the planet, has been largely overlooked in the study of oral art. Projecting that most modern of mentalities—reading as an avenue to interpretation—as a facile metaphor on all that we wish to understand (e.g., “reading” oral performances) can be an obstacle in the study of both oral and written traditions. There is a big difference between reading writing and speaking

thinking, especially if the spoken word occurs in the absence of any tradition for writing in preliterate or strictly oral cultures—all of which have been smothered by colonial conquests to some degree since 1492. Times have changed, and our sensibilities have changed along with them. The rise of alphabetic literacy and its dissemination through writing and printing technology have had a profound effect on what Donald Lowe calls the “hierarchy of the senses” and, thus, on the way in which we register and store information as humans. That raises the issue of just how much information about a people’s past oral traditions—preliterate cultural content and contexts—is contained in modern knowledge. The whole problem is bound up with enticing mysteries on how oral performances have changed in the long run, how resolving these puzzles at some satisfactory level might set new standards for estimating authenticity in performance studies, and what having that information might tell us about linguistic and cultural change in general.

Ethnopoetics and Humanism

The great demand of anthropological poetics (and its derivative ethnopoetics as defined here) is that we render these experiences as clearly and accurately as possible through our sense of being-in-place and the guidance of histories—our own and those of others—that appear to contextualize the material best. Such analyses can teach us things that are not available in any other way. Among many other possibilities, they can show us mystery and beauty and the need for being in them as we pass through the landscapes of our lives. Combined with what can be learned from rigorous methods, history, archaeology, and personal experiences, we can bolster our sense of ancient aesthetic and poetic creations by studying the legends, tales, myths, and meanings as they exist today in oral performances. In the quest to understand the rich and abiding nature of oral cultures, however, the bottom line must be more than a study of language and storytelling. It must be a critical exercise in the larger and more inclusive realm of an anthropology of experience, the anthropology of being human, the anthropology of shared humanity. Poetry and related performance arts, after all, are about all of us. They always have been.

Ivan A. Brady

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Discourse Analysis; Ethnography; Heteroglossia; Narrative Texts; Oral History; Storytelling

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ETHNOSTATISTICS

Ethnostatistics and quantification rhetoric are broad fields of study that deploy different sorts of qualitative methods to study the use of statistical, graphical, and numerical constructions in various settings. Ethnostatistical work has taken as its topic how the practices

of quantification are employed in medical, scientific, or media settings. Combined with quantification rhetoric, it has considered the way charts, summaries, and graphical displays are used to make persuasive points. Work in this tradition has also studied the everyday use of numerical constructions of various kinds. Some of this work has drawn on ideas from the sociology of scientific knowledge, some has drawn on ideas from discourse and conversation analysis, and some has drawn on ideas from linguistics. Whatever methodological preference, studies typically use careful analysis of numbers and statistics within particular settings.

This style of work brings to the fore the often hidden assumptions and practices that underlie quantification, whether in technical or everyday settings. It can be usefully split into five broad areas: studies of mathematics as a social practice, studies of the way objects and events are turned into mathematical summaries, research on the way different forms of quantification are built to support arguments, work on everyday uses of mathematical and semi-mathematical notions, and studies of how quantification is achieved in social science and the implications for how we should understand the status of quantification. Note that there is considerable overlap here; these classifications are intended to give a broad indication of the different focus of work.

Studies of Mathematics as a Social Practice

Constructionist approaches to quantification highlighted conventional, culturally embedded, or arbitrary features to mathematical systems. Ethnomathematicians have outlined radically different mathematical systems such as Islamic geometry and Inca data structures. Ethnomathematicians have suggested that the earliest known mathematical objects may date back 37,000 years—a bone with notches that appear to be for counting. At 25,000 years old, the “Ishango Bone” appears to provide a table of prime numbers and a lunar phase calendar, suggesting to some that the mathematician may have been a woman tracking menstrual cycles.

David Bloor has developed constructionist arguments further and attempted to show how different forms of mathematics and concepts of number were fitted to different societies. For example, he argued that moves to a more continuous notion of number were associated with an increasingly involvement of

mathematicians with problems of ballistics. The philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and Imre Lakatos both developed arguments that highlighted conventional elements to mathematics. Lakatos in particular attempted to bring philosophy of mathematics closer to history and sociology. He argued that mathematical proofs are not accomplished by formal procedures alone; historical studies of proofs show that they depend on a range of inexplicit or informal procedures.

There are profound debates over how far mathematics can be said to be invented or culturally contingent. For many ethnostatistical researchers, the issue is not whether mathematics itself is culturally contingent but rather how mathematics and various forms of quantification are built in different institutions and how they are distorted by social interests. For example, there is a range of studies in the tradition of radical statistics that explore critical issues such as the production of crime statistics to show increases in criminality or to show the effectiveness of severe punishment. These are not critical of statistical work as a principled project; rather, they are critical of particularly flawed or politically biased uses. In contrast, work in the sociology of scientific knowledge adopts a position of methodological indifference or relativism to the validity or correctness of statistical work and focuses instead on social questions of how it is produced and related to social organizations.

Studies of the Transformation of Phenomena Into Mathematical Forms

A second area of ethnostatistics has focused on the way objects and events are transformed into mathematical forms. For example, Michael Lynch studied the way biological specimens are represented in mathematical terms and the different transformations that are involved with such representation. He noted the way particular specimens are turned into mathematical objects by giving them a specific numerical code. As he put it in 1985, the “naturalistically visible lizard is no longer just a lizard, as it becomes the bearer of a numerical code. Marking preserves a class of lizards, equivalent in all respects except for the unique identity of each mark within the set of marks” (p. 41).

Malcolm Ashmore and others studied the application of economic reasoning to the topic of health. For example, they showed that the outcome of cost–benefit analysis of different configurations of health service

care was fundamentally dependent on a range of often inexplicit assumptions. These researchers found that health economists worked with highly contrasting notions of the precision and impartiality of statistics depending on the setting in which they were used. Their conclusion was that the success of cost-benefit analysis lies in its trading between the world of facts and figures and the world of politics. Although the contingency of cost-benefit analysis was demonstrated, they also showed that it is not easy to dispense with it.

This kind of work blurs into studies that focus specifically on the way quantification can be used to build rhetorical cases. Whereas the studies in this strand of ethnostatistics emphasize the contingency and optionality of producing mathematical versions, the studies in the next strand focus on the way the resources of quantification can be used to build cases and counteralternatives.

Studies of Quantification Rhetoric

Quantification rhetoric involves the use of mathematical, statistical, or otherwise quantified constructions (including figures, graphs, and tables) as parts of arguments in scientific articles, newspaper articles, and official reports. For example, Jonathan Potter and others studied constructions of medical progress in the effectiveness of cancer treatment. They showed the way a range of different calculation, fractionation, aggregation, and presentation practices were selectively drawn on to form the scaffolding of contrasting versions produced by representatives of cancer charities and skeptical critics. They highlighted the importance of inexplicit definitional decisions that constitute phenomena as countable in different ways and the importance of selective translations between numerical and nonnumerical formulations (1% vs. small). Studies of quantification rhetoric have focused in particular on the representation of socially controversial topics such as drug use, crime, and sexual identity. Sometimes the specifics of the statistical construction are related to broader media interests and political agendas. For example, James Orcutt and Blake Turner studied the way the U.S. media constructed a “cocaine epidemic” by using selective graphical representations that greatly exaggerated what original research data suggested was a largely static situation of drug consumption.

Studies of Everyday Measurement Systems

In Harvey Sacks’s foundational work on conversation analysis, he developed a fourth area of study that he called “members’ measurement systems.” He noted that in everyday settings, numbers are used with different logics. There is a different leeway for being late for an appointment made for “2:28” than for one made for “half past two.” In effect, there are different measurement systems implied by these different constructions. “Fast” on a car speedometer is different from “fast” relative to surrounding traffic. Precision is not something that is decided in an abstract manner but rather is something relevant to the interactional context; thus, one of the features of legal and medical interaction is that phrases such as “I have no money” and “it seemed like 3 days,” which have a precisely calibrated and communicative everyday logic, might not satisfy legal or medical criteria for precision. For example, “the water damage occurred at 4:30 AM” may be a description that has legal precision (perhaps in relation to alternative testimony), but “the water poured through the ceiling very early in the morning” may be a description that evokes sympathy for the victim and highlights the ordeal we experience when we are woken up by water penetration.

Problems With Quantification in the Social Sciences

A final cluster of studies is concerned more with the coding, mathematical, and statistical practices through which social science objects are manufactured. Some of this work is purely descriptive, but often such studies develop critical points about the basis of social science claims. Aaron Cicourel’s influential study of research on Argentine fertility showed a range of practical and often implicit procedures and judgments that went into the use of a set of questions to produce a statistical conclusion about fertility rates. Max Atkinson offered one of the clearest illustrations of the social processes that go into counting social facts, taking the example of suicide statistics (which have classically been used as a sociological indicator of community cohesion). He noted that cross-national suicide styles and relative stigma have a major impact on counting. For example, hanging is relatively unambiguous, whereas suicide by driving is often hard to separate from everyday traffic carnage; in strongly

Catholic cultures, coroners may be much more reluctant to treat a suspicious death as suicide. In addition, coroners, the police, and family members draw on culturally available notions of suicide to make sense of ambiguous deaths. All of this means that suicide statistics are already strongly a product of different cultural practices and theories of suicide. As Dorothy Smith argued, the “facts” of suicide are inseparable from the methods through which those facts were constructed. These ethnomethodological studies have sometimes been taken as a critique of quantitative social science, and they certainly have critical potential. However, they can also be viewed as having highlighted the important interactional work that goes into production of any statistics. More recent conversation analytic work that has studied the operation of systematic survey interviews is, in some respects, a development of groundbreaking work by people such as Cicourel and Atkinson.

Emmanuel Schegloff's article on reflections on quantification in the study of conversation raises important questions not just for conversation analysts but also for any qualitative researchers who wish to introduce a level of quantification into their work. One possibility is that research on ethnostatistics and quantification rhetoric will provide more sophisticated insights into the possibilities and limitations of quantification in areas of research that have traditionally been qualitative (e.g., ethnography, discourse and conversation analysis, grounded theory).

Research in ethnostatistics and quantification rhetoric raises profound issues as to the relative status of qualitative and quantitative research. Robert Gephart's original book on ethnostatistics was subtitled “Qualitative Foundations for Quantitative Research.” This formulation suggests that whatever the power and success of quantitative studies, qualitative research may be required to explore fundamental issues underlying quantitative work.

Jonathan Potter

See also Codes and Coding; Constructivism; Conversation Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Ethnography; Objectivity; Quantitative Research

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EVALUATION CRITERIA

What constitutes a high-quality qualitative study? Evaluating qualitative studies requires criteria. The credibility of a study flows from evaluative judgments based on criteria of excellence and quality.

Diverse approaches to qualitative inquiry—phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutics, critical theory, grounded theory, and feminist inquiry as examples—remind us that issues of quality and credibility intersect with varying theoretical orientations, the targeted audience for a study, and intended inquiry purposes. Different perspectives about things such as truth and the nature of reality constitute alternative epistemologies and ontologies. People conducting qualitative studies or reviewing findings through different paradigmatic lenses will render different judgments because they use different criteria of quality.

Research directed to an audience of independent feminist scholars, for example, may be judged by substantially different criteria from research addressed to an audience of government economic policymakers. Exploratory research serves a different purpose and, therefore, must be judged by different criteria of quality compared with confirmatory research aimed at making a fundamental contribution to knowledge. In program evaluation, studies aimed at making improvements in implementation of a new program, what are called formative evaluations, are fundamentally different from studies aimed at rendering an overall judgment about the merit or worth of a program, what are called summative evaluations. Thus, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that particular philosophical underpinnings or theoretical orientations and special purposes for qualitative inquiry will generate different criteria for judging quality and credibility.

Five Distinct Sets of Criteria

To illustrate how different criteria lead to different judgments of quality, consider five contrasting sets of criteria for judging the quality of qualitative inquiry from different perspectives. Some of the criteria within these frameworks overlap, but even then subtle differences in nuances of meaning can be distinguished. The five contrasting sets of criteria flow from the following:

- Traditional scientific research criteria
- Constructivist criteria
- Artistic criteria
- Critical change criteria
- Pragmatism

Traditional Scientific Research Criteria

Science has traditionally emphasized objectivity, so qualitative inquiry within this tradition emphasizes procedures for minimizing investigator bias and rigorous data collection procedures; for example, cross-validating sources during fieldwork. In analysis, it means using multiple coders to establish the validity and reliability of pattern and theme analysis. This tradition includes concepts such as validity, reliability, variables, hypothesis testing, causal explanation, and generalizability, especially in combination with quantitative data. Qualitative methods are used to describe and explain phenomena as accurately and completely

as possible so that descriptions and explanations correspond as closely as possible to the way the world actually is. Government agencies supporting qualitative research often operate within this traditional scientific framework.

Constructivist Criteria

Social construction, constructivist, and interpretivist perspectives have generated new language and concepts to distinguish quality in qualitative research; for example, emphasizing trustworthiness rather than validity. Constructivists propose that naturalistic inquiry should be judged by dependability (a systematic process followed systematically) and authenticity (reflexive consciousness about one's own perspective and appreciation for the perspectives of others). Because they view human understandings of the world as socially, politically, and psychologically constructed, constructivists triangulate to capture and report multiple perspectives rather than to seek a singular truth. They are more interested in deeply understanding specific cases within a particular context than in making generalizations. Constructivists embrace subjectivity as inevitable, and their findings are explicitly informed by attention to praxis and reflexivity.

Artistic Criteria

This perspective emphasizes that qualitative analysis is both science and art, with an emphasis on artistic criteria—aesthetics, creativity, interpretive vitality, and expressive voice. Case studies become literary works. Poetry or performance art may be used to enhance the audience's direct experience of the essence that emerges from analysis. Artistically oriented qualitative analysts seek to engage those receiving the work—to connect with them, move them, provoke them, and stimulate them. Creative nonfiction and fictional forms of representation blur the boundaries between what is “real” and what has been created to represent the essence of a reality, at least as it is perceived, without a literal presentation of that perceived reality. The results may be called creative syntheses, scientific poetics, or other phrases that suggest the artistic emphasis. Artistic qualitative analyses strive to provide an experience with the findings where “truth” or “reality” is understood to have a feeling dimension that is every bit as important as the cognitive dimension.

Critical Change Criteria

Those engaged in inquiry as a form of critical analysis aimed at social and political change eschew any pretense of objectivity; they take an activist stance. This includes explicitly explicating system inequalities. The “critical” nature of critical theory flows from a commitment to use research to critique society, raise consciousness, and change the balance of power in favor of those less powerful. Critical theory provides both philosophy and methods for approaching research as political praxis (connecting theory and action) and as change-oriented forms of engagement. Likewise, feminist inquiry, liberation research, and empowerment evaluation are part of this tradition. This category can include collaborative and participatory approaches to fieldwork that are conducted in ways that build the capacity of those involved to better understand their own situations, raise consciousness, and support future action aimed at political change.

Pragmatism

The evaluation profession has adopted standards that call for findings to be useful and practical. This pragmatic orientation judges a qualitative evaluation by the degree to which it provides practical and usable answers to focused questions. Why are participants dropping out of the program? How can the program be improved? Action research in organizational development typically has a pragmatic utilitarian orientation.

Use of Diverse Criteria

These five frameworks illustrate the range of criteria that can be brought to bear in judging a qualitative study. They can also be viewed as alternative lenses for expanding the possibilities available, not only for critiquing inquiry but also for undertaking it. Although each set of criteria manifests a certain coherence, many researchers mix and match approaches, and this means recognizing and dealing with tensions between them.

Operating within any particular framework and using any specific set of criteria will invite criticism from those who judge a work from a different framework and with different criteria. Understanding that criticism (or praise) flows from criteria can help researchers to make explicit what criteria to apply to a particular work.

Michael Quinn Patton

See also Action Research; Authenticity; Constructivism; Credibility; Critical Arts-Based Inquiry; Exploratory Research; Feminist Research; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Positivism; Pragmatism; Program Evaluation; Reliability; Social Justice; Trustworthiness; Validity

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EVALUATION RESEARCH

Evaluation research is carried out in the social sciences to appraise human activities in a formal systematic way. Qualitative evaluation research refers to the use of qualitative methods in this endeavor. A study can be understood as “evaluation” only in the context of its use. There is no specific set of methods that makes a research study an evaluation. Evaluation research draws on the same pool of methods as do other forms of social research. This entry outlines the conceptual and pragmatic factors that differentiate evaluation from other forms of social research and the contribution of qualitative methods.

Evaluation Research

A distinction is often made between basic (or academic) research and evaluation (or applied) research. Evaluation research is applied in that the aim is to produce knowledge that will contribute to greater understanding of the effect of a defined activity. This activity may be referred to in a number of ways such as intervention, initiative, and policy. An intervention is a specified, but not necessarily specific, activity. It may already be in place or may be a new type of activity. Evaluations are often set up when interventions are being initiated or when unexpected problems arise. It is considered as important to find out what interventions do and do not work and also how things work or what prevents them from working. In this

way, lessons can be learned and taken forward in future attempts to improve the social world in which we live. Developing knowledge of how things work is where qualitative research has a particular contribution to make to evaluation.

Evaluation Design

Evaluation research differs from basic research in that it is usually set out as such at the start, with aims and objectives (defined in the research design) that are closely related to the intervention. A wide range of types of evaluation design exists. However, two main types that are defined by the contexts in which they take place can be identified: program and organizational evaluation. Program evaluation is applied to intervention programs carried out primarily to address social problems in a population or in a community setting. For example, a study may be set up to evaluate a program of activity aimed at reducing levels of crime. Depending on the nature of the intervention, the program and consequently the evaluation can become complex, and multiple evaluation studies may be conducted in parallel. Organizational evaluation is research that is carried out in organizations to examine the factors that influence the production and delivery of goods and services. The focus is on performance and productivity. An example here would be an evaluation of a police communication skills training initiative to improve relations between police and the public.

Quantitative methods have traditionally dominated in evaluation due to the emphasis on outcome. For example, the success of a crime prevention initiative is likely to focus, initially at least, on whether crime had been significantly reduced at the end of the intervention period. Influenced by the use of experimental method in the natural sciences, the “gold standard” approach is the controlled trial. This involves “before and after” comparison between a site where the intervention has been applied and a site where it has not. However, this methodology has limitations in social settings because social variables are difficult to define and control. Consequently, a more realistic approach to evaluation has emerged that highlights the importance of understanding the process of social change or, in other words, the context and mechanism involved. The goal of evaluation in this approach is to understand the relationship among context, mechanism, and outcome.

Using Qualitative Methods in Evaluation Research

The emphasis on describing context and mechanism has led to increasing use of qualitative research in evaluation. The focus in qualitative research on exploring social meanings and processes is valuable in understanding how the intervention works (or fails). The most common qualitative evaluation methods are interviews, focus groups, document analysis, and observation, but other methods such as video-recordings and diaries may also be used.

Evaluation Frameworks

The research design is often set out in the form of an evaluation framework. This will describe the focus and aims of the research at different stages and how the intervention will be assessed. The evaluation may use qualitative methods alone, or qualitative methods may be included as part of the design. In mixed method designs (using qualitative and quantitative methods), a qualitative study may form a discrete project at a particular stage or be an integral part of a larger investigation. Evaluation frameworks often identify ways of assessing the success of the intervention or “indicators.” These help to provide structure and clarity as to the aims and objectives at each stage.

Stages of Evaluation

Evaluation research designs can be considered in relation to three main stages: strategy, process, and outcome.

Strategic Evaluation

Evaluation in social research is about examining social change. Strategic evaluation aims to describe the social system under investigation before change takes place. For example, crime prevention may have been decided on nationally as an important policy goal, but it will be addressed locally and there may be many local factors to consider that cannot be reliably predicted in advance. Qualitative research is often conducted to describe the social context at the start and to help tailor the intervention so that goals and practices are appropriate to the local population. Interviews and/or focus groups may be carried out to assess the key concerns of local people about crime. These will be purposively sampled to represent and gain perspectives

from different demographic groups such as young and old people, various ethnic groups, parents, local professionals, and local businesses. Another possibility would be to undertake observation to describe crime in the locality prior to the start of the study.

Research at this stage helps to define the intervention and how it may be assessed. Indicators may be developed to provide a structure for the process and outcome stages of the evaluation. An important part of any social intervention is consumer involvement, and qualitative methods are valuable for identifying and evaluating concerns of consumers from the start of a project.

Process Evaluation

Once the intervention has been defined, the process of implementation and progress (including problems and setbacks) will be assessed during the intervention period. A particular strength of qualitative methodology is that, in providing detailed descriptions of what happens when interventions are carried out, we can begin to look more closely at how things work (or do not work). This can lead to improved understandings of causal mechanisms.

Qualitative research may be used to elicit the experiences and views of participants throughout and to make comparisons between different groups and different stages. For example, it might be found that setting up a new youth club to divert young people from committing crime was resisted by the target population initially but that involving local musicians who are popular with the young people increased attendance. This in turn could be linked to reduction in crime on the nights when this activity took place. Close attention to the perspectives of the young people in semi-structured interviews at regular intervals during the intervention period would enable such factors to be described in detail.

Outcome Evaluation

The main way of assessing outcome is to consider whether the intervention has worked or not. Outcome evaluation measures the results achieved by interventions in relation to various indicators. For example, have crime rates been reduced? However, understanding outcome is about much more than this. It is about what happens when an intervention is applied. This may include finding out about people's experiences of outcomes. For example, qualitative research may

explore in detail the way in which the crime prevention program has affected people's lives.

The Role of Theory

All research, whether qualitative or quantitative, has a theoretical basis. It influences decisions about both the methodology and the framework used for conceptualizing the problem under study. The influence of theory in relation to how the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted is often not made explicit in reports of evaluations. This means that evaluation research has been criticized for being atheoretical. It is good practice in qualitative evaluation to describe the way in which theory has influenced the research. This makes it possible to assess the quality of the study. However, stakeholders, participants, and funders often require short accessible reports. One way of attending to this is to write up the research in different ways for different audiences. A descriptive report can be written for the funders, stakeholders, and participants. The research can also be written up in more detail, including further in-depth analysis and explicit reference to theoretical literature for academic audiences (although available to all). Evaluation research needs to be theory driven rather than data driven if it is to contribute to a cumulative body of knowledge in which theory can be built and tested.

Qualitative Research as Evaluation

Studies that are not formally set up at the start as evaluation can be viewed as evaluative in that they may provide useful knowledge about a topic without being considered as applied research. Many research bodies that fund academic research now require those applying for grants addressing particular social concerns to show how their findings will contribute to real-world issues and to include nonacademic audiences in their dissemination plans. In this way, basic research can be treated as a form of evaluation.

Qualitative Evaluation Research in Practice

Evaluation research is not "ivory tower" research. It is hands-on research and often entails a high level of responsibility to funders and people who have a stake in the conduct and outcomes of the research. Project and research goals will usually need to be negotiated with these stakeholders. There will typically be a project

team and an evaluation team. The project team setting up and running the intervention will include people with an interest in the process and outcomes of the evaluation. This may include representatives from professional groups, the public, community groups, the voluntary sector, and/or local businesses. Social interventions work best when there is ownership of them by the populations at which they are aimed. Qualitative research enables consumers to contribute their perspectives from the start of the research so that they can have an influence on the way in which it is developed at the strategic stage and can contribute understandings of why it does or does not work at the process and outcome stages.

Challenges to Qualitative Evaluation

Qualitative evaluation may involve a number of significant challenges. These relate to working collaboratively (with other researchers, funders, and stakeholders), time constraints leading to limited time for detailed data analysis, resistance to the use of qualitative methods, the potential complexity of evaluation designs, disagreement with the findings by stakeholders, and the need to disseminate to diverse audiences. These issues can be difficult to negotiate. The key is to set up a position of strength at the start by being clear and transparent about the methods being used and the research process, having clear quality standards to which you will adhere, and identifying and discussing the different agendas of those involved.

Moiria J. Kelly

See also Action Research; Community-Based Research

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EVERYDAY LIFE

Everyday life experiences refer to the ritualistic, ordinary, and often mundane occurrences that take place

on any given day in a researcher or participant's life. Everyday life as a methodology examines and uncovers the realizations of daily life and how they are communicated and interpreted by an observer and/or a participant. Everyday life combines several disciplines and perspectives, including symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and existential sociology.

Everyday life as a participatory action research method is not isolated; rather, it is embedded in people and situations. Researchers often negotiate between research that is collected traditionally through means of data collection and creative and introspective research that relies on the positionality, perspective, and viewpoint of participants.

Everyday life research focuses on the details and seemingly insignificant occurrences that collectively contribute to how a situation, phenomenon, or occurrence is interpreted and experienced. Such research seeks to understand social experience based on how people do and experience social life, which privileges experience as knowledge. The perspective becomes a study of social interaction in a natural environment that acknowledges extraordinary happenings while legitimating the ordinary events of life. By privileging people in their natural state and interacting with them in their natural context, research takes on a realistic reflection of life rather than an oversimplified and generalized version.

Exploring everyday life requires the researcher to focus on details, make connections and associations between emergent and repetitive themes, focus equally on sameness and difference (what happened today that did not happen yesterday and how that influences the research topic or focus), and make comparisons between the researcher's experience and the topic being studied. This position allows the researcher to become a character or presence in the story he or she is telling and to deduce a theory or analysis based on the information that is uncovered.

Everyday life is often written in a first- or third-person voice and relies on rich descriptions, sharp detail, creativity, and comparative analysis. Everyday life sociology is a research style that emerged in California during the late 1980s and focused on the philosophical work of interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, rule response, and ritual engagement. Everyday life research is collected through interviews, participant observation, introspective journal writing, and other qualitative methods.

This approach is useful in analyzing qualitative data because it requires the researcher to consider and

negotiate the ubiquitous themes that occur in everyday life, from work to play. Important details can be discovered through the monotonous recovery of daily occurrences that differentiates individual experiences. By focusing on specific and overlooked details, everyday life has the potential to generate new knowledge and concepts from seemingly marginal and unimportant daily occurrences.

One of the benefits of everyday life as a research approach is the encouragement of diversity. It is widely used among marginalized groups to privilege their personal perspectives and viewpoints that might otherwise be silenced or misinterpreted.

Robin M. Boylorn

See also Embodied Knowledge; Fictional Writing; First-Person Voice; Interdisciplinary Research; Lived Experience; Memoirs; Reflexivity; Storytelling

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EVIDENCE

Evidence is conventionally defined as the knowledge or principles that substantiate claims to wider truth. Notions of evidence are threaded through qualitative research from the basis for inquiry, through research processes, to the final products of qualitative research.

Addressing the nature of evidence has been and remains central to deliberation in philosophy, law, literature, management science, history, and (more recently) health care around evidence-based practice. The determination of what counts as evidence, who or what determines this, and on what philosophical basis this is done remains subject to debate. Qualitative researchers must address a number of key issues related to evidence.

Evidence and Epistemology

The concept of evidence is linked closely to epistemological notions of truth and of what constitutes

knowledge. Inherently, there is a deeper philosophical or value-laden component when evidence is considered, and how and whether evidence is viewed as such is dependent on an underlying worldview, theory, or paradigm. Although it is important for qualitative researchers to be knowledgeable of method, they should be aware of and reflect critically on these underlying epistemological dimensions.

Evidence as the Basis for Qualitative Research

Evidence can justify and inform a qualitative study. The vast majority of qualitative researchers recognize that evidence regarding the world can be derived from formal knowledge sources such as previous research studies and theory. In many (but not all) instances, qualitative researchers should be aware of this formal knowledge prior to commencing a study and should use it where appropriate to inform their proposed research questions. Before drawing on this evidence to guide inquiry, researchers must also assess whether the research and theory are trustworthy or convincing and should ascertain whether and where important omissions are evident. Hence, comprehensive searching, appraisal, and meta-synthesis of existing literature are important steps in the beginning stages of the qualitative research process. Some approaches, particularly some forms of grounded theory and phenomenology, emphasize far less a reliance on drawing on or responding to previous evidence to guide qualitative inquiry. Evidence for the importance of these studies will rely on personal experience far more.

Evidence and the Process of Qualitative Research

Evidence is equally critical during the qualitative data collection, analysis, and presentation phases of research to ensure methodological rigor. Approaches to qualitative research generally purport that the perspectives and behaviors of humans are integral to understanding and explaining the social world. Appropriate sampling strengthens rigor. Qualitative research should seek to collect data in the right settings with appropriate participants; this is invariably dependent on the research question. However, a common principle of effective sampling is to generate data with strategically selected individuals and settings optimally well placed to generate insights (i.e., provide

credible evidence) regarding the phenomena being explored. In instances where the participants and/or settings are very different from people and/or settings elsewhere, the transferability of findings is reduced and the wider applicability of the qualitative research is compromised.

The rigor of qualitative findings can also be affected by other dimensions of evidence and method during the research process. What is the evidence that data have been analyzed adequately? During analysis, seemingly outlying themes should specifically be sought and explored. What is the evidence that the researcher's interpretations are appropriate and reflect the data adequately? The trustworthiness of findings can be increased via recourse to evidentiary quotations from the data. Audit trails can also be collated to show how the researcher interpreted the qualitative data and addressed issues of reflexivity. In this way, notions of evidence are threaded throughout the process of qualitative research.

Evidence as the Product of Qualitative Research

Finally, the findings of qualitative studies themselves constitute evidence and should be presented in light of preexisting or wider evidence. What are the implications of the qualitative study taking other empirical studies into account? How might the findings generate evidence to guide the practice of a profession? How can mid-range theories amplify and further expand qualitative findings? Researchers need to address the transferability of findings to different people and settings. When doing this, stances are adopted regarding the status of the evidence generated by the qualitative inquiry. This raises issues of how congruent these stances are with the research's stated and unstated epistemological positions.

Alexander M. Clark

See also Epistemology; Evidence-Based Practice; Meta-Synthesis; Rigor in Qualitative Research

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EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Qualitative research methods, once seen as peripheral and in opposition to evidence-based practice, are increasingly accepted in research to both facilitate and explore evidence-based practice. Qualitative methods can contribute to the development of more nuanced, context-responsive, practice-based evidence. They can further understanding of why and how evidence informs practice in different locations and can support evidence-based practice through qualitative systematic review and by understanding why and how interventions do and do not work in particular settings or populations. This entry describes the history of evidence-based practice and then reviews both its successes and the challenges it has faced. The entry concludes with a look at the future role of qualitative research in evidence-based practice across many disciplines as well as its relevance to public policy.

The History of Evidence-Based Practice

The conscientious, judicious, and explicit application of best evidence in a profession or to a professional's practice is a contested and frequently divisive concept that is viewed, after David Sackett's work in particular, as a professional imperative, an ideology, or a myopic dogma. Many professions now claim, or aspire to claim, that practice in their domain should be based on "evidence"—including medicine, nursing, teaching, policing, management, social policy, economics, and social work. What this evidence consists of and where qualitative research fits remain contested.

The concept of evidence-based practice dates back to the 19th century but has emerged into prominence in debate and policy since the early 1990s. Reasons for this include growth in the perceived need for greater effectiveness and efficiency during an era of increased public accountability and managerialism, increased capacity for systematic electronic data collection (and monitoring of performance), and developments in communications technology that facilitate rapid dissemination of research findings.

Knowledge derived from research has consistently been recognized as a central (and often *the* central) component of evidence. However, not all research methods have been equally esteemed. Hierarchies of evidence were developed to categorize studies into

levels of strength. These hierarchies frequently positioned expert opinion as the least trustworthy source and randomized control trials and/or systematic reviews as the strongest, most reliable forms of evidence. The most trustworthy research, when synthesized into systematic reviews or practice guidelines, could then be disseminated to practitioners in a parsimonious and accessible form purportedly ripe for application to practice.

The case for evidence-based practice has been promoted through political, empirical, ethical, practical, educational, and ideological means. With such powerful forces at play, it was difficult to argue that practice should be anything other than evidence based. From the early 1990s, numerous influential organizations, commentators, and researchers have championed the ethical and social need for greater reliance on evidence to improve outcomes and make decision making more transparent and effective. Professionals have been urged by government, the scientific community, and regulatory bodies alike that it is not only desirable but also ethically essential for them to practice in accordance with “the evidence.” Practice guidelines proliferated. These guidelines were often developed by professional bodies and/or experts who had a priori screened and appraised studies and reviews in an existing area. These guidelines were replete with the findings of meta-analyses, randomized trials, and larger scale observation studies because they held higher status in the methodological hierarchies. Universities responded by creating new curricula around the need to practice in accordance with the evidence.

The Success and Challenges of Evidence-Based Practice

Those espousing the need for evidence-based practice have been successful in framing debate over the past decade. However, the changes that have actually been made to practice are much less marked. Despite the prominence of the evidence-based practice movement and attendant guidelines, the vast majority of practice remains contrary to the evidence. This is testament not only to the complexities of practice but also to continuing contentions over what counts as evidence and how best to support professionals to practice in accordance with evidence.

After the initial enthusiasm for evidence-based practice subsided, a debate emerged as to why substantial improvements in rates of evidence-based practice

had not occurred. Some argued that hierarchies of evidence were too methodologically restrictive and overly reliant on randomized trials. Research participants often did not represent the broader population. This was most apparent in randomized controlled clinical trials, where restrictive criteria excluded adequate numbers of females, older adults, people with comorbidities, and diverse ethnic groups.

Furthermore, many of the decisions confronting professionals in their practice are not necessarily about effectiveness. However, most of the hierarchies of evidence-based practice focus on research questions pertaining to effectiveness. For example, although meta-analyses and randomized trials may have relevance to some aspects of health care (e.g., prescribing medication) in which the principal issue is efficacy, this does little to guide the professional on how to create a positive therapeutic relationship with the patient, how to empower the individual to use the prescribed regimen, or how best to engage informal caregivers. For this, the professional needs considerable clinical and social skills and insight into the patient’s milieu as well as an environment that provides adequate time and resources.

Arguments have also focused on the ontological assumptions underpinning evidence-based practice. Ray Pawson, David Byrne, and other realists have challenged the overly linear conception of simplistic cause and effect implicit within evidence-based approaches and their disregard of intervening contextual factors. Rather, they argue, causality in practice is generative, arising when multifarious factors come together in specific combinations to generate particular outcomes. Thus, evidence is applied in a much more ambiguous, multifactorial, and context-bound environment than many proponents of evidence-based practice have acknowledged. It has since been recognized more widely that evidence-based practice could be successful only through the development of more practice-based evidence.

The Place of Qualitative Research in Evidence-Based Practice

Prior to 2000, qualitative research had, at most, a peripheral role in debate around evidence-based practice. Hierarchies favored methods that allowed for manipulation and intervention in unnaturally closed systems. Evidence hierarchies, although widely adopted, ascribed far less esteem to methods that collected data

in natural settings (whether based on quantitative or qualitative data) and often made no reference to qualitative research whatsoever. Was this to be a reenactment of a paradigm debate that once more led to the incommensurability of qualitative research with a dominant view?

Opportunities for proponents of qualitative research to influence mainstream debate in evidence-based practice were constrained as the disciplines in which qualitative research was more accepted (e.g., social science, nursing, education) were comparatively marginal to the evidence-based practice debate. This debate privileged supposedly “objective” and unbiased quantitative work. Conversely, even the opinions of experts were viewed negatively as being subjective and biased. To no surprise, proponents of research into human perspectives struggled for validation.

However, more critical comment that cautions the positing of methods into any hierarchy has arisen across methodological divides. These proponents maintain that what matters most in terms of the validity and strength of a method is the applicability of the method to the research question. Many great advances in the natural and human sciences have occurred despite a lack of evidence from randomized trials. In making decisions, professionals must rely on findings from different methods and knowledge bases. This acknowledgment provided an early avenue for the contributions of qualitative research.

There was also a growing recognition that research evidence must capture the personal, social, and contextual complexities that are central to professional practice. Combined with the view that the world was not as ordered or predictable as proponents of evidence-based practice had envisaged, arguments for a more nuanced evidence-based practice emerged within mainstream debate.

Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley captured this well in their plea for research into health and social interventions to examine “what works for whom, when, and why.” Trials were undertaken in artificially controlled closed systems, but findings were then generalized to natural open systems. The moderating effect on outcomes of other factors in the natural world (both contextual and individual) lessened the effectiveness of the intervention. Hence, generalizability of benefit was not achieved. Rather, a qualitative research was needed to understand how interventions led to different outcomes for different people.

The continued relative lack of use of evidence in practice also drove governments and disciplines to

consider why this might be the case. New areas of study around knowledge translation and use emerged. Almost inevitably, these areas needed to acknowledge and explore the complex nature of practice settings and organizations. Disciplines historically more peripheral in the evidence-based practice movement, such as organizational studies, nursing, and the social sciences, were mobilized. Significantly, these were disciplines in which the contributions of qualitative research were accepted.

Other wider methodological developments also supported the increased prominence of qualitative research in evidence-based practice. Acceptance and use of mixed methods research in all disciplines have increased. Furthermore, it is increasingly expected that researchers in the social and health sciences will work in interdisciplinary teams. This has created new opportunities for debate and collaboration across traditional disciplinary and methodological boundaries.

Collectively, these developments reconciled qualitative research and evidence-based practice.

The Future Role of Qualitative Research

How will qualitative research build its influence in the sphere of evidence-based practice in the future? Although critical comment is essential for the continued evolution of evidence-based practice, these developments are unlikely to result from bemoaning or undermining the merits of making practice more evidence based. The movement is far from perfect, but it has sufficient professional, public, and political momentum to continue to frame debate during the coming years. However, a number of opportunities that show considerable promise for qualitative research have emerged during recent years.

Policymakers and practitioners continue to face challenging decisions in which reliance on trials and meta-analyses fails to provide sufficiently qualified and context-responsive answers. Randomized trials and systematic reviews still remain focused on the global effectiveness of interventions. Qualitative research is also suited to understanding the complexities of lay understanding and experience, understanding the influence of context on outcomes, and explaining behavior. Continued exploration of the factors influencing implementation of evidence in practice is likely to occur. Research funding bodies have become increasingly attuned to the need for knowledge translation in studies. Qualitative research will

continue to elucidate the complexities of how and why research should shape practice.

The recognition that knowledge beyond that related to questions of effectiveness is important for practice justifies the applicability of qualitative research for policy and practice. One of the most promising areas of recent progress has been the advent of qualitative systematic review—rigorous syntheses of qualitative findings that can distill the wider body of qualitative evidence in a set area. These reviews often draw on tools for the methodological appraisal of qualitative research and have developed different methods to synthesize study findings. Findings can be used to guide practice in relation to issues such as how interventions work and what different subpopulations value.

Notably, even in areas where systematic reviews suggest a type of intervention, the trials on which those reviews are based often have markedly different levels of effectiveness. Qualitative research can explicate why interventions work or do not work and the influence that contextual factors have on outcome.

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See also Critical Realism; Evidence; Meta-Synthesis

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EVOLUTION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In North America, qualitative research operates in a complex historical field that crosscuts at least eight historical moments. In the present, these moments overlap and operate simultaneously. We define them as the traditional (1900–1950); the modernist or golden age (1950–1970); blurred genres (1970–1986); the crisis of representation (1986–1990); the postmodern, a period of experimental and new ethnographies (1990–1995); postexperimental inquiry (1995–2000); the methodologically contested present (2000–2004);

and the future, which is now (2005–). The future, the eighth moment, confronts the methodological backlash associated with the evidence-based social movement. It is concerned with moral discourse, with the development of sacred textualities. The eighth moment asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, freedom, and community.

Successive waves of epistemological theorizing move across these eight moments. The traditional period is associated with the positivist foundational paradigm. The modernist or golden age and blurred genres moments are connected to the appearance of postpositivist arguments. At the same time, a variety of new interpretive qualitative perspectives were taken up, including hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, cultural studies, and feminism. In the blurred genres phase, the humanities became central resources for critical interpretive theory and the qualitative research project broadly conceived. The researcher became a bricoleur, learning how to borrow from many different disciplines.

The blurred genres phase produced the next stage, the crisis of representation. Here researchers struggled with how to locate themselves and their subjects in reflexive texts. A kind of methodological diaspora took place, a two-way exodus. Humanists migrated to the social sciences, searching for new social theory, new ways to study popular culture and its local ethnographic contexts. Social scientists turned to the humanities, hoping to learn how to do complex structural and poststructural readings of social texts. From the humanities, social scientists also learned how to produce texts that refused to be read in simplistic, linear, incontrovertible terms. The line between a text and a context blurred. In the postmodern/experimental moment, researchers continued to move away from foundational and quasifoundational criteria. Alternative evaluative criteria were sought—those that might prove to be evocative, moral, critical, and rooted in local understandings.

Any definition of qualitative research must work within this complex historical field. Qualitative research means different things in each of these moments. Nonetheless, an initial generic definition can be offered. Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews,

conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

The history of qualitative research reveals that the modern social science disciplines have taken as their mission the analysis and understanding of the patterned conduct and social processes of society. To carry out this task, it was presupposed that social scientists had the ability to observe this world objectively. Qualitative methods were a major tool of such observations.

Throughout the history of qualitative research, investigators have always defined their work in terms of hopes and values, ideologies based in professional, occupational, and religious faiths. Judgment of qualitative research (like all research) has always been based on the ability of the work to “say something” to us by showing how we conceptualize our reality and our images of the world. *Epistemology* is the word that has historically defined these standards of evaluation. In the contemporary period, as argued earlier, many received discourses on epistemology are now being reevaluated.

Arthur Vidich and Stanford Lyman’s history covers the following (somewhat) overlapping stages: early ethnography (to the 17th century); colonial ethnography (17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century explorers); ethnography of the “other,” the American Indian (late 19th- and early 20th-century anthropology); community studies; ethnographies of American immigrants (early 20th century through the 1960s); and studies of ethnicity and assimilation (mid-20th century through the 1980s).

In each of these eras, researchers were influenced by their political hopes and ideologies, discovering findings in their research that confirmed prior theories or beliefs. Early ethnographers confirmed the racial and cultural diversity of peoples around the globe and attempted to fit this diversity into a theory about the origin of history, the races, and civilizations. Colonial ethnographers, before the professionalization of ethnography in the 20th century, fostered a colonial pluralism that left natives on their own so long as their leaders could be co-opted by the colonial administration.

European ethnographers studied Africans, Asians, and other Third World peoples of color. Early American ethnographers studied the American Indian

from the perspective of the conqueror, who saw the lifeworld of the primitive as a window to the prehistoric past. The Calvinist mission to save the Indian was soon transferred to the mission of saving the “hordes” of immigrants who entered the United States with the beginnings of industrialization. Qualitative community studies of the ethnic “other” proliferated from the early 1900s to the 1960s and included the work of E. Franklin Frazier, Robert Park, and Robert Redfield and their students as well as William Foote Whyte, Robert and Helen Lynd, August Hollingshead, Herbert Gans, Stanford Lyman, Arthur Vidich, and Joseph Bensman. The post-1960 birth of ethnicity studies challenged the “melting pot” hypotheses of Park and his followers. The emergence of ethnic studies programs saw Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans attempting to take control over the study of their own peoples.

The postmodern and poststructural challenge emerged in the mid-1980s. It questioned the assumptions that had organized this earlier history in each of its colonizing moments. In 2000, Vidich and Lyman argued that qualitative research, which crosses the “postmodern divide,” requires one to virtually “abandon all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives . . . and prejudices as resources for ethnographic study” (p. 56). The postmodern and post-experimental moments were defined in part by a concern for literary expression and the narrative turn—a concern for storytelling, for composing ethnographies in new ways.

In this new era (the future), the qualitative researcher does more than observe history; he or she plays a part in it. New tales from the field will now be written, and they will reflect the researcher’s direct and personal engagement with this historical period. Now at the dawn of this new century, we struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society.

The Eight Moments of Qualitative Research

The history of qualitative research in North America can be divided into eight phases.

First Moment: The Traditional Period

The first moment, or the traditional period, began in the early 1900s and continued until World War II. In it, qualitative researchers wrote “objective” colonizing

accounts of field experiences, reflective of the positivist scientist paradigm. They were concerned with offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings. The “other” who was studied was alien, foreign, and strange.

In this period, the fieldworker was lionized, made into a larger than life figure who went into and then returned from the field with stories about strange people. This has been described as the period of the “lone ethnographer,” the story of the man-scientist who went off in search of his native in a distant land. Fieldwork was a rite of passage for the ethnographer, something that must be endured alone. Returning home with his data, the lone ethnographer wrote up an objective account of the culture studied. This account was structured by the norms of classical ethnography. These norms organized ethnographic texts in terms of four beliefs and commitments: a commitment to objectivism, a complicity with imperialism, a belief in monumentalism (the ethnography would create a museum-like picture of the culture studied), and a belief in timelessness (what was studied would never change). The other was an “object” to be archived. This model of the researcher, who could also write complex dense theories about what was studied, holds to the present day.

The myth of the lone ethnographer depicts the birth of classic ethnography. The texts of Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson are still carefully studied for what they can tell the novice about fieldwork, taking fieldnotes, and writing theory.

Today this image has been shattered. The works of the classic ethnographers are seen by many as relics from the colonial past. Although many feel nostalgia for this past, others celebrate its passing. In 1989, Renato Rosaldo quoted Cora Du Bois, a retired Harvard University anthropology professor who lamented this passing at a conference in 1980, reflecting on the crisis in anthropology: “[I feel a distance] from the complexity and disarray of what I once found a justifiable and challenging discipline. . . . It has been like moving from a distinguished art museum into a garage sale” (p. 44).

Du Bois regarded the classic ethnographies as pieces of timeless artwork contained in a museum. She felt uncomfortable in the chaos of the garage sale. In contrast, Rosaldo was drawn to this metaphor: “It [the garage sale] provides a precise image of the postcolonial situation where cultural artifacts flow between unlikely places, and nothing is sacred, permanent, or

sealed off. The image of anthropology as a garage sale depicts our present global situation” (p. 44). Indeed, many valuable treasures may be found, if one is willing to look long and hard, in unexpected places. Old standards no longer hold. Ethnographies do not produce timeless truths. The commitment to objectivism is now in doubt. The complicity with imperialism is openly challenged today, and the belief in monumentalism is a thing of the past.

The legacies of this first period began at the end of the 19th century when the novel and the social sciences had become distinguished as separate systems of discourse. However, the Chicago School, with its emphasis on the life story and the “slice-of-life” approach to ethnographic materials, sought to develop an interpretive methodology that maintained the centrality of the narrated life history approach. This led to the production of the texts that gave the “researcher as author” the power to represent the subject’s story. Written under the mantle of straightforward, sentiment-free social realism, these texts used the language of ordinary people. They articulated a social science version of literary naturalism, which often produced the sympathetic illusion that a solution to a social problem had been found. Like the Depression era juvenile delinquent and other “social problems” films, these accounts romanticized the subject. They turned the deviant into a sociological version of a screen hero. These sociological stories, like their film counterparts, usually had happy endings as they followed individuals through the three stages of the classic morality tale: being in a state of grace, being seduced by evil and falling from grace, and finally achieving redemption through suffering.

Second Moment: The Modernist Phase

The modernist phase, or the second moment, built on the canonical works from the traditional period. Social realism, naturalism, and slice-of-life ethnographies were still valued. This period extended through the postwar years to the 1970s and is still present in the work of many. In this period, many texts sought to formalize qualitative methods. Modernist ethnographers and sociological participant observers attempted rigorous qualitative studies of important social processes, including deviance and social control in the classroom and society. This was a moment of creative ferment.

A new generation of graduate students across the human disciplines encountered new interpretive theories (e.g., ethnomethodology, phenomenology, critical

theory, feminism). They were drawn to qualitative research practices that would let them give a voice to society's underclass. Postpositivism functioned as a powerful epistemological paradigm. Researchers attempted to fit the classical traditional model of internal and external validity to constructionist and interactionist conceptions of the research act. They returned to the texts of the Chicago School as sources of inspiration.

A canonical text from this moment remains *Boys in White* by Howard Becker and colleagues. Firmly entrenched in mid-century methodological discourse, this work attempted to make qualitative research as rigorous as its quantitative counterpart. Causal narratives were central to this project. This multimethod work combined open-ended and quasi-structured interviewing with participant observation and the careful analysis of such materials in standardized statistical form. Becker's classic article, "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," described this practice as the use of "quasi-statistics." In the 1958 work, Becker articulates the problems of attempting to collect data in the field that conform to statistical needs. He concluded that ultimately a field researcher's conclusions are "implicitly numerical" but do not require "precise quantification" (p. 31).

In the analysis of data, Becker noted that the qualitative researcher takes a cue from statistical colleagues. The researcher looks for probabilities or support for arguments concerning the likelihood, or frequency, that a conclusion in fact applies to a specific situation. In this way, work in the modernist period clothed itself in the language and rhetoric of positivist and postpositivist discourse.

This was the golden age of rigorous qualitative analysis, bracketed in sociology by *Boys in White* at one end and *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, published in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, at the other end. In education, qualitative research in this period was defined by George and Louise Spindler, Jules Henry, Harry Wolcott, and John Singleton. This form of qualitative research is still present in the work of researchers such as Strauss and Juliet Corbin.

The golden age reinforced a picture of the qualitative researcher as cultural romantic. Imbued with Promethean human powers, these researchers valorized villains and outsiders as heroes to mainstream society. They embodied a belief in the contingency of self and society, and they held to emancipatory ideals for which one lives and dies. They put in place a tragic and often ironic view of society and self, and they joined a long

line of leftist cultural romantics, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Karl Marx, Henry James, John Dewey, Antonio Gramsci, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

As this moment came to an end, the war in Vietnam was everywhere present in American society. In 1969, alongside these political currents, Herbert Blumer and Everett Hughes met with a group of young sociologists, called the "Chicago Irregulars," at the American Sociological Association meetings in San Francisco and shared their memories of the "Chicago years." In 1980, Lyn Lofland described the 1969 meetings as a "moment of creative ferment—scholarly and political." The San Francisco meetings were a watershed event that saw the emergence of "labeling theory, ethnomethodology, conflict theory, phenomenology, dramaturgical analysis" (p. 253). In this way, the modernist phase come to an end.

Third Moment: Blurred Genres

By the beginning of the third stage (1970–1986), or blurred genres, qualitative researchers had a full complement of paradigms, methods, and strategies to employ in their research. Theories included symbolic interactionism, constructivism, naturalistic inquiry, positivism and postpositivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical theory, neo-Marxism, semiotics, structuralism, feminism, and various racial/ethnic paradigms. Applied qualitative research was gaining in stature, and the politics and ethics of qualitative research—implicated as they were in various applications of this work—were topics of considerable concern. Research strategies and formats for reporting research included grounded theory, the case study, and methods of historical, biographical, ethnographic, action, and clinical research. Diverse ways of collecting and analyzing empirical materials were also available, including qualitative interviewing (open-ended and quasi-structured), observational, visual, personal experience, and documentary methods. Computers entered the situation, to be fully developed as aids in the analysis of qualitative data in the next decade, along with narrative, content, and semiotic methods of reading interviews and cultural texts.

Clifford Geertz's two books, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and *Local Knowledge* (1983), defined the beginning and end of this moment. In these two works, Geertz argued that the old functional, positivist, behavioral, and totalizing approaches to the human disciplines were giving way to a more pluralistic, interpretive, and open-ended perspective. This

new perspective took cultural representations and their meanings as its point of departure. Calling for “thick descriptions” of particular events, rituals, and customs, Geertz suggested that all anthropological writings were interpretations of interpretations. The observer had no privileged voice in the interpretations that were written. The central task of theory was to make sense out of a local situation.

Geertz went on to propose that the boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities had become blurred. Social scientists were now turning to the humanities for models, theories, and methods of analysis (e.g., semiotics, hermeneutics). A form of genre diaspora was occurring—documentaries that read like fiction, parables posing as ethnographies, theoretical treatises that looked like travelogues. At the same time, other new approaches were emerging—poststructuralism, neopositivism, neo-Marxism, micro-macro descriptivism, ritual theories of drama and culture, deconstructionism, ethnomethodology. The golden age of the social sciences was over, and a new age of blurred interpretive genres was upon us. The essay as an art form was replacing the scientific article. At issue now was the author’s presence in the interpretive text. How could the researcher speak with authority in a period when there were no longer any firm rules concerning the text (including the author’s place in it), its standards of evaluation, and its subject matter?

The naturalistic, postpositivist, and constructionist paradigms gained power in this period, especially in education in the works of Harry Wolcott, Frederick Erickson, Egon Guba, Yvonna Lincoln, and Robert Stake. By the end of the 1970s, several qualitative journals were in place, including *Urban Life and Culture* (now *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*), *Cultural Anthropology*, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *Qualitative Sociology*, *Symbolic Interaction*, and *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*.

Fourth Moment: The Crisis of Representation

A profound rupture occurred in the mid-1980s. What we call the fourth moment, or the crisis of representation, appeared with *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (published in 1986 by George Marcus and Michael Fisher), *The Anthropology of Experience* (published in 1986 by Victor Turner and Edward Bruner), *Writing Culture* (published in 1986 by James Clifford and George Marcus), *Words and Lives* (published in 1988 by Clifford Geertz), and *The Predicament of*

Culture (published in 1988 by James Clifford). These works made research and writing more reflexive and called into question the issues of gender, class, and race. They articulated the consequences of Geertz’s “blurred genres” interpretation of the field in the early 1980s.

New models of truth, method, and representation were sought. The erosion of classic norms in anthropology (e.g., objectivism, complicity with colonialism, social life structured by fixed rituals and customs, ethnographies as monuments to a culture) was complete. Critical epistemology, feminist epistemology, and epistemologies of color now competed for attention in this arena. Issues such as validity, reliability, and objectivity, believed to be settled in earlier phases, were once again problematic. Pattern and interpretive theories, as opposed to causal linear theories, were now more common as writers continued to challenge older models of truth and meaning.

In 1987, Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes described how the crisis of representation was felt in their fieldwork among the Songhay of Niger. Stoller described the conventional practice of gathering data, categorizing them, and writing them up—at one point creating a series of logical formulas to understand Songhay insults. Stoller became dissatisfied with this form of writing, in part because he learned that “everyone had lied to me and . . . the data I had so painstakingly collected were worthless. I learned a lesson: Informants routinely lie to their anthropologists” (p. 9). This discovery led to a realization that he had, in following the conventions of ethnographic realism, edited himself out of his text. This led Stoller to produce a different type of text, a memoir, in which he became a central character in the story he told. This story, an account of his experiences in the Songhay world, became an analysis of the clash between his world and the world of Songhay sorcery. Thus, Stoller’s journey represents an attempt to confront the crisis of representation in the fourth moment.

In 1998, Patricia Clough elaborated this crisis and criticized those who would argue that new forms of writing represented a way out of the crisis. She argued that it is this insistence on the difference between writing and fieldwork that must be analyzed. In writing, the fieldworker makes a claim to moral and scientific authority. These claims allow the realist and experimental ethnographic text to function as sources of validation for an empirical science. They show that the world of real lived experience can still be captured, if

only in the writer's memoirs, fictional experimentations, or dramatic readings. But these works have the danger of directing attention away from the ways in which the text constructs sexually situated individuals in a field of social difference. They also perpetuate "empirical science's hegemony" (p. 8), for these new writing technologies of the subject become the site, according to Stanley Aronowitz, "for the production of knowledge/power . . . [aligned] with . . . the capital/state axis" (quoted on p. 8). Such experiments come up against, and then back away from, the difference between empirical science and social criticism. Too often they fail to fully engage a new politics of textuality that would "refuse the identity of empirical science" (p. 135). This new social criticism "would intervene in the relationship of information economics, nation-state politics, and technologies of mass communication, especially in terms of the empirical sciences" (p. 16). This, of course, is the terrain occupied by cultural studies.

The preceding arguments have been developed viewing writing as a method of inquiry that moves through successive stages of self-reflection. As a series of written representations, the fieldworker's texts flow from the field experience, through intermediate works, to later work, and finally to the research text that is the public presentation of the ethnographic and narrative experience. In this way, fieldwork and writing blur into one another. There is, in the final analysis, no difference between writing and fieldwork. These two perspectives inform, and in these ways the crisis of representation moves qualitative research in new critical directions.

A Triple Crisis

The ethnographer's authority remains under assault today. A triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis confronts qualitative researchers in the human disciplines. Embedded in the discourses of poststructuralism and postmodernism, these three crises are coded in multiple terms, variously called and associated with the critical, interpretive, linguistic, feminist, and rhetorical turns in social theory. These new turns make problematic two key assumptions of qualitative research. The first assumption presumes that qualitative researchers can no longer directly capture lived experience. Such experience, it is argued, is created in the social text written by the researcher. This is the representational crisis. It confronts the inescapable problem of representation but

does so within a framework that makes problematic the direct link between experience and text.

The second assumption makes problematic the traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research. This is the legitimation crisis. It involves a serious rethinking of terms such as validity, generalizability, and reliability—terms already retheorized in postpositivist constructionist–naturalistic, feminist, interpretive and performative, poststructural, and critical discourses. This crisis asks the question: How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the contemporary poststructural moment? The first two crises shape the third crisis, which asks the question: Is it possible to effect change in the world if society is only and always a text? Clearly, these crises intersect and blur, as do the answers to the questions they generate.

Fifth Moment: The Postmodern Period

The fifth moment, or the postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing, struggled to make sense of these crises (1990–1995). New ways of composing ethnography were explored, and theories were read as tales from the field. Writers struggled with different ways to represent the "other," although they were joined by new representational concerns now. Epistemologies from previously silenced groups emerged to offer solutions to these problems. The concept of the aloof observer had been abandoned. More action, participatory, and activist-oriented research was on the horizon. The search for grand narratives was being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations.

Sixth Moment: The Postexperimental Inquiry

The sixth moment, or the postexperimental inquiry (1995–2000), was a period of great excitement, with AltaMira Press, under the direction of Mitch Allen, taking the lead. The "Ethnographic Alternatives" book series by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner captured this new excitement and brought a host of new authors into the interpretive community. The series was given a mandate to publish experimental forms of qualitative writing that would blur the boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities. Experiments in methods for representing lived experience were present in some volumes of the series.

Seventh and Eighth Moments: Present and Future

In this same time period, three major new qualitative journals appeared: *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Qualitative Studies in Education*, and *Qualitative Research*. The editors of these journals were committed to publishing the very best new work. The success of these ventures framed the seventh moment, what we are calling the methodologically contested present (2000–2008). As discussed earlier, this was a period of conflict, great tension, and (in some quarters) retrenchment.

The eighth moment is now and the future (2008–). In it, scholars are confronting the methodological backlash associated with the evidence-based social movement.

Reading History

We draw several conclusions from this brief history, noting that it is, like all histories, somewhat arbitrary. First, each of the earlier historical moments is still operating in the present, either as legacy or as a set of practices that researchers continue to follow or argue against. The multiple and fractured histories of qualitative research now make it possible for any given researcher to attach a project to a canonical text from any of these historical moments. Multiple criteria of evaluation compete for attention in this field. Second, an embarrassment of choices now characterizes the field of qualitative research. There have never been so many paradigms, strategies of inquiry, or methods of analysis to draw on and use. Third, we are in a moment of discovery and rediscovery as new ways of looking, interpreting, arguing, and writing are debated and discussed. Fourth, the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective. Class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape the process of inquiry, making research a multicultural process. Fifth, we are clearly not implying a progress narrative with our history. We are not saying that the cutting edge is located in the present. Rather, we are saying that the present is a politically charged space. Complex pressures inside and outside of the qualitative community are working to erase the positive developments of the past 30 years or so.

Norman K. Denzin

Author's Note: This entry draws from Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

See also Autoethnography; Historical Context

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EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism emerged and achieved its greatest popularity during the years following World War II, chiefly because of the persona and literary works of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. In the realm of philosophy, existentialism is best seen not as a new or distinct philosophy but rather as a revolt against traditional philosophy. Moreover, the word *existential* is used as an adjective to identify styles in art, dance, literature, theater, poetry, spirituality, and even sculpture. Some of the writers, philosophers, and artists identified with this movement have explicitly rejected the label *existential*. Given this complexity, it is best to see existentialism as a sensibility, a passion for living, an orientation to the emerging drama of actual lived experience.

Four Themes of Existentialism

The formal literature of the existentialist perspective emphasizes one or more of the following four themes: the struggle for meaning, the role of emotion and its importance in life, the irrational potential or absurdity of life, and individual responsibility.

The Struggle for Meaning

First is the nature of the individual and his or her struggle to find and create meaning in life. There is an emphatic assertion that individuals are free—not totally or absolutely free, but at least partly free to respond to the conditions that face them in life and to create meanings in this existence. All individuals are born into a family, culture, community, nationality, religion (or none), racial/ethnic group, and so on. Individuals do not so much “choose” these as they are “thrown into” them, embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts. Language acquisition is crucial because as children grow into adulthood they progressively acquire the terms, concepts, vernacular, and

other meanings associated with the collective membership of that social grouping. Are individuals 99% free or 1% free? Existentialists would find this question entirely irrelevant and uninteresting; even if the answer tends more to the 1%, there remains an essential openness to discretion, interpretation, and choice. Even a prisoner in solitary confinement has a choice on how to spend the time, existentialists would insist, whether to explore the nature and meaning of solitude or to fuel the fires of anger and rage. A key concept for existentialists is “choice” and the insistence that individuals possess freedom to respond to the situation or conditions that face them and to elect one course of action (or interpretation) over another. An often-quoted aphorism of Sartre is that individuals are “condemned to be free.” An individual can approach and live his or her life “in good faith,” which means an acceptance of one’s freedom to make choices in response to situations, or “in bad faith,” which means a denial of one’s agency, often with attribution of meaning to external circumstances, people, or structures. Many of the existentialist novels and plays dramatize individuals’ agonizing struggles to find and create meaning.

The Importance of Emotion

The second theme concerns emotion and its fundamental importance in life. Although some of the pre-Socratic Sophists emphasized the central role of emotions in life (and thus are interpreted retrospectively as early or proto-existentialists), from the time of Socrates to contemporary times the primary emphasis has been on reason and rationality. From this traditional view, individuals achieve the pinnacle of their humanity and meaning to the extent that they develop and cultivate their minds—the powers of their reason. A well-known statement of philosopher Immanuel Kant is, “Nothing great was ever accomplished without reason.” Emotions are seen as a secondary or degraded side of existence, as potential obstacles to the higher forms of reason. In contrast, existentialists emphasize the passionate and emotional aspects of life and assert the relative dominance of emotions over reason in many circumstances. This emphasis is prescriptive; one should embrace and passionately engage in the present moment, the here-and-now, and not allow the past or the future to distort the present. Friedrich Nietzsche had a different spin on the aphorism by Kant noted earlier: “Nothing great is ever done without passion.” The subjective emotions are not to be

denied—to be regarded as secondary to reason. They should be embraced and examined. Even superficial reflection shows that our main emotions—love, family loyalty, friendship, joy, ecstasy, appreciation, and many more—are not antithetical to meaningful life (or even reason); they are often the wellsprings of meaning.

The Absurd

The third theme is the irrational potential in life, even the absurd. Absurd is a theme in some existential literature, and here the word *absurd* means without inherent or intrinsic meaning. We are thrown into the world, thrown into specific circumstances, but these have meanings only to the extent that they are created by individuals. This theme is explored in several of Albert Camus's novels, especially *The Stranger*, written during the immediate postwar period.

The Stranger

In *The Stranger*, the protagonist Mersault is an indifferent “everyman,” but one divorced from his own self and feelings; he has no plans, no ambitions, no sense of his emotions, and even only indifference to his own mother's death. A series of exigent circumstances result in Mersault shooting an Arab (six times) on a beach. The subsequent trial becomes a literary vehicle for resurrecting Mersault, and in it he is confronted with others' perceptions of him. He was a stranger to himself, but now in his trial he becomes capable of self-reflection and, thus, guilt for his crimes. At the end of *The Stranger*, Mersault says that he opens his heart to the “benign indifference of the universe,” which is to say a world that is without inherent meaning and, hence, is absurd. The phrase “benign indifference of the universe” is a way of expressing emphatic opposition to what structural sociologists hold as true, the *sui generis* (or independent meaning) of social phenomena. Another literary expression of the irrational in life is Camus's 1948 play *The Plague*.

The Plague

Set in Algeria, the plague spreads throughout society and decimates many citizens. The plague is a metaphor for Nazi occupation. The purpose of the play is to show the different individual responses to this scourge. The protagonist in *The Plague* is the ironically named Mr. Grand, who like Mersault is

a perfectly ordinary “everyman.” In the contemporary times of the 21st century, many postmodern analysts talk about the failure or dissolution of the “grand narratives” of life (e.g., God, capitalism, socialism, communism, democracy, Christianity); this essentially engages the same issue that postwar existentialists called “the absurd.”

Individual Responsibility

The fourth theme is individual responsibility. On this theme, Sartre was the most emphatic about humans' responsibility to themselves. This philosophy is perhaps expressed most forcefully in his 1956 work *Being and Nothingness*, and it is here that Sartre uttered the famous remark, “Everyone gets the war he deserves.” What this means is that although individuals may have relatively little freedom to create the social, political, and economic conditions of their existence, they do have some freedom of choice to make what they can of their situations. They may adopt an attitude of conformity, resignation, resistance, escape, rebellion, or reform, but whatever their choices, those choices then act back on them and define who they are in the world. What does it mean to be human? For Sartre, the Nazi occupation of France and World War II became illustrious of how individuals responded with their feelings, perception, actions, and choices.

Existentialism and Phenomenology

Existentialism and phenomenology share origins and progenitors, so the linkages between them are inescapable. Existentialism emphasizes real individuals in the world, the lived existence of actual experience, so this raises the question of human perception and how the external world appears to and is known by individuals. This is where phenomenology comes in. Phenomenology is the rigorous study of consciousness. The goal or purpose of a phenomenological analysis is to penetrate the taken-for-granted world of common sense (which phenomenologists term “the natural attitude”) so as to grasp and understand how ideas, emotions, and other meanings are seen and interpreted by the self or others. An early writer in the hermeneutic (interpretive) tradition was Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), who asserted that the study of human meaningful action was radically different from that usually employed by scientists. To do this properly

requires that an observer bring to the observation prior cultural knowledge of what it means to be human in that culture and then empathically understand what thoughts and actions mean to specific individuals in actual settings. Phenomenology seeks the origin, the ground of meaning in the manner by which the (external or internal) world becomes known to us. The origins of truth and reality must be sought in the particularities of the relationship that binds the human knowing subject to his or her world. The phenomenological method is essentially descriptive, not explanatory. Understanding (*Verstehen*) is the cornerstone of Dilthey's method; it involves all of one's perceptive, cognitive, and affective capacities in the comprehension of another individual and what objects mean to him or her. This method of *Verstehen* was later developed by the famous German sociologist Max Weber for sociological analyses.

Existentialism and phenomenology have influenced subsequent developments in the social sciences both explicitly and implicitly. At the explicit level, some scholars and social scientists are known by their commitments to an existential sociology or an existential psychology. An early work that sought to translate some of the abstract philosophical ideas of existentialism into sociology was Edward Tiryakian's *Sociologism and Existentialism* in 1962. In this book, Tiryakian tried to reconcile two very different ways of thinking about human social life. The term *sociologism* is usually associated with the many books of Émile Durkheim and his thinking that social reality exists above and apart from any specific individuals. Individuals do not matter much in this way of thinking; "society" exists before individuals come into it and beyond the life of any specific individual. The larger institutional structures of society are seen as superseding and transcending the lives of ordinary individuals and are not dependent on individuals in any meaningful way. Societies and cultures are seen to achieve stability, change, transform, and disintegrate largely independent of the wills, intentions, choices, and decisions of individuals. This is the key idea for those who are structuralists in the social sciences, and such thinkers have traditionally dominated academic thought. The second perspective is that of existentialism, which places a much greater emphasis on individuals, their choices, their responsibilities, their passions, their decisions, their virtues, their cowardice, and so on. Tiryakian proposed to bring together these two seemingly incompatible perspectives in a manner that would retrain the integrity of each.

In 1967, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann published *The Social Construction of Reality*, a work that is now known to all social scientists and their students, either through the primary source or through many of the available secondary sources. Like Tiryakian, Berger and Luckmann sought to reconcile two prevalent social science views about life. They characterized these two views as "society in man" and "man in society," but these terms essentially correspond to sociologism and existentialism. The first view, society in man, tries to capture the structuralist perspective, which sees social and cultural structures as primary foundations of social reality; in contrast, individuals are seen as largely passive recipients of social and cultural influences. The second view, man in society, emphasizes men and women as active agents of freedom and choice, as persons who choose to conform, resist, rebel, or create. This is the view that is consistent with the existentialist view of freedom. This view of human nature sees men and women as active, as empowered subjects in their cultural milieus.

In their 1977 anthology *Existential Sociology*, Jack Douglas and John Johnson brought together a series of essays that explored the implications of existentialism and phenomenology for the social sciences, specifically sociology. The emphases on individuals and practical action appeared to have a resonance with American pragmatism, especially symbolic interaction, so several of the essays explored these connections. Symbolic interaction also involves the study of real persons in actual social situations, usually (but not exclusively) with an eye to grasping how commonsense actors interpret these situations. Many of the same authors contributed to the 1985 anthology edited by Andrea Fontana and Joseph Kotarba, *The Existential Self in Society*, which brought together a series of empirical studies of the self and identity in our complex culture. And in 2002, the existential sociology trilogy was completed with *Postmodern Existential Sociology*, edited by Joseph Kotarba and John Johnson, which sought to revise and update existential sociology in light of "the postmodern turn" in qualitative sociology. The authors of this anthology sought to expand the existentialist perspective to the new realities of a globalized, mass-mediated culture and to incorporate new methods for studying these.

Existential sociology invariably uses some form of qualitative research. The earlier studies tended to use participant observation or field research. The objective of this research is for the observer to enter some natural setting of everyday life, to participate with and

get to know the members of this setting, and to try to achieve a member's knowledge of how things work and what things mean (if this is possible) for the purpose of studying, understanding, and articulating the members' interpretations of what is going on and why. In many research studies, it was important for the researcher to establish relations of trust so that they would truthfully report what things mean. There are many research studies in which the researcher is a former member and returns to the setting for the purposes of study. In other cases, it is not possible to achieve full membership status (e.g., drug dealing, other illegal activities). There now exists a voluminous literature on the problems and issues involved in doing this kind of research. During recent years, many new methodological approaches have been advanced and developed. Some of these new methods, such as ethnographic content analysis and comparative content analysis, are devised to specifically examine mass-mediated or cinematic realities. Other new methods focus on the observer or writer and his or her cultural meanings; some of these products are performed before audiences rather than merely being reported in scientific journals. One methodological genre is known as performance ethnography and has achieved interdisciplinary acceptance.

The study of emotions has blossomed during recent decades. Although some of the early work was done by existential sociologists or existential psychologists, this burgeoning area of inquiry has grown far beyond these early concerns. Social scientists in many disciplines now take the topics of feelings and emotions very seriously, and a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative methods has been used in these studies. The American Sociological Association now has a separate section on the Sociology of Emotions, numbering hundreds of members who study and teach about emotions. The intellectual battles about emotions were very heated and passionate during the early days of this movement, but now few doubt the centrality of feelings and emotions to human life. The empirical study of emotions has won widespread interdisciplinary acceptance, and here the focus is on individuals in nonclinical settings, the lives of ordinary persons who are functioning in the everyday world of work, family, and institutional lives. It is estimated that perhaps as many as 60 million Americans suffer from depression at some point in their lives. The best-selling books by William Styron, Peter Kramer, Kay Redfield Jamison, and Andrew Solomon attest to this widespread phenomenon. Do feelings and emotion dominate cognition or

vice versa? The jury is still out on this question and many other important questions, but the argument is heated and passionate.

Although the existing literature on postmodernism is very complex and difficult (if not impossible) to characterize, much of it implicitly addresses the absence of inherent or intrinsic meaning. In earlier times, existential writers would have depicted this as the irrationality of life or even as the problem of the absurd. Like the earlier existentialism, postmodernism is perhaps best seen not as a well-developed theory or perspective but rather as a sensibility or orientation to the world; also, like *existentialist*, the word *postmodern* is used as an adjective to characterize representations in art, dance, theater, cinema, spirituality, and so on. Postmodernism is evolving and changing with the times. In one early article, Norman K. Denzin identified four distinct phases or "moments" in the evolution of postmodern thought and sensibility, but then in a later article there were seven identifiable phases. It is likely that the majority of postmodernists would disagree with, reject, or assert the failure of what is called the "Enlightenment Project," specifically the promise of science to bring forth a more just world. This is a sentiment with which many existentialists would also agree. "Science" is problematic in this view—capable of many worthy achievements but also contributing to much suffering and misery.

John M. Johnson

See also Phenomenology; Postmodernism; Social Constructionism

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EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Experiential knowledge was succinctly defined in 1994 as "information and wisdom gained from lived experience" by Marsha A. Schubert and Thomasina J. Borkman. It signifies a way of knowing about and

understanding things and events through direct engagement. Lived experience incorporates the actual experience itself along with the meanings attributed to the experience by the person experiencing it. One form of experiential knowledge, termed *Indigenous* or *local environmental* knowledge, refers to information and meanings gleaned through active participation in an activity that is shared by or distributed among members of a group or community. This can include groups of people who form a community (e.g., people who are part of the same village or ethnic group), people who are linked in other ways (e.g., people engaged in similar activities such as fishermen in a particular geographic region or factory workers), or people who are a group only in the sense that they share a particular experience (e.g., people with a chronic medical condition).

A second thread in the discussion of experiential knowledge focuses on how researchers' own lived experiences frame their decisions regarding research questions, understanding, and interpretations. Arguing that research decisions are selective and that understanding is informed by perspective, postmodernists, feminists, qualitative researchers, and critical race theorists challenge exclusion and marginalization of the experiences of subgroups by mainstream researchers. They argue that the researcher's lens, shaped by identity, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, education, and position, influences how questions are selected and framed as well as how data are collected and interpreted. Experiential knowledge of the researcher is always present in research, and some propose that research benefits when this is made explicit. Beyond mere acknowledgment, the researcher embraces the importance of experiential knowledge constantly exploring the interaction among experience, data, and understanding through an iterative process of inquiry and reflection. For some researchers, this also includes an action phase whereby findings are tested and the results are fed back into the process.

Another aspect of experiential knowledge entails understanding how it is directly embedded in the inquiry process itself and how the researcher taps into the knowledge of the "other." Anthropologists and other social scientists who conduct research in naturalistic settings engage in a process by which knowledge is gleaned through empathic participation in everyday events and in-depth reflection on the experience. The researcher uses all of his or her senses in seeing, hearing, feeling, and understanding. The researcher's toolkit, including participant

and unobtrusive observation and listening, questioning, informal conversation, various forms of interviewing, mapping, elicitation, photography, and survey taking, supports this way of knowing. What is unique is that the researcher uses these tools, particularly observation, listening, questioning, and reflecting, to experience the phenomenon under study, albeit only partially. Experiential knowledge takes many forms, including cultural, social, political, environmental, historical, and organizational knowledge. Through participatory and collaborative research, the researcher joins himself or herself, as well as his or her knowledge, with the wisdom of those engaged in the domain or issue under study in a discovery process that is cooperative and negotiated.

Marlene J. Berg

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Phenomenology; Reflexivity

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EXPLANATION

In ordinary usage, as well as in philosophy, an explanation tells us not only what happens but also why. This idea is embodied in the distinction between description and explanation. In the literature on research methods, explanation has generally been understood as causal explanation and its pursuit has been limited to quantitative (or even, more narrowly, experimental) methods. Qualitative researchers, in reaction, have generally denied that they were seeking causal explanations, arguing that their goal was the interpretive understanding of meanings rather than the

identification of causes; some (e.g., Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln) have rejected the entire concept of causality as outdated and inappropriate for the social sciences.

However, this argument has usually failed to take account of recent philosophical developments in our understanding of explanation and causality. The traditional view of causal explanation, and the basis for its restriction to quantitative methods, derives from David Hume's analysis of causality, generally known as the "regularity theory." Hume argued that we cannot directly perceive causal relationships and, thus, that we can have no knowledge of causality beyond the observed regularities in associations of events. This view treats the actual process of causality as unobservable—a "black box"—and focuses on discovering whether there is a systematic relationship between inputs and outputs.

This view has more recently been challenged by an alternative approach to causal explanation, one that sees causality as fundamentally referring to the actual mechanisms and processes that are involved in particular events and situations. These mechanisms and processes can include mental phenomena as well as physical phenomena and can be identified in unique events as well as through regularities. In philosophy, advocates of this view include Wesley Salmon and Hilary Putnam. In the social sciences, this approach is associated (although not exclusively) with the position known as "critical realism."

This position's emphasis on understanding processes, rather than on simply showing an association between variables, provides an alternative approach to causal explanation that is particularly suited to qualitative research. It incorporates qualitative researchers' emphasis on meaning for actors and on unique contextual circumstances, and by treating causal processes as real events, it implies that these may be observed directly rather than only inferred. Thus, it removes the restriction that causal inference requires the comparison of situations in which the presumed cause is present or absent. It is strikingly congruent with Herbert Blumer's approach to qualitative research, known as symbolic interactionism, as well as with the work of more recent qualitative researchers such as Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman. With its grounding in a realist ontology, however, it is in conflict with "strong" versions of social constructivism that deny the existence of any "reality" outside of our constructions.

A great deal of qualitative research implicitly incorporates such an understanding of explanation as

an understanding of causal processes, a view that is very congruent with commonsense views of explanation. The challenge for these qualitative researchers is to make this view of explanation more explicit, to use it to defend the legitimacy of explanation as a goal of qualitative research, and to further develop qualitative procedures for systematically generating and testing causal explanations.

Joseph A. Maxwell and Kavita Mittapalli

See also Explanatory Research; Realism

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EXPLANATORY RESEARCH

The term *explanatory research* implies that the research in question is intended to explain, rather than simply to describe, the phenomena studied. This type of research has had a contested history in qualitative inquiry, and divergent views of the appropriateness of such goals in qualitative research are currently held. This entry summarizes the current state of this debate and describes some of the most important qualitative methods for such explanation.

Traditionally, the research denoted by the term *explanatory research* has been quantitative in nature and has typically tested prior hypotheses by measuring relationships between variables; the data are analyzed using statistical techniques. In the narrowest sense, this term is sometimes used synonymously with *experimental research*, with the implication that only experiments are capable of answering causal questions. More broadly, it can also include other types of quantitative research grouped under terms such as *causal modeling* and *structural equation modeling*, which attempt to identify causal relationships through the analysis of correlations between variables.

However, the terms *causal* and *explanatory* have also been applied to various types of qualitative research, although these uses have been controversial both within and outside of the qualitative research community. Such uses were more common in the earlier history of qualitative research, but with the inception of

the “paradigm wars” during the latter part of the 20th century, the very idea of causation became problematic in qualitative research. The prevalence of the view that only quantitative methods can be used to investigate causality led many writers to avoid making explicit causal claims in their work, whereas other qualitative scholars have argued that the entire concept of causality is illegitimate or inappropriate in qualitative research.

The debates about what research counts as “explanatory” have taken on major political dimensions since 2000, as advocates of what they call “science-based research,” which privileges the use of randomized control trials (RCTs) as the “gold standard” for causal explanation, gained control of federal funding for educational research in the Bush administration. (A similar development occurred earlier in Great Britain.) Although there has been widespread criticism of this position, it has many adherents and its influence has been felt beyond educational research.

Despite this, the use of terms such as *influence*, *impact*, *affect*, and *contribute to*, is common in qualitative research reports, and such terms imply causality in some sense. In addition, a growing number of researchers (both qualitative and quantitative) now argue that, in some circumstances, quantitative approaches are not necessarily the best (or only) ways of reaching explanatory conclusions and that qualitative methods can be used to systematically develop and test causal explanations.

There are several important criticisms of randomized experimental designs as the preeminent research strategy for explanatory purposes. First, in many situations, and for some issues, it is difficult or impossible to rigorously implement such designs, and many purported RCTs have in fact been so flawed that their causal conclusions are questionable. Second, many other types of research (ranging from quasi-experiments, to causal modeling, to qualitative approaches) can establish causal conclusions, not with certainty (no method can do this) but beyond reasonable doubt.

Finally, the model of causation assumed by most advocates of RCTs and by quantitative researchers in general, known as the “deductive–nomological” or “regularity” model, has been the object of sustained criticism both in the philosophy of science and in social research. Since the demise of logical positivism, which was closely identified with this model, an alternative view of causation (often identified as “realist”) has gained substantial prominence. The latter model, which sees causation not as regularities in the relationships between independent and dependent

variables but rather as the actual properties and processes that produce causal outcomes, is much more compatible with qualitative research and supports the claims of qualitative researchers to be able to draw causal conclusions.

Probably the earliest explicit systematic attempt to use qualitative methods for causal explanation was analytic induction, developed by the sociologist Florian Znaniecki during the 1930s. Znaniecki believed that this approach, based on the search for similarities in an exhaustive examination of cases, could be used to inductively generate universal causal laws; any exception to a proposed law required reexamination of the data. However, this view, based on a positivist understanding of scientific explanation, has generally been rejected by later scholars, and current uses of analytic induction have largely abandoned any explicit claim to causal explanation.

One of the most widely used qualitative approaches to explanation has been called “causal narratives.” This strategy was developed as an explicit strategy during the 1950s, although it draws on the earlier techniques of historians and political scientists. It was intended to provide an alternative to the quantitative correlational methods that were widely used in the social sciences to develop causal models, methods that many scholars believed were unsuited to the complex, interacting, and contextually specific phenomena that social scientists often study and to the small samples with which they often work. This explanatory strategy is quite different from that of analytic induction in that, instead of seeking regularities in the relationship between proposed explanatory factors and outcomes across cases, the goal is to elucidate the processes at work in one case, or a small number of cases, using in-depth intensive analysis and a narrative presentation of the argument.

Similar approaches have often been used in case study research. Robert Yin argued that, contrary to the traditional stereotype of case studies as a relatively weak method that is useful mainly for exploratory purposes, case studies can provide a powerful strategy for causal explanation. A classic and often-cited example is Graham Allison’s *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Yin and others have provided a variety of techniques for developing and testing causal explanations in case study research, some that were drawn from quantitative strategies, such as time series analysis and logic models, and others that were developed within the case study tradition, such as narrative approaches.

Likewise, Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman argued that qualitative research is in fact far better than purely quantitative approaches at developing explanations of what they called “local causality”—the actual events and processes that led to specific outcomes. They also suggested that, given multisite data, qualitative methods can develop rather powerful general explanations and can confirm causal models suggested by survey data. John Creswell has incorporated the latter view into his widely cited typology of mixed methods designs. He defined an “explanatory design” as one in which the results of an initial quantitative phase are explained by a subsequent qualitative investigation.

This emphasis on explanation as the understanding of causal processes in specific cases, rather than the formulation of general laws, is strikingly consistent with recent work on explanation within the realist tradition in the philosophy of science. This tradition sees causality as consisting not of regularities in the relationships between variables or events but rather of real (and, in principle, observable) causal mechanisms and processes, the result of the operation of the powers of natural and social entities, within a specific context, to produce particular outcomes, although they may or may not produce regularities. Such views are beginning to have an influence on the theory and practice of social research methods and are much more compatible with qualitative research than are the traditional positivist understandings of causality.

Joseph A. Maxwell and Kavita Mittapalli

See also Analytic Induction; Explanation; Realism; Theory

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EXPLORATORY DATA ANALYSIS

Exploratory data analysis is the set of steps that qualitative researchers follow in exploring a new area of social or psychological life that they do by collecting open-ended data from which to generate new concepts and generalizations about that area. The most efficacious exploratory data analysis leaves these investigators as much scope as possible for the discovery of new concepts and generalizations. That is, the steps followed are designed to encourage and enhance this inventiveness.

Exploratory data analysis, unlike its confirmatory counterpart, begins when data collection starts in that the researcher examines the record (e.g., written notes, audio- or videorecordings) of what has been observed during each session of data collection. This knowledge then directs subsequent sessions during the same research project. Moreover, as the data are being gathered, ideas about them (e.g., possible concepts, generalizations) emerge and are recorded as memos. Each record and accompanying memos are further elaborated and compared (constant comparative method) as soon after the session of collecting as possible, and additional memos may also be written at this time. This initial analytic phase eventually gives way to the main phase of data manipulation, typically launched once the researcher ceases gathering data.

During data manipulation, the records and memos are closely examined and further compared with an eye, first, to discovering their common properties and, second, to melding these properties into concepts and generalizations about the area of social life under study. Identifying such properties and forging concepts and generalizations from them is at the creative heart of discovery research. A variety of computer programs are available to help manage the data and their emergent concepts and generalizations, although the common warning is that such programs are not themselves creative mechanisms. They cannot make intuitive leaps, those creative or innovative moments during which scientists intuitively, and imaginatively, find such properties, concepts, and generalizations.

They can only help to organize the records and memos, thereby putting the researcher in a position to discover new relationships.

Barney Glaser argued that, during exploratory data manipulation, the most effective route to discovery is not through using these programs but rather through conducting hands-on sorts of the records and memos gathered earlier. He advocated spreading out, on a large table or even on the floor, handwritten versions of them and then looking over the entire set to identify their commonalities. Alternatively, some researchers prefer to write such material into computer files for eventual printing, cutting up, and placing on the table or floor for analysis. At this point in the study, still others choose to avail themselves of the data management features of a computer analysis program.

Discovery proceeds in steps during this main analytic phase. At the beginning, during the sorting process, the researcher first finds and then shapes a number of descriptive concepts and generalizations. Glaser referred to this process as “substantive coding,” whereas Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin called it “open coding.” The resultant concepts and generalizations are called “substantive codes” or “open codes.” For Glaser, the second (and final) step moves the discovery process to a more abstract inclusive level known as “theoretic coding,” which produces a set of theoretic codes. These abstract concepts and generalizations enable the researcher to generalize, however tentatively and however hypothetically, beyond the study from which they emerged. They become elements of an emergent theory about the area of social or psychological life being examined and may be developed with data gathered through open-ended procedures such as narrative analysis, focus group sessions, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

Turning to grounded theory as a particular kind of emergent theory, Glaser maintained that no further analytic steps are needed. The researcher, having followed the two steps just described, is now ready to concentrate on writing the research report. In contrast, Strauss and Corbin held that a second intermediate step called “axial coding” is needed. It is accomplished using a coding paradigm made up of components such as context, conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences as these relate to the area of social life being investigated. Glaser argued that this paradigm “forces” the exploratory researcher who uses it to see his or her data through the lens of preconceived concepts. This, Glaser held, constrains discovery, and

it is unnecessary because these components, where relevant, will become evident during his two-step coding process. Axial coding, with its 18 different coding families, is by far the most complicated analytic procedure in exploratory data analysis. Once this coding is completed, Strauss and Corbin’s approach calls for a third step that they labeled “selective coding”; it is akin to Glaser’s theoretic coding.

Judy Kendall, in a test of both coding schemes, analyzed qualitative data gathered during research on a family raising a child suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. She concluded that Strauss and Corbin’s approach generates deeper description than does Glaser’s approach but that the latter’s approach is more effective for developing rich grounded theory and the level of generalization needed for further concatenation of exploratory work in the area of study. The approach chosen, then, depends on the researcher’s principal goal—to generate deep description or extensive development of inductive theory.

Exploratory data analysis is the showcase of inductive reasoning in the social sciences. It is here, through this kind of analysis, that new concepts and generalizations are consciously, intentionally, and inductively created directly from data, the hallmark of emergent theoretic (exploratory) research and today the best known of the inductive types of discovery. Other steps in social scientific exploration—such as study design, data collection, and data write-up—are, as it were, supporting actors in this drama of discovering something new.

Robert Alan Stebbins

See also Discovery; Induction

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EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

In the social sciences, the term *exploratory research* or *exploration* refers to broad-ranging, intentional, systematic data collection designed to maximize discovery of generalizations based on description and direct understanding of an area of social or psychological life. Such research is, depending on the standpoint taken, a distinctive way of conducting science—a scientific process. It is both a special methodological approach, separate from verification or confirmation, and a pervasive personal orientation of the exploratory researcher. The emergent generalizations are typically many and varied; they often include descriptive facts, folk concepts, cultural artifacts, structural arrangements, social processes, and beliefs and belief systems normally found in the group, process, activity, or situation under study. This entry examines the nature of exploratory research, its relationship to verification, and its status as a special kind of longitudinal research referred to as *concatenation*.

Nature of Exploratory Research

One fruitful way of understanding social scientific exploration is to describe what it is not. Thus, it is not a synonym for studying, examining, analyzing, or investigating something. Nor is it the exploration sometimes conducted by artists, inventors, and innovators whereby they become familiar with something by testing or experimenting with it. Furthermore, social scientific exploration is not traveling over or through a particular space for the purposes of discovery and adventure, which we might call spatial exploration. This definition does, however, come closest to the one given in the introductory paragraph. On another level, social scientific exploration is not the examination of a thing or an idea for diagnostic purposes—to search it systematically for something. This meaning suggests that because explorers here already know what to look for (e.g., oil, cancer, toxins), they need only methodically hunt for it. Finally, it is not serendipity, which is logically and procedurally a quite separate form of discovery; it is the quintessential form of informal experimentation, accidental discovery, and spontaneous invention.

Researchers explore when they possess little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless

have reason to believe contains elements worth discovering. To explore a given phenomenon effectively, they must approach it with two special orientations: flexibility in looking for data and open-mindedness about where to find them. Oriented in this way, the first step is to try to acquire an intimate firsthand understanding of the group, process, activity, or situation being observed. It follows that the most efficacious approach is to search for this understanding wherever it may be found using any ethical method that would appear to bear fruit. The outcome of these procedures, and the main goal of exploratory research, is the production of inductively derived generalizations about the group, process, activity, or situation under study. Researchers then weave these generalizations into what Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss referred to as “grounded theory,” which explains the object of study. Such theory is founded on direct observation of social phenomena.

In most exploratory studies, qualitative data predominate even when they are augmented where possible and desirable with descriptive statistics such as indexes, percentages, and frequency distributions. Furthermore, social scientific exploration is described most accurately as primarily *inductive*, whereas verification is primarily *deductive*. In other words, during exploratory inquiry, researchers do think deductively at times, although they do so largely within their emerging theoretic framework rather than within established theory and sets of hypotheses deduced from it. Moreover, they engage in a sort of verification; that is, they (tentatively) confirm their emergent generalizations rather than an ensemble of a priori predictions. Despite constraints of research design, verificational researchers, for their part, sometimes serendipitously observe regularities leading to generalizations about the group, process, activity, or situation they are investigating. Some of these chance discoveries may have been reached by inductive reasoning, but in confirmatory work such induction is not systematic. Nevertheless, because quantitative data can also be explored as well as verified, it is prudent to be unequivocally clear about the nature and scope of particular research projects, describing them as qualitative–exploratory, quantitative–exploratory, qualitative–confirmatory, or quantitative–confirmatory. Not surprisingly, the simpler labels of qualitative and quantitative can spawn confusion.

Exploration and inductive reasoning are important in science, in part because deductive logic alone can

never uncover new ideas and observations. Max Black noted that, with the growth of natural science, philosophers became increasingly aware of the limitations of deductive argument. That is, because such argument can bring out only what can be deduced from its premises, philosophers are now inclined that all new knowledge must come from some form of induction. The limits of deductive argument are effectively illustrated in what Robert Stebbins called “syllogistic reasoning.” The syllogism is the simplest of all deductive systems, where all A is B, all B is C, and therefore all A is C. In this system, it is impossible to learn about Propositions D, E, and F through logic alone because the reasoning connecting Propositions A, B, and C is a closed argument. Given that established social science theory is a vast, albeit less logically tight, version of the simple syllogism, it too is incapable of revealing any information about the social equivalents of D, E, and F. Whether D, E, F, and still other phenomena even exist and, if they exist, whether any of them is important for a detailed and profound understanding of the group, process, activity, or situation in question can be determined only through discovery. In principle, social scientists have a choice at this point: explore (i.e., use inductive logic) or wait for serendipity to light the way. But serendipity is too adventitious and sporadic to serve as a substitute for systematic exploration.

Exploration and Verification

Verification is research designed to test one or more hypotheses derived deductively from preexisting theory. Such theory could be grounded theory that has emerged from a sufficient number of studies that, together, have reached a point warranting confirmation of its many inductively generated hypotheses. Most commonly, however, verification is undertaken on hypotheses derived deductively from theory that has no exploratory grounding. Verification differs from exploration in that the former rests on prediction and control of the research setting.

In general, exploration is the preferred methodological approach under at least three conditions: when a group, process, activity, or situation has received little or no systematic empirical scrutiny, has been largely examined using prediction and control rather than flexibility and open-mindedness, and has grown to maturity along the exploratory/verificational continuum but has changed so much on the way that

it begs to be explored anew. Whichever condition pertains, the accent in exploratory research is always on inductive generation of new concepts and empirical generalizations.

Concatenation

As scientists come to understand more clearly the group, process, activity, or situation chosen for examination, they and their field of research move toward the verificational pole of research. As they proceed in this direction, they eventually come to rely less and less on flexibility and open-mindedness and more and more on prediction and confirmation, a process that typically unfolds over the course of several studies, with each study executed in “concatenated” fashion with reference to the earlier ones. In other words, movement along the continuum is paralleled by an expansion of the grounded theory and the development of generic or overarching concepts, both made possible by the accumulation of research and application of the theory to an ever-wider range of phenomena.

Robert Stebbins coined the term “concatenated exploration” to refer at once to a longitudinal research process and the resulting set of open-ended field studies linked together in, as it were, a chain leading to cumulative, often formal, grounded theory. Studies near the beginning of the chain are wholly or predominantly exploratory in scope. Each study, or link, in the chain examines or, at times, reexamines a related group, activity, or social process or aspect of a broader category of groups, activities, or social processes.

Where this metaphor of a chain of studies becomes inadequate is in its failure to suggest the accretive nature of properly executed concatenated exploration. In the metaphor of the chain, each link is equally important, whereas in scientific concatenation, the studies in the chain not only are linked but also are predicated on one another. That is, later studies are guided, in significant measure, by what was found in earlier research in the same area as well as by the methods used and the samples examined there. Thus, each link plays a somewhat different part in the growing body of research and in the emerging grounded theory. Furthermore, note that the earlier studies only guide later exploration; they do not control it to the point where discovery is hampered by preconceptions.

Ideally, a field of research, pursued according to the canons of exploration reaches a point in the scientific process at which a coherent grounded theory

about a reasonably broad range of related phenomena has emerged. Now concern is chiefly with enhancing precision of the theory, a goal commonly realized primarily through prediction, quantification, and a heavy reliance on inferential statistics. Even here, however, qualitative data occasionally play an important role. Such data, for example, can help to confirm propositions not amenable to quantitative assessment or, through exploration, can bring to light important recent changes in social process and social structure that a narrowed attention on confirmation of hypotheses has led researchers to overlook.

Before closing, a final comment about the process of concatenation is in order. It is noteworthy that most exploratory sociologists have been considerably less inclined than their counterparts in anthropology to stay with a research subject through several rounds of fieldwork, analysis, and publication. Rather, these sociologists typically conduct one or two field projects, which may or may not be related, and then retire to their offices to write elaborations of their data, theoretic and methodological expositions, upper division textbooks in their specialties, and even personal memoirs. The result is that scientific understanding of an area of social life that has been given a good start through exploratory research is, because of neglect, commonly arrested thereafter, for it is rare that someone else takes up the project where the pioneering researcher left off.

Exceptions to this indictment do nonetheless exist, and a few of them should be mentioned to demonstrate that concatenated exploration is not only desirable but also possible. Robert Burgess spent more than 20 years conducting a variety of interrelated studies on different phases of British education, ranging from nursery school, through primary and secondary school, to university and adult education. William Shaffir, since his graduate school days during the late 1960s, has examined various aspects of communal life among Orthodox Jews in Canada and

Israel. Steven Taylor, at times in collaboration with Robert Bogdan, explored the social world of the mentally retarded in the United States. They launched their first research project in this area in 1972. Stebbins's studies of the serious leisure of amateurs, hobbyists, and career volunteers in North America (which began in 1973) also exemplify this genre of research. Alas, the widespread failure to concatenate to the verificational stage is one of the greatest weaknesses of exploratory research.

Robert Alan Stebbins

See also Deduction; Discovery; Grounded Theory; Induction; Serendipity

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F

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist epistemology brings together the usual epistemological concerns such as what constitutes knowledge and how it is constructed with the central issues of feminist theory: gender as an analytic category. Although there are multiple complex discourses on feminist epistemology, at their root is the consideration of the role of gender in determining how knowledge is constructed, both by individual knowers and by social and cultural groups of women and men. A theme in many discussions is how power relations based on gender (and race, culture, social class, and other social categories) shape what counts as knowledge in debates not only in epistemology and feminist theory, but also in all academic disciplines. Given that the purpose of all research is ultimately to produce knowledge and since feminist epistemology brings out the role of gender in shaping knowledge construction, gender is important in considerations of all research methodology. It is especially relevant in discussions of qualitative research where the researcher is very consciously involved in and part of the research process. This entry first gives an overview of feminist theories and then describes differences and similarities between theories that focus on the individual; structural, cultural, and standpoint feminist theories; and poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial feminist theories. Lastly, it discusses the ways in which these feminist perspectives affect the conduct and analysis of research.

An Overview of Feminist Theories

There are many feminist theories. Although there are similarities and points of conflict among them, they all arose out of the fact that feminism as a historical and social movement was intended to challenge women's oppression. There generally has been an assumption that most people have been socialized into sexist ideology and often into particular gender roles and ways of thinking that usually give males more institutional, social, and economic power and access to resources. Feminism assumes that the problem in gender relations is not men, but sexism and the forces of patriarchy that lead to sexism. Feminism seeks to challenge sexism and sexist ways of thinking and living that limit both men and women. As feminist cultural critic bell hooks has discussed, everyone has something to gain from the feminist movement, as its purpose is to create more equitable relations for all people—both women and men.

Over the course of history, in response to the gender climate in society at any given era as well as the academic disciplines that inform scholarship, feminism has taken on different forms and emphases. For example, up until the late 1970s or early 1980s, the feminist movement was intended to address the needs of women in general; however, it in fact focused on the experience and needs of White, middle-class women and did not adequately take into account the impact of race and class. Thus, from the late 1980s and on into the new millennium, there has been much development in research and scholarship by and about women of

color and in scholarship that focuses on differences among women. More recently, much work in feminist theory has foregrounded the effects of globalization. The remainder of this section focuses on the different strands of feminist theory broken down broadly into three areas. In each section, there is a particular emphasis on the major epistemological focus of these strands, as well as a consideration of how these theoretical threads deal with differences among women.

Individually Focused Feminist Theories

A range of feminist theories, including liberal feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and most discussions of feminist psychology, focuses especially on women as individuals. Liberal feminism has its roots in the enlightenment philosophy of the 19th century that emphasized rationality and shaped the education system of the 20th century. The focus of liberal feminism of the 1960s and 1970s (and to some extent in the current day) is on giving women as individuals equal rights to men in the system the way that it is, particularly in regard to education and job opportunity. Liberal feminism has not tended to directly challenge knowledge construction processes; rather, it has emphasized giving women equal access to all levels of education and enabling them to participate in knowledge construction processes as used by men.

Psychoanalytic feminism and feminist psychology more generally also have an individualistic focus, but from a psychological perspective. The concern here is how individual women construct knowledge in light of gender socialization that emphasizes the importance of caring, connection, and relationship. One key influence in these perspectives is the work of Carol Gilligan, beginning with the publication of *In a Different Voice* in 1982. This book was based on Gilligan's study of women's moral development and found that women tended to make moral decisions based on connection and relationship rather than on an appeal to moral principles, a perspective that is gender-related as opposed to gender-specific. Two years later, Nel Noddings elaborated on the ethic of care from a philosophical perspective, particularly in regard to how it relates to education. Building on the work of both Gilligan and Noddings, another important influence was the publication of *Women's Ways of Knowing* by Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule in 1986. This book was based on a

qualitative study of 135 women and focused on how these individuals came to know and learn, with special consideration of the role of affect, connection, and relationship as well as rationality in learning and knowledge construction in women coming to voice. These individually focused feminisms were critiqued as focusing on the concerns of White, middle-class women because they tend to focus on women as a unitary category or on the generic woman who is often implicitly White and middle-class. These strands also tended not to examine race, class, cultural, and sexual identity differences among women, though in more recent years there has been more attention to these issues of difference in feminist psychology. The unit of analysis in these feminisms tends to be the individual and how he or she constructs knowledge. In regards to research methodology, these feminisms point to the role of voice, affect, and relationship in the research process.

Structural, Cultural, and Standpoint Feminist Theories

Structural, cultural, and standpoint feminist theories tend to focus especially on the role of social structures and power relations that shape knowledge production. There are a variety of these theories, many of which initially emerged in sociology and related disciplines in the 1970s and 1980s alongside the individually focused feminist theories. The structural feminist theories of radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and socialist feminism examine the effect of societal structures and power relations between dominant and oppressed groups on women. The concern of radical feminism has been primarily with challenging patriarchy as a form of structural oppression, while Marxist feminism argues that there are two primary systems of oppression—patriarchy and capitalism—that need to be challenged. Socialist feminists not only focus on patriarchy and capitalism, but also emphasize an examination of other systems of oppression, such as racial oppression, and the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation in relation to the material realities of women's lives. The units of analysis of these frames are structural as opposed to individual or the psychological.

Closely related to structural feminist theories are cultural feminisms and standpoint feminist theories, which initially developed in the late 1980s and 1990s and today continue to focus more on women in particular

groups defined in terms of race-ethnicity, culture, gender, class, and sexual orientation. The lived experience of a specific group of women is at the center of analysis, rather than at the margins, as, for example, in Black feminist thought, womanism, Latina feminism, or Asian and Asian American feminism. Because the focus is on the dynamics of where women of particular cultural or other groups stand in relation to the dominant culture in understanding their lived reality, such feminisms are referred to as *standpoint feminisms*. From an epistemological perspective, all structural, cultural, and standpoint feminisms focus on the role of power relations in shaping the politics of knowledge production, and they examine what gets counted as knowledge, and by whom, in the construction of knowledge. From a research perspective, cultural and standpoint feminist theories highlight how the race, culture, and gender of the researcher relative to the participants affect methods for getting access to participants, the relationship with the participants, and the data collection and analysis processes.

Poststructural, Postmodern, and Postcolonial Feminist Theories

In addition to the further development of psychological and standpoint feminist theories, the 1990s and the new millennium have given rise to poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial feminist theories. Although there are some differences among these *post* theories, they also have points of connection. These theories draw on structural and standpoint feminist theories in the sense that they are concerned with social structures. But there are also a number of differences, mostly in the degree to which the poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial discourses emphasize issues such as deconstruction, power, the notion of identity and knowledge construction as constantly shifting, and subjectivity (and the impossibility of objectivity).

Rather than the unit of analysis being social structures as in structural or standpoint feminisms, poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial feminist theories view the unit of analysis as the connections between individuals and social structures of race, gender, and class (and/or the forces of colonialism in postcolonial feminism) rather than the social structure itself. Epistemologically, all of the post discourses to one degree or another deal with deconstruction, particularly in regard to the knowledge construction processes used by individuals as well as by various

academic disciplines. They all problematize the notion of truth as something that can be known with certainty because truth is always shaped in part by cultural or social factors and colonial influences; thus, the post discourses recognize multiple truths. These realities or truths are always both constructed and viewed partially through one's positionality or social location. Positionality in this context refers to the notion that where one is positioned based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or ability, and the intersections of these categories (often referred to in the post discourses as multiple subjectivities) relative to the dominant culture or to other social groups in society always affect one's view of the world and how one constructs and values knowledge. Given one can never get completely outside of one's positionality, objectivity is viewed as impossible. Thus, the post discourses emphasize the role of and accounting of multiple subjectivities in shaping knowledge construction, although in the feminist perspectives within this approach gender is always a primary category of analysis.

As in structural and standpoint feminist theories, power is central in shaping knowledge construction processes, but the notion of power is conceptualized often from French poststructural scholar Michel Foucault's perspective, who sees power as always circulating rather than in being completely in one place or another and who suggests knowledge can never be separated from power. The shifting nature of power suggests that knowledge is never static, nor is identity, given that there is always a shifting understanding of identity in regard to various aspects of one's positionality over time.

From an epistemological perspective, those who draw on poststructural, postmodern, or postcolonial feminist theory and pedagogy emphasize how positionality (of teachers and learners) shapes teaching and learning in the classroom and how it affects both knowledge production processes in the lives of individuals and official knowledge production processes in the conduct of scholarship, research, and the publication of results of such work. There is a focus on the raising of consciousness and simultaneous challenge of how structural systems of gender, race, or class inform thinking. At the same time, there is an emphasis on deconstruction of binary categories such as male-female or affective-rational. Thus, there would be a problematizing of ideas that suggests that men are one thing and women, another (e.g., men are rational,

and women are intuitive). Rather, the post discourses would problematize the idea that a particular quality was attributed to one gender or the other and would deconstruct (in the sense of examining and taking apart) how such an idea developed to begin with and what socialization processes were in place that allowed such an attribution to occur. Further, those who adhere to the post discourses would call all binary categories into question and attempt to move the knower beyond black-white thinking in regard to any binary category. Such recognitions of fragmentation, instability of categories, and the shifting nature of identity in light of further thought, emotion, and experience have implications for how research is conducted.

Feminism, Epistemology, and Qualitative Research

A central question in all forms of feminist research is to ask whose interests will be served by the research. The hope in feminist research is that the interests of women will be served or that the research will contribute to an understanding of gender relations and the processes that contribute to knowledge construction through the research process. A number of interrelated issues touched on above warrant further discussion in regard to the feminist (and antiracist, postmodern, and postcolonial) approaches to qualitative research.

Power, Positionality, and Relationship in Research

In most forms of qualitative research, it is generally understood that the researcher is in a position of power relative to the research participants. Although most feminist researchers would agree, they also recognize that participants are not without power; participants have the power to withhold information or to exercise power in other ways. Nevertheless, feminist research scholars emphasize accounting for the ways power is likely at play in the research process. As much as possible, researchers should try to find ways participants can exercise power in the research process and be assured that their voices are represented the way they would like in the research report. Further, as Michele Fine suggests, one should also avoid “othering” participants in the research process by, for example, requesting that participants share much information about themselves while the researcher shares little or no information about her- or

himself. Such a dynamic often further exacerbates the power relationship.

Related to concerns about power relations in the research process are the issues of positionality and relationship between researcher and participant. One’s positionality (gender, race, class, sexual orientation) affects the relationship that the researcher has with participants and affects the research process because participants often speak differently to researchers who are members of their cultural group compared to researchers who are members of another cultural group. For example, African Americans are likely to speak to an African American researcher differently than to a White researcher. With an African American researcher, they may use insider language; they may be more trusting of the researcher and less concerned that what is said will be misinterpreted or misrepresented. Thus, researchers whose positionality differs from that of research participants may need to work more at developing relationship and share personal information related to the topic to create trust and to avoid othering. Further, most feminist and other research approaches that deal with the role of power relations are concerned with the issue of the voice and portrayal of the participants in the research report and also seek to ensure that participants themselves benefit from the research process.

Subjectivity, Shifting Nature of Meaning, and Dependability

As discussed above, many feminist scholars and others influenced by postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism argue that identity, knowledge, and meaning are constantly shifting in light of continued interaction with others, and hence, there is a continued reframing of meaning. They also highlight the myth of objectivity and discuss how positionality and multiple subjectivities shape the research process. This argument is not to suggest, however, that the research is then totally subjective and hence not dependable. Rather, the point in these forms of feminist research is to be clear and upfront about the nature of one’s subjectivity by addressing issues such as one’s theoretical perspective in conducting the research, the degree of participation of the researcher in the interview or observation, the role participants had in responding to the write-up, and the ways that the positionality of participant and researchers shaped the interactions and thus the research and knowledge

production processes. This questioning enhances the dependability of the research in that it makes the process and assumptions clear. Paradoxically, by making the subjectivity clear, the research becomes more objective. Thus, the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is replaced by an examination of the dialectic between the two and is dealt with directly, which increases the dependability of the research. This fracturing of binaries—the notion of the shifting nature of power and the fact that at every moment individuals are constructing knowledge anew in light of questions they are asked—continued life experience, and continued reflection (including reflection that is initiated because of the research process) means that meaning and knowledge are always partial and continually unfolding. The qualitative research process itself facilitates that unfolding, but it is never the final word. In fact, there is no final word, but the process itself is part of the product.

Elizabeth J. Tisdell

See also Feminist Research; Poststructuralism; Representation; Researcher–Participant Relationships; Subjectivity

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FEMINIST RESEARCH

Feminist research challenges traditional researchers to engage gender dynamically as a category of inquiry in the research process. Feminist researchers utilize both qualitative and quantitative research methods and sometimes a combination of methods. What makes research feminist lies in the particular set of theoretical perspectives and research questions that places women's issues, concerns, and lived experiences at the center of research inquiry. Feminist research stresses the importance of considering how gender intersects with other forms of women's oppression based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and so on. Feminist research promotes social justice and works to initiate social change in women's lives. Feminist research praxis emphasizes issues of power and authority between the researcher and the researched, offsetting the influence of these factors through the practice of reflexivity throughout the research process. This entry reviews the history of feminist research from the 1960s onward, beginning with attempts to include women as research subjects, then reviewing the result of putting women's lived experience at the center of research, and, finally, exploring the ways in which recognizing the differences in those experiences leads to greater attention to issues of race and ethnicity and to a more global perspective. Attention to these perspectives on research leads feminist researchers to an ongoing examination of the role of power and authority in understanding the research process generally.

Feminist Empiricism

In the '60s, '70s, and '80s, feminist researchers called attention to the pervasive androcentric bias within science and social science research. Feminist empiricists worked to correct these biases by adding women to research samples and by asking new questions that encouraged women's experiences and perspectives to emerge. Feminist empiricists thought that by doing so, they could improve the accuracy and objectivity of claims about the universal knowledge that could be obtained through positivistic research.

Feminist empiricists' insights on androcentrism and their goals of eradicating sexist research cascaded across the disciplines of psychology, philosophy, history, sociology, and education and across the fields of

law, medicine, and communications. The 1970s and '80s saw the publication of many groundbreaking feminist research anthologies critical of androcentric research that made significant contributions to the deconstruction of traditional knowledge frameworks, such as the work of Gloria Bowles, Renate Duelli Klein, Helen Roberts, and Nancy Tuana.

Women's Issues and Lived Experiences as a Basis for Knowledge

In contrast to this endeavor, feminist researchers of the '80s and '90s launched other important challenges to traditional research, starting with a basic foundational question: What is the nature of the social reality? A new set of feminist epistemologies (ways of knowing) and methodologies (ways of asking questions) interrogated, disrupted, modified, and at times radically challenged dominant models of knowledge building within and across the disciplines, beginning with a critique of positivism, the mainstream research paradigm based on the scientific method. Feminists challenged basic tenets of positivism and scientific objectivity, particularly the idea of value-free science that stresses the detachment of the researcher from the researched, universality, and the idea that there is a social reality waiting to be discovered. Instead of working to improve mainstream research by including women, as feminist empiricists had done, some feminists challenged the viability and utility of positivism's hallmark concepts of objectivity and universality. These feminists claimed that knowledge is achieved by paying attention to the specificity and uniqueness of women's lives and experiences rather than by correcting studies by simply adding women.

Feminist researchers such as Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, and Kum-Kum Bhavnani argue that objectivity needs to be transformed into feminist objectivity. Haraway, for example, defines feminist objectivity as "situated knowledges." Feminist objectivity asserts that knowledge and truth are partial, situated, subjective, power imbued, and relational. The denial of values, biases, and politics is considered unrealistic and undesirable. Historian Joan Scott disputes the positivist notion of a one-to-one correspondence between experience and social reality and argues that experience is influenced by one's particular context—the specific circumstances, conditions, values, and relations of power. Scott introduced a linguistic turn to the understanding of social reality by

illustrating how experience is discursively constructed by dominant ideological structures. Tracing the discourse surrounding experience uncovers the underlying mechanisms of oppression within society that may provide new avenues of resistance and transformation.

Feminist researchers also hope to validate the importance of emotions and values as critical lenses in research. Alison Jaggar recognizes emotion as a critical aspect of knowledge seeking; she thinks it is unrealistic to assume emotions and values do not surface during the research process. Emotions ultimately determine why a given topic or set of research questions is studied and how it is studied. The positivistic dualism between the rational and the emotional for these feminist researchers becomes a false dichotomy. Positivism per se is not the enemy of all feminist inquiry. Some feminist researchers see the merits of positivism, especially when adding validity to feminist research projects. Some research questions may require a positivistic framework, especially if the project's goal requires the testing of a specific research hypothesis on a broad spectrum of data with the goal of generalizing to a wider population (see Sue Rosser, Kathi Miner-Rubino, and Elizabeth Cole).

Feminist Standpoint Epistemologies

Feminists who are critical of feminist empiricism's "add women and stir" approach place women's lived experiences at the center of knowledge building. Feminist standpoint epistemology is an alternative model of knowledge building (see Sandra Harding and Dorothy Smith) that borrows from the Marxist and Hegelian idea that an individual's daily activities or material, lived experience structures understanding of the social world. For both Karl Marx and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the master's perspective is partial and distorted, while the worker-slave's is more complete because he or she must comprehend both his or her own world and the master's to survive. Feminist standpoint scholars argue that a woman's oppressed location within society provides fuller insights into society as a whole; women have a more nuanced understanding of social reality than men do precisely because of their structurally oppressed location vis-à-vis the dominant group, men. Sociologist and standpoint theorist Dorothy Smith stresses the necessity of starting research from women's lives; taking into account women's everyday experiences, she pays particular attention to finding and analyzing the gaps that occur when women try to

fit their lives into mainstream methods of conceptualizing women's situation. Examining the differences between two perspectives gives the researcher a more accurate and theoretically richer set of explanations of the lives of the oppressors and the oppressed.

Early critiques of standpoint epistemology argued that it collapses all women's experiences into a single defining experience and neglects the diversity of women's lives, especially those women who differ in terms of characteristics such as race, class, or sexual preference. Another important question was raised: If knowledge comes from the oppressed, how does one ascertain who is the most oppressed? Feminist standpoint scholars and researchers responded to these concerns, and standpoint epistemology has shifted over time, resulting in the concept of multiple standpoints that consider the interlocking relationships between racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class oppression as additional starting points into understanding the social reality.

Difference Matters: Feminist Research Turns Toward Difference

Although feminist empiricists and standpoint researchers stress the importance of acknowledging women who had been left out of mainstream research models, some important questions remained. Which women's stories were being told? Whose life experiences were included, and whose were left out? Feminism's interaction with postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism fostered a turn toward feminist difference research. Feminist researchers became increasingly conscious of the diversity of women's experiences. They argued against the idea of one essential experience and recognized a plurality of women's lived experiences.

Feminist research has also examined biases and inequities in terms of difference. Feminists of color, particularly Chandra Mohanty and bell hooks, critiqued the shortcomings of early feminist research to explore the important interconnections among categories of difference in terms of gender, ethnicity, nationality, and class. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins stressed the significance of Black feminist thought. Black women, argues Collins, are outsiders within. To successfully navigate White society, Black women must cope with the rules of the privileged White world while they face a marginalized position in terms of their race and

gender. Consequently, sociological insiders cannot understand or be cognizant of the Black experience because of their privileged positionality. Instead, those in power often generalize the diversity of women's lived experiences. Collectively examining the intricately connected matrix of difference helps one truly understand individual life experiences.

Global Perspectives

Feminist scholars and researchers continue to engage in issues of difference across gender, ethnicity, and class. Feminists are currently expanding their focus on difference to include issues of sexual preference, disability, and geographical region. Many feminist researchers, including Bhavnani, Hyun Sook Kim, and Diane Wolf, stress the importance of women's experiences in a global context with respect to issues of imperialism, colonialism, and nationality. Analyses incorporating race, class, and gender differences often ignore the diversity among women with regard to their particular geographical and cultural placement across the globe. Two key questions for feminists who take a global perspective are the following:

1. How does one conceptualize and study difference in a global context?
2. What research frameworks empower and promote social change for women?

Feminists who attempt to speak for the others in a global context should acknowledge the inherent power dynamics of international research. In what sense does the researcher give voice to the other and to what extent is that privilege taken for granted by the others? Feminists working in a global context call for a heightened attention to power and to difference. Is there potential for women to come together across difference and to forge social change? Some feminist researchers call for employing a type of strategic essentialism in their research, encouraging a strategic use of essentialism in order for women to promote their political agenda.

Locating the intersections of women's differences is a way that some feminists have begun to research difference in a global context and empower women's voices. Much of the theorizing and research studies on the international concerns of women, however, remains fragmented. Black feminists, third world feminists, and global, postcolonial, and transnational feminists often

remain uninformed about each other's theories and/or perspectives and research. Creating links between these strands of knowledge building to gather a more complex understanding of the workings of racism, imperialism, and neocolonialism across historical and cultural contexts is still a challenge for feminist researchers. What models of knowledge building will allow feminist researchers to study these interconnections? The answer requires an understanding of how feminists execute their research practices and what overarching principles guide their work.

Feminist Praxis: Issues of Power and Authority in Research

Feminist praxis builds on the understanding of difference and emphasizes the integration of issues of power, authority, ethics, and reflexivity into the practice of social research (see Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Deborah Piatelli). Feminist researchers are particularly keen to examine power dynamics in the entire research process (see Majorie DeVault and Shulamit Reinharz). Feminist research practitioners pay attention to reflexivity, a process whereby researchers recognize, examine, and understand how their social background, location, and assumptions affect their research practice. Practicing reflexivity also includes paying attention to the specific ways in which one's own agendas impact the research at all points in the research process—from selecting the research problem to designing the method and the ways one analyzes and interprets the findings.

The journey we have outlined thus far introduces the theory and praxis of feminist research. Feminists continue to evolve new ways of thinking and of modifying the understanding of the nature of the social world—providing new questions and angles of vision with which to understand women's issues and concerns, while actively engaging in promoting social change and justice for all women.

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber

See also Critical Theory; Feminist Epistemology; Gender Issues; Reflexivity

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FICTIONAL WRITING

In the late 1980s, Jocelyn Sheppard and Donald Hartman surveyed 69 authors of novels written as doctoral dissertations, chiefly in the fields of English literature and writing, within 31 North American doctoral programs that had accepted dissertations written in a genre of literary fiction. Other disciplines in the social sciences have been more cautious in taking up such alternatives. For example, at the time of this writing (2007), Timothy Mennel's dissertation *Everything Must Go: A Novel of Robert Moses's New York* appeared to be the first doctoral thesis of its kind in the field of urban geography.

During the mid-1990s, several well-known education scholars debated the question of whether or not a work of fiction could be acceptable as a doctoral thesis; Arthur Saks's edited account of a public debate between Elliot Eisner (for the affirmative) and Howard Gardner (for the negative) is a well-documented example. Nevertheless, Hofstra University had already decided this question several years earlier by

awarding a doctorate in educational administration to Peter Sellitto for his novel *Balancing Acts*. Other universities to accept novels as doctoral dissertations in education include the University of British Columbia (Rishma Dunlop's *Boundary Bay*) and the University of Toronto (Douglas Gosse's *Jackytar*, which also has the distinction of being commercially published).

But how can one accept fictional writing in the literature of social research? In much everyday speech, fiction is equated with falsehood, whereas nonfiction is taken to designate a true story. If one assumes that research is chiefly concerned with documenting facts without distortion in "true" stories, then one might conclude that there is no place for fictional writing in social inquiry. Rob Walker was among the first educational researchers to question such assumptions in his essay "On the Uses of Fiction in Educational Research—(and I Don't Mean Cyril Burt)." Walker's reference to Burt gestures toward colloquial understandings of fiction as a binary opposite of truth—Burt was posthumously accused of falsifying data in his influential twin studies that he claimed heredity was a more significant determiner of human intelligence than environment. Walker (1981) argues that fiction might be "the only route to some kinds of truth" (p. 163) and demonstrates that lightly fictionalized case studies (e.g., accounts that use pseudonyms and/or composite characters, places, or events) ameliorate some of the difficulties raised by issues of confidentiality. Such fictions are usually based on extensive empirical data and change the truth very little.

The conventional binary opposition of fact and fiction—and other binaries implied by this opposition, such as real and imaginary—obscures the difficulty of distinguishing clearly between textual representations of the world "out there" and the worlds constructed in texts. It is important to note that having doubts about the referential adequacy of such binaries does not necessarily constitute an antirealist position, but rather these doubts may signal distrust of storytelling practices motivated by what Sandra Harding calls the desire for one true story, a desire which drives much research in the modern Western sciences. Desires for one true story have also driven the construction of narrative strategies in which fact and fiction are mutually exclusive categories and particular kinds of facts, such as scientific facts and historical facts are equated with reality—claims to ontological status for the worlds that scientists and historians imagine.

Fact and fiction might be much closer, both culturally and linguistically, than these narrative strategies imply. A fiction, in the sense in which it derives from the Latin *fictio*, is something fashioned by human agency. The etymology of fact also reveals its reference to human action; a fact is the thing done, that which actually happened (the Latin *factum* is the neuter past participle of *facere*, do). In other words, both fact and fiction refer to human performance, but fiction is an active form—the act of fashioning—whereas fact descends from a past participle, a part of speech that disguises the generative act. Facts are testimonies to experience—events to which we give meaning. For example, historical facts are testimonies to historians' experiences of using disciplined procedures of evidence production and interpretation to construct meaning—to produce events that are meaningful within their traditions of social relationships and organization.

Tom Barone's book, *Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching*, is by no means a novel, but it will reward any reader interested in the relationships of fiction to educational research. Barone's book demonstrates the following:

1. What we commonsensically call fiction can advance important purposes of educational research.
2. There is no clear line of demarcation between works of fiction and nonfiction.
3. And apparently nonfictional life stories can sometimes be best utilized as if they were fictional.

Writing from the United Kingdom, Peter Clough similarly brings literary and ethnographic approaches together to demonstrate that fictional narratives can produce truths about educational problems and issues.

Noel Gough

See also Narrative Inquiry; Storytelling

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FIELD DATA

Field data are the most common type of data collected in qualitative research inquiries. In qualitative research studies, the field is the physical place where data collection takes place. Examples of field data include written words in documents, interview transcripts, observational notes, pictures, diagrams, and memos. Thus, all raw material collected in a qualitative study that will be used for analysis purposes can be considered field data. This entry discusses a few of the most common types of field data and the importance of triangulating the evaluation of data.

The most common source of field data is talk; specifically, people's words or conversations. In many qualitative interviews, talk is audio- or videorecorded to capture as many nuances of the conversation as possible. Otherwise, the talk is recorded by hand. The respondent's entire statements are then transcribed—representing a written account of the recorded conversation or retyped handwritten notes, thereby making the information from the interview more accessible for analysis.

Observational notes are another common type of field data. These notes can be created when the researcher is observing participants and taking notes on what is being observed firsthand. Diagrams of the environment or the proximity of the participants can be a valuable addition to the fieldnotes. The goal of observational field notes is to have a record of what was observed so that this record subsequently can be analyzed.

Another common type of field data is pictures of the environment. Taking pictures of the surroundings is a powerful method for recording the situation where field data are being collected. Other aspects from the environment can be collected as field data, including documents and artifacts as well as the researcher's thoughts, ideas, hunches, and so forth.

Regardless of what type of field data is collected, it is important for the researcher to decide, prior to data collection, the type and scope of data that should be collected. For example, if a researcher is interested in investigating the phenomenon of being a junior high student with severe reading difficulties, the researcher has a multitude of possible types of data to collect. The researcher might individually interview students, take pictures of the environment, observe groups of students, and/or hold a focus group, among other data collection methods. With the array of choices of possible field data, the researcher needs to consider what type of data will help her or him understand the phenomenon under investigation. However, it should be noted that field data also can be collected a posteriori.

Finally, where possible, it is important to triangulate field data. Triangulating data involves utilizing more than one source of data to assess the credibility, transferability, dependability, and/or confirmability of the results, as well as to check the integrity of the inferences stemming from the data. For example, a researcher might collect field data in the form of interviews, documents, and focus groups. By triangulating the results from these three types of field data, the researcher can be more confident that the voices of the participants have been captured.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Data Collection; Data Security; Raw Data

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FIELD METHODS (JOURNAL)

Field Methods is a refereed journal that publishes articles on methods for studying human thought and human behavior. Research articles show the development of

new methods or new uses for existing methods. The “Short Takes” section contains articles with handy tips for working in the field. *Field Methods* also publishes reviews of books and software and think pieces addressing key theoretical issues.

Field Methods began in 1989 as the *Cultural Anthropology Methods* journal. A decade later, in recognition of the increasing interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter, it changed its name to *Field Methods*. Since its inception, it has been under the editorship of H. Russell Bernard. Articles examine data collection techniques and modes of analysis, the link between method and theory, and the impact of new technology on traditional field research activities. Embracing both qualitative and quantitative methods in scientific and interpretive paradigms, the journal operates under the motto “methods belong to all of us.”

Field Methods not only is for researchers in the social sciences and the humanities, but also is for professionals in the delivery of social services, in government, and in the private sector who use field research to acquire knowledge.

Examples of articles include the following:

- “The Active Participant-Observer: Applying Social Role Analysis to Participant Observation,”
- “Adaptation of Venue-Day-Time Sampling in Southeast Asia to Access Men Who Have Sex With Men for HIV Assessment in Bangkok,”
- “Communication Problems Between Researchers and Informants With Speech Difficulties: Methodological and Analytic Issues,”
- “Child Survival in Affluence and Poverty: Ethics and Fieldwork Experiences From Iceland and Guinea-Bissau,”
- “Using Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software to Develop a Grounded Theory Project,”
- “Collecting Data Among Ethnic Minorities in an International Perspective,”
- “Considerations for Collecting Freelists in the Field: Examples from Ethnobotany,”
- “Some Field Methods in Medical Ethnobiology,”
- “An Ecological Framework for Participatory Ethnobotanical Research at Mt. Kasigau, Kenya,”
- “Ethnography and Experiments: Cultural Models and Expertise Effects Elicited With Experimental Research Techniques,”
- “Checking for Relationships Across Domains Measured by Triads and Paired Comparisons,”

- “Photo Interviews: Eliciting Data Through Conversations With Children,” and
- “Thinking Aloud to Create Better Condom Use Questions.”

Michael Quinn Patton

See also Field Data; Fieldnotes; Field Research; Fieldwork

Websites

Field Methods: <http://www.qualquant.net/FM>

FIELDNOTES

Fieldnotes can be crucial to any qualitative study, regardless of data collection tool or methods used. In fieldnotes, qualitative researchers record in-depth descriptive details of people (including themselves), places, things, and events, as well as reflections on data, patterns, and the process of research. These details form the context and quality control that shape multiple qualitative data points into articulated, meaningful, and integrated research findings.

Fieldnotes are a type of personal journal, written, in Thomas Schwandt's (1997) words, “for an audience of one” (p. 115). Thus, they are unique to each researcher, written in the first person and in a free-flowing, spontaneous manner. David Fetterman suggests separating fieldnotes into two sections—observations and speculative-personal reflections. This separation may be most appropriate in ethnography, in which all data from activities such as participant observation might be collected in fieldnotes in the form of observations. In other types of qualitative methods, such as semi-structured, recorded interviews, data may be defined as verbatim interview recording or transcripts and fieldnotes as the descriptive elements that recordings cannot capture—such as dress; demeanor; gestures; facial expressions; off-mic comments; setting characteristics, such as what is on walls and bulletin boards and the furniture arrangement; weather; smells; back story; and researcher impressions, assumptions, and feelings during time in field; and so on.

It is crucial that fieldnotes be written as soon as possible after each field activity and in as much rich detail as possible. These notes should be done prior to discussing the experience with anyone else, for such discussion may dilute memory. Writing notes is a time-intensive, but

Fieldnotes Excerpts: First Winter Fieldwork With Afghan Women Refugees

1/1/02 Old Jalozai Refugee Camp, near Peshawar, Pakistan

. . . electricity had been out for days . . . just now it went out again. Someone got a lantern and we talked in the near darkness . . . For heat there is a kerosene heater that really smells bad, but you only smell it intermittently . . . have to blow it out before sleep so you don't asphyxiate . . .

1/3/02

Woke to a brisk morning . . . put on coat to use outside bathroom. Cold face washing was bracing but not too bad . . . "Shakira" came by early and fussed over me. Talking about finding a warm bathroom, electric blanket, things I don't need and too much trouble . . . To distract them, I said what I really needed were warm socks, which I knew was possible. This led to a day where socks kept appearing. "Zareen" came back with two pairs during the morning. "Shakira" brought me two pairs at lunch . . .

1/7/02

2:15 PM: . . . I have a minute to see where I'm at . . . Need more material, different material, but don't know how to get at it. In some ways I have plenty of stories and perspectives. In others I am missing the facts to string it together . . .

11:45 PM: I'm having trouble figuring my way around the gaps . . . I can't get the confirmation I need . . . I'm getting concrete examples, but also ideology. I think I'm taking too many short cuts . . . Need to ask about thoughts, feelings, actions. Not "why" questions . . .

There's a shorthand to speech that isn't familiar to me . . . "Talk to some people" "He accepted" "He didn't dare" Of course "why not?" is the next question, so maybe banning "why" isn't the answer . . .

(Added 1/17/02)

I asked later about "accepted" . . . It's shorthand for accepted the argument and agreed to change behavior . . . "he accepted that women should be educated and agreed that his sister/wife/daughter could attend classes."

Source: Brodsky, A. E. (2003). *With all our strength: The revolutionary association of the women of Afghanistan*. New York: Routledge.

invaluable process, and the quantity of observations and reflections recorded can be quite large. Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen suggest that the researcher jot down a topical, sequential outline as soon as possible, and then, as soon as possible after leaving the immediate field, write a chronological account of observations and impressions. They counsel that the language of descriptive fieldnotes, in particular, should dissect the world, objectively describing it with rich adjectives rather than with abstract, evaluative, or summative phrases. Thus, instead of describing a "brave and determined Afghan women," one would describe "an Afghan woman in her mid-30s, head uncovered, whose voice slows and hardens, forehead furrows, and eyes narrow as she holds my gaze in hers and describes working for women's rights, despite death threats, in post-Taliban Afghanistan."

Reflective fieldnotes can be written whenever one muses on the process, findings, problems, patterns, and so on of the study. They capture impressions and the researcher's ongoing analytic process. Reflections often

change iteratively over the study course, as is true of most qualitative work, and serve as a record of progress as well as a place to work out problems. Reflective fieldnotes should also document researcher biases, standpoint, dilemmas, possible mistakes, reactions, and responses to fieldwork and participants. Finally, it is important that all fieldnotes be well organized so that memoing, coding, and other analytic techniques can be utilized to draw meaning from this rich qualitative tool.

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See also Data Analysis; Fieldwork; Reflexivity

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FIELD RESEARCH

To understand field research in contemporary qualitative research necessitates some historical perspective—that is, in its original sense—how researchers first began entering their fields of study or research sites to address the subjects or people of their studies face-to-face. The whole notion of fieldwork began with the work of Bronislaw Malinowski, a founder of social anthropology, who decided to study the Trobriand Islanders and live with them between 1915 and 1918 as opposed to armchair ethnological-theorists at the time like Sir James Frazer. Moreover, field research or fieldwork, often interchangeable concepts, have come to mean in the broadest sense the methodological actions of investigation for the whole of the social sciences rather than for anthropology alone. Today, qualitative researchers in the social sciences are not the only ones using the methodological notion of field research or fieldwork; it describes the data gathering of many in the natural and physical sciences as well. Field research is not any one thing, but it implies multitudinous perspectives, not only on how to conduct it, but also on how to place it. With varying traditions and multiple disciplines that define how research is conducted and the philosophical undertones of the social sciences that drive theory-making through its practice and the impetus of empirical data gathering, field research is an ever evolving concept in qualitative research.

History of the Concept

Taken from the widest angle, it is as important to give equal weight to the history of the idea of field research as it is to recognize its common usage and meaning to qualitative research as a whole. There are, for example, the issues and problems associated with doing field research, which are dependent upon different traditions of qualitative research. In addition, the notion of the field in qualitative research does not simply mean a place any longer, the exotic location abroad for the lone anthropologist, but it can signify a range of possibilities for the locus of research.

The field in essence is where qualitative research is carried out by the researcher. The field experience is bounded by time. In other words, one's field experience is referenced by how long one is in the field and may be a recurrent process during several sets of time periods. Its focus depends on the training of a particular researcher in a specific discipline such as anthropology, psychology, or sociology, for example, and his or her employment of different research traditions.

The difficulty often is bridging the epistemological foundations and gaps between the past and present with the conceptual evolution of the idea of field research and methodological practice in the field together with a contemporary divide between entrenched disciplines and the interdisciplinary character of qualitative research. This bridging is significant in order not to ignore the history and philosophy of social theory or the ongoing dilemmas from the production of present day field research.

An honest historical reckoning of field research in the social sciences begins with Malinowski (1884–1942), the founding father of anthropological fieldwork practice and field research in the traditional sense. His now-classic study of Trobriand Island society took anthropologists off the terrace, where the colonial administrator observed colonial subjects, to live with the natives themselves and thereby gain invaluable knowledge from the native perspective. Such proximity to the Indigenous subject became known as participant observation. Field research in this traditional view at the turn of the 20th century meant going out to the field in far-off places to Africa, Asia, Melanesia, Polynesia, and elsewhere. It also meant acquiring the subjective point of view of the so-called native from an observable distance. It signified participating and observing the everyday lives in a study over a prolonged period of time.

This history of field research in anthropology grew out of colonial administration in many of these far-flung field-sites, which in turn has spawned some negative criticisms of the discipline's origins. The transformation of engaged research activity in the field from armchair conjecturing to participation and observation became a significant shift of the research mindset. It represented, in essence, an intellectual rupture from Victorian-minded anthropologists such as Frazer (1854–1941) and his contemporaries against comparative accounts of civilization and culture without true knowledge of the Indigenous other, advocating for a revisionist redefinition of the discipline to one of practice and being with the other for a period of time.

Such a rich history of the discipline of the British School of social anthropology is abridged for purposes of brevity here. Suffice it to state that the history of field research as it developed out of anthropological practice, one of participant-observation followed by ethnographic accounting, began and flourished at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

In part, the discipline also was influenced during its incipience by the trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific crossings of British social anthropologists and their appointments to various universities in the United States, Australia, and South Africa, as well as by French sociology and the legacy of the French journal *L'Année Sociologique* through such luminaries as Claude Lévi-Strauss from the lineage of Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. For qualitative research and its influences of present-day field research, there is the interrelated history of the Chicago School, for the discipline of sociology in the 1920s and 1930s, and for psychology at the turn of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, their peers and others, and the influences of the Vienna School.

To anthropology and anthropologists, field research is synonymous and coterminous with ethnography and participant observation, in moving closer to the other by being there with the subjects of one's study. Postmodern inquiries questioned the authoritative assumptions of fieldwork and the writing about culture or ethnography in the 1980s through the influential efforts of James Clifford and George Marcus. More recently, as Paul Dresch and colleagues have described, there are new unfolding challenges of self and other or subject-object dichotomies and challenges of how to reflexively address new patterns of social happenings in an increasingly globalized environment and the transformations of peoples everywhere whether from the perspective of far-off worlds or those closer to home. These assumptions have to do with the authoritative point of view of the ethnographer and relate to notions of power in writing and generally are from the critique of deconstructionism in literature and from perspectives of feminist theory. In relation to globalization, the Kayapo Amerindians in Brazil and the Nyae Nyae !Kung San people of Namibia are examples of people who are now able to question the authoritative role of scientists, government officials, and others in relation to their proprietorship of their future as a people.

Doing Field Research

Aside from these historical particularities in comparing five research traditions from qualitative research—biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study—various issues and problems arise during the data collection phase or by being in the field and conducting research. As John Creswell explains, these have to do with questions of access, observation, interviewing, documenting, and ethics, to name some of the more pressing dilemmas. Field research methods differ in comparison to disciplinary training whether in anthropology, political science, psychology, or sociology.

To conduct any field research entails proper preparation on part of the researcher. It means that the field researcher must have a well-thought-out research design of a particular topic for field research. It also entails writing a strong research proposal that is then approved by funding committees, dissertation committees, and ethics review boards.

Each qualitative research tradition has its own set of access problems, which are usually addressed by the researcher in the field. For those concentrated in the biographical tradition, the researcher must decide whether to focus on an individual's life or on a number of individuals, and if the latter, how many. A biographer must gain permission from their subjects to be interviewed. Moreover, the biographical researcher must decide if particular interviews will be recorded through notes or be audio- or videorecorded. The researcher must also consider whether archival material is necessary to provide a broader social picture of these individuals' lives.

A researcher working in the phenomenological tradition must decide what phenomenon is important and which individuals to select from who have experienced such a phenomenon. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's study of terminally ill patients and their experiences facing death is an example of such research. Again, selection here is important; the researcher must gain access to these individuals and obtain their permission to be interviewed.

After deciding which phenomena to study, the grounded theorist must develop a theory based on empirical evidence obtained during the data collection process in the field. Such theoretical insight is supposed to allow the researcher to better address the phenomena in question for future research. The same types of questions arise in regard to access of individuals and their

Field Research and Globalization

Anthropologists at the turn of the century were increasingly questioning the notion of so-called primitive people. This questioning culminated with British anthropologist Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard's (1902–1973) book *Oracles, Witchcraft, and Magic Among the Azande* (1937), a critique of the French philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and his notion of primitive mentality. Evans-Pritchard argued that there was no distinction between a so-called primitive mentality and a Western mentality because other people's religions had their own inherent logic for explaining the world. Following Evans-Pritchard's legacy, notions about the "other" changed to an appreciation of diversity and to valuing other worldviews (see Johannes Fabian's (2007), *Memory Against Culture*).

Also, the idea of "globalization" is a misnomer. People have been globalized by the West since colonial contact began in the 16th century. Moreover, there is no pristine culture, as different people have been in contact with one another for millennia. Culture is not static but changes over time, and modern aspects of globalizing efforts through technological advances and immediate communication are only recent aspects of people being affected by the world's globalizing processes of contact.

The Kayapo and the !Kung San exemplify cultural change and how these groups relate to Western societies. The Kayapo have been fighting miners and ranchers from encroaching on their lands since the 1970s and against government development projects for hydroelectric dams. The !Kung San have been disposed from their traditional homelands since the 1970s. In the past 30 years they have suffered from alcoholism and have been forced into settlements, quite a change from their nomadic hunter-gatherer traditions.

Anthropologists are increasingly active in protecting the Indigenous rights of the people they study. One example is the lifework of anthropologist David Maybury Lewis (1929–2007) who co-founded with his wife the organization Cultural Survival. Equally important is the work of anthropologist Terrence Turner and his advocacy of the Kayapo Amerindians. Anthropologist Darrell Posey (1947–2001) worked tirelessly for intellectual property rights of Indigenous

people like the Kayapo to prevent the encroachment of pharmaceutical companies on traditional knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants. The !Kung San successfully argued a court case in 2006 for a return to their ancestral land in Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Nonetheless, despite legitimate land claims by people like the Kayapo and the !Kung San against their respective governments, officials have been slow to react and provide for these people the right of self-determination. More positive advocacy and intervention is needed to prevent these peoples from disappearing altogether.

Hence, the anthropologist-researcher's role has transformed from that of observer from the "other's" point of view to one of advocacy in protecting the people they study. Whole worldviews and people are disappearing at alarming rates. Hence, the field is not simply a place but, in some instances, an imagined future where people like the Kayapo and !Kung San must be actively protected by researchers, scientists, and nongovernmental organizations. This is about co-existence and respect. The legacy of fieldwork today will be how researchers protect those they study.

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agreement to be interviewed for field research. Methodological techniques such as axial coding and theoretical sampling are often employed by researchers focused on the grounded theory tradition.

For the ethnographer, access may imply a whole set of other problems than those listed above. For example, if the ethnographer is studying an Indigenous group in a

foreign country, there may be visa requirements and governmental bodies restricting access to Indigenous groups. It may be difficult to get to the field site or sites. Furthermore, gaining access to any population, whether at home or abroad, may require a certain amount of trust, which will take time to establish. It may take an ethnographer several attempts before

being accepted by a particular group of people, village, or township deemed suitable for study. The methodology of participant observation—living day in, day out with informants and participating in the daily lives of subjects—does not normally allow for breaks from the field, and if so, only sporadically. For many ethnographers such as Carolyn Nordstrom and her colleagues, assimilating into everyday life produces a whole set of other difficulties, such as change of diet and living circumstances, language barriers, harassment of local officials, and for some in some cases dangerous and violent circumstances.

The case study researcher must choose the right cases to research, the sets of individuals to be interviewed, and perhaps the archival material to be transcribed. Cases are bounded happenings or units that are contained in one phenomenon within a defined limitation of time. For such types of studies, researchers must decide whether to approach analysis by focusing on one particular case and examining it thoroughly or most commonly, by comparing multiple cases through sampling and other documentation measures.

All such field research has its own sets of data collection management and analytical problems of association, which vary with the specific research tradition and demonstrate how field research is defined for different reasons. What is more, such concerns of field research express in the most general sense diverse modes of being in the field and show how the focus of research traditions directs specific types of field research. For each tradition, one must decide how best to take fieldnotes, how best to transcribe such notes, and what aspects of data collection are relevant for the project at hand, or perhaps irrelevant, and can be used at a later time. Such fieldnote guidelines have been excellently described by Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. The specific disciplines in which field researchers work shape the questions that they ask and are dependent on certain theoretical underpinnings of the specific disciplines—psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology, or political science—which involve various epistemological assumptions. However, in qualitative research, researchers are moving away from these disciplinary peculiarities and toward an interdisciplinary epistemology with emergent confrontations.

Things happen by chance in the field, and the field researcher has to adapt to these processes of circumstance. For example, a colleague was in the field in China during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and was able to write about them. Likewise, while I was in the field in the Basque Country, I found that

my informants were only willing to discuss a controversy over the wider inclusion of women in relation to a historical commemoration celebration rather than to discuss my initial interests in their fishing culture.

Other Field Research Guidelines

All field researchers must be aware of their role in the field and of their effects on their subjects in both informal and formal contexts. Therefore, reflexivity is an important aspect of the researcher's work. Field research is guided by past experience and informed by the mistakes of previous research when ethical guidelines were not as strict—for example, in U.S. the Tuskegee Syphilis Project, in which unnecessary harm was caused when the treatment for syphilis was withheld from study participants even when penicillin became available; the U.S. Department of Defense's Project Camelot, a U.S. Army program that was designed to evaluate the causes of warfare, but in actuality was used to undermine revolutionary movements in places like Latin America; psychologist Stanley Milgram's studies of behavioral aspects of authority and obedience, studies that were highly controversial because of the ethical concerns raised by his use of deception in experiments using electric shock; or even the most recent controversy involving anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon and geneticist James Neel about the Yanomami peoples of Brazil and Venezuela. Ethics review boards of universities, especially those in the United States, were created to guarantee against unwarranted deception and to ensure informed consent as well as the privacy and confidentiality of the study participants (as appropriate). Such ethical requirements for the study of human subjects involve the respect for all persons and their well-being and provide a framework for moral standards to follow during field research.

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See also Ethnography; Fieldnotes; Fieldwork; Participant Observation

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FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is the hallmark of research for qualitative researchers. It is a tool used to help describe and understand a group or culture. It is guided by practical activity, judgment, interpretation, and description. The method involves working with people in their own communities for long periods of time. Company manners or guest behaviors disappear over time. The typical or normative behavior reemerges and is dominant over extended periods of time.

Fieldworkers are typically participant observers. They participate in the lives of the people they work with, observing and recording what they see and experience firsthand. This participation gives them the advantage of being immersed in the culture long enough to understand it from the insider's perspective and distant enough to objectify patterns of behavior in the community, enabling them to share their insights with other colleagues.

Fieldwork requires systematic observation, interpretation of observed behavior, and a plan of action to follow up on observations. Although an overall research design is mapped out in fieldwork, much of the actual work depends on observations and responses in the field. The fieldworker uses judgment and interpretation at every stage to determine the next steps; for example, what to follow up on to better understand the situation, particularly from a specific role or perspective. Fieldworkers often find new leads or paths while in the field as they learn the right questions to ask. The objective in fieldwork is not to decide who is right and wrong. It is to describe the various, and often conflicting, perspectives and worldviews in a culture or community.

Qualitative researchers record their observations and insights in written documents, emails, digital photographs, and video. The fieldworker uses a variety of methods and techniques to ensure the integrity of the data, ranging from sampling strategies to triangulation (i.e., comparing different forms of data to rule out rival hypotheses). In addition, there is much reliance on the use of verbatim quotations to help tell the story in the community member's own voice. Fieldworkers

rely heavily on unobtrusive measures to interpret daily events, including participant's clothing, language, dialect, body piercings and tattoos, graffiti, maps, music, letters, and local newspapers. These measures provide some indication about social status, attitudes, roles, and power. This naturalistic approach avoids excessive filtering, distortion, or bias associated with the researcher's perspective and the artificial response typical of controlled or laboratory conditions. The amount of time devoted to working in the field allows for built-in forms of reliability as the fieldworker observes the same patterns of behavior over time. These methods objectify, standardize, and refine the researcher's insights and perceptions.

The findings or interpretations are typically recorded in fieldnotes. These are often highly personalized records of the day's events. Fieldworkers typically type their notes up each day while they are still fresh and vivid. After fieldworkers have sorted and analyzed the fieldnotes and related data, they share what they have learned with participants in verbal or written form to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of these understandings. Although the focus of fieldwork is to learn about a culture or community, many ethnographers take time to record their own attitudes and behavior to monitor their own behavior and perceptions. Fieldworkers attempt to be unobtrusive and minimize their impact on the community. However, the presence of an engaged human instrument will always have some effect on the people in the community. Fieldwork is always guided by ethical principles and standards, ranging from honesty to reciprocity. These principles protect people's rights, such as the right to privacy, and ensure the viability of qualitative research (by allowing community members to trust fieldworkers enough to continue letting them in their lives). Fieldwork combines rigor with the serendipity of real life experience. The combination contributes to the production of a compelling story in a way that is rigorous and gives voice to the human experience.

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See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Ethnography; Naturalistic Inquiry

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FILM AND VIDEO IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Film and video are used in qualitative research as data collection tools, as sources of information and dialogue between researchers and participants, and as mechanisms for disseminating research results. The 20th century was the century of film; the 21st is the century of digital video. The 20th saw major innovations in recording and filmmaking, many applicable to ethnography. But owing to characteristics of the technology itself, visual approaches never became a prominent feature of qualitative research. A methodology may be viewed as the application of a technology to some feature of the world, producing the traces that serve as a basis for analysis. Current video technology offers a spectacular methodological promise, making it the first choice for ethnographers of the future. Video is a more robust and transparent data collection technology. As a reflexive prompt, it can help individuals or groups provide richer data; and in the hands of subjects, it expands the scope of inquiries, while substantially minimizing the interviewer effect. Moreover, as a presentation medium, it can be edited to reach both specialist and lay audiences. This entry begins with a brief history of visual ethnography, followed by a discussion of the role of technology. It then reviews differences between video for data collection and presentation, provides a critique of past ethnographic techniques, and ends with a distinction between documentary and academic films.

A Brief History of Visual Ethnography

Nanook of the North, produced in 1922 by Robert Flaherty, is often considered the first ethnographic film. Flaherty openly staged some scenes in the movie, which worried few and entertained many. Russian Dziga Vertov, a contemporary of Flaherty's, is credited with developing a realistic film style that came to be

known as *cinéma vérité* (filmic truth), which was later popularized by 1950s French documentary maker Jean Roach in his work on the lives of Parisians. Anthropologist Margaret Mead's collaboration with Gregory Bateson during the mid-century was highly influential in the development of visual approaches to ethnography. Today, students and scholars are quick to appreciate her idea that notepad and pencil are not enough and that cameras are important field technologies. For much of the mid- to late century, though, survey methods and quantitative analysis dominated social science data gathering. However, the means and technical capabilities of present-day scholars, combined with the massive technical changes over the past 40 years, have seen a resurgence of audiovisual methods.

Technology and Visual Ethnography

Although technology does not determine social practice, it does provide opportunities and sets constraints. Celluloid film was an expensive medium. Cameras were large and difficult to control. Data collection could not readily be accomplished by a lone ethnographer. It could even be argued that film was not used, in any serious sense, to collect data but only to provide a record of interesting social practices and rare or disappearing cultures. Rapid innovations in technology over the past 2 decades have resulted in four new characteristics of relevance for qualitative research. First, the technology needed to produce audiovisual recordings of extremely high quality has become smaller, lighter, less expensive, and easy to use. Driven by tourists, parents, and the private surveillance industry, manufacturers invested significant resources in innovation that resulted, unintentionally, in arguably the best means of collecting and presenting data on social life. Second, analogue media degrade, if only a little, with each copy, but digital audiovisual records may be reproduced in perpetuity with no loss, facilitating the archiving and sharing of data and results among qualitative researchers. Nonlinear editing systems are the third crucial advance for digital ethnographic research. New generations of ethnographers need not worry about the cumbersome and destructive editing systems used by the editors of anthropological films. Fourth, the internet represents a wealth of information and technical assistance while providing innovative platforms for the storing, viewing, and coding of raw audiovisual data and for editing and the presentation for entertainment, educational, and scholarly purposes.

Distinguishing Use: Video in the Field and in the Presentation Hall

Collection of audiovisual data must be clearly distinguished from their use in various presentational settings. For data collection, digital recordings are just as useful for standard quantitative purposes as they are for qualitative analysis. Drive-by footage has been employed to test the broken windows crime theory; fixed cameras have been used to examine cultural accounts of ritual disrobement at Mardi Gras. Cameras in the hands of subjects to document interactions in a Brazilian prison or the home life of an asthmatic child have increased the scope of qualitative research into social realms that were once beyond reach. Moreover, this latter technique substantially minimizes the interviewer effect when the presence of an outsider influences the responses and behaviors of insiders. Another application is the use of video itself as a stimulus to prompt informants. This use has provided a reflexive mechanism for focus group program evaluations in education, and organizational and rural development research.

However, the standard use of digital video is for the simple record of social life it provides. Interacting with participants in the presence of recording devices provides a videoactive context for research. The familiarity of most people with video technology quickly makes the camera an actor in the research process, a subject of commentary and focus of action. It is not difficult for informants to neglect its presence, yet observation occurs in both directions. Sometimes it is useful to let subjects become operators themselves. The fluid wall created by a camera is an opportunity and not a hindrance so long as the researcher is willing to switch between the four main types of record: standard audio-video, audio only, fieldnotes, and memory.

The presentation of data is one of the key differences between audiovisual and other forms of qualitative methods. Text-based forms of output (books and articles) have dominated social research since its inception, but lectures and professional meetings have long relied on a combination of talk, graphs, and pictures to build a case. Nonlinear editing systems such as Final Cut Pro enable the scholar to capture data, to build sequences clip by clip through the setting of In and Out points in a data file with three tracks (one video and two audio), adding voiceovers. Evident is the flexibility of the medium that allows for the editing of multiple versions to address both specialist and

lay audiences. This ability suggests two possible presentation formats. One is a complete movie, with titles and credits. The other is production of a clip sequence that allows for starting, stopping, and reviewing in real time.

One of the key advantages, indicated above, is that widespread exposure to alternative shooting styles (e.g., reality television) have immunized audiences to shaky camera work and framing that would have been unacceptable in an era where Hollywood productions dominated visual thinking. An unintended, but highly desirable, constraint of audiovisual presentations is that while one can speak about anything one likes, the only content that can be shown to the audience is, quite simply, what one has filmed. One cannot luxuriate in the abstractions of social theory for long without returning to the real world of social interactions. This inability facilitates a focus on questions of interest to real people and not just to specialists.

Comparing Video to Other Ethnographic Techniques

The size and user-friendliness of modern camcorders cast doubt on the exclusive use of audiorecorders or still photography for qualitative research. Archival audiorecordings and photography as media are still worthy for discourse and content analyses, respectively. But apart from their use as a stimulus for respondents, there would appear to be no advantage to ordinary research encounters of tape recorders and still cameras over digital camcorders. When considering data collection for a new research setting, it is productive to keep in mind that a typical camcorder captures audio of equal or higher quality than most tape recorders, and the lens cap can readily be used where respondents prefer audio only. Standard DV-NTSC format records nearly 30 frames per second, any of which can be freeze-framed if a still shot is later desired. There is no real-world research situation where the size difference between a still camera and a video camera would make the former preferable over the latter, and nearly all would agree that collecting more data (digital video) is better than collecting less (photographs). But the crucial consideration is an approach to the social world: audiovisual ethnography is committed to the position that an understanding of social life occurs through a full examination of the processes that comprise social interactions. A still photograph is a moment in time, while an audiorecording misses spatial context and

physical gesture and expression. Both appear insufficient for qualitative research when compared to the flexibility of digital video. A final note is the ethical research concerns that emerge in the digital age. There are downstream market applications that can magnify the vulnerability of at-risk groups.

Documentary and Academic Films

It is important to distinguish between scholarly and documentary uses of video. Although some academic movies might be indistinguishable from documentaries, there are important differences in audience, in emphasis, and, particularly, in the time frame. Academic films are more intellectually rigorous and do not follow market forces. A documentary that requires several years to make, responds to issues in the research literature, is produced for presentations at meetings and classrooms, and is provided without charge on the internet is indistinguishable from the academic movies that characterize qualitative research products in the 21st century.

Wesley Shrum and Ricardo B. Duque

See also Action Research; Content Analysis; Ethics and New Media; Multimedia in Qualitative Research; Reflexivity; Subjectivity; Theatre of the Oppressed; Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment; Visual Narrative Inquiry

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FINDINGS

Qualitative research findings are typically defined as the researchers' interpretations of the data they collected or generated in the course of their studies. In naturalist (or empirical or analytical) qualitative studies, findings are viewed as derived from data collected in the course of study. Here, results and data (e.g., quotations, fieldnotes, case descriptions) are viewed as readily distinguishable from each other and from the data analysis procedures used to produce those results. For example, the finding in a grounded theory study is a theoretical rendering of an event, not the data in which this rendering is grounded or the coding procedures used to create it.

In contrast to the data-based view of findings in naturalist qualitative studies is the constructed view in interpretive or critical qualitative research in which data are conceived to be generated by both researcher and participant in interaction and, therefore, not easily differentiated from findings or from any other element of the research process. The word *finding* implies that some reality exists that can be found, an objectivist stance at odds with the constructivist position that everything about the research process is generated within the unique social interactions and sociocultural and historical milieu constituting inquiry. Here, findings have no existence independent of researchers. Indeed, in certain types of life and oral history projects, autoethnography, and arts-based qualitative inquiry, findings as a concept does not exist at all.

Findings in Naturalist Qualitative Research

Findings conceived as data-based in naturalist qualitative research may be classified as topical or thematic surveys, conceptual-thematic descriptions, or as interpretive explanations. Topical survey findings feature inventories and quasi-qualitative and quasi-statistical (e.g., illustrative quotations and frequency counts) summaries of data derived from manifest content analyses. Thematic survey findings convey a latent pattern or repetition researchers discerned in their data. Findings in the form of conceptual or thematic descriptions appear as abstract renderings either derived directly from the data collected within a study or imported from theoretical or empirical literature outside the study. Analogous to each other in degree of data transformation, conceptual descriptions are

theoretical renderings of phenomena, experiences, events, or cases, while thematic descriptions are narrative, phenomenological, or discursive renderings of them. The most transformed of qualitative findings are interpretive explanations, or the grounded theories, ethnographies, or otherwise fully integrated explanations of phenomena, events, or cases considered the quintessence of qualitative research. Interpretive explanations offer a coherent model or single thesis or line of argument. Accordingly, whereas a topical or thematic survey might consist of a list or more detailed description of a set of actions a group of participants reported using after receiving a diagnosis of cancer and a conceptual description, a reframing of these actions as coping strategies, an interpretive explanation might consist of a theoretical model linking these strategies to different conditions for selection and different outcomes.

Margarete Sandelowski

See also Constructivism; Data; Data Analysis; Data Collection; Data Generation; Objectivism

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FIRST-PERSON VOICE

Writing in the first-person voice involves using the first-person pronoun (I, we, me, us, my, our) to represent your ideas. In some disciplines, the first-person is commonplace; in others, third-person voice is expected, and therefore demanded by dissertation committees, journal editors, and researchers themselves. Authors who avoid using the first-person pronoun in academic writing seem to believe that it interferes with the impression of objectivity and impersonality they seek to create. However, in many reports of qualitative research, scholars prefer to use the first-person in their writing, as this matches the intention of giving voice to their participants' perspectives. Indeed, style guides published by specific associations provide guidance on this issue. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th edition, for example, states, "When referring to the author(s), use the first person, not the

third person. That is, say 'I injected the subjects with the appropriate dose of Athenopram,' not 'the experimenter injected . . .'" (p. 37). Related to this, the manual advises authors to use the active rather than the passive voice; that is, to write "we injected . . ." rather than "the subjects were injected with . . ." (p. 41).

Although the American Psychological Association did not explicitly encourage use of the first person until 2001, other academic associations have long urged its use where appropriate. For example, in 1979 the *American National Standard for the Preparation of Scientific Papers for Written or Oral Presentation*, which represents the views of many scientific organizations, recommends that when a verb concerns action by the author, the first person should be used, especially in matters of experimental design. However, it also warns against excessive use of the first person, principally for reasons of stylistic felicity. For example, if a first-person pronoun is repeatedly the first word and/or subject of sentences, then it quickly becomes monotonous.

As long ago as 1966, Henrietta Tichy wrote (in the first edition of *Effective Writing for Engineers, Managers, Scientists*) that arbitrarily avoiding necessary and common words such as *I* and *we* leads to awkward writing marked by over reliance on the passive voice and other weak indirect speech. Writers who discard these words turn to evasive and pompous substitutes such as *the author*, *one*, *the researcher*, or *the present writer*. Perhaps more important, indirect and passive constructions allow authors to evade responsibility for what they write.

Novelist and critic Ursula Le Guin points out that writers often use the third person and the passive voice because these forms are indirect, polite, and unaggressive; they make thoughts seem as if nobody had personally thought them and actions seem as if nobody had actually done them so that nobody need take responsibility. Thus, she notes, these constructions are popular among "bureaucrats and timid academics" (Le Guin, 1998, p. 68) and generally avoided by writers who are prepared to take responsibility for their interpretations and assertions.

Noel Gough

See also Publishing and Publication

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FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are a form of qualitative interviewing that uses a researcher-led group discussion to generate data. Since their reintroduction to social science research in the mid-1980s, focus groups have become a popular method because, like individual interviews, they can be modified in a wide variety of ways to suit an equally wide range of purposes. They can thus be used for exploratory research, where the participants are relatively free to discuss the topic as they see fit, or they can be used in a more structured fashion, where the interviewer or moderator takes a more active role in controlling the issues to be discussed.

The defining element of focus groups is the use of the participants' discussion as a form of data collection. In particular, there is no requirement to reach consensus or produce a decision; instead, it is the participants' conversation about the research topic that is of interest. Although various versions of group interviewing have been used throughout the history of the social sciences, the term *group interview* is currently synonymous with focus groups for almost all forms of group-based data collection, the major exception being the observation of naturally occurring groups.

Compared to more long-standing methods of qualitative data collection such as participant observation and individual in-depth interviews, focus groups have a rather unusual history. Despite the fact that Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld developed the focus group in the 1940s, that early work was followed by nearly 40 years when focus groups were almost unknown in the social sciences. During that same time, however, focus groups became the primary qualitative method in marketing research (where individual or one-on-one interviews have only recently gained in popularity).

Starting in the 1980s, two of the earliest places where focus groups reappeared in the social sciences were in survey research and evaluation research. The practice of relying on focus groups as an exploratory

tool for developing survey content was a common technique in marketing research, a technique which has also become widespread in academic survey research, especially in projects that involved previously unexamined topics. For evaluation research, focus groups are used in both preliminary phases, such as needs assessment or program development, and in follow-up or summative evaluation, to hear about the participants' experiences with a program.

By bringing together people who share a similar background, focus groups create the opportunity for participants to engage in meaningful conversations about the topics that researchers wish to understand. This ability to learn about participants' perspectives by listening to their conversations makes focus groups especially useful for hearing from groups whose voices are often marginalized within the larger society. Focus groups are thus widely used in studies of ethnic and cultural minority groups, along with studies of sexuality and substance use.

Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

Qualitative researchers often face a choice between using focus group or individual interviews, but the underlying similarities between these are two methods are at least as important as their differences. Most important, they both have a strong tendency to base the content of the interview on the researcher's interests, and they both give the researcher a potentially large role in determining how the conversation will proceed. The extent to which the researchers influence the content as well as the dynamics of the conversation produces the same set of options for both focus groups and individual interviews, ranging from less-structured to semi-structured to more-structured interview formats.

The most obvious differences between focus groups and individual interviews arise from two closely related aspects of these procedures: the total number of participants in a typical project and the amount of data provided by each participant. One way to think of this is to compare the kinds of the data that would be provided by a set of focus groups in comparison to a parallel set of individual interviews. The focus groups would typically provide access to a greater number of participants, while the in-depth interviews would typically provide more detail about each participant. Hence, the simplest summary of the

differences between these two methods is to say that individual interviews are more useful when the goal is to obtain depth and detail about each participant, while focus groups are more useful when the goal is to hear from a range of participants.

Choosing between focus groups and individual interviews is often not a matter of using either one or the other, however, because the two often work well in combination. One common option is to use one method as a first step, followed by further data collection with the other. For example, focus groups could provide an introduction to the views of a variety of participants, a step that would be followed by a purposive selection of several participants for in-depth follow-up interviews. Alternatively, a series of individual interviews could provide the interviewer with the background necessary to gain access to and conduct more effective focus groups with an equivalent set of participants. Another useful combination of individual and group interviews is to use one method as a source of member checking for data collected through the other so that individual interviews could provide a cross-check for conclusions reached from focus groups or vice versa.

One final note about group and individual interviews is that they will not necessarily yield identical data, even from the same participants. This point should be obvious because the same person is unlikely to provide identical data in individual interviews with different interviewers or in focus groups with different sets of participants. In both those cases, researchers would expect the changes in social context to create the potential for different subjective interpretations and responses. Even so, some qualitative researchers still seem to believe that the interview participants should have one, single set of “facts” to share and that any deviation between what is heard in focus groups and individual interviews implies that one method or the other is in error. As an ironic commentary on the simplicity of this assumption, some social scientists claim that individual interviews produce better data than focus groups because the presence of others in a group biases what each individual says, while some marketing researchers advocate focus groups over individual interviews because the interviewer exerts such a large influence in the one-on-one setting. An alternative explanation would be that these two sets of researchers each have a tendency to prefer the method that has a longer historical traditional choice in their own field.

Design and Analysis of Focus Groups

Group composition is one of the most important aspects of research design for focus groups. As a starting point in the selection of participants for a focus group project, it is crucial to take into account both the needs of the researcher and the interests of the participants. Too often, researchers make the mistake of determining the group composition based on their own needs, without giving enough attention to the participants’ point of view. At a minimum, the participants need to feel comfortable talking to each other about the research topic; beyond that, lively conversation requires a set of participants who are actively interested in talking to each other about the interview topic.

Selecting participants who share a similar perspective toward the topic is the most common strategy for producing the kind of group composition that will generate active exchanges. This strategy is usually summarized as creating homogeneous groups, where the homogeneity is based on what the participants share with regard to the research topic rather than simple similarity in demographic characteristics. For example, a set of focus groups on time management issues for working mothers would select participants who were women, who were employed, and who had children under age 18 living at home—but those choices would all be directly defined by the topic. The value of homogeneity in group composition is that it encourages the participants to relate to the topic in terms of both their similarities and differences. On the one hand, their similarities make it easier for them to share their thoughts and feelings about the research topic; on the other hand, their differences create an interesting basis for comparing where they each stand with regard to the topic.

This same principle of homogeneity is also at work in the common practice of segmenting the group composition in focus group projects. These designs separate the participants into two or more distinct categories or segments. Extending the previous example on working mothers, the total set of groups might be divided between some groups where the participants were single and other groups of participants who had partners, or the segmentation might divide the groups between mothers of either younger or older children, and so on. Using segmentation serves two purposes. First, it increases the comfort level of the participants in each segment, due to their shared background. Second, it

allows the researchers to make systematic comparisons across the factors that distinguish the different categories of groups. Segmentation in focus groups can thus contribute to higher quality of data by both increasing the participants' sense of shared interests and giving researchers the ability to compare the discussions across different types of participants.

Of course, making appropriate choices about group composition will be of little value if the research design does not include equally good choices about the interview questions. Once again, the content of the questions has to meet the needs of both the researchers and the participants. In particular, it is important to write questions that will get the participants involved in active discussions about the topics that are of most interest to the researchers. In situations where the participants are not already highly engaged with the topic, the first one or two questions are often more oriented toward the participants' interests, in order to encourage the kind of lively group dynamics that will lead to an equally active discussion when the questions get closer to the researchers' core topics.

The style of moderating by the interviewer is another area that typically receives a great deal of attention in research designs for focus groups. The most common distinction is whether the moderator takes a more directive or less directive approach, which corresponds to the difference between less structured and more structured groups that was mentioned earlier. In more structured groups, the moderator plays a relatively directive role by assuring that the conversation stays focused on the research topic. This strategy is best suited to goals that emphasize hearing as much as possible about a well-defined research agenda. In contrast, less structured groups allow the participants to follow their own paths while the moderator mostly facilitates rather than directs the discussion. This strategy matches goals that emphasize exploration and discovery.

Turning from research designs to data analysis, focus groups once again show many similarities with individual interviews. Further, most of what can be said about qualitative analysis of textual data applies equally well to transcripts of audiorecordings from focus groups. The most distinctive issue in the analysis of focus groups results from situations where a single participant may repeatedly mention a particular topic or theme within a group. From an analytic point of view, this repetition leads to what focus group researchers call the need for group-to-group validation—so that any result that is considered to be important should be

a major element of the discussion in most of the groups. More generally, the analysis of focus groups should pay special attention to the topics that consistently generate high levels of interest from almost every participant in almost every group. Thus, the process that began with asking the participants to focus on the topics that were most important to the researchers ends with the researchers focusing on the topics that were most important to the participants.

David L. Morgan

See also Audiorecording; Evaluation Research; In-Depth Interview; Interviewing; Member Check; Participant Observation; Survey Research

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FORUM: QUALITATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH (JOURNAL)

In 1999, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*—a peer-reviewed, open-access, multilingual, and multidisciplinary online journal—was launched. The journal publishes empirical studies using qualitative research methods and also encourages submissions that discuss the theories and methodologies reflected in qualitative research. The contents of *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* can be viewed online and downloaded for free. Moreover, journal subscribers receive email updates when new content is published.

This journal's goal is to create a place where discussions among qualitative researchers flourish in the

social sciences and across international boundaries. By redefining the traditional format of published journals, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* offers a more interactive periodical that serves as a conversation place for researchers, students, and others interested in qualitative research. In addition to soliciting theoretical, methodological, and research articles, the journal also encourages suggestions for revisions to its design. Conversation points, including reviews, debates, reports on conferences, and interviews, are also provided. For example, the editors may encourage debate of the journal's review of a particular book, interview a prominent scholar, or encourage discussion of new and/or controversial issues in the field.

When *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* was created, there were few conversational outlets for qualitative researchers. The founders of this journal saw this as problematic as qualitative research was typically marginalized within the social sciences, and many researchers had few opportunities to engage within their departments or disciplines around methodological issues. In addition, the journal's founders believed international boundaries between qualitative researchers were quite rigid. Grounded in their own German perspective, the founders noticed that German concepts gained little press in the United States, while few American methodologies were explored in Germany. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* was formed to address this lack of international communication and to take advantage of the internet's ability to transcend geographic and disciplinary boundaries.

The creators of *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* note three characteristics that differentiate this journal from its traditional counterparts. First, publication timelines are more malleable in an online context; articles can be published immediately after peer review, leaving little lag time between research project completion and dissemination. Second, the amount of available space for each article is more flexible, allowing researchers to document the research process in more detail. Finally, free online publication provides for more interactivity, allowing researchers, readers, and editors to communicate electronically.

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Internet in Qualitative Research;
Virtual Community

Websites

Forum: Qualitative Social Research:

<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>

FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The work of the French social philosopher Michel Foucault provides one of the theoretical frameworks often used to inform and shape studies employing discourse analysis. Foucauldian-influenced discourse analysis has gained increasing prominence in qualitative research since the late 20th century. Studies drawing on this approach have focused on diverse substantive areas, ranging from urban and business studies to health related areas such as nursing and occupational therapy. Foucauldian discourse analysis offers the potential to challenge ways of thinking about aspects of reality that have come to be viewed as being natural or normal and therefore tend to be taken for granted. It can enable us to explore how things have come to be the way they are, how it is that they remain that way, and how else they might have been or could be. This entry first examines Foucault's concept of discourse with its emphasis on the nexus between power and knowledge. It then discusses how this approach to discourse analysis might be operationalized, including an exploration of what might constitute data for a Foucauldian-influenced discourse analysis. Issues arising from the use of such an approach are raised, along with suggestions as to how some of them might be addressed.

The terms *discourse* and *discourse analysis* do not have single, absolute definitions because understandings of discourse and discourse analysis are derived from different disciplinary and theoretical traditions. Whatever the theoretical frame that is informing the understandings of discourse will also inform and shape the understanding of discourse analysis that is in use. Consequently, like other qualitative analytical approaches, discourse analysis is not a unified, unitary approach. However, although the principles of analysis may differ according to the approach to discourse analysis that is adopted, it is not a case of anything goes in discourse analysis. The theoretical premises on which the research being reported has drawn need to be clearly articulated.

In one sense the term *Foucauldian discourse analysis* could be considered something of a misnomer in

that Foucault did not develop a method for doing discourse analysis *per se*; in fact, he actively resisted doing so. Indeed, rather than specifying one way of doing discourse analysis, it is Foucault's theoretical work that provides us with a number of understandings that underpin both the framing and the conducting of research using this approach, including the type of question(s) or issue(s) being explored, as well as the way in which data are thought about and analyzed. Drawing on a metaphor Foucault used, the understandings derived from his work provide a toolbox or set of tools that can be used to shape the discursive analysis undertaken.

Foucault challenged the idea that knowledge is objective and value-free, inevitably progressive, and universal. Instead, he argued for an inextricable link between power and knowledge and used his concept of discourse to explore this power-knowledge nexus. Put simply, drawing on Foucauldian understandings, discourse refers to ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality. Discourses operate to order reality in certain ways. At any point in time, there are a number of possible discursive frames for thinking, writing, and speaking about aspects of reality. However, as a consequence of the effect of power relations, not all discourses are afforded equal presence or equal authority. Foucault described power as a network or a web that enables certain knowledge(s) to be produced and known. Somewhat paradoxically, such power can also constrain what it is possible to know in certain situations. Thus, in Foucault's analysis, power is a productive concept; it is not simply repressive. Nor is power a hierarchical concept, but rather it is an effect of sociohistoric processes in that knowledge underpinning a discourse can be used by proponents of that discourse both to claim authority and presence in certain settings and to exclude other possible discursive framings or ways of viewing those settings. Thus, while discursive frameworks order reality in a particular way, rendering it visible and understandable, they may also constrain or even exclude the production of understandings and knowledge that could offer alternative views of that reality. Thus, Foucauldian-influenced discourse analysis offers the possibility of illuminating the effects of power Foucault posited as being exercised from innumerable points within a given context, and this possibility is one of the attractions of the approach in qualitative research.

Foucauldian discourse analysis uses conventional data collection techniques to generate texts able to be

analyzed within Foucauldian theoretical frames. These texts could be interview transcripts, newspaper articles, observations, documents, or visual images. The sample of texts would need to be justified in terms of why they were chosen, how they were collected, and so on. The task of the discourse analyst is to make explicit the ways in which discourses operate and their effects within particular contexts. For example, health care research using this approach has explored and challenged understandings and practices pertaining to health care procedures such as cervical and other forms of screening, the assignation and maintenance of a diagnosis, construction of case notes, routinized practices such as handover at the end of nursing shifts, and notions of patient compliance.

Questions the researcher might ask of the texts that constitute the data for their study include those posed by Mark Philp: What rules permit certain statements to be made? What rules order these statements? What rules permit us to identify some statements as true and some as false? What rules allow for the construction of an explanatory map, model, or classificatory system for this text?

Drawing on Foucauldian theoretical perspectives, discourse analysis thus involves more than analyzing the content of texts for the ways in which they have been structured in terms of syntax, semantics, and so forth. Rather, it is concerned with the way in which texts themselves have been constructed, ordered, and shaped in terms of their social and historical situatedness. Texts are thus both product of and in turn, produce, discursive-based understandings of aspects of reality. But any text will only ever convey and produce a partial perspective of the reality being presented. The image of an object represented in a text is formed according to the frame or focus that shapes what is to be seen. This formation challenges the notion that texts are neutral and value-free receptacles, or simply conveyors, of information. An important assumption that underpins Foucauldian discourse analysis is that language cannot be considered to be transparent or value-free. Even the language that researchers take to be the most natural—that is, the spoken word or talk—does not have universal meaning, but is assigned particular meanings by both speakers and listeners, according to the situation in which language is being used. Ian Parker suggests asking the following questions: Why was this said and not that? Why these words? Where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world? Texts

are thus interrogated to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within them that have shaped the very form of the text in the first place.

As with any research approach, issues arise when using Foucauldian discourse analysis. Researchers will find that they are confronted by an ongoing tension between the text and its context in terms of how much consideration needs to be given to the contexts in which the written or visual texts are generated or from which they emanate. Put another way, this analysis is about how best to situate texts in their wider contexts, what these contexts are and where to stop in such contextualization. Further, when undertaking discourse analysis, researchers are in a position to impose meanings on another's text. The position of the researcher must therefore be made explicit throughout the research process. It is important to take into consideration, as pointed out by Parker, that researchers are also producers of discourse.

Another point of consideration is that analytic approaches to discourse often refer to partial or situated reality, viewing texts as constructed by and in turn constructing understandings of reality rather than describing a or the reality. Discourse analysis can thus be perceived by some as not providing a sufficiently rigorous methodology in which the reader is satisfied that the analysis has produced the only possible reading. Yet discourse analytic approaches do not necessarily aim to seek closure in terms of producing the only possible reading; to seek to do so may, in fact, be in conflict with the tenets of the approach employed.

Similarly, results of discourse analysis studies are often criticized for not being generalizable. However, generalizability can be viewed as a discursive construct that draws on particular understandings of what it means to generalize. Developing a form of decision trail can be of use to address some of these issues. Such a trail involves explicating what theoretical understandings of discourse and discourse analysis are in use and articulating clearly the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis. It must also contain detail about which texts were analyzed, why they were chosen, and how they were generated. In other words, there must be a rationale given for the choice of texts, and it must stand up to scrutiny.

Finally, a word of caution. In many ways, Foucauldian discourse analysis is as much a plural term as is discourse analysis itself. Foucault's work does not represent a linear, homogenous body of work. Rather it reflects the development of his thought over

a considerable period of time. As with all thinkers, Foucault's emphases and foci changed and evolved. It is important to be aware of this change and to clearly situate the research being undertaken, not only in terms of it being discourse analysis that draws on Foucauldian understandings, but also in terms of which understandings, derived from which parts and emphases in Foucault's work. Put another way, Foucauldian discourse analysis is about identifying, selecting, and using tools from those in the extensive tool box provided by Foucault's work to shape and frame the research conducted and analysis undertaken.

Julianne Cheek

See also Context and Contextuality; Discourse; Discourse Analysis; Historical Discourse Analysis; Text

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FRAMEWORK (SOFTWARE)

Framework is a matrix-based tool for qualitative data analysis developed by the Qualitative Research Unit

at the National Centre for Social Research in the United Kingdom. Key to the approach is that it organizes data into a series of matrices from which it is possible to conduct case-based and thematic analysis. It facilitates the systematic analysis of all qualitative data sets from the straightforward to the more complex.

Framework was conceived in the mid-1980s and has since then developed a reputation as a tool that supports transparency, consistency, and quality in the analytical process. It is an approach that has been adopted widely by other researchers both in the United Kingdom and internationally.

Initially an entirely paper-based method, it has evolved over the past 20 or so years into a unique software package, released in 2008, which can be run on all Windows-based computers. Key to the Framework approach is the captured synthesis of data; that is, the

creation of summaries of verbatim data that maintain context, language, and meaning. Other CAQDAS (i.e., computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software programs) packages either do not enable this ability or do it in a slightly cumbersome way. In addition, the unique output of Framework—the thematic matrix—in which these data summaries are displayed is not supported by other CAQDAS packages.

Although Framework has been developed to suit the needs of those who wish to use this approach, it also offers qualitative researchers the choice to use the key functions of other code and retrieve packages so that the analytical methods used can be driven by the requirements of the research. In addition, the software has broadened the applicability of Framework to a wider range of research activities including longitudinal qualitative research, secondary analysis of qualitative data,

	1.2 - Relationships/Sexual behaviour over time	1.3 - Own feelings about and attitude to sexuality (over time & at present)	1.4 - other people's reactions to their sexuality
	Had loads of boyfriends in [name of area 1] and [name of area 2] - but none long term (14)	After suicide attempt didn't want people to understand - felt ashamed of how he felt (about being gay?) and of relationship with step brother (6)	Mum was fine when he eventually came out - she worries because she knows how cruel people can be - when told her initially she was crying because he'd not spoken to her about it - but wasn't the reaction expected - it was more supportive than he expected
	When living with Dan in London met Barry on holiday in Gran Canaria - Barry knew what he was up to with Dan but didn't bother him - was longest relationship he had and the reason he stayed in London - cared about him - but eventually broke down	Before he left home he hadn't wanted to tell parents about being gay - was ashamed - the actual act of going with a lad - has a lot to do with way brought up, their reactions to things on TV but when actually got out there (ie when left home) and was doing what got up to, didn't give shit then	On morning of this interview, he went for an HIV test. Doctor asked about whether he used protection with a girl, and when he replied that is wasn't a girl, he could see the wall coming up - the barriers: <i>There is still a lot of prejudice but in different areas, do you know what I mean</i>
Jonathan Jonathan	Had sexual relationship with step brother at age 14 - ended when progressed too much for step brother - RESULTED IN SUICIDE ATTEMPT - SEE 2.6	Don't think was a point where he became comfortable - its continual - fairly comfortable now - though thinks he will marry a woman eventually - decision made through looking at gay life - how lonely you get - a marriage of convenience just, don't think long term gay relationships work, got no commitment, thinks its too easy to mess about - men in general more promiscuous than women - could have marriage with friend Kay who is bisexual. You could both go off and do whatever you're going to do, but then both come	<i>Mixed down the streets in hot pants but never has any bad attention for being gay</i> Would pick up on mum and partner's reaction to Julian Clary on TV - felt alone and feels he put himself there - he made decision about how they would react, so isolated self off - it wasn't them, it was him - should have come out at 14 THEY WERE FINE WHEN HE EVENTUALLY

An Example of Framework's Matrix Output

Source: National Centre for Social Research, London and Edinburgh, UK. Used by permission.

and systematic reviews, basically any activity that requires the navigation of large bodies of textual data. The package is available in two formats. A networked version allows the creation of a secure repository of qualitative data that multiple users can access, thus supporting teamwork. The stand-alone version for single users will have the same functionality without the data sharing capabilities, although it will still be possible to export to and import data from other stand-alone version users.

William O'Connor and Kandy Woodfield

See also Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Data Analysis; Data Management

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Websites

National Centre for Social Research, Framework:
http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/hw_framework.htm

FREE ASSOCIATION NARRATIVE INTERVIEW

Guided by the psychoanalytic principle of free association and designed to elicit narratives, the free associative narrative method employs open questions that encourage interviewees to remember specific events because these, unlike generalized answers, are replete with emotional meanings. The principle of free association, based on a psychoanalytic ontology emphasizing unconscious conflict and its management as the basis of psychic life and self-presentation, is that emotional significance, often unconscious, is contained in the links between one idea and the next as they are produced in a specific relationship to the listener. The method is particularly appropriate for exploring emotionally charged

and identity-based issues as opposed to topics where only opinion, beliefs, or facts are sought.

Unconscious conflict produces anxiety. It follows that anxiety will feature more or less prominently in research relationships (interviews and data analysis), varying with the interview topic, the setting, and the interviewer's ability to contain anxiety. Unconscious defenses against anxiety will affect how interviewees remember and narrate events and their part in these. In contrast to most interview methods, the method therefore presumes unconsciously defended subjects in relationship (thus including researchers as well as researched). This account of subjectivity understands unconscious desires and defenses against anxiety as products of interviewees' biographically unique psyches dynamically engaging with their social experiences (intersubjective, historical, and discursive). This psychosocial ontology resists simple explanation and reductive analysis.

Questions inviting specific accounts avoid emotionally drained generalizations and defensive rationalizations. Such questions are then followed up in a similar open fashion, echoing interviewees' chosen ordering and phrasing. In this way, participants' frames dominate rather than the researcher's. A second interview affords opportunity to listen to the record, notice patterns missed at the time, and devise a subsequent set of unique questions based on this first listening. Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson originally developed the method as an adaptation of the biographical interpretative method in the course of research into the relationships among gender, anxiety, and fear of crime. In a variety of subsequent applications, the key principles have been used to produce revised designs. For example, research questions exploring changes over time require a longitudinal design to accommodate the need to space a set of interviews over an extended period.

Based on the holistic principle of gestalt (that the whole is more meaningful than its parts), analysis involves keeping in mind the whole data set for a given individual when interpreting a part of it, in particular the associations that led up to it. However, rather than expect a coherent relationship between parts, the researcher remains alert to inconsistencies, contradictions, and conflicts as well as changes in emotional tone and avoidances.

Following psychoanalytic epistemology, based on using one's subjectivity as an instrument of knowing, researchers learn to use their emotional responses to the interview and to subsequent data analysis. This

ability is aided by detailed, reflexive fieldnotes that ideally are available for group analysis.

Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson

See also Biography

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FUNDING

Funding is increasingly being recognized as an enabler for qualitative research, usually in the form of financial support that is given so that the research can be both undertaken and completed in a timely manner. With respect to qualitative research, such support can take various forms. One example is when researchers and/or research institutions are granted a certain amount of money to be used directly for research-related costs. These costs might include salaries, equipment, travel, or other expenses identified as necessary to enable the conduct and completion of the research. In other cases, in-kind funding support for projects may be offered. For example, rather than being given cash, the researchers could be provided with access to certain equipment or to specialist staff such as professional transcribers if interviews are part of the research, translators if the research involves working across different ethnic and language groups, and sometimes experts in particular substantive fields whose expertise is needed for particular parts of the research being undertaken. Equipment can range from computing resources such as laptops or specialized software such as NVivo to company or pool cars or office space and furniture. Often both cash and in-kind support are offered as funding for particular research projects. Thus, when researchers talk about funding for qualitative research, this refers not only to monetary support, but also can

take various forms and guises. This discussion aims to describe and explain some different funding options for qualitative research and to highlight the processes and issues involved in each.

Historically, and particularly when compared to more quantitative or basic science types of research, qualitative research has not attracted large amounts of funding, if any. This, Janice Morse notes, has led to a false assumption on the part of some funders, even some researchers, that qualitative research does not require funding or at least not to the same extent as other types of research projects. Although some qualitative research projects may indeed not need funding or not much funding as they are relatively small in focus and located in the researcher's local area, other studies cannot happen unless they are funded in some way. Such studies may be located in more than one geographical area and could involve a relatively large number of participants. On the other hand, in one sense all qualitative research is funded, as it is supported by the time spent on research by the researcher. In the current workplace climate, with its emphasis on cost recovery and accountability for time spent, many qualitative researchers find their available time for doing research being constantly eroded by workload in other areas, and this problem creates pressure to seek monetary and in-kind funding for the research, which can include buying the researcher's time. Increasingly, for researchers to be given time to carry out their research, they must attract funding that can either pay outright for their time or bring money into the institutions where they work so as to cover the cost of their time spent on research.

This need in turn raises another set of issues for qualitative researchers. In the past, many qualitative researchers have carried out all parts of the research process themselves as part of their day-to-day work as academics, students, or practitioners. They have recruited participants, gained relevant permissions, collected the data, analyzed that data, and written the report in its entirety. In fact, some qualitative researchers have argued that in order to maintain the integrity of their particular approach to qualitative research, it is imperative that they do so. This belief highlights one of the issues pertaining to the place and role of funding in qualitative research studies—how much of the research needs to be done by the researchers themselves and how much can be done by others? For example, is it necessary for researchers to conduct or transcribe or even listen to the text of every interview

in a study, or is reading the transcripts of interviews conducted by research assistant staff and produced by a professional transcriber sufficient? There is no right answer to this type of question. Depending on which type of qualitative research is being used in a particular study, the answer may vary. It is, however, important that these questions are considered so that sound methodologically based answers and research design related rationales can be produced for the decisions made.

Seeking, gaining, and accepting funding for qualitative research is not a neutral, value-free process. A number of issues arise for qualitative researchers when seeking and/or accepting funding. Many of these issues pertain to relationships between the funder, those being funded, and those who are part of the research. When doing funded research, it is important for researchers to inform participants about who is providing the funding and for what purpose that funding is being given: some participants may not wish to participate in a study that is funded by particular agencies. With respect to the relationship between the funder and those funded, offering and accepting funding involves entering into a form of contractual agreement that has consequences for the research being undertaken. Whether or not the involvement of a particular funder is appropriate can be considered on a number of fronts. One of these pertains to the ethics of the funder's involvement. A question that qualitative researchers must consider and, if necessary, grapple with, is whether or not they should apply to certain funding bodies for funds. They will need to consider what the funder stands for and also the role that the funder may want to have, or even insist on, in the research; for example, a funder may want input into any or all of the design, focus, and results of the research. At times, researchers may find themselves asked to modify proposals in ways that appear to compromise the approaches they wish to take, so their funding choice raises methodological issues as well. Qualitative researchers will need to think about to what extent appeasing requests is appropriate, what these requests mean for them and for the project, and how they will navigate disagreements should they arise.

The extent of funding bodies' involvement in research can vary considerably, from a very hands-on approach to a form of involvement that comprises little more than a series of reporting relationships over the course of the project. However, no matter what form the involvement takes, the point remains that accepting funding from a funder creates a new set of

relationships for the researcher to navigate, and these relationships need to be worked at, developed, and clarified as part of the research process. Funding creates another dimension to relationships between the various players in the research process. When there is clear communication between funder and those being funded, these relationships can enhance the research effort and assist its smooth functioning. However, if they are fraught, then in some cases the research itself can be compromised. What is certain is that this set of relationships cannot be ignored or assumed.

Two major pathways are available to qualitative researchers in locating funding for projects. The first is applying for funding for a particular project, the concept and design of which have already been developed to some extent by the researcher and research team. In other words, researchers have an idea for a project and then seek out funding sources for that project. The other main pathway is responding to tenders that have been advertised by industry or government for clearly defined and clearly delineated research projects, usually of very short duration. In this case, the researcher and research team are essentially funded to conduct someone else's research project or perhaps to develop a predetermined research idea into a research project. The research team is often put together in response to the tender advertisement. Each pathway warrants close scrutiny.

With respect to seeking funding for a particular idea or project that has been developed by the researcher and research team, it is crucial to be able to identify where funding for that project or idea might come from. One starting place would be to make note of the funding sources referred to in journal articles on qualitative research, especially if the reported research is in a similar area or uses a similar methodology to that of the researcher reading the publication. Another is to obtain publications that list the names of potential funders for their type or area of research. It is important to become aware of the relevant procedures and preferences involved for each funder. For instance, funders may call for proposals only at certain times of the year; if the research team knows that a likely funding body calls for applications in April each year, then it can plan to be ready for that due date well in advance. Thus, it is important for researchers to familiarize themselves with the research funding cycles of particular funding schemes so as to enable forward planning and adequate preparation of the application. Proposals for funding are sophisticated

documents and take much time and effort to develop. Each funding body will have their own requirements for what needs to be submitted to them and what form the proposal must take. Many have formal guidelines and application forms. The outline and description of the research will need to conform to the guidelines provided. This requirement could mean that, if funding is sought from several funders for the same research project, different applications must be written because the requirements will vary in terms of level of detail, presentation, and style. Further, the content and style of the application form and the directions provided are often a good guide as to whether a particular source is open to funding research that employs qualitative approaches. If the form or guidelines insist, for example, that the research must have a hypothesis, and/or if they clearly use notions of research that are laboratory or experimentally based, then it is unlikely that the scheme will be open to, or sympathetic toward, qualitative research. This likelihood is not necessarily to suggest that these funders will not consider funding qualitative research; however, it does indicate that winning this funding will be difficult. Another means of ascertaining the likelihood of funding for a qualitative project is to ask for a list of projects that the body has funded in the past. This list will also give a good guide as to the funder's research related emphases and foci.

The second major pathway for gaining funding for qualitative projects—namely responding to calls to conduct a predetermined research idea or project, often by means of competitive tender processes—is one that needs to be considered carefully. Such considerations center, to a large degree, on a particular inflection and outworking of the issues alluded to previously with respect to the control and ownership of the research and to the concomitant research relationships in the project. Essentially, in this type of research funding, the funder is buying researcher and/or team expertise to have a particular piece of research carried out. There will be varying degrees of freedom for the researcher's input into the actual project design, ranging from none or very little input to being given quite a free hand. Qualitative researchers will need to think carefully about what this freedom might mean, both for them as researchers and for the types of outcomes or research products that they will be expected to deliver. In fact, the contract entered into by the researcher with a particular funding body will often assume research outcomes to be synonymous with time-delimited products

such as dates for production of reports, schedules of presentations, and deadlines for the preparation of research-related materials. Such a contractual arrangement can have the effect of reducing to a series of deliverables the way the research is viewed and understood. Although at one level this contract can contribute to accountability in the way funds are used, at another level it shifts the emphasis, in terms of ways of thinking about research related products, from bearing directly on the integrity of the research itself to being more focused on the processes associated with the research being undertaken. Indeed, in this situation, more emphasis may come to be placed on meeting deadlines than on theoretical and/or methodological integrity.

Any discussion about funded qualitative research must consider the influence of the political context in which the funding is being sought, both on the way funding for research is thought about and on the way it is allocated. As researchers enter the 21st century, funding for qualitative research is increasingly being used for purposes other than supporting and enabling particular research projects to be conducted. For example, the absolute amount of funding received by individual researchers in terms of cash received and the sum total of the amount of funding received by the research active staff at an institutional level, such as in universities, is being used to measure research performance and to make judgments about the worth of both researchers and institutions. Thus, funding creates the possibility of determining relative rankings and worth in a type of research marketplace premised on competition between researchers and institutions. Such a development reflects the influence of the neoliberal-oriented governments in power in many countries at this time, particularly in the West, and the outworking of policies and practices derived from such an orientation. Carlos Torres highlights the following notions as being promoted by neoliberal thought: "open markets, free trade, the reduction of the public sector, the decrease of state intervention in the economy and the deregulation of markets" (p. 368). In such thought, the emphasis is clearly on economic aspects of government. Research, researchers, and the institutions to which researchers belong are viewed as part of a research market place. In this market place, researchers and institutions must compete for funds and establish their relative worth in relation to each other.

The effect of such thinking on ways in which the nexus between funding, qualitative research, and qualitative researchers is thought about operates in a

series of cascading contextual levels of influence. These range from a macropolitical level, such as at the policy level of government, through to the local level, such as within the researcher's university department or research unit. For example, with respect to the macrogovernmental level and the understandings emanating there from, some countries (such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand) have developed research assessment exercises designed to ensure value for money in terms of research investment by governments, as well as to make researchers accountable and able to be ranked against each other. Government funding for research infrastructure and development has been directly linked to the outcomes of such exercises in the institutions undergoing this form of assessment. Winning such funding from government is imperative in a climate of fiscal restraint. Researchers who can attract funding are highly prized in such an environment—so too is the type of research that they do. This change marks a shift in emphasis from the original intent of funding being an enabler or means by which research may be undertaken to funding itself being an end in its own right—as important as the research itself, or even more so, in the eyes of administrations in many university and other research-oriented institutions.

Such a shift creates issues for qualitative researchers who have traditionally found it more difficult to compete on methodological grounds under mainstream funding bodies that are historically premised on assumptions about research drawn from basic science. Further, low success rates when applying for funding (in Australia, it is less than 20% in some schemes) are increasingly the case in most countries, as competition for shrinking funding sources grows relentlessly. It is much more likely for researchers not to be funded as a result of an application process than it is for them to be successful. If qualitative researchers are not able to attract funding, then there is the very real possibility that they, and the type of research they do, could be marginalized, deemed irrelevant, and even thought of as not of high quality. These results are due to a conflation of research quality with the amount of funding gained in many of the research assessment exercises. Such conflation has spin-off effects at more microlevels with, for example, the amount of funding certain individuals have attracted for their research being used to develop hierarchical rankings of researchers in institutions. Such rankings are then used when making

decisions about which staff to recruit or whether researchers will be successful when applying for tenure, and they are also a factor in determining whether researchers should be promoted. All of this is part of the outworking of the notion of a research marketplace in which a researcher, like research, can become thought of as a commodity, and the amount of funding obtained for research becomes a type of currency that influences each researcher's relative position in such a market.

None of this is to suggest that funding is in itself a bad thing. Used well, funding enables qualitative research to proceed when otherwise it could not. However, funding is more than just the support given to the research project or research team; it is a political process as well. Inherent in the thinking about funding, from the initial consideration of where to seek funding right through to what form the funded research outcomes eventually take, are assumptions about what is and what is not fundable research. There are also assumptions about appropriate methods and the question of who will control the research in terms of its design and what it will deliver. These must be considered and taken into account by qualitative researchers who contemplate applying for and/or accepting funding from a particular funder, as must the effect of gaining funding, which can become an end in itself and is often used as a measure of a researcher's worth. In such a climate, all qualitative researchers must be alert to the ways in which these funding issues affect them as researchers, the places in which they conduct research, the things that they research, and, in fact, the very notion of qualitative research itself.

Julianne Cheek

See also Politics of Qualitative Research; Research Design; Research Proposal

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G

GENDER ISSUES

Is there a systematic relationship between gender and methods in social science and educational research? Scholars in social science and educational disciplines address this question in multiple ways. Some have sought to establish whether or not a scholar's gender affects choice of methods and subsequent publication and reception of scholarly work. Others have probed ways in which gender affects access in fieldwork, relationships between researchers and those who are researched, and ethical standards applied in conducting and publishing fieldwork. Other commentators, especially those writing from a feminist perspective, have explored whether gender affects research practices, ethics, and perspectives on the production of knowledge itself.

In sorting through the voluminous research on gender and methods, it is helpful to consider distinctions between the three concepts of methods, methodology, and epistemology initially outlined by feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding and elaborated further by sociologist Marjorie DeVault. Methods refer to the tools that researchers use to collect and evaluate evidence in addressing questions of theoretical importance in their disciplines. Methodology refers to theorizing about methods and research practices. Epistemology involves the bases for knowledge claims, assumptions about the nature of reality, and critical reflection on the processes of knowledge production. Among feminist and critical theory researchers, epistemology usually involves critiques of claims that knowledge can be, or even should be, objective and value free. Although there

are some overlaps between these concepts, it is nevertheless useful to separate them in exploring relationships between gender and methods.

Methods

If one defines methods as tools for use in conducting research, it is hard to draw any tight associations between methods and gender. Historically, most academic disciplines were dominated by men, and men were the original pioneers of most methods used in educational and social scientific research, from ethnography to survey research. Although some analyses of contemporary published scholarship suggest that women might use qualitative methods more frequently than men, this was not the case historically. In disciplines such as sociology and political science, it was women rather than men who were quantitative analysts at the point when these disciplines became institutionalized in Western universities. One example is the careful quantitative work carried out by women associated with the so-called Chicago School of American sociology, who conducted careful, detailed censuses of dwelling units on Chicago's South side and drew upon quantitative data from police and social work files to publish quantitative papers at a point when many of their male colleagues were writing non-empirical theoretical treatises. Mary Jo Deegan has shown that in the precomputer era, routine ciphering was seen as an appropriate task for women. It was only with the introduction of computers and sophisticated analytical methods in the 1950s and beyond that evidence collection and evidence analysis by computer-assisted statistical packages became separated, and

men began to dominate the latter. In writing about more recent eras, Judith Stacey and Barrie Thorne suggested that disciplines that have been more accepting of qualitative methods such as ethnographic observation and intensive interviewing—for example, anthropology—have experienced more of a feminist revolution in the content and perspective than those such as economics or psychology that have not. However, it is hard to discern the direction of such a relationship. Were women attracted to fields where qualitative methods were used, or did women's participation popularize qualitative approaches?

Despite the contemporary trend toward greater popularity of qualitative methods, especially among women scholars, the link between gender and methods is by no means absolute, and women scholars in quantitatively oriented disciplines continue to publish more quantitative than qualitative research. In disciplines such as education where women have entered in growing proportions and qualitative methods have become more dominant, male scholars use these methods frequently. Subject matter may also affect methods. For example, scholars contributing to the relatively new fields of men's studies and studies of sexuality, many of them men, often rely on qualitative methods.

Commentators such as DeVault, Shulamit Reinharz, and Joey Sprague, who have written feminist-oriented reviews of methods, have concluded that most methods, in and of themselves, are not explicitly linked to either gender or feminism. Women researchers, and researchers writing from a feminist perspective, have employed a variety of methods, sometimes combining approaches or adapting methods in creative ways. These writers suggest that the impact of gender and feminism likely is greater in the areas of methodology and epistemology than in methods themselves.

Not all scholars agree, however, and some have suggested that the dense, emotion-laden lives of women call for qualitative methods to enable faithful portrayals. An early critique by sociologist Jessie Bernard made a distinction between the *status-nexus* versus the *cash-nexus* quality of women's lives as compared to men's. Bernard argued that important nuances of women's experiences slipped between the matrix of quantitative analysis strategies dominated sociology at the time. The labor-intensive, but not necessarily technology-dependent, nature of most qualitative methods makes them accessible to scholars working from all types of institutions, making them potentially more democratic. Some scholars contend that qualitative

methods are especially well suited for the study of phenomena and domains of social life typically excluded from scholarly analysis. Qualitative methods allow for greater independence from the traditional apparatuses of knowledge construction, and they do more to preserve the voices of nondominant groups. For example, many of the large data sets based on survey or census data exclude information on women, making it impossible to study their lives.

Recently popular qualitative methods, such as narrative analysis and oral history, blur the boundaries between social scientific and literary analysis and are used frequently by women scholars. These methods have been especially prominent in the study of the lives of working class women and women of color, who historically have been marginalized from formal mechanisms of knowledge production. Scholars who use such techniques—for example, Patricia Bell-Scott and Juanita Johnson-Bailey—turn to qualitative methods to avoid distortion of women's words and experiences that might occur with the use of a more heavily researcher-constructed method. These approaches also preserve nuances of speech and forms of expression that convey valuable information, but which usually are lost in many other forms of research. These scholars are also concerned with empowering women who participate in their research by validating the importance of their lived experiences and knowledge derived from everyday life.

However, scholars such as Toby Jayaratne, Barbara Risman, and Sprague contend that in certain contexts quantitative methods can be as effective, if not more effective, in addressing women's concerns. These scholars argue that methodological choices should be based on the question at hand and the audience for which the research is intended. Sprague points out that in the policy arena, hard statistical data are frequently the coin of the realm, and one is most persuasive when presenting information in this form. Qualitative research is often complex, subtle, and context bound, and perhaps therefore harder to convey faithfully in brief reports in public settings or in media sound bites.

Methodology

A lively dialogue has emerged around the issue of gender and methodology, or thinking about the utilization and application of methods. Whether and how gender affects access in research and relationships with research participants has been widely discussed in the literature. Some scholars have argued that in

Western cultures, norms define women as the confidants of women and of men, thereby providing women researchers with advantages in conducting any research involving face-to-face contact with informants. Obviously there are exceptions to this pattern, and there are some areas of social life in many societies from which women are explicitly excluded. Furthermore, as scholars such as Josephine Beoku-Betts and Catherine Kohler Reissman have pointed out, other attributes such as social class, age, marital status, and race-ethnicity also affect access and field relationships in ways that are by no means simple or straightforward. Sharing gender or racial attributes with research subjects may be helpful, but is rarely sufficient for transcending all barriers. Insider status may be essential for researching certain groups, and qualitative methods have sometimes been thought to be less exploitative of disempowered groups because they involve intensive face-to-face relationships. Nevertheless, as writers such as Lynn Cannon, Elizabeth Higginbotham, and Marianne Leung and Stacey have demonstrated, qualitative approaches can also engender issues of exclusion, misrepresentation, and exploitation. Recruitment strategies in qualitative research may exclude some groups from participation. Close emotional ties developed in the course of research may enhance the power of the researcher to manipulate research subjects. Maxine Baca-Zinn and Patricia Zevalla have shown that insiders can be caught in conflicts between their roles as scholars and participants in communities. Such power imbalances can sometimes be addressed by explicit efforts to engage in collaborative or action research, where concerns of research subjects are central to the research endeavor and participants have a voice in the research process and its products. Another strategy frequently suggested is full disclosure of the researcher's stance, personal history, and relationships to participants, even if this disclosure makes her or him vulnerable and subject to criticism within academia.

Feminist scholars have been particularly attentive to issues of exploitation of participants and have been in the forefront in developing ethical standards and practical strategies to minimize such risks. Women scholars have also been prolific contributors to a burgeoning literature on research ethics. Some have been actively engaged in efforts to apply the knowledge gained through research to address real-life concerns of research participants, even if such efforts fail to bring scholars rewards within the academy.

Many feminist scholars argue that knowledge must be for women and not simply about women. This perspective implies a critical stance of scholarly knowledge, and a careful analysis of who benefits, and who does not, from the seemingly value-neutral scholarship valued in many academic fields. A primary example is the work of Dorothy Smith, who argues that most scholarship is written from the perspective of the relations of the ruling. She outlines a methodology (institutional ethnography) designed to ground research in the everyday concerns of women. The emergent, flexible character of qualitative research helps to keep research grounded in the real-life experiences of participants. Producing knowledge for women creates practical ethical dilemmas, such as whether or not one reports potentially damaging information about subjects that could serve as a rationale for their oppression.

Epistemology

Women scholars have been prominent in critiques of objectivity and value neutrality that frequently accompany the use of quantitative methods. Again, the association must not be drawn too tightly, as many women scholars subscribe to traditional notions about value-free scholarship and many men critique claims of objectivity. Especially prominent among these critics are Smith and Patricia Hill-Collins, who are often identified as *standpoint* theorists in that they see all scholarship as being written (inevitably) from a distinctive standpoint that can attain only partial truths. These scholars reject notions that through professional training or rigorous application of "objective" methods researchers can produce a form of scholarship that is divorced from their subjectivity. Instead, the topics that scholars find intriguing, the methods that they find most fruitful, and the analyses they produce all reflect the life experiences of the researchers and the institutional contexts in which they work. Mentors, disciplines, local institutions, funding agencies, and the like all influence the process of knowledge production, including which methodological approaches are considered legitimate, whether or not scholars are aware of these influences.

Other scholars have argued that women, as a group, have a distinctive way of knowing that lends itself particularly well to qualitative methods. Although there is substantial variation in perspectives among scholars who have advanced such arguments, most see women's

vision as more focused on care, relationships, and connection rather than on rights, justice, and formalized ways of generating knowledge. Most do not regard such gender differences as innate or as linked to biology, but rather as the product of women's cumulative life experiences, their lifelong greater involvement in dense and emotionally rich relationships, and their lesser involvement in abstraction.

Both standpoint and women's way of knowing theorists have been critiqued as reflecting a form of essentialism and as perhaps assuming too great a similarity among all women, despite differences among them. Scholars writing from non-U.S. locales and within the postcolonial tradition, such as Chandra Mohanty, Maria Mies, and Maria Lugones, have critiqued this scholarship for implicit first world bias and a tendency to exclude or decenter nondominant women from non-Western societies. These theorists also have been criticized for reifying a socially constructed category of gender, giving it a permanence and stability that it may not deserve. Postmodernist-influenced scholars have raised questions about how norms of presentation of scholarly work, discipline-based concepts and vocabularies, and taken-for-granted assumptions within the academy shape and constrain what can and cannot be known. They have also problematized concepts such as sex and gender and simplistic understandings of the relationships between the two. Scholars such as Judith Butler and Anne Fausto-Sterling point out that notions of sex as a dimorphic, dichotomous category are more a social construction than an accurate reflection of human biology. But the conventions and the vocabulary tend to structure our perceptions, rather than the reverse. How can we study links between methods and gender if gender itself is unstable?

The postmodernist critique has implications not simply for the gathering of evidence by use of research methods, but also for the reporting, interpreting, and evaluating of research. Research reports are essentially interpretations that are inherently personal and dependent on dynamic relationships between subjects and researchers. Multiple studies of similar groups or phenomena are likely to yield conflicting, irreconcilable accounts (as is seen in some accounts of female and male anthropologists who studied the same cultures) because the world is changing and differently perceived by persons of differing backgrounds. There is no single truth, and therefore the quest to find it through careful application of rigorous

methods is misguided. Criteria for evaluating quality of accounts are ambiguous. Power relationships are important and must be understood and deconstructed, because alternative, nondominant interpretations also are present. Readers may come away from accounts with variable understandings, often quite different from those intended by the writer. Knowledge is neither stable nor cumulative. These perspectives conflict with assumptions underlying most quantitative research, which values replicability, cumulateness, and generalizability. They also conflict with some forms of qualitative research, especially with what Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein refer to as *naturalism*, which assumes a one-to-one correspondence between observation and reality.

Qualitative methods frequently are used by researchers influenced by postmodernism because they allow a more detailed accounting of how the report was produced. Qualitative accounts typically contain more contextual detail and permit greater exploration of difference and diversity, rather than being framed primarily around analysis of central tendencies. Patti Lather, Laurel Richardson, and Marianne Paget are some of the feminist scholars who have experimented with nontraditional forms of presentation of qualitative research, such as multivocal text, poetry or song, and live performance, in attempts to more faithfully represent the complex and contradictory elements of the phenomena they have studied.

Women are not the only postmodernists, but women scholars in many fields have been influenced in particular by postmodernist critiques of power inherent in knowledge production processes. Some feminist scholars have criticized the postmodernist turn in scholarship as being post-feminist because women and women's concerns are not necessarily prioritized in research. In addition, some scholars have feared that postmodernist-oriented research is less oriented than other forms of gender scholarship toward producing knowledge applicable to real-world problems in women's lives. This is an explicit aim of many who label their work as feminist.

Conclusion

In summary, relationships between gender and methods are complex. If methods are regarded as tools for conducting research, the link between gender and methods seems tenuous at best because women and men draw upon similar toolkits of research methods,

albeit perhaps in different proportions. Oral history and narrative analysis might be exceptions and may be more directly linked to gender. An influence of gender is easier to discern in the realm of methodology, or theorizing about methods, and there has been substantial writing about links between gender, ethics, and numerous practical concerns in conducting research. With regard to epistemology, the links are even stronger, with women scholars and scholars who research nondominant groups in society especially prominent in critiques of objectivity, value neutrality, and the quest for a theoretical master narrative that will guide understanding of much of social life. It is important to recall, nonetheless, that the linkages between gender and methods, or gender and methodology, or gender and epistemology are neither absolute nor deterministic. They also are constantly evolving.

Linda Grant

See also Feminist Research; Fieldwork; Narrative Analysis; Researcher Sensitivity

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GENEALOGICAL APPROACH

The genealogical approach confronts ideas or practices that present themselves as universal. It reveals that they actually issue from and reflect a narrower source. Once this revelation is accomplished, genealogy evaluates the more limited meaning of the practices. Ultimately, genealogy attempts to show that all practices have variable meanings and reflect different forces rather than possess intrinsic meanings and point to a permanent reality. In the social sciences and humanities, the works of the major progenitors of genealogy, Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, have given rise to those forms of discourse analysis and ethnographic studies that emphasize the preeminent role of language and other practices in constructing or establishing the identities of the subjects and objects with which we interact. The constituting role of these practices applies also to us: we are simultaneously the vehicles and the products of our discursive and nondiscursive social practices. This entry reviews the meaning of genealogy for Nietzsche and Foucault and then discusses the presence of genealogy in the social sciences and humanities.

Nietzsche and Foucault on Genealogical Critique

The genealogies of Nietzsche and Foucault assume (and simultaneously attempt to establish) that society is composed of mutually contesting forces. Nietzsche refers to the interplay among these value-creating forces as a will to power. Some of these forces are active; that is, spontaneous affirmations of the contest among the forces that make up society. Others are reactive; that is, exist as denials or negations of the contestatory but also creative nature of society. When

active forces dominate the social body (or the individual), Nietzsche refers to the latter as an *affirmative* will-to-power; when reactive forces are in the ascendancy, a *nihilistic* will to power. Similarly, Foucault refers to the forces of the social body as *power*. This power is not primarily the coercive sort or laws that say “thou shall not ...”; rather, it refers to the practices that construct objects, subjects, and criteria of truth. For example, the modern form of power, bio-power, consists in the disciplines that organize and regulate bodies in the social arena—workplaces, schools, armies—and the policies that control the health, size, and other parameters concerning the utility of the population. Bio-power also requires forces that resist it. They permit it to continue exercising and increasing the practices that make up its anonymous disciplinary activity. In turn, the resisting forces require bio-power in order to be what they are. The social body is therefore ultimately both of these types of forces, power and resistance.

The Critical Dimension of Genealogy

Given this brief sketch of society as the interplay among value-creating forces, we can now elaborate on the specific characteristics of genealogy. Genealogy has a critical dimension and an affirmative dimension. Its critical dimension involves three tasks. The first two tasks are to reveal the social forces that cultural codes and social institutions serve, and often conceal, and to evaluate these codes and institutions on the basis of that revelation. The third task is to show how one and the same word, practice, or institution often serves successive and distinct, even opposed, forms of life and thereby takes on a new significance at every turn. In other words, the third task is to show that society is fundamentally grounded in contestation among the value-creating forces that genealogy takes to be its domain of operation. Genealogy, like every other discourse, is itself a value-creating force; thus, it is subject to the same sort of analysis it provides for other discourses.

The critical side of genealogy and its three tasks are a form of critique: they reveal that no one can detach a value-code or institution from its history—from the successive value-creating powers it serves—and thereby make the claim that this code or institution has an intrinsic and universal meaning. For example, the moral term *good* is usually presented as an absolute value; that is, as transcending the social arena in which it is operative. But Nietzsche argues

that its meaning varies, depending on whether it is paired with *bad* or with *evil*. When it is coupled with *bad*, good is the spontaneous self-affirmation of a group whose social position allows its members to be truthful—to be themselves freely and fully—in contrast to those who are bad off; that is, those who have been placed in and adversely affected by unenviable circumstances and consequently cannot exercise their full powers. When this impotent group has the opportunity to invent its own value code, it expresses its resentment of the other group and its members’ spontaneity or freedom. This resentment is captured by the impotent group labeling the other group *evil* and by imposing the value code *good and evil* on all of society if and when the group gains power. Whereas the first group exists as an active force, as the spontaneous affirmation of its human powers, the second group exists only as a reaction to the first; it calls itself good only in the sense of not being what it deems evil. When this reaction is against the world as a flux of forces and when this rejection of reality is reflected in the religious doctrines, political constitutions, philosophies, and other important social discourses that shape our perceptions and thoughts as well as guide our actions, society becomes a nihilistic will-to-power, in Nietzsche’s terminology. His critique, therefore, functions to reveal the social origin and meaning of a code that presents itself as a transcendent value or truth.

Although he uses the notion of power and resistance rather than will-to-power, Foucault follows Nietzsche in adopting genealogy as a means of undermining any discourse that tacitly or overtly presents itself as transcending the arena of power and resistance. Foucault attempts to reveal, for example, that truth is relative to the power or micropractices that establish the identities of the subjects and objects of a social body. In the case of bio-power, truth consists in the conclusions of the social sciences insofar as the latter are structured to advance the disciplining processes of modern society; that is, truth is relative to and in the service of bio-power. If the forces that resist bio-power should ever become the new power, then truth would presumably take on a meaning other than that which increases the utility of the population and advances bio-power. Thus, Foucault attempts to reveal the meaning of truth, evaluate it in terms of the forces it serves, and show that difference (e.g., the many meanings of truth) is closer than the notion of identity to how things are.

The Affirmative Dimension of Genealogy: Beyond Discourse Analysis

If we stick to the first two tasks of the critical dimension of genealogy, we are doing what discourse analysts typically do: identifying the discourse (including associated nondiscursive practices or structures) that provides the initial compellingness of certain particular practices or actions and thereby showing that the latter do not merit the universal or otherwise privileged status that they been assigned. The third task of the critical dimension consists in showing that society is in fact the interplay among contesting forces that genealogy supposes.

This third task and the entire critical dimension of genealogy are related to the second, affirmative, dimension of genealogy. Genealogy drops the pretense of neutrality that is characteristic of the social sciences and conventional discourse analysis. For the genealogist, and particularly for Nietzsche and Foucault, genealogy is, as we have seen, a means of undermining claims to neutrality as well as racist, sexist, and other doctrines that present as transcendent what is really the desire or outlook of a particular group. Simultaneously, this undermining of neutrality and claims to transcendence—the critical dimension of genealogy—is the endorsement or valorization of those forces, genealogy included, that support the interconnectedness, heterogeneity, and creativity of the positions contesting with one another for their place in society. This valorization is the primary meaning of the affirmative dimension of genealogy. This affirmative dimension shows up implicitly in much of discourse analysis and explicitly in many ethnographic studies. For example, some authors (see Further Readings below) debunk strict identity claims in order to show that culture is hybrid in nature; others argue that the individual is saturated with many selves; still others reveal that race and gender are not univocal concepts and, more generally, that scientific, linguistic, and other academic categories hide the proliferating diversity of natural and human characteristics.

Although genealogy eschews neutrality, it does not cast aside relative merit: in the exchanges among the positions that contest with one another, and in the particular context in which these exchanges take place, one of these positions can always put forward considerations for its social discourse that might be found more compelling than those for the other discourses—though,

once again, only for the time being and within a particular crucible of contestation. These exchanges among the competing positions have the added virtue of amounting to the very kind of contestatory and creative society that genealogists affirm.

Fred Evans

See also Discourse Analysis

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GENERALIZABILITY

In the quantitative tradition, the term *generalizability* is a synonym for *external validity*. In addition to ensuring that a study is valid internally by, for instance, administering to a study's research subjects only instruments that actually measure what they claim to measure, quantitative researchers also normally are concerned that their findings will apply to other people and/or other situations that the study's sample supposedly represents. Qualitative researchers, who normally play a very different research game, have been forced to rethink the generalizability notion.

Generalizability in Quantitative Research

In quantitative research, a study's generalizability is assessed by focusing on a study's sampling procedures and by using statistical analysis designed to determine the likelihood that the study's results might have occurred by chance. If a study's sample is large enough and was selected randomly, the statistical analysis is likely to show that there is only a very slim possibility that the study's results are a product of chance. In such cases, the study is said to exhibit external validity and the study's findings are judged generalizable.

For a variety of reasons, including the complexity of social phenomena and the ever-changing cultural dimension of social life, quantitative researchers have had difficulty producing even probabilistic findings that can be generalized even to delimited populations. In the 1970s, this failure led one prominent quantitative researcher, Lee Cronbach, to suggest that quantitative researchers should add a qualitative component to experimental studies so that qualitative researchers' thick descriptions could be used *ex post facto* to generate grounded hypotheses about why idiosyncratic results occurred. By the 1980s, Cronbach went even further: He argued that action in the social world was constructed, not caused, and, consequently, that those who were waiting for social scientists to produce generalizable findings were, in essence, waiting for Godot.

Generalizability in Qualitative Research

Cronbach's position in the 1980s is quite similar to the position articulated by qualitative researchers from the symbolic interactionist, ethnomethodologist, and other constructivist traditions. But, in fact, virtually all qualitative researchers have been forced to rethink quantitative researchers' generalizability notion, if only because of their small samples.

Because of small sample sizes, most qualitative researchers simply cannot play the traditional generalizability game. Instead, they have redefined the generalizability question in more commonsense terms: Why will knowledge of a single or limited number of cases be useful to people who operate in other, potentially different situations?

Qualitative researchers have answered this question in a number of ways. Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, for instance, took note of the same sort of complexity that Cronbach had discussed and concluded

that only consumers of research could determine whether the setting studied was sufficiently similar to the consumer's organization to entertain the working hypothesis that findings would transfer. Robert Donmoyer, on the other hand, suggested that reading qualitative accounts of radically different cases could produce enriched cognitive schema and that these schema would allow for a kind of intellectual generalization even when settings are radically different.

Robert Donmoyer

See also Psychological Generalization; Quantitative Research; Transferability

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GRAND NARRATIVE

Most qualitative researchers will ground their work within certain epistemologies. One such epistemology is based upon postmodern thinking and influences how we view Western society. *Grand narrative* or *master narrative* is a term introduced by Jean-François Lyotard in his classic 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, in which Lyotard worked to critique institutional and ideological forms of knowledge. Lyotard suggested that there is a modern or grand narrative that society has used to define itself. The grand narrative is usually linked to the mainstream or status quo. Some examples of the grand narrative in the modern world are capitalism, the Enlightenment, Christian ideology, Freudian psychology, political democracy, natural science, positivism, and patriarchal order. Outside of these narratives is the other.

In postmodernism, the grand narrative of the modern story is a privileged competition between the polarities of those who are in the story and those who are not. The other is always present and will work to

disrupt or interrupt the grand narrative in some way. At the same time, the grand narrative needs the other to justify the modern story. For example, modernists used women to justify the patriarchal dominance of the modern reality. The essence of postmodernism is to disrupt the modern story and the grand narrative.

Within the grand narrative are privileged sites. The goal of people within the modern story is to hold as many of the privileged sites as possible. The goal of marginalized communities is to acquire these privileged sites so that they can join the modern story. The other option is to try to rewrite the grand narrative so that the voices of marginalized communities are included. For example, the privileged color in the modern Western world is White. The privileged gender is male. The privileged race is Caucasian. The privileged age is 25 to 40. Our relationship to nature is consumers. Our preferred means of production is mass production.

According to Lyotard, grand narratives are seen as oppressive because one grand narrative excludes another. With this continual conflict and attack on the modern grand narrative, modern society has opened up the narrative to include and to absorb the other. The notion is that the other has a legitimate history that can be added to the social story of our time; for example, including Aborigines in the intellectual history of North America.

This process has created a lot of confusion in the modern grand narrative as a pastiche of influences impact the story. In this mix of signs, images, and stories, members of the grand narrative no longer have a clear vision of how they fit into the mainstream story. In this confusion, members of society can look to a remembrance of the good old days when we knew what the grand narrative was and how we fit into it. At the same time, we are searching for new signs and schemata that will more adequately describe and explain the grand narrative we are creating because the old ones do not work anymore. The shift from a mere consumer of knowledge to a knower of knowledge or a meta-narrative is the essence of the new grand narrative.

Devon Jensen

See also Meta-Narrative; Otherness; Postmodernism

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GRAND THEORY

Grand theory is the broadest form of theory within a discipline. A theory can be described as a set of concepts and the relationships among them. In the human sciences, theories are often classified by their scope, from the narrowest in scope to the broadest. Micro theories, sometimes referred to as partial or situational theories, have the narrowest scope. Micro theories are restricted to a particular phenomenon or, as the name suggests, situation. Some scientists have equated micro theories with research hypotheses because their narrow scope makes it possible for such theories to be tested with as little as one research study.

Mid-range theories, which have been described as being particularly useful for practice disciplines, are more abstract and inclusive than micro theories but remain testable, although such testing may require a program of research or series of studies in which specific concepts and relationships in the theory are tested individually. Mid-range theories have been described as particularly useful for practice disciplines and have been the focus of recent theory development efforts in (for example) nursing.

Grand theories, sometimes referred to as conceptual frameworks or conceptual models, develop overall explanations for a discipline or body of knowledge. The concepts addressed by grand theories are highly abstract and cannot easily be operationalized into variables or used in hypotheses. Thus, grand theories are untestable. Some authors have described grand theories as normative; that is, that grand theories describe not the way a discipline is, but the way that discipline should be. Grand theories, though untestable, are often useful as organizing frameworks for knowledge development or as foundations for mid-range theory development. Examples of grand theories can be found in many disciplines. Theoretical physicists are at work on a grand unified theory, which would reconcile electromagnetism with weak and strong nuclear forces. In sociology, Talcott Parsons's structural-functional theory, developed in the 1960s, has had considerable influence. In nursing, a number of grand theories were developed in the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to describe nursing's unique disciplinary body of knowledge. Examples of grand theories of nursing include the theory of health as expanding consciousness and the self-care deficit theory. Qualitative researchers use an array of grand theories from symbolic interactionism to general systems theory. In

addition, explicitly normative grand theories such as Marxism and feminism are common in qualitative research, although there is disagreement about whether these approaches are grand theories, ideological orientations, or epistemological traditions.

The scope of grand theories has of course led to criticisms. Grand theories have been described as too broad, leading to oversimplification of complex issues; as lacking in clear definitions of central concepts; as empirically unverifiable (i.e., untestable); and as static and unresponsive to changing conditions. Despite these criticisms, grand theory continues to hold an important place in knowledge development in the human sciences.

Lioness Ayres

See also Critical Race Theory; Postcolonialism; Queer Theory; Symbolic Interactionism

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GROUNDING THEORY

Grounded theory refers simultaneously to a method of qualitative inquiry and the products of that inquiry. Like most discussions of grounded theory, this entry emphasizes the method of inquiry. As such, the grounded theory method consists of a set of systematic, but flexible, guidelines for conducting inductive qualitative inquiry aimed toward theory construction. This method focuses squarely on the analytic phases of research, although both data collection and analysis inform and shape each other and are conducted in tandem. The analytic strategies are inherently comparative and interactive; this method guides researchers to make systematic comparisons and to engage the data and emerging theory actively throughout the research process.

Grounded theory developed from the codification of the methods that its originators, sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1967), used in their study of the social organization of dying in hospitals. Their pioneering book, *The Discovery of*

Grounded Theory, set a new course for qualitative research in sociology and beyond and left a lasting imprint on both the grounded theory method and social scientific inquiry, in general.

The significance of Glaser and Strauss's book must be placed in its historical context. Despite long-standing qualitative traditions largely at the University of Chicago and the impressive contributions of its faculty and students, qualitative research had waned by the early 1960s as sociologists and other social scientists increasingly turned to sophisticated quantitative methods. At that time, survey research was gaining dominance in sociology. As Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz (2007) point out, survey research commanded funding, positions, and the development of research institutes while its proponents controlled departments, students, and major journals. A few doctoral departments had specialties in qualitative research and a small cadre of ethnographers published vibrant studies; nonetheless, qualitative research became increasingly marginalized in sociology.

Publication of the *Discovery* book stood as a methodological marker that countered the increasing hegemony of quantitative methods and changed the status of qualitative research. Glaser and Strauss challenged numerous sociological conventions of the day. They disputed the sharp divisions between data-collection and analysis phases of research. Throughout their book, Glaser and Strauss argued against the growing division between theory and research. They contended that the grand theory of mid-century scholars failed to explain empirical phenomena and the narrow empirical studies of quantitative researchers failed to generate theory. Moreover, Glaser and Strauss proposed that scholars could develop theory from qualitative research.

Not only did Glaser and Strauss put forth a powerful rhetorical statement about the place and promise of qualitative research, but also they provided a set of flexible strategies that guided the analysis of qualitative data. They presented the first detailed, systematic attempt to codify qualitative analysis—and, simultaneously, to develop middle-range theories through subjecting data to rigorous analytic scrutiny. Since 1967, Glaser and Strauss's message inspired both students and seasoned researchers to pursue inductive qualitative research. Perhaps ironically, many more researchers claimed allegiance to grounded theory to justify their research than actually used the method itself for conducting it.

The guidelines that comprise the method reflect Glaser and Strauss's divergent backgrounds. Glaser's

doctoral training in quantitative methods at Columbia University gave grounded theory its rigor. He sought to codify qualitative methods in an analogous way as his mentors had codified quantitative methods. Much of the logic and language of grounded theory reflects Glaser's background and simulates that of quantitative research. This language has distinguished grounded theory from other qualitative approaches, but also it has led to obfuscating several of its major strategies.

Strauss's contrasting background emanated from his doctoral studies at the University of Chicago where the traditions of pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, and ethnographic fieldwork permeated his consciousness and lengthy career. Strauss brought pragmatist emphases on action, meaning, language and the provisional nature of truth to grounded theory. Strauss's pragmatist and symbolic interactionist foundations imparted notions of individual agency, interactional indeterminacy, and the multiplicity of perspectives, all of which gave grounded theory its open-ended character. Both Strauss and Glaser emphasized inductive inquiry, emergent processes, and the modifiability of theory.

The *Discovery* book outlined key methodological strategies but Glaser's (1978) manual, *Theoretical Sensitivity*, first elaborated the grounded theory approach, and Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (1998) later offered distinctive versions. (See all these works for detailed descriptions of grounded theory strategies.) Glaser (1978) delineated his concept-indicator model of theorizing, outlined sets of loosely related theoretical codes, advocated line-by-line coding of data, and established the analysis of basic social processes as the focus of grounded theory studies. In all versions, grounded theory begins with very early close coding of collected data. The initial coding aims to ask what is happening in these data and invokes short analytic labels in the form of gerunds to identify specific processes and treat them theoretically. From the beginning, then, grounded theory coding differs from most types of qualitative coding, which rely on pre-established static topics and general characteristics. When researchers define a set of tentative codes, they use these codes to compare, sort, and synthesize large amounts of data. Throughout the process, grounded theorists write memos elaborating their codes by identifying their properties, the conditions under which the code arises, and comparisons with specific data and other codes. Memo writing (a) engages researchers with their data and emerging comparative analyses, (b) helps them to identify analytic gaps, (c) provides

material for sections of papers and chapters, and (d) encourages researchers to record and develop their ideas at each stage of the research project. By writing successively more analytic memos, researchers raise the theoretical level of their work.

The strategy of theoretical sampling distinguishes grounded theory and makes it much more than a coding system. Theoretical sampling means that researchers seek and sample data that informs their theoretical categories. Thus, theoretical sampling differs markedly from representational sampling with which it is often confused. Researchers engage in theoretical sampling after they have selected key categories and need to elaborate and or refine them. Such further analytic work may prompt grounded theorists to sample in entirely new empirical areas from those in which they began their study.

Another major methodological concept, but one that is not so well articulated, is theoretical saturation. For grounded theorists, theoretical saturation means seeking data to identify and fill the properties of a theoretical category. Researchers often erroneously believe that they have achieved theoretical saturation when their data become repetitive. They may gather repetitive data without filling the properties of their categories. Further problems arise concerning what constitutes saturation. Most researchers assert saturation rather than provide evidence for it. Trite categories are easily saturated, thereby leading to low-level analyses that do not account for variation in the category or process being analyzed.

After researchers have constructed a set of developed categories, they sort their memos, explicating these categories according to the logic of their theoretical analysis. This theoretical sorting of memos forms integrates the sections of the paper or chapter. Grounded theory strategies enable researchers to avoid being overwhelmed by unanalyzed data and incomplete ideas because grounded theorists write memos all along that give them readily available materials to sort and integrate. The method fosters developing sections of the analysis throughout the research process.

At least two other versions of grounded theory methods have emerged since publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* and of *Theoretical Sensitivity*. Strauss and Corbin's 1998 methodological manual, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, first published in 1990, constituted the first major departure from the earlier books in that it lacked their depiction of a flexible approach, emphasized verification rather than emergence of concepts, and added two new technical procedures.

Strauss and Corbin added another type of coding, axial coding, in which researchers would treat a category as an axis around which they identified the dimensions of its properties and established its relationships to other categories. In addition, they proposed that researchers develop a conditional matrix to map intersections of micro, meso, and macro conditions on actions and to outline connections between these levels of analysis. In Glaser's (1992) rancorous response to *Basics of Qualitative Research*, he requested that Strauss and Corbin withdraw their book and rename their approach. Glaser viewed their emphases on preconceived procedures and verification as undermining the method, which he had based on emergent concepts and theory construction. Since then, he has presented his concept-indicator version of grounded theory as the classic statement, despite having abandoned several of his main strategies such as line-by-line coding and the analysis of basic social processes.

Constructivist grounded theory, as Bryant and Charmaz each first articulated separately (Bryant, 2002, 2003; Charmaz, 2000, 2005, 2006) and recently together (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) has emerged as the major alternative to the earlier versions. Constructivist grounded theory assumes that both the research process and the studied world are socially constructed through actions, but that historical and social conditions constrain these actions. The constructivist version of grounded theory retains, and even stresses the key facets of the method as outlined above, but recognizes that the researcher plays an active and vital role in the research process, particularly in the developing dialogue between researcher and data from which codes and categories, and eventually a grounded theory should result. Hence, this form of the method strengthens the basic guidelines by attending to issues such as reflexivity, the research context, the inescapable effect of prior knowledge and existing literature. It also offers insights into the ways in which new theoretical insights develop by engaging with epistemological issues, and so provides a more sophisticated account of induction and deduction than that contained in the early books on the method.

Adele Clarke (2005) also adopts constructivist principles and combines them with postmodernism in her revision of grounded theory, called situational analysis. Bryant, Charmaz, and Clarke advocate adopting key grounded theory strategies devoid of their positivistic underpinnings that include the discovery of an external reality, an objective social

scientist, quest for explanation and prediction, and erasure of how the conditions of the research process, including the researcher's experiences and subjectivities affect the research process. Instead, constructivism takes a relativistic view and emphasizes: (a) the social conditions of the research situation; (b) the researcher's perspectives, positions, and practices; (c) the researcher's participation in the construction of data; and (d) the social construction of research acts, as well as participants' worlds. Constructivism retains the central foci of action, process, and meaning in earlier versions, but favors theoretical understanding over explanatory generalizations. Constructivists attend to locating their analyses in the specific historical, social, and interactional conditions of their production, rather than constructing concepts abstracted and separated from their origins. In short, constructivists seek abstract understanding of empirical phenomena as situated knowledge.

Kathy Charmaz and Antony Bryant

See also Axial Coding; Codes and Coding; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Theoretical Sampling

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GROUP INTERVIEW

See FOCUS GROUPS

H

HARM

Nonmaleficence, a core principle of many ethics codes, is a duty to avoid, prevent, or limit harm to others. In qualitative research, the concept also includes harm or injury to feelings, privacy, confidentiality, or reputations of participants. Sometimes considerations about harm are extended to the larger population from which participants are sampled. For example, embarrassing findings of misconduct within a specific group category may be perceived as harmful to the larger group.

There is controversy about how researchers should practice nonmaleficence. A common rule to prevent or limit harm is to employ methodologies that present minimal risk to participants. Minimal risk is usually defined as the degree of harm or discomfort that research participants would encounter in their routine daily lives relative to the research design. For example, if interviewees were first exposed to extreme heights and then asked to report on their feelings, the potential harm (fear, panic) would be different for a sample of cliff divers versus a sample of acrophobics (people who are afraid of heights). Therefore, in order to evaluate the threshold of harm, it is important for researchers to have an understanding of the everyday lives of their participants.

Two well-known examples of harm in social research are Philip Zimbardo's 1973 Stanford Prison Experiment and Stanley Milgram's series of experiments on obedience to authority in the 1960s. In the Zimbardo experiment, students played the roles of guards and inmates in a mock prison. In this controversial study, the students who were taking the part of guards soon began to act sadistically toward the prisoners, who were humiliated

and experienced severe stress. Although a 2-week experiment had been planned, it was terminated after 6 days because of the psychological harm the participants were experiencing.

In the Milgram study, participants were led to believe that they were giving ever-increasing electric shocks to another person who was concealed behind a wall. The majority of the participants continued the shocks to the highest level, as instructed by the experimenter, but they also demonstrated significant emotional distress, even seizures. Although the Milgram study has been criticized for its use of deception and the distress caused to participants, a follow-up study showed that fewer than 2% of the participants had negative feelings about the experiment. The interpretation of harm is therefore highly subjective and difficult to measure.

While considering the nature of harm that may arise in qualitative research, it is also important to anticipate potential benefits of the research, to question whether participants are aware of the potential harm before they give consent, and to develop strategies either to minimize the harm as they occur or to remedy them afterwards. The principle of proportionality suggests that the greater the potential harms arising from research, the greater is the care required to address those harms. Finally, it is important to determine whether participants perceive harm in the same manner as the researchers or ethics review boards. Researchers and ethics boards sometimes try to prevent all harm, although this concern may not be shared by participants.

Russel Ogden

See also Benefit; Confidentiality; Privacy; Risk

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HEALTH SCIENCES, QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN

Qualitative inquiry has made an important contribution to our understanding of health and illness over the past 40 years. Since the 1920s, qualitative research has been used by anthropologists to delineate beliefs about health and illness in various cultural groups, often in what they called “primitive natives.” In the 1960s and 1970s, sociologists began using ethnography and ethnomethodology to study health and illness in American cultural groups. From this era, several classics arose—most notably, *Boys in White*, an ethnography of medical students by Howard Becker and his colleagues, published in 1961.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, qualitative research made inroads into nursing through nurse-anthropologists, such as Madeleine Leininger (University of Washington), Pamela Brink (University of California, Los Angeles), and Marguerita Kay (University of Arizona) and through the development of grounded theory by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (University of California, San Francisco). These researchers, with their colleagues and students, made important contributions to qualitative inquiry in three ways: (1) they conducted qualitative research and published the results in nursing journals, thus bringing qualitative inquiry to the attention of the nursing academic community; (2) in the training of their own doctoral students and the publication of qualitative methodology, they built a strong foundation for qualitative health research and the mentoring of a new generation of students; and (3) they brought qualitative inquiry into basic graduate programs and to the attention of funding agencies. Four decades later, qualitative inquiry is integrated into most graduate curricula and is used by most allied health disciplines (such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and medicine). Specialized qualitative journals (such as *Qualitative Health Research*) and qualitative proposals are funded at the federal level.

Qualitative health research conferences are well attended, and conducting qualitative health research is no longer a marginal activity.

Qualitative research has made significant advancement to the understanding of health and illness, to the provision of care, and to professional development and education. In order to achieve this advancement, qualitative methods have been modified for use with the ill and data collection in institutions. The perspective or context is unique in qualitative health research and certain qualitative methods have been more suited to this task than others. This entry reviews the major areas of qualitative research in the health sciences and describes the modifications made in adapting qualitative methods to this field.

Major Areas of Qualitative Health Research

The main areas within qualitative of research and the ways that qualitative methods are adapted when used in health research are as follows:

Delineating Health

Qualitative methods have made a major contribution in the understanding of health, in developing definitions of health, in eliciting perspectives of various populations about health, and in describing processes used for attaining health. Most commonly, this work is conducted using ethnographic methods and with a variety of types of interviews. Participant observation has also been particularly successful in eliciting this information by revealing discrepancies between what people say they do and what they actually do to become healthy.

Nevertheless, these studies have remained at the descriptive level, and relatively few models or theories of health have developed from this work. This research has identified the most optimal way to provide health education in community programs, to evaluate health programs, and to ascertain why various programs have failed. This important research could not have been achieved through quantitative methods.

Impediments to Health

Also categorized under health are a large number of studies investigating discrepancies in health; that is, why individuals in communities, cultural groups, or segments of the population are not uniformly healthy.

Many of these studies use participant action research (PAR) and ethnography, exploring community and cultural beliefs and values, determining what conditions result in poor health behaviors (such as infant bottle-feeding, smoking behaviors, or drug and alcohol use), and identifying what impedes the acceptance of care (such as noncompliance with immunization programs and poor diabetes care). This research provides valuable insights into programming so that community services may be targeted and become more effective. When a large survey or expansive geographic area is involved, both qualitative and quantitative methods combine to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

Understanding Illness

Some qualitative health research has focused on patients with diseases, describing what it is like to experience various medical conditions. In this research, it is assumed that each disease produces a unique set of symptoms, and these in turn result in a different experience of illness for those who are afflicted. This research is important for symptom and disease identification, which occurred informally in the 18th and 19th century, and continues as new diseases are identified. The significance of recognizing symptoms using qualitative methods is clear when one examines the research describing cardiac symptoms, particularly in women. The onset of myocardial infarction symptoms is often vague and ambiguous, yet morbidity and mortality may be greatly improved if people with symptoms report for care early. Careful qualitative description of these symptoms can then be communicated and included in brochures and other lay reading materials, hence enabling those developing these symptoms to report for emergency care earlier than they would otherwise.

Experiencing Illness

By far the largest category of qualitative health research is referred to as *experiencing illness*. These studies may be categorized as dealing with the meaning of illness to the afflicted, the ways in which illness disrupts everyday life, and the experience of becoming a patient.

Studies exploring the context of illness are focused across the life span—for example, studies of the pregnant mother's diabetes, the child's or adolescent's

management of diabetes, an adult living with diabetes, or the coping of the elderly diabetic. This research may also be gendered, as in research on how illness affects males and females, and causes role-disruption. There are also descriptions of the illness experience of for individuals of different cultural backgrounds. There are ethnic studies about the language, food, and beliefs and values (such as religion, modesty norms, and caregiving), as well as studies of illicit behavior, such as drug and alcohol use or abuse, or variation in the experience of pain and pain behavior cross-culturally. Qualitative researchers often focus on vulnerable populations—the hospitalized who may be dying, mute (due to mechanical ventilators or to Alzheimer's disease), incarcerated, homebound, or homeless.

The Experience of Caregivers

Qualitative researchers have studied professional caregiving and have written extensively about becoming a physician and the doctor–patient relationship. They have documented the uncertainties of medical students, beginning with the initial shock of anatomy dissection, then first surgical procedures, and the first encounters with death. Qualitative researchers have also documented the moral and ethical dilemmas that occur in the practice of medicine and have uncovered the nature of the decisions that physicians make in daily practice. For example, there are a large number of qualitative studies that examine the breaking of bad news. This research, written primarily from the physician's perspective, uncovers the harm that may occur to patients and their families when information regarding the prognosis is given insensitively or without consideration that the patients are people. These findings inform practice and instruct physicians how to provide shattering information gently.

There is a parallel literature on becoming a nurse. These studies describe what it is like to be a neophyte nurse; to be a more experienced nurse, yet carry a caseload beyond one's capabilities; or to cope with emergencies that one has not previously encountered. Some of this research gets to the heart of these problems, describing the human side of caring and the developing nurse–patient relationship. Some of this literature is phenomenological, providing insights into the meaning of caring, suffering, and fatigue. Some of this research uses grounded theory, showing how one develops relationships or how one copes with the

nuances of nursing, developing mid-range theories. Some of this research uses ethnography, describing, for instance, nurse–patient interaction in the intensive care unit (ICU) when the intubated patient cannot verbalize, and providing clear and concise strategies to enhance communication with these patients. Other research uses narrative inquiry so that nurses may learn from patients' or other nurses' stories about what a certain experience is like, hence informing their own practice. Some of this research uses videorecorded data and microanalysis so that nurses can study, for instance, implicit patterns of touch or the pain responses of infants. Finally, some of this research is evaluative, and from this research, modifications to care, or new patterns of care, are developed.

Although qualitative inquiry was introduced later into allied health care professions than nursing, similar areas of expertise are developing in these professions and, as equally important, are being incorporated into practice. Qualitative theories are providing frameworks for practice, enabling the identification of concepts particular to illness or to each profession, and qualitative meta-synthesis is enabling assessment of aggregated research, enhancing the understanding of caregiving.

Rarely do caregivers nurse individual patients; rather, they nurse families, including the sick person as well as his or her significant others. Qualitative researchers describe how family units respond to the threat of illness, assist each other when one member is ill, and how the family constellation forms a mutually supportive unit in times of crisis. Qualitative research informs one on how to interact with the family as a unit and on how to support the family so that family members may support each other and the sick family member. Similarly, qualitative research informs caregivers on how to support groups and on how to care for the communities.

Research and the Context of Care

The context of care is important in qualitative inquiry, for unlike laboratory research, the researcher has no control over the research interventions and is a guest of the participants. Most important for successful fieldwork is the gaining of trust prior to commencing data collection, for until the participants become accustomed to being observed, the reactive effect of the researcher's presence may invalidate the data. Thus, all fieldwork data collection is invariably

preceded by a period of "getting in," during which the participant gets to know the researcher, and the researcher becomes a part of the group.

Research on the family unit often takes place in the participants' homes. This research may be done through regularly scheduled visits, or the researcher may even live with the family. These research topics include patterns of family caregiving, social support, patient dependency, nutrition, care of the mentally ill, bereavement and grief, or dying alone. Often, this research is disease focused—for instance, on persons living at home following a stroke or persons with AIDS who are cared for in the home—and family units as participants are selected accordingly.

Frequently, the focus of research is on studies of small groups; for instance, gangs in the community. In this case, researchers overtly seek to become a part of the group, without being involved in illicit or illegal behaviors. Studies of drug use, homelessness (including street kids), and prostitution have been conducted and have provided important insights into the lives and health of these marginal groups.

Often, the institution is the domain of the research project. If the researcher is a physician or a nurse, accustomed to hospital norms, fitting in is relatively easy. These researchers know who to approach, when, and where and can identify the best time, for instance, for interviewing or observing care. However, researchers who are not accustomed to hospital routines, sights, sounds, and smells will have to spend some time becoming familiar with the setting and with getting to know what is going on before beginning fieldwork. They must learn how to enter certain areas, where they can and cannot go, and when. Finally, they must learn institutional standards of conduct, such as the ethics of confidentiality.

Exploration of health care in the community is a large component of qualitative health research. Ethnographic methods are used to identify those persons with unmet needs who are falling through the cracks in the health care system or who refuse, for instance, to seek care in the clinics.

Much research is conducted in community organizations: Focus group research is often used for identifying community needs, examining programs of care, or evaluating the efficacy of health promotion programs. Although some of this research is quantitative, using quasi-experimental design and statistically measuring the efficacy of program outcomes, qualitative research is used to investigate the processes of

changing health behaviors and to determine insider perspectives within programs.

Some qualitative inquiry may be classed as urban and rural, with the rural sociologists focusing on health in farmers, their wives, and families or of isolated small communities. Urban health may study factories, city apartment buildings, or even construction sites.

Qualitative health research is conducted at the sites of major disasters. These disasters usually involve large populations and high morbidity and mortality, such as natural (e.g., the Sichuan, China, earthquake) or weather-related disasters (e.g., hurricanes, such as Katrina in and around New Orleans in the United States) or terrorism (e.g., the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City). Qualitative researchers study the effects of survivorship, such as grief and bereavement; forced relocation and migration; adaptation following the loss of one's family, home, and community; and adjustment following injury.

The experience of rescue workers is also an important area of inquiry. Firefighters or soldiers may experience posttraumatic stress or other serious and disabling psychological problems; qualitative inquiry provides important knowledge regarding their experiences, debriefing, and recuperation.

The Education of Health Professionals

The last substantive category of qualitative research in the health sciences is the examination of educational processes in health professionals, role acquisition, and patterns of care.

Becoming a nurse or a physician is a complex process. In addition to the disciplinary lecture style learning, students must learn anatomy and pathophysiology in the anatomy lab (initially on models and then with cadavers), then with patients in rounds, in supervised practicum, and when they become more expert, as they provide care. Qualitative researchers have documented these processes of learning extending from student to expert practitioner, and have documented the intuition and its role in client assessment. Conversational analysis has documented exactly what is said in the caregiver-patient encounter, how nurses care during childbirth in the ICU and in trauma care or how they care for palliative patients.

Finally, evaluation research has been used to evaluate care and patterns of care in time-and-motion studies and studies of nurse workload and physician caseload. Patient satisfaction is an important part of

evaluating services, and usually, such studies use mixed-method design, with qualitative interviews a major component of the evaluation and accompanied by statistical indicators of care.

Modification or Adaptation of Qualitative Methods for Health Science Research

Developing concepts and theories that describe illness and health seeking behavior is essential in qualitative research in the health sciences. In nursing, the theoretical base is thin and in need of theoretical development—something that can best be achieved using qualitative inquiry. Further, to achieve the knowledge domains discussed above, there has been considerable modification of qualitative methods. This adaptation was essential not only because methods must be changed to access ill participants, but also because the priority of care in the hospital supersedes research agendas. Both of these features are discussed in the next section.

Methodological Strategies for Approaching Health and Illness

Qualitative inquiry's greatest contribution is in the identification of knowledge, concepts, and theories. Interpretative description identifies the unspoken, enabling insights into care. Similarly, microanalytic description, using videotape, enables the examination of facial expression, of transient nurse touches, and the fleeting responses of patients.

Important work over the past decade is in the delineating or development of concepts. The abstract nature of this work allows for the generalization of concepts across contexts and populations and ultimately the development of higher-level explanatory theories.

The majority of theories developed thus far in health care have been mid-range theories developed from grounded theory. The earliest of these was about dying in hospitals by Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss, and Jean Quint Benoliel. Since that time, a number of mid-range theories has developed about normalization (Janice Morse & Sharon Wilson; Kathy Knafl), hope (Kay Herth), transcendence (Pamela Reid), fatigue (Karin Olson), reformulation (Barbara Carter), enduring (Janice Morse), caring (Madeleine Leininger and others), and comfort (Janice Morse). Of importance are the mid-range theories that describe processes and change, primarily trajectories of care (Julie Corbin).

Higher-range theories are less common, and there is a need to develop theories of broader scope by linking concepts and mid-range theory. Suffering is a higher-range theory that is moving toward this level of theory development, building on the work of Eric Cassell, on social suffering (Arthur Kleinman, and colleagues), and enduring and emotional suffering (Janice Morse and colleagues). Other theories are developing in the area of social support (Miriam Stewart & Ann Neufeld) or with the parturient woman (Joyce Roberts), but these have not been consolidated to a single theory thus far. However these areas hold tremendous potential, and it is only a matter of time before major theories emerge.

Physical Alterations and Data Collection/Analysis

Data collection when the participants are ill requires special skills and adjustment. Sick patients may not, for instance, be able to be interviewed because they are mute—for example, even if they are cognitively aware, intubated patients are not able to speak. They may communicate by other means, using a pen and paper or by signaling, but such means of communication gives poor data for research purposes. Some researchers have elicited the experience of being on a respirator by asking these patients to tell their story after they have been weaned from the respirator or have used observational research—participant observation or videorecorded data.

Researchers who have tried to conduct qualitative inquiry with confused patients as participants have encountered similar problems. Again, depending on the level of confusion, observational methods were found to be more useful than interview methods. However, in her study with psychiatric (schizophrenic) patients, Beverly Lorencz noted that, after asking a question, if she waited, an answer would eventually come. These disturbed patients first talked to the other voices, and Lorencz had to wait her turn. Alterations in reality are part of the patient's reality and must be included in the data, no matter how bizarre.

Patients in hospitals, especially if they are on certain medications, may not be able to be interviewed because a dry mouth or the lack of dentures may make speaking difficult. The patient may be in pain, have a headache, be on pain medications, and/or be too sleepy to be disturbed. In my own research with trauma patients, interviews were not possible, but the patient could

sometimes answer single questions. Nevertheless, the primary data were obtained from video cameras attached to the wall of the treatment room. Such shooting without any control of the camera means that one's data is poor when caregivers surround and obscure the patient, but the sound is still clear. The best data are often only what one can get.

Because of the responsibility that the hospital has to patients, their next of kin, and to society in general, security is essential when data are collected in the hospital setting. The researcher must gain permission from hospital administration both to conduct the study and to enter the premises. Researchers cannot then simply walk into a patient's room. Researchers must get permission from the charge nurse and the patient's primary care nurse to check that it is convenient to visit the patient, that the patient is well enough to be interviewed or observed, and that such a visit will not interfere with family visiting or any scheduled treatments or rounds. Once all of these conditions are met, researchers may place a sign on the door stating that an interview is in progress. If the participant is critically ill or injured, it goes without saying that his or her care has priority over data collection activities.

Janice M. Morse

See also *Qualitative Health Research* (Journal); Qualitative Health Research Conference; Vulnerability

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HEGEMONY

Most basically, hegemony refers to the domination of one group of people over another. More specifically, and more relevant to critical qualitative research, it refers to the domination of the ideas of one group over those of another. As such, hegemony refers to the mainstream deployment and acceptance of ideologies that justify the inequities inherent in modern society including capitalism, sexism, racism, and so on. Hegemonic domination can take place with or without the use of

physical force; however, it is often domination achieved not by force, but through ideological means.

Hegemony as a concept was first employed in Marxist thought in the mid- to late 1800s. Marxist conceptions focused on political leadership and domination by the ruling bourgeois over the subordinate working class proletariat through politically endorsed systems of economic and material distribution. The term *hegemony*, however, was coined by Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) and most fully explicated in his work *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. This work was conducted from 1929–1935 by Gramsci while he was imprisoned in Italy for his role in the development of the nation's Communist Party. Gramsci's work extended Marxist thought beyond its focus on capitalist struggle to an analysis of intellectual struggle and the role of external forces such as the mass media in stifling creative thought. He contended that the masses remained in their oppressed position because society did not allow them to imagine a different way of living; lacking such a conception, they were unable to conceive how they could challenge the prevailing system. Thus, Gramsci freed Marxist thought from economic determinism as he allowed for autonomic individuals, yet placed them within a system of communicative power that encompassed the state, the media, and social interaction.

Hegemony is of interest to qualitative researchers as a lens through which ideologies can be identified, documented, exposed, and used to create alternate ideology. Given the political nature of such research projects, it is no wonder that research into hegemonic thought is concentrated within critical research approaches, such as critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis, which aim to make explicit and often challenge power hierarchies.

No one method suits the collection of data useful to the examination of hegemonic structures or thought. Rather, as Gramsci notes, hegemonic ideologies operate through such social systems as the media, the state, and everyday communicative action. As such, a variety of social artifacts can produce data on prevailing hegemonic thought, including key informant interviews, documents, media analyses, observation, and diaries. These sources can reveal prevailing ideologies used to maintain and enforce existing social structures. Critical data analysis techniques such as critical discourse analysis and reconstructive analysis, as outlined by Phil Carspecken with reference to critical ethnography, can then identify sites of hegemonic thought that can be

woven together to produce a picture of how ideologies are circulated, produced, and reproduced to perpetuate existing inequities that benefit the ruling group.

Kay E. Cook

See also Critical Discourse Analysis; Critical Ethnography; Critical Research; Ideology; Marginalization

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HERMENEUTICS

From the Greek *to interpret* or *to make clear*, *hermeneutics* is the study of the theory and the practice of understanding and interpretation. It is built on the assumption that interpretation is not a straightforward activity even though people do it all the time when they interact with others and the world. The concept is based on Hermes, the Greek mythological god of boundaries and of those who cross them, who is said to have translated the gods' messages for humans. To do so successfully, he had to understand both the language and the mind-set of the gods (so as to communicate the intended message) and those of humans (so as to communicate it in a way they could understand). It is this space of encounter, this boundary between person and text, person and person, or person and world where meaning is open to interpretation that is of interest to researchers who draw from hermeneutics. This entry explains the nature of hermeneutics and provides a brief overview of its influence on Western thought since the 18th century. Then focusing on philosophical hermeneutics, it describes how the interplay of tradition, language, dialogue, experience, and context contribute to its theory of interpretation. Finally, the role of hermeneutics is examined in qualitative research.

Hermeneutic Traditions

Hermeneutics originally focused on the interpretation of sacred and legal texts and has developed into an influential school of thought in continental philosophy as well as in applied social research. Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) insight that there is no access to an uninterpreted or atheoretical world of knowledge but rather that the mind actively makes sense of the world based on prior conceptual frameworks paved the way for hermeneutics as it is known today.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was one of the first philosophers to theorize that hermeneutic thinking is a universal and natural part of being human in a social world rather than simply an application of strategies for interpreting texts. Schleiermacher distinguished between two forms of interpretation: acts of interpretation that happen all the time as people encounter texts or the world around them and on which they act without much thought and those that deal with ambiguous, complex texts or situations where understanding is not immediately available or clear and for which a doctrine of interpretation—hermeneutics—is needed.

The door Schleiermacher opened up—that understanding and interpreting are naturally occurring, innate human abilities, as well as human inabilities—is at the core of modern hermeneutics. If people always understood correctly or readily, then bureaucrats, teachers, therapists, researchers, and other social interpreters would not be needed to assist with obscure texts or unfamiliar points of view. It is because understanding can be manipulated, mistaken, and misguided that hermeneutic theories of understanding take into account the social, cultural, and political contexts, past and present, in which understanding and misunderstanding take shape. It is also because humans continue to make sense of the world around them and act on those interpretations regardless of their familiarity, interests, or knowledge that understanding the process of understanding is a core issue in social research. Contemporary hermeneutic approaches are, therefore, concerned with the processes through which understanding and interpretation occur, the truthfulness of interpretative statements, and the conditions for new understanding. They differ, however, in their focus and purpose.

When discussing the interpretation of a text—for example, a story told by another—conservative hermeneutic theorists follow a methodical approach

involving bracketing out their foreconceptions to find the true meaning of the story that is determined as the author's intent. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Emilio Betti (1890–1968), and Eric Donald Hirsch, Jr. (1928–) have all been interested in developing a methodical approach to hermeneutics. For these theorists, preconceptions are identified and controlled in order to get to the truth of that which needs interpreting. *Critical* hermeneutic theorists—suspicious that any text can reveal the meaning of an author—seek instead to uncover the shaping presence of history, power, and ideology evident in the author's expression as well as in the reader's interpretation. Exposing ideological traces involves a critical and reflective process that ideally allows the author and reader to create more empowering interpretations from which to act. Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) and Jürgen Habermas (1929–) are most often associated with this approach. In contrast to both of these approaches, *philosophical* hermeneutics emphasizes neither the text nor the reader; rather, the focus is on the event of understanding or interpretation as it occurs in the encounter between reader and text. Unlike conservative hermeneutics, the reader's foreconceptions are not bracketed out; they are understood as creating the intersubjective link necessary for engagement with the text. However, like critical hermeneutics, the purpose of philosophical hermeneutics is the creation of deeper or new understanding, and that means disrupting, to a certain extent, the imposition of one's preconceptions on the text as it is encountered. This process cannot be controlled, however, since there is no method that can predict in advance which prior conceptions or judgments will enable understanding from those that might obscure or distort it. It is during the interpretive process that these influential forces are revealed, and so it is only then that they can be contended with. The question of what this self-examination entails is at the core of philosophical hermeneutics. Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) are primary figures behind this approach.

Although Schleiermacher advanced the notion that a method for interpretation was essential to guard against misunderstanding and paved the way for Dilthey, he also pointed out that the human potential for misunderstanding was the result of limited exposure to alternative viewpoints and that increasing the plurality of experience would increase the likelihood that understanding, not misunderstanding would occur. It is on

this transformative potential of experience that Heidegger and Gadamer have built their hermeneutics. Furthermore, they argued that the experience of being in the world is the basis for understanding and interpretation, not a separate event. Humans do not first look at the world and then understand it, but they live out their understandings every day. For this reason, interpretation cannot be reduced to a predetermined method, but it occurs interpretively during the interpretive process itself.

Historically Effected Consciousness

As Kant made clear, an unsituated and uninterpreted state of being does not exist. Gadamer spoke of “historically effected consciousness” to describe the condition of being shaped and continuously reshaped by multiple horizons of meaning or traditions and the conscious self-awareness of being so effected. In contrast to theorists who suggest suspending the influence of tradition during the interpretive process, Gadamer believed that it is only by engaging tradition that understanding is possible. Tradition may not only constrain understanding by limiting available perspectives, but it also enables it by providing points of connection to the text or words of the other. Furthermore, tradition is not a stable, unitary perspective from which everything is viewed, but is made visible in the prejudices and assumptions that are aroused by the text or another. The idea of bracketing, therefore, misunderstands the role of tradition and the role of the other in understanding. That is, different prejudices emerge and different words are spoken about a topic in a conversation with a friend or a researcher because each situation gives expression to a different structure for understanding and thus to a different interaction between tradition, the object of consideration, and the person with whom people are in dialogue. Like Hermes, the interpretive event is affected simultaneously by prior experiences with the topic and the audience with whom the topic is being explored. The meaning that is made, therefore, is not prethought, but is brought forth in the event of participating in dialogue with another.

Heidegger used the image of a circle to convey the dynamic interplay between the object in the world that one seeks to understand and the subjective experiences of the object, past and present. When hearing a story, people project their own meaning (informed by tradition) into it. In turn, however, a point in the story might provoke an alternative interpretation, thus

promoting a new relationship between the person and the tradition. This new relationship informs one’s continuing interpretation until a new idea is similarly provoked. This process is not a linear, however, but happens in the process of understanding itself. In other words, everyday interpretive work is embedded in historical, cultural, and linguistic traditions, but as much as it is always oriented to present concerns—the topic at hand—is always under revision.

Understanding as Dialogue

Gadamer used the metaphor of a fusion of horizons to describe this process. *Horizon* denotes both the space (and the limiting conceptual framework) that one is located in and the presence of a beyond. Simply traveling a short distance, spatially or through one’s interaction with another, shifts both the location one is in and demarcates a new possible beyond. As people move and experience other frames of reference, their understanding of self and the world cannot help but to incorporate some of this worldly text into their own. Simultaneously, however, because people carry forward their prior experiences, people orient themselves to understanding in particular ways. Gadamer believed that the potential to develop new understandings occurs because of this interplay between one’s perspectives on the world (our traditions) and that which one’s current situation or concern arouses in one. It is during this encounter that people are most able to reflect upon the historically effected nature of their state of being in the world. It is in dialogue, Gadamer explained, that the experience of understanding is most productive because the other person, and therefore, his or her horizon, is simultaneously seeking expression alongside ours. The arousal of questions that the voice of the other awakens in people, or does not awake, is at the core of what Gadamer calls a genuine hermeneutic experience and is that for which a fusion of horizons strives.

Genuine Hermeneutic Experience

Heidegger argued that propositional statements, those that were used to “measure” or to account for understanding “scientifically,” could not account for the complexity of experience. To understand human experience, Heidegger explained, one must think beyond the statement to the experience itself or, as he put it, to that which strives to be brought forth in language.

Although Heidegger emphasized the experience of experience, Gadamer went on to develop the role language plays in bringing experience to understanding. Gadamer explained that the point of contact between self and others and between one's embodied experience and the expression of that experience is language. This point of contact necessarily means that in the process of bringing forth understanding in language, some aspect of experience remains unsaid. Simultaneously, the voice of the other or the topic at hand arouse some but not other aspects of what one and the other might mean. For Gadamer, new understanding requires that people allow themselves to engage in all that the conversation offers. As language unfolds, it reveals the prejudices of both speakers while also concealing areas where contact did not occur. Gadamer argued that a genuine hermeneutic conversation calls simultaneously for engagement in the experience of understanding, one that seeks out the possible meanings in both what is said and what is unsaid, and critical reflection on the structure of understanding that one is engaged in. This need requires a stance of active questioning and reflection that does not rest on first impressions, but seeks to expose and examine understanding's deeper, hidden meanings.

Hermeneutics in Qualitative Research

Hermeneutics challenges both the aim of social science and its reliance on a narrow conception of understanding encouraged by scientific methods. It alters the conception of inquiry from seeking explanations or understanding about someone or something to one of engaging with the dynamic and historically situated nature of human understanding. Inquiry, therefore, is no longer framed as a separate event from that which is being inquired into; both must be acknowledged in the final analysis.

Although not having an explicit method, hermeneutics has influenced the theory and practice of qualitative research in several ways. First, because language (and other symbolic meaning systems) mediates people's experiences of the world, qualitative inquirers are paying closer attention to the language used by research participants while also acknowledging the symbolic systems they too inhabit and that give shape to their study. Theorists, such as Clifford Geertz (1926–2006), have written extensively about the dynamic interplay involved when interpreting the interpretations

of others. Second, these contributions have informed how qualitative researchers talk about data collection, analysis, and representation, as each is seen as part of a dialogic, dynamic, holistic, and self-reflective process where interpretation and understandings are developed continuously along the way rather than as separate stages of a study. Finally, the hermeneutic potential that the space of difference between self and other opens up has caused theorists, such as Charles Taylor (1931–), to call on social inquirers to reenvision their role not as elicitors of information that benefit social science, but as promoters of cross-cultural dialogue where understanding of self and other occur concurrent to inquiring into the world people share.

Melissa Freeman

See also Critical Hermeneutics; Interpretation; Understanding

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HETEROGLOSSIA

Heteroglossia refers to the multivoiced nature of language. For studies of discourse, narratives, and text, heteroglossia and associated concepts provide a sophisticated sociological approach to analysis. Utterances and texts are populated with a multitude of social languages attached to specific ideologies or perspectives. Examples include professional jargons, peer group argots, and political or religious discourses. These “sociolects” are characterized by the social

stratum of speakers associated with particular social groups that are not equal in power or prestige. One sociolect may be authoritative and hegemonic, suppressing other voices, but all societies contain multiple social languages, some of which are engaged in opposition and struggle.

For Mikhail Bakhtin, who theorized heteroglossia, every utterance is multivocal, containing both a social language and a speech genre. A speech genre is not necessarily associated with a particular social group, but with particular forms of utterance and speech situations. Speech genres include poems, parodies, scholarly treatises, sermons, biographies, prayers, confessions, life stories, and everyday conversations. Genres enable creativity, but they also contain rules and structures that place parameters on utterances. Utterances, then, are shaped by social languages and genres, but they are also dialogic, containing at least two voices: the speaker's voice and the voice of the social language through which this is ventriloquated. The speaker as author incorporates the words and voices of others, but the utterance becomes the speaker's own when it is populated with his or her own intentions and accent and is appropriated for the speaker's own purpose.

An analysis of text or utterances from this perspective examines the sociolects and speech genres used and how the author combines different voices—words with different socioideological histories—into a unique utterance. Analysis also focuses on how utterances are socially charged and dialogically engaged with past, present, and future audiences and how they position the speaker vis-à-vis others. Anthropological linguists have used Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia, voice, utterance, and dialogism in the analysis of conversation and performances and the social work that speaking accomplishes. Others have employed these concepts to examine relations between social and personal facets of human development, especially the development of identity in cultural worlds. From this perspective, individuals' utterances are analyzed for the ways in which speakers orchestrate voices from their sociocultural worlds to create distinctive images of self and to envision their (future) social positions. To do these kinds of analyses, sociolinguistic diacritics or textually inflected ethnographies of speaking are useful.

Debra Skinner

See also Discourse Analysis; Narrative Analysis; Textual Analysis

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HEURISTIC INQUIRY

The heuristic approach to qualitative research was pioneered by American humanistic psychologist Clark Moustakas. Although it is an exploratory approach to research, it is really quite different from other approaches in that it is not concerned with discovering theories or testing hypotheses, but is concerned directly with human knowing and especially, with self-inquiry. The term *heuristic* derives from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which means to *find* or *discover*, and is used by Moustakas to describe the process of an inner search for knowledge, aimed at discovering the nature and meaning of an experience. It is an approach that offers a significant departure from mainstream research in that it explicitly acknowledges the involvement of the researcher to the extent that the lived experience of the researcher becomes the main focus of the research.

In this respect, heuristic inquiry (HI) anticipates the growing awareness of the participatory position in which researchers find themselves placed. Although rarely acknowledged, in general research is often autobiographical in the sense that the research topic and research question are usually motivated by personal interests and concerns, and the results and findings of the research can have personal impact on the researcher in both subtle and profound ways. In the capture of data, the researcher can accumulate and access a range of tacit knowing that results from the participatory nature of the process. What HI does is make this participatory process explicit, and moreover, it makes this the major focus of inquiry.

To some extent, HI has remained on the periphery of the qualitative approach, and it is easy to overlook

its relevance to almost all research in the human and social sciences. It is a method that is being taken up gradually in such fields as education, psychology, psychotherapy, and counseling, as well as in theological and transpersonal studies.

There is clearly more involved in HI than researchers simply analyzing their own experience. Nor is it merely a variation on phenomenological inquiry. The strength of HI is in the way it sets out a systematic and transparent methodology for self-inquiry. Indeed, the heuristic approach is more systematic and rigorous than might usually be imagined, and as a consequence it is extremely demanding.

Moustakas stresses that HI is a way of knowing, involving a personal encounter; as he puts it, “there must have been actual autobiographical connections” (1990, p. 14). The self of the researcher is present throughout the process, the researcher experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge, promoted by self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery. In effect, it is the salience of the research topic and research question for the researcher that is being acknowledged. Indeed, what explicitly can be the focus of the approach is the transformative effect of HI on the researcher’s own experience.

The Development of HI

Heuristic research follows in a long and ancient tradition of self-inquiry, a method of inquiry that was desperately in need of being reinvented. It re-emerged in the 1950s and ’60s, when Moustakas developed the idea of HI through his own self-exploration of loneliness. In 1985, Bruce Douglass and Moustakas, in an influential paper, outlined a model of the heuristic process that included three phases: *immersion* (exploration of a question, problem or theme), *acquisition* (collection of data), and *realization* (synthesis). Then, in 1990, Moustakas elaborated the model further, identifying a core conceptual framework, with seven basic phases of inquiry.

In many respects, HI bears a striking resemblance to such approaches as autoethnographic research, which emphasizes the cultural context of experience, and also with autobiographical research, which emphasizes the life-story. There are also many similarities with William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson’s transpersonal inquiry, with John Heron’s idea of lived inquiry, and with mindful inquiry, a synthesis of four intellectual traditions: phenomenology, hermeneutics,

critical social theory, and Buddhism that has been developed by Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro. It is a matter of note that integration in the literature of these overlapping methodologies is sadly rather lacking.

The Influence of Michael Polanyi

The influence of the ideas of Michael Polanyi, a philosopher of science, on Moustakas cannot be overestimated. The concepts of tacit knowing and indwelling, and even the term *heuristic* itself, all stem directly from the work of Polanyi. These ideas were central to his major work, *Personal Knowledge* (1958). Polanyi’s critique of “scientific detachment” has been characterized as a *participative realism*, and a *heuristic philosophy*. Polanyi argues that at the root of all claims to objective scientific knowledge there is always a reliance upon personal knowledge. Such ideas may have been a little before their time, and marginalized by other philosophers, but it is to Moustakas’s credit that he has taken Polanyi’s ideas and used them so effectively.

The influence of Polanyi can be seen most clearly in Moustakas’s core conceptual framework. This includes: the need to identify with the focus of the inquiry; self-dialogue with the phenomenon being explored; the power of revelation in tacit knowing; and the key processes of intuition, indwelling and focusing. This is all set within the context of an internal frame of reference, within which all experience needs to be understood.

The Seven Phases of Heuristic Research

In practice, HI entails creating a story that captures the qualities, meanings and essence of a human experience. The process begins with a question or problem to which the researcher seeks an answer. This question or problem, whether explicitly or implicitly, will always reflect a personal concern of the researcher with respect to understanding them self, and the human world in which they live. Moustakas’s heuristic approach offers a structured sequence involving seven phases of inquiry.

1. *Initial Engagement*. Research begins with the discovery of an intense and passionate interest or concern with respect to important social and universal meanings that have personal implications. Initial engagement involves self-dialogue and an inner search helping to clarify the

chosen topic and the research question. Turning inward taps into tacit awareness and knowledge, and requires disciplined commitment in order to discern the underlying meanings and clarify the context.

2. *Immersion.* Following the discovery and clarification of the question, the researcher immerses in anything and everything connected with the question. This involves intense exploration, following trails of data, self-dialogue, self-searching, seeking out co-researchers with similar concerns and experiences, and facilitating the tacit dimension of knowing. It is a phase that might seem quite boundless.

3. *Incubation.* This is period of consolidation. Focus is relaxed, such that emerging ideas are allowed to take root. It may be important to take “time out” in order to create a space for ideas to germinate, or it may involve further more-focused work with co-researchers.

4. *Illumination.* This occurs naturally and spontaneously out of the relaxed and tacit state of the previous phase. There is a meeting of conscious and unconscious aspects of the phenomenon and the beginnings of a synthesis of fragmented knowledge emerges. There is insight, and emotional connection is made. The universal significance of the phenomenon is realized. A completely new discovery is made.

5. *Explication.* This requires a further period of indwelling and focusing in order to deepen, clarify and refine the new discovery, to gain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon. This is a more detailed process, involving continuous self-exploration and awareness. The researcher explicates the major components of the phenomenon in readiness for the final phase of integration.

6. *Creative Synthesis.* This is achieved through mastery of the data and inspiration from the tacit and intuitive dimensions. The focus is upon integration and synthesis, and the mode of its expression as a fully realized picture of the discovery. The researcher may explore any creative means that feels appropriate—for example, art, poetry, music, metaphor, and so on as well as description and narrative—in order to convey the purest essence of the phenomenon to the world.

7. *Validation of the Heuristic Research.* Moustakas regards the question of validity as one of meaning. The

heuristic researcher returns again and again to the data to check that the depiction of the experience is comprehensive, vivid and accurate. This is a judgment that in the first instance can only be made by the primary researcher. Validation is further enhanced through co-researcher validation. Nevertheless, a final validation must be left to how the research is received, through publication, presentation, or perhaps performance. Indeed, it is in sharing the creative synthesis with others that the validity of heuristic work is established.

Practical and Critical Issues

HI will not be for everyone, but for anyone interested in self-inquiry who wants a structured approach within which to work and who is not intimidated by research that can lead to unpredictable avenues of inquiry that can become a quest with no seeming closure, then it is to be seriously recommended.

It is useful to point out that, in effect, it is not the researcher who chooses the research question, but the research question that chooses them! Invariably, the research question is deeply personal in origin, and it may come to light as a major preoccupation that has been around for a significantly long time.

HI is a research process that is difficult to set any clear boundaries to, particularly with respect to duration and scope. It is a method that can be best described as following one's instinct, but at the same time requiring the highest degree of transparency and thoroughness. It is a method of inquiry that should not be undertaken lightly.

HI highlights the importance of working with the heuristic process of others, especially with the historical recordings of previous inquiry. Indeed, it turns out that the works of writers, poets, artists, spiritual leaders, and scientists can all be usefully treated as the creative products of HI, which are validated by a participatory sharing with others, who in turn may be inspired to engage in their own heuristic study. And so the great chain of HI is moved along, originally as part of the ancient oral tradition, then down through the centuries as recorded and written tradition, and most recently as part of the empirical scientific tradition.

From a clinical perspective, there is a very striking similarity between the methods of HI and the practices of counseling and psychotherapy, particularly with respect to the use of the “self.” It is therefore a method of research that particularly resonates with inquiry into counseling and psychotherapy-related issues.

HI is not just a methodology, since it is possible to adapt the heuristic approach for specific purposes within other approaches to research. At the heart of the approach is a process of heuristic discernment, which can be recognized as a fundamental skill or process useful in any type of inquiry. This notion of discernment describes a participatory process of reflection and discovery, leading to fresh insight, greater awareness, or new conceptual or practical distinctions. It is at work at both the macro and micro levels of inquiry, and it not only helps promote reflexivity, but also is involved in the planning of inquiry, the collecting and analyzing of data, and the dissemination of the findings. It can be regarded as the basic skill that every qualitative (and arguably, every quantitative) researcher must develop.

Another example is the skill of heuristic indwelling, which is especially important with helping in the development of the skill of reflexivity. In addition, it is possible to view qualitative analysis as a process involving the systematic and rigorous application of indwelling or discernment. This process is particularly important in at least three ways: (1) indwelling especially stresses the participatory nature of tacit knowing, (2) indwelling is crucially involved in the sifting through and interpretation of data, and (3) indwelling seems to offer the possibility of a specific methodological tool within qualitative research.

HI is of importance to any researcher who is faced with the dilemma of the inauthentic exclusion of his or her own experience from his or her field of research. The promise of HI is that it offers a systematic way of incorporating the self into inquiry methods while ensuring a high level of reflexivity and transparency. Furthermore, it holds out the promise that some of the most significant, exciting, and urgent life events and extraordinary human experiences might be researched more closely.

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See also Autoethnography; Lived Experience; Phenomenology; Reflexivity; Tacit Knowledge; Transparency

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Qualitative research addresses specific psychosocial and cultural issues in context. Context refers to the external characteristics of the situation to be studied that are situated outside the individual, group, or even institution or community that are the focus of interest. Historical context refers to past conditions, which influence the present. Most social scientists would agree now that individual behavior is shaped by broader social, economic, political, and physical factors that interact with psychological characteristics in specific place and time. To understand these broader factors, which are influential in the present, it is important to know how they evolved and what shaped them.

The historical context refers to political, social, environmental, and cultural decisions or events occurring over time that can be described and linked to the situation under study. Political decisions might include policies that promote warfare, attempt to control population migration, eliminate of social welfare benefits, or decide to move or amalgamate a neighborhood hospital or to introduce a school voucher program—policies that all would have significant consequences for people with limited incomes or for those attempting to improve their life circumstances by crossing national borders to wealthier areas or whose efforts to improve their health and educational status are impaired. A critical perspective on historical context would examine those factors that have, over time, contributed to current situations marked by disparity, discrimination, or stigma. It would be impossible, for example, to ignore

the history of slavery, plantation life, and manufacturing when considering the circumstances confronting impoverished African American families in the rural areas of the United States or in inner-city neighborhoods in the Northeast or Midwest. Understanding the differences, for example, in migration history and struggles of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans from the Mexican–U.S. border areas calls for understanding the political and economic history of the U.S. relationship with each of these countries, as well as understanding local differences in economic and other factors that may play a role in these immigrants' current status.

Social conditions might include population decentralization as a consequence of neighborhood redevelopment or the transformation of clubs and bars from moderate cost to expensive, thus shifting the nature of the clientele with implications for social relationships among former and current users. Environmental history might include the development of large urban garbage dumps and unsuccessful efforts to remove them or the history of the environmental conditions promoting high rates of asthma. And cultural history might include the history of migration and resettlement of people of distinct national origins and stories about their efforts to preserve and reconstruct their lives through festivals, music, storytelling, dance, and other cultural manifestations.

Researchers who examine historical context must find ways of bounding the period of time they are considering. These ways may differ depending on whether researchers are considering relatively recent shifts, as in the case of illegal drug trends or the consequences of the destruction of public housing in Chicago, or long-term trends, as in the case of institutionalized discriminatory practices directed toward specific groups of minority students such as African Americans or Native Americans. Information on historical context may be found in archives, written histories, oral narratives of older residents and recent arrivals, and on the internet. As with any historical research, references and sources must be cross-checked and cross-validated before they are recorded as accurate. And, as with other forms of research, the theoretical perspectives, values, and biases of the researcher guide the reconstruction and portrayal of history and should be transparent.

Jean J. Schensul

See also Documents; Evidence; Historiography

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HISTORICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Historical discourse analysis is a poststructuralist approach to reading and writing history; a mode of conceptualizing history through a theorized lens of critique. Historical discourse analysis works against the objectivist fallacy of traditional positivist historical methods in decentering the authority of the historian as a neutral recorder of facts and the claim of historical writings as objective reconstructions of past events. In line with its intent to disrupt taken-for-granted ways of conceptualizing history, the task of historical discourse analysis is not to find truths about past events or to identify the origins or causes of past events, but to expose history as a genre—contingent, ambiguous, and interpretive. Historical discourse analysis is, therefore, less a set methodology than a set of postmethodological methodologies.

Grounded in the works of poststructuralist (or post-modernist) theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Jean-François Lyotard, historical discourse analysis approaches history as discursively produced and, more important, understands discursive productions as always and already power-laden enterprises. The task of the historian is, from this perspective, to uncover and critique the technologies of power that have come to legitimate certain ideas as truths. Historical discourse analysis is a mode of critical social analysis.

All histories from this perspective are a subjective sampling of materials, selectively organized and presented. All histories are interpretations. Derrida's blurring of the boundaries between philosophy and literature, his insistence that philosophy is a kind of writing that employs the same kinds of discursive devices (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, etc.) as literature is applied here to history. History is too conceived as a kind of literature.

From this perspective, then, no full accounting of history is possible, and no true accounting of history is achievable. No discrete sampling of materials, no matter the criteria used to guide the selection, can be

proffered as the definitive representation of a historical event. The aims of historical discourse analysis are at once more modest and more complex.

The Concept of Discourse

Historical discourse analysis is founded on a post-structuralist conception of discourse: an antiessentialist perspective on language, identity, society, and social practices. From this perspective, language and discourse are viewed not as impartial tools that describe reality, but as constitutive modes of power that construct reality in unequal ways, demarcating the center from the periphery, truth from opinion, and reality from interpretation. Discourses are understood as central modes and components of the production, maintenance, and conversely, resistance to systems of power and inequality; no usage of language is considered a neutral, impartial, or apolitical act.

This concept of discourse, thus, works against the commonsense understanding of language that assumes a signifier has a stable and consistent meaning—in which meaning appears to be fixed. The poststructuralist reworking of the term *discourse* is then a critique of the ontological and epistemological foundations of the modern, including the structuralist, understanding of being and its relation to the world. It problematizes the usually unproblematized link between epistemology and ontology, repudiating the foundational idea in Western metaphysics that a direct correspondence exists between being and knowing, the thing and its name, and in doing so disrupts the reigning Enlightenment notion of objective science and the free subject, as well as the structuralist discourses that valorize structure in place of human agency.

This discourse is not, despite persistent misreadings, a nihilistic denial of empirical reality or an absurdist refutation of existence. The claim is not that the world does not exist—only that metaphysical truth does not exist. Events occur, but that which people demarcate as events, and the meaning people give such demarcations derive only through the mediation of language and discourse. Derrida's famous declaration that there is nothing beyond the text and Foucault's insistence that no one and no thing is free from the workings of power are expressions of this idea that all meanings are constructed through language and discourse and all knowledge is, therefore, interpretation—unstable, contingent, and constituted always and already through the play of power that legitimates some interpretations and not others.

The Role of the Historian

The positivist view of history, which presupposes the historian as an unencumbered subject who stands outside of discourse, is according to Derrida the original fallacy at the heart of Western metaphysics. Working against the disciplinary assumptions of traditional history (scientific historiography or historical realism), historical discourse analysis contests the ideal of the historian as an objective observer or recorder of facts, an author who stands outside the texts she or he reads and writes.

The role of the effective historian, according to Foucault, is to unmask the demagoguery of traditional histories (as well as science and other such knowledge-claims). The point is to challenge the very assumptions that enable the hierarchical distinction between history and literature, fact and interpretation. The aspiration of the historian is not to produce a better history or to exchange the wrong history with the right. The historian's role, from Foucault's perspective, is not the impossible task of writing the true historiography or the revisionist aim to produce a truer history, but the task of uncovering the processes through which history becomes established as such.

Challenging the Medium

Given its poststructuralist theoretical frame, an important element of historical discourse analysis is the decentering of the historical itself. Foucault's approach to history, for instance, serves a double function: it is a social critique aimed at dislodging the usual story, as well as a counter-history aimed at dislodging the usual method of telling the usual story. The content of Foucauldian history works against the tendency to invoke profound historical constants and meaningful progressions, against both a presentist fallacy that conceives the past in terms of the present and a fallacy of finalism that formulates a past event as the genesis of a present circumstance. The sources of Foucauldian history resist the usual chronicles of heroes and kings, treaties and wars (and in an analogous move to Derrida's notion of "reading at the margins"), in looking to hitherto disregarded and discounted sources and stories for occurrences and practices that may have been slight and inconsequential in their original circumstances. The Catholic practice of the confession, a minor religious practice begun in the 17th century, gets taken up as a significant thread of analysis in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, for example.

The form of Foucauldian history contest the traditional linear narrative, working against the pull of the chronological trajectory—the legitimated structure for organizing historical facts. It seeks, in other words, to make visible the dynamic of power central to the systemic production and perpetuation of both the “true” and “legitimate” story and the “authoritative” and “correct” manner of its telling.

Uses of Historical Discourse Analysis

Historical discourse analysis is used generally to trace the ways in which the particular discursive devices found in examined texts or discourses functioned to construct certain normative ideas and views of events and people. Such analyses tend to examine both formal and informal practices of a given period through the examination of the social, political, legal, and disciplinary codes and their discourses to see how a particular category of subject (e.g., the child, the immigrant, the insane, the criminal, the dependent, the homosexual, etc.) and subject categories (e.g., race, culture, gender, age, sexuality, etc.) become constructed. Thus, to paraphrase cultural studies critic Stuart Hall, the hallmark of historical discourse analysis is the study of discourses as systems of representations.

An example of historical discourse analysis at work is the Foucauldian analysis of madness in the Age of Reason. Underlying this analysis of how the category of madness and the identity of the insane was formulated through the particular sets of knowledge available in that episteme was the illustration of the idea that in any episteme, claims of truth and falsity are made in a conflictual economy: that some discourses are legitimated as being able to pronounce that which is true or false while others are not, and some disciplines become established as *science* or as *knowledge* while others do not. His point, ultimately, was that such identities and categories were, and are, contingent not essential—discursively constructed rather than found in nature. There are no absolute and objective bases for making those distinctions where they are made, and therefore, no unassailable reason that certain behaviors or characteristics get grouped as descriptors of sanity, health, or Americanness while others are grouped as their opposites.

Because historical discourse analysis is an approach to history rather than a set methodology as such, the specific analytical method for the examination of texts or discourses can vary. Methods of close reading, such

as Derridean deconstruction, or the many techniques of discourse analysis in general can be applied to historical texts as ways of analyzing texts or discourses as the means of understanding linguistic practices as social practices.

Yoosun Park

See also Constructivism; Deconstruction; Discourse; Discourse Analysis; Foucauldian Discourse Analysis; Postmodernism; Poststructuralism

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HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Whether studying a contemporary social issue, such as drug abuse or terrorism, or the history of an individual person or of a concept, such as freedom, historical research provides the critical contextual link of the past to the present. Using a historical research design is of particular relevance to research about contemporary social and cultural issues, as it enhances an understanding of the present. Any contemporary issue is bound intrinsically with the social and historical milieu of the past. Most historical research involves some type of conceptual idea, theme, or person in history. This entry discusses the stages in historical research design, the types of data used, and the forms such research can take. It also explores issues in the evaluation and analysis of such data and briefly reviews the impact of technology on historical research.

Definition of Terms

Historical research is most often associated with historiography as the primary research method. Historiography goes beyond data gathering to analyze and develop theoretical and holistic conclusions about historical events and periods. It includes a critical examination of sources, interpretation of data, and analysis that focuses on the narrative, interpretation, and use of valid and reliable evidence that supports the study conclusions. Although a historian studies history or may teach history, the historiographer writes, analyzes, and interprets history.

Stages in Historical Research Design

Historical researchers are often depicted as detectives, looking under many different stones for clues of existence rather than simply describing the appearance and location of the stones.

1. The first stage of a historical study is the identification of a researchable phenomenon and includes reading relevant literature, listening to present ideas about the phenomena, and even more important, reflecting on the researcher's interest. Before the researcher begins the formal search process, examining background information on the topic can provide valuable information in developing the focus of the study. The researcher then selects a particular time period, person, phenomena, or era related to the focus of the study.

2. The second stage involves developing hypotheses or research questions and identifying a theoretical perspective to guide the data collection process and interpretation of results. A theoretical framework can provide a guide for the historical study, both in data collection and analysis. Although some historians dispute the need for such a framework, most historiographers contend that a theoretical perspective helps the researcher focus and interpret historical events as recorded.

3. The third stage is the data exploration and collection stage, which can be the most time- and labor-intensive part of the research process depending on the subject and accessibility of data sources.

4. The fourth stage, following data collection, includes fact-checking, evaluation of the validity and reliability of data, and the analysis of evidence from each source. During this stage, the researcher evaluates

the data, including the analysis and meaning of missing data, and forms generalizations. It is at this stage that the researcher answers the research question or accepts or rejects the hypotheses and forms conclusions.

5. The final stage of historical research involves the writing of the report in which findings are described along with their interpretation and which provides detailed supportive evidence in defense of the conclusions.

Data Collection

Historical researchers in their investigation of the past often treat data as "witnesses in a trial." From this perspective, the historical method is more than the simple search for facts about the historical story. A historical investigation includes interpreting the meaning of events, which are analyzed based on the available of surviving data. Data sources can be primary sources in the form of documents, paintings, music or media, or they can be secondary resources, such as stories, literature of the era, and other accounts of the event or phenomena. All the data should be evaluated with a critical eye, using a variety of primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

Primary sources refer to first-person accounts of events in original documents, letters, artwork, literature, music, observational notes, journals, and photographs. Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during a historical event or time period. Primary sources were either created during the time period being studied or were created at a later date by a participant in the events being studied (as in the case of memoirs), and they reflect the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer. Primary sources may be in their original format or may have been reproduced later in a different format, such as in a translated document, book, microfilm collection, or video or on the internet. These original sources of data hold the greatest value in the validity and reliability of historical analysis.

Generally, a primary source is one that was created at or very near the time of the historical event it describes. These primary sources are also usually the product of either the person(s) involved in the event or an eyewitness to the event. Primary sources also include materials transcribed, translated, printed, created, produced, and/or published later, so long as

the later version is an authentic and accurate word-for-word rendering of the original. Handwritten documents, for example, are sometimes published in printed collections by academic presses in an effort to make them easier for researchers to access and to read, such as those that have been translated from the original language. An example of a primary source is the trial transcripts of the official trials of Joan of Arc. Although originally written in Latin, they are now available in English translations on the internet and have been verified by French historical experts.

Although primary sources are the most critical data for historical research, the use of these sources as data, such as first-person accounts, is not sufficient proof that the described event even occurred. A critical analysis of primary resources may reveal that the author, writer, or creator of the primary source reflects the perception of the writer, observer, or witness, and the accuracy of what occurred is inaccurate. This possibility must be considered and carefully evaluated by the researcher as to the validity and authenticity of the original source.

Further, historical researchers must recognize that original documents are only a trace of what remains of a historical event. They are greatly influenced by the perception, biases, and selective survival of the document and are limited to specific groups of people in society whose accounts have survived, such as the educated and literate. People who had little power in a culture—such as women, members of the lower classes, and minorities—have produced few primary resources. This result is primarily because of illiteracy, because of their use of oral rather than written historical records, or because their work has not been considered valuable. For example, the trials of witches during the medieval period in Europe reflect only the officials who conducted the trials and interrogations. There are few first-person accounts from the perspective of the women themselves, other than forced confessions. The women who were accused, convicted, and eventually burned at the stake as punishment were usually illiterate, and their stories as primary sources are unavailable to researchers. As George Orwell once noted, “History is written by the winners” (“As I Please” newspaper column, *Tribune*, February 4, 1944).

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are data from letters, diaries, and account descriptions of persons who were not eyewitnesses of the event or who did not personally

know the person who is the focus of the study. This category of sources is significantly easier to define, understand, and access. A secondary source is any item that was created after the events it describes or is related to or is created by someone who was not directly involved in or was an eyewitness to the events. Secondary sources also include summaries, personal interpretations, and views and include simple descriptions of primary sources. Types of secondary sources include biographies and accounts written years after the event, even if written by a witness to the event (e.g., a first-person account of a child written as an adult). Other examples are scholarly or popular books and articles, reference books, biographies, and textbooks. Critical analysis of secondary sources follows the same criteria as mentioned above for primary resources.

Sampling can be quite diverse in nature depending on the available archival resources. More than in other research designs, the researcher attempts to locate every relevant documentary source related to the phenomena.

As previously discussed, the researcher should assume that many documents and other data sources have been lost, destroyed, or deliberately distorted. The literate and educated of societies and cultures were in positions of power, such as church and political leaders. They were the primary authors of the vast majority of official primary and secondary sources until the past 2 centuries. Young girls and women often wrote letters or kept diaries, when possible, and are considered valuable first-person accounts. A well-known example is the *Diary of Anne Frank*, a primary source, written by a young teen girl who experienced the Holocaust by hiding with her family in Amsterdam. Anne Frank’s diary gave historians a valuable perspective of the Holocaust, a persecution that did not exist in official documents. Artwork created by those in concentration camps of World War II and propaganda films made by the Third Reich are other examples of primary data that add validity and reliability to historical research. Secondary sources in the example of the German Holocaust would include diaries, journals, and interviews with children and relatives of those who died during World War II.

The selection of data samples is based on the purpose of the research. This selection may seem obvious, but historical relics are often broad in nature, while only a small portion of the documentary evidence is relevant to the research question. Due to the nature of what humans leave behind, there exists varying degrees of archival value in historical data. For example, finding unfamiliar documents or information that

is unrelated to the research focus can be a distraction and is time-consuming. However, this discovery phase can assist the researcher in refining the study and/or research question. Essentially, historical research is a translation of translations.

Data Sources

Diaries, photographs, art, literature, minutes of meetings, eyewitness accounts in newspapers or other official documents, court records, letters, maps, and other relevant sources can often be found in university and specialty collections. Government websites and collections are also excellent beginning points for locating data sources, as are special collections from museums and art galleries. Many of these can now be located on the internet. Historical research that is often overlooked includes a variety of art and media forms, such as paintings, sculpture, poetry, music, film, television, and literature. These resources can depict the shifts and changes in the social, cultural, and political context of history.

Many of the senses are used in historical research: listening to music or recordings of the era, reading and knowing the language and expressions of the era, taking extensive notes from primary sources, observing art and other media, and examining available artifacts. Rigor and systematic data collection is critical, which includes seeking assistance from archivists and historical experts in the subject area and visiting relevant physical locations. Data should always be labeled and dated and authorship identified, including all critical details of the data source.

Types of Historical Research

Historical research can take many forms, depending on the purpose of the research as well as on the availability and quality of data and resources available to the researcher. The following types of research methods represent the most commonly used. Historical researchers often combine approaches and include other innovative data collection methods as well.

Oral history is a biographical approach in which the researcher gathers personal recollections of events from a living individual through audio and videotape recordings. Oral history can include written works of an individual who has died, but is primarily limited to a living individual. Most researcher questions and comments are unstructured, although a general interview schedule

may be employed to guide the story depending on the nature of the oral history. This method provides the respondents, or storyteller, a natural and effective environment that allows a reciprocal interchange between the researcher and the respondent. Many oral histories are located in university collections and are available on the internet.

Autobiography narrative is an account of a person's life that has been written or recorded by the individuals themselves. A biography narrative account of a person's life can be either told to the researcher or found in archives, documents, and other sources.

Life history is a biographical writing in the form of an extensive record of a person's life, as told to the researcher. The life history of a person involves a living individual.

Case study is a type of historical research that sheds light on a phenomenon through an in-depth examination of a single case exemplar of a phenomenon. The case can be an individual person, an event, a group, or an institution. Case studies take a relatively small subsample of research subjects as a source of in-depth, qualitative information.

Reliability and Validity

Establishing authenticity is a challenging and critical aspect of historical research. As has been previously discussed, artifacts of history are often a result of "selection bias." The survival of the documents is significant. Validity is related to the external critique of the data. In other words, is the document or artifact an authentic representation? This answer can be determined by age of the document, such as the paper, writing style of the author, origin, and consistency with other evidence. Verification by experts is often included in the external validation process. Data should include at least two or more sources of the same type of information. These sources can be two primary sources, which concur without conflict or disagreement, or one primary source and one independent secondary source, which corroborates with the primary source and does not contain any substantial contradictory information. The researcher, even with intense scrutiny of the data sources, must always consider that primary sources have been altered after the original event.

Internal criticism of data constitutes the reliability of data sources. The researcher attempts to establish

the meaning in the data and the context from which it was derived. Researchers question the trustworthiness as a source, such as the author's biases and perceptions of the event, and if the authors are reporting from intimate knowledge or from others' descriptions of the phenomena. The researcher must be vigilant about including both positive and negative criticism of all data sources, including missing accounts, the lack of relevant viewpoints, and persons involved in events. Understanding the way in which cotemporary words and phrases are used in contrast to past usage and meanings is a critical aspect in establishing reliability. Abortion, for example, has not historically been used to describe the present social and medical definitions. Reading and analyzing secondary sources can often provide the researcher with clarification of language use, artistic interpretations, and alterations of historical events.

Data Analysis and Reporting of Findings

Interpretation occurs at the analytic stage through interpretation of meaning. Extensive examples should be used, with excerpts from documents and other artifacts. Although most historical research is based on incomplete data, the researcher must extend and derive opinion beyond what is discovered and is known from the research data collection process. A critical description of historical evidence, an evaluation of its historical significance to contemporary society, and creative narratives should be included in the written research report, including the derived inferences. The researcher should include all sources in the reference list, footnotes about data sources, and multiple references. This list should reflect the corroboration of facts, as evidence of reliability and validity of the findings.

Future Trends in Historical Research

During the past several years, technology has advanced the use of the internet for correspondence of both primary and secondary sources. As technology has advanced, few people keep diaries or journals or write letters. Those who deliver speeches often do not write them verbatim, as in the past. Storytelling has most often been associated with the oral traditions of the undereducated and less developed cultures and was often expressed for society's entertainment rather than for leaving historical evidence. Yet, storytelling is

an important historical method since it is a way of communicating values and cultural paradigms. Contemporary storytelling may now take the form of emails, blogs, and instant messaging, creating challenges for historians accustomed to depending on handwritten letters and traditional data sources. Historical research will change as more correspondence and eyewitness accounts are recorded on the internet and become available as new data sources for historical research.

Karen Saucier Lundy

See also Artifacts; Autobiography; Biography; Case Study; Data; Diaries and Journals; Document Analysis; Genealogical Approach; Historiography; Life Stories; Memoirs; Oral History; Secondary Data; Unobtrusive Research

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HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historiography is concerned with historical interpretations and representations of the past—put another way, the writing of history as opposed to history itself. Although historiography is primarily a disciplinary phrase introduced by contemporary academics, the inquiry it represents can be traced back to the very

earliest origins of historical writing in the work of ancient Greek writers who reflected on each others' historical conclusions.

At one level, focused on specific historical accounts, historiography reflects on the theories and philosophies that inform and motivate them and how they both might influence the conclusions drawn. This reflection might involve, for example, critical reflection of the authenticity, subjectivity, and authority of various information sources. At another level, taking a broader perspective, historiography sheds light on the dominant or collective interpretations of groups of historians within particular time periods and how they reflect disciplinary progress and change (this reflection might be thought of as reflecting on the disciplinary history of studying history). Importantly, however, what particularly characterizes historiography is, crosscutting both these levels, an exploration of the various contexts that affect historical thinking in any one time and place. In this sense, historiography involves consideration of the broader cultural, social, economic, and political forces that shape historical writers and their writing. This scholarship acknowledges that there is no pure historical truth that can be obtained totally impartially. Indeed, it is recognized that all historical accounts are produced by individuals who are products of their environments that affect their focus, what they include or leave out, and the conclusions they draw.

As a practice, historiography has progressed and changed. Over recent years, it has moved from practical concerns on data sources to include far greater consideration of these aforementioned contexts and forces. As the social sciences have gradually become more interested in historical reflection, historiography has played an important role in the development of subdisciplines such as historical sociology, historical geography, and historical economics in terms of reflecting both on how social sciences influence history and on how they represent history (and the people and groups who make history—such as women, working classes, and numerous ethnicities and cultures). Moreover, because of the reflection on the practice of writing history, the lessons learned from historiographical accounts help shape the future of history as a humanity.

Historiography—both as a critical way of writing history and as a reflection on the writing of history—has involved the use of a range of methods, often in combination, which includes the use of archived material and

written historical accounts (including research, autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, and oral histories). For more recent historiographies, representation in the television, media, and other forms of mass communication might also be consulted. The distinguishing factor, however, in historiographers' uses of these sources is a critical comparison and critical perspective on their origins, uses, and biases.

Gavin J. Andrews

See also Document Analysis; Historical Context; Historical Research

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HORIZONTALIZATION

Horizontalization stems from the idea that the researcher should be receptive to and place equal value on every statement or piece of data. Being universally receptive allows the researcher initially to grant equal value to each statement uttered by the participant and thus promotes a rhythmic flow between the researcher and the study participant—an interaction that motivates full disclosure of the experience. The metaphor of a horizon is utilized when discussing horizontalization. A horizon can be thought of as a perspective, or way of seeing the world. Thus, a horizon refers to that which comes into a person's conscious experience and acts as a foundation or condition of the phenomenon. Horizons are believed to be unlimited because humans can never entirely use up their experiences of things regardless of how many times they are reassessed. Although no horizon lasts indefinitely, whenever one horizon diminishes, a new horizon emerges.

Phenomenologists believe that we experience phenomena that exist in the world via self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-reflection. The horizontal (i.e., lived experiences) brings to the forefront the experiences of individuals and forms perceptions of experiences that

will always prevail even though the elements of conscious life appear and disappear. Thus, horizontalization helps the mind to discover its own essence.

Horizontalization is a method for understanding data through a phenomenological reduction by reducing the number of words and replacing the vocabulary with similar terms in which the researcher places equal value on each statement or piece of data. As such, horizontalization is a continuous process, and even though a person may reach a termination point in which a perception of something is discontinued, the potential for discovery always remains—thereby making a complete reduction impossible. When utilizing horizontalization, the researcher is trying to consider each horizon in the data that enable him or her to understand an experience.

After engaging in horizontalization, the researcher can ignore or delete statements that are irrelevant or repetitive in the data. By eliminating redundant and immaterial statements, only the horizons, or the unique aspects of the participants' perspectives, are left. As the researcher considers each horizon and its textural qualities through self-awareness and reflection, an understanding of the experience emerges. At this point, significant statements are identified that provide information about the experiences of the participants. The researcher carefully examines the identified significant statements, and then clusters these statements into themes or meaning units. Examples of researchers engaging in horizontalization occur in many interviews. When the researcher is nondirective and open to the participant disclosing information, the researcher is utilizing horizontalization techniques. Using statements and questions that are reflective, nonjudgmental, and inquisitive can reveal multiple horizons in the participants' perspectives.

The process of horizontalization assists the researcher by reducing potential researcher bias. When giving each statement equal value, the researcher cannot hone in on one aspect of the participants' perspective; instead, the whole perspective is considered. In other words, each statement is taken individually as an indicator of truth. By engaging in horizontalization, the researcher moves from seeing the raw data as representing empirical information and thus can begin to identify the underlying meanings and essences in the data.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Phenomenology

Further Readings

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HUMANITIES, QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN

The humanities are the study of the meaning humans attribute to their experience through analysis and interpretation of the products of that experience, be they conceptual, cultural, or physical artifacts. Disciplines in the humanities include modern and classical languages, linguistics, literature, history, philosophy, jurisprudence, archaeology, comparative religion, ethics, and the history, theory, and criticism of the arts. The humanities have had a significant influence on the conduct of qualitative research in the social sciences and in education; for example, in the way that hermeneutics inspired the interpretive turn in the social sciences and how literary and art criticism influenced the development of arts-based research in education (e.g., Elliot Eisner's development of educational connoisseurship). Educational researcher Frederick Erickson, whose early studies focused on historical musicology, asserts that the wisdom and empathy cultivated through the humanities is especially needed now in educational research, which is in danger of being desiccated by a misguided scientism.

One may speak of the humanities as inherently qualitative, as they intend to understand human experience by interpreting the constructs of that experience. Although quantitative methods are also critical to humanistic disciplines, such as using census data in historical investigations or conducting chemical analysis of artifacts, much work in the humanities is accomplished through the qualitative methods of interview, observation, and document analysis. This entry focuses on how these methods are employed, especially in history and in the history, theory, and criticism of the arts (including literature).

History and Narrative

Research in this area may be focused on a topic, event, or individual and be represented through oral, written, or film or video documentary, biography, or autobiography. Historical research refers to topics, events, or

individuals existing in the past (or past experience); it is narrative research when the topic or individual, or individual experience, is studied in the present.

Recent work in historical research reflects a linguistic turn in the discipline, influenced by postmodernism and the poststructuralist deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Historians working in this vein reject the possibility of an objective historical truth that can be uncovered empirically, asserting instead that there are multiple truths and ways of interpreting and representing a historical phenomenon that are perspectively situated and influenced by sociopolitical power structures. For example, Foucault's method of archaeology sought to unearth discursive rules that were sociopolitically constructed to understand the representation of past events. In his later writings, Foucault's analytic method of genealogy, significantly inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche and exemplified in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, interpreted history as the product of continuous shifting power relations.

The poststructuralist linguistic turn raises significant concerns regarding the relativity of knowledge and possibility of empirical historical or narrative research. Other movements in postmodernism, such as semiotics (the reading of signs as signifiers of meaning so that anything might be called a text that can be read and interpreted—human action, a painting, etc.) and social and cultural history, acknowledge the sociopolitical construction of experience as one of constant change instead of a linear progression and of the situated nature of knowledge, but without yielding to complete relativism. Clifford Geertz's work in anthropology and writing on interpretation (e.g., the importance of providing a thick description) was influential in history as well as in social science, especially in social and cultural history.

Working within the postmodern paradigm, many historians and narrative researchers assert the possibility of conducting empirical research, while recognizing that any understanding is sociopolitically situated in a particular time and place and according to the perspectives of the researcher in dialogue with his or her sources. The researcher is not able to uncover a single causal explanation or truth, but rather an interpretation of what a phenomenon may have meant to specific individuals as described by them orally or through written documents or other artifacts. As in other forms of qualitative research, the reader or viewer plays an active role in constructing an interpretation and understanding

of the assertions presented by the researcher. The researcher (and reader or viewer) can establish the trustworthiness of presented interpretations in ways similar to qualitative research in the social sciences and education, for example through triangulation of sources, transparent descriptions of the acquisition and analysis of sources, and so on. Historical and narrative research is conducted primarily through interview and document analysis.

Interview

The interview is used to record oral histories. Historical and narrative research recorded through oral histories has traditionally straddled the realms of the humanities and social science, situating itself in either realm depending on the topic of investigation. Significantly, the federal government of the United States, on the recommendation of the National Research Council, has recently exempted oral history research from review by institutional (ethics) review boards, thereby complicating its use in topics of relevance to social science and educational research.

Oral histories can provide access to insights about a topic that are not available through archival or written documents or artifacts. Oral histories also provide a different kind of insight because they reflect the memories of a witness to an event. In her book on recording oral history, Valerie Raleigh Yow devotes an entire chapter to the significance of memory in oral history, discussing issues related to psychological and physical influences on memory, individual, and collective memory, and effects of the interviewer–narrator relationship on memory. Oral histories also give access to the experiences of disenfranchised or powerless groups, whose information is less commonly documented in writing. A significant objective of feminist scholarship is to tell the stories of marginalized or disempowered individuals and groups. Oral history interviews are typically audio and possibly video-recorded, in-depth, and lengthy, lasting from a 1 hour-long session to numerous sessions.

Oral histories may be presented as life histories (or stories), biographies, or autobiographies. Yow defines a life history or story as an account written or told by an individual about his or life that is then edited and presented by another person. A biography is a narrative about an individual's life constructed through life history accounts, personal documents, artifacts, and photographs. Unlike a life history, which stands on its

own, the biographical account puts the individual's life within a historical context. For example, historian Theodore Rosengarten interviewed farmer Ned Cobb to document the 1930s Sharecropper's Union movement. Autobiography is written by an individual on his or her initiative. Yow recommends the use of autobiographies in biographies and life histories when available.

There are numerous examples of oral history projects available online. For example, the U.S. Library of Congress has a collection of over 2,900 life histories collected through the Federal Writer's Project of the U.S. Work Projects Administration (1936–1940). Also a part of the Federal Writer's Project is a collection of over 2,300 narratives of first-person accounts of slavery. The Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution has transcriptions of interviews with over 180 American artists from diverse regions and cultural backgrounds.

Document Analysis

In biographies and other historical accounts, documents and artifacts are used to develop interpretations (sometimes in conjunction with oral histories). Documents and physical artifacts (e.g., photographs, clothing, books, tools, etc.) may come from archives or from an individual's personal possessions or an institution's private or public collection. The method of analysis will depend on the kind of document or artifact and the research questions. Regardless of the analysis method, the researcher will attempt to put the document or artifact in sociohistoric context and consider; for example, the motivation for its creation and who the audience or user might have been. Feminist theorists have been influential in this area as well in their efforts to use the documents and artifacts of marginalized groups as a means for making their voices heard in historical and narrative accounts.

A good example of the application of postmodern theory's emphasis on sociohistoric context in a work of cultural history is the five-volume series on private life, spanning Pagan Rome to modern times, examining Western European cultural artifacts (architecture, clothing, pottery, tools, art, etc.) to understand the private life of Western European people from different eras. For example, in the first volume focused on Pagan Rome to Byzantium, a chapter dedicated to the Roman household and its freed slaves analyzes domestic architectural remains, fresco paintings, sculptures,

and personal items (such as a woman's toilet kit) among other things to understand the hierarchical structure of human relationships in domestic settings in ancient Rome.

Official documents are also commonly used to investigate a historical topic. For example, probate inventories (legally mandated inventory of possessions of a deceased person) have been used in early American cultural research. These inventories would record in exhaustive detail items located in a deceased's household room by room, ranging from beds and linens to specific books, numbers of food items, farming tools, and so on. The presence or absence and amounts of various items gives historians insight into the nature of that person's existence and can serve as an example of lifestyle for a certain group of people at that time (e.g., a farmer, tradesman, landowner, etc.). Probate inventories have been used to investigate topics ranging from literacy in 18th-century Westborough, Massachusetts, to Rhode Island hand-loom weavers to household sleeping arrangements in early Massachusetts, as documented in the book *Early American Probate Inventories* by Peter Benes and Jane Montague Benes.

History, Theory, and Criticism of the Fine Arts

Recent qualitative research in the history, theory, and criticism of the fine arts reflects the influence of postmodernism as discussed above in relation to history, but the difference is that the focus of inquiry in these disciplines revolves around cultural practices manifest in art objects or performances. Essentially, postmodernism has challenged the formalism of modernism so that most researchers in these disciplines do not search for a single, grand interpretation or meaning of an art work or performance that may be discerned from an analysis of its formal properties, but that there may be multiple interpretations and meanings to an art work or performance. These interpretations are dependent upon the interaction of the inquirer's prior knowledge and life experience and on the sociocultural situation of the artwork or performance's creation, including characteristics of the creator and the time and place of the creative act. This analysis applies to art history, aesthetics (theory of the fine arts), and criticism. In art history, Michael Baxandall's 1972 *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* was seminal in moving art history away from connoisseurship to studying art objects within their sociocultural context—as both a reflection

Former Slaves Tell Their Stories: An Example From the American Memories Project of the Library of Congress

The American Memories Project of the Library of Congress includes almost 7 hours of interviews conducted with 23 former slaves born between 1823 and the early 1860s. In the interviews, which took place between 1932 and 1975, the interviewees discuss how they felt about slavery, slaveholders, coercion of slaves, their families, and freedom. Several individuals sing songs, many of which were learned during the time of their enslavement. It is important to note that all of the interviewees spoke 60 or more years after the end of their enslavement, and it is their full lives that are reflected in these recordings. The individuals documented in this presentation have much to say about living as African Americans from the 1870s to the 1930s, and beyond.

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. George Johnson, Mound Bayou, which took place in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, in September 1941. The interview was conducted by Charles S. Johnson (1893–1956), a sociologist who served as the director of research for the National Urban League and later became the first African American president of Fisk University. The interview was transcribed by John Wesley Work III (1901–1976), an educator, composer, choral director, and ethnomusicologist who held a variety of positions at Fisk University until his retirement in 1966. With Fisk University sociology professor Lewis Jones, Johnson and Work also collaborated with the Archive of American Folk Song on the Mississippi Delta Collection project, which was a two-year joint field study conducted by the Library of Congress and Fisk University during the summers of 1941 and 1942.

Interview with Mr. George Johnson, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, September 1941

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: Ah, do you, ah do you remember the first blues you heard that you didn't like? Do you remember what it was? Do you remember when you first heard it and didn't like it?

Mr. George Johnson: I don't know. The first blues I heard—oh, I hear a little old boy sing that thing here. I forgot it now, anyhow, right here in Mound Bayou.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: Hmm.

Mr. George Johnson: Because that's something I didn't care for. It was a little stupid for me; I didn't care nothing about it.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: A little stupid for you, huh?

Mr. George Johnson: Yeah, sir. Yeah, sir. I didn't care no kind of blues. Didn't care nothing about it. I hear niggas, niggas sing the blues and I didn't want to hear it.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: You didn't want to hear it?

Mr. George Johnson: Never want to hear it. [I think (?) he is crazy. That's right, [he is (?)] crazy.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: [laughter] What did it sound like?

Mr. George Johnson: Oh, it wasn't, sound like nothing. Just some—oh, lord most of, it wasn't nothing. Just some Negroes just acting monkey. Nigga act like he got shortcoming. That's right. He shortcoming. He uncouth. See. Nigga ain't got some kind of stuff in his head, why he just going be a monkey all his life, right. Care about it.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: Naw, I like the blues.

Mr. George Johnson: You do! I don't care nothing about it.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: [laughter]

Mr. George Johnson: Nothing. Nothing about the blues. Want to get me to know something, like something, you get a brass band start let's go do a quickmarch out there. Show you what I'll do. quickmarch go I'll go play ??? St. Alderman's Command, St. Alamo ??? you up. [Mr. George Johnson taps his cane for emphasis]

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: St. Alamo? That's another, another one—

Mr. George Johnson: St. Alamo, my god all mighty! Man. Yes, sir. quickmarch.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: Quickmarch?

Mr. George Johnson: Quickmarch. Every foot [tip scratch sidewalk (?) every, every fellow's foot just right there. Every fellow's foot.

Dr. Charles S. Johnson: Ah, do you remember any other quickmarch titles?

<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	Yeah. St. Alderman's Command quick, quickmarch.	<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Hmm.
<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Huhmm?	<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	See. I got it in my mind. In my head stuck since I was a little boy. You take a man [stick it in his head (?)] he soon forget that thing. You get them boy here he wanna learn it. He get to learn that stuff. Learn, if he's a boy, he can learn. Learned mine sixty-years ago. Sixty-five-years ago.
<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	St. Alderman's Command.	<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Hmm.
<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Saint whose command?	<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	Got it from Daddy. Grandpa. Got it from pa, he wasn't ??? blacksmith but he know it, understand. You see. He's engineer. Civil Engineer. Now, he, master Jeff, sent my dad across Louisiana to chain [peg (?)] the chain to white folks land, you understand. And across the river Ashford Landing, niggas be in the field farming, you know, breaking up ground and cutting stalks like that. "See that nigga?" That nigga say, "What nigga you talking about?" He looks at them. "That Jeff Davis' nigga. That Jeff Davis' free nigga. That Jeff Davis, see nigga got them chains [pegging (?)] ??? , part nigga." When they meet day, you understand, that ain't no white man.
<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	Yes. St. Alderman's Command quickmarch. And the Final Quickstep quickmarch.	<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Hmm.
<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Final Quicksteps?	<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	"Yes, sir. That's Jeff Davis nigga. That nigga belong to master Jeff. I'm scared of that nigga." Now he come back with that ??? Mound Palmyra. Be on master Jeff's place, you understand.
<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	Yes, sir. [Mr. Johnson intones] These are quicksteps to these quicksteps. Man, been all through that stuff. Been through it. Been through. See I, the reason I know everything, because when you, fellow got to learned it from a blacksmith. He had lived had something in his mind and he's young. And he knew he'd get old. See. That's why I can tell you something about drilling a piece of iron. Because my dad learned me. He showed me how.	<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Right.
<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Hmm.	<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	??? man on a chain, you understand. ???.
<i>Mr. George Johnson:</i>	I don't fool with no kind of iron, you see. I played brass band long enough not to fool with a blacksmith. I play every now, you see. But don't take me like, can't use no, I know what, like I tear up a piece of iron like a rock.	<i>Dr. Charles S. Johnson:</i>	Give you money for it.

Endnote: The interviewer goes on to ask him what he said, and he says "I cussin' you out." But actually, Mr. George Johnson doesn't use any profanity. The basic translation of the passage is: I'm not a child. I'm not waiting on [you (?)]. I don't know, I don't know, yes ??? . Which in slavery times would most certainly have been considered impertinent and insubordinate, but it wasn't cursing. Mr. George Johnson seems to be having a bit of a joke on the interviewer, using the Creole to express some impertinence and resistant attitudes that don't at all come through in the English majority of his testimony. Whether this is indicative of some wider sociolinguistic trend or not would make a fascinating research topic. We do know that in the 19th century, the Creole language was often used for satire and expressing emotions that would have been socially unpermissible in either international French or English.

Source: Transcription of an Interview with George Johnson, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, September 1941 (part 5 of 6). Call number: master/afc/afc9999001/t4779A; digital ID: afc9999001-t4779a. Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Washington, D.C. 20540. Available online at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/afcesn:@field\(DOCID+afc 9999001t4779a\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/afcesn:@field(DOCID+afc 9999001t4779a)).

Voices From the Days of Slavery: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html>

of and influence on that context. In aesthetics, Morris Weitz declared in the 1950s that there is no single definition of art, which influenced the development of aesthetic theories such as George Dickie's institutional theory of art in which stakeholders in the art world determine what is valued as art. In art criticism, professionals moved beyond the modernist formalism of Clement Greenberg's writing on abstract expressionism, for example, to investigate other sources of meaning, such as Donald Kuspit's work on the influence of psychology and spirituality on interpretations of art. Within each of these disciplines, there is the recognition of multiple interpretations and the sociohistoric situation of knowledge and understanding about an artwork, including the sociohistoric situation of the artist. Although the artist's intent is considered in postmodern art history (visual and performing arts), aesthetics, and criticism, it is not considered the sole source for understanding an artwork's meaning, as the possible meanings reside in the dialogic exchange between artist, artwork, and viewer.

As in history, however, the possibility of multiple interpretations does not necessitate rampant relativism. In art history, like history, there are archival documents and documents from individual, public, and private collections to use as primary and secondary sources. For example, in researching the provenance (history of ownership) of an art object, an art historian might consult auction sales records, estate sale inventories, exhibition catalogues, and an individual's correspondence. Information from these sources may be triangulated to ensure the validity of the interpretation. In art criticism, the critic draws on knowledge of the artist's intent (provided, perhaps, through an interview, artist's statement posted in an exhibition or catalogue, or in the artist's correspondence—consider the numerous letters Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo), as well as on the knowledge of the sociohistoric context of the work's creation and on what is observable in the art object. In this way, art criticism may employ the qualitative methods of interview, observation, and document analysis.

Numerous writers on criticism, art and literary, provide some criteria for determining the value of an interpretation. Umberto Eco asserts that a text has rights, limiting to what extent it can be interpreted or that there is a range of interpretations it will allow. These limits are set by the author's (or artist) intent, the signifiers in the text (whether verbal, visual, auditory, or kinetic), and the sociocultural circumstance of the

work's creation and presentation. Terry Barrett offers three main tenets for interpreting art: (1) it reflects what one sees in the artwork and knows about the sociocultural circumstances of its creation, (2) the interpretation is presented with evidence that can be referenced (observational and art historical), and (3) the interpretation is meaningful and insightful to the inquirer and others. Indeed, Eco, Barrett, and others judge the reasonableness of an interpretation by admitting it to a community of interpreters. This judgment relates to the practice of peer debriefing or the confirmability audit in social science qualitative research.

In essence, qualitative research in the humanities embodies the interpretive turn discussed in the social sciences. The aim of research in the humanities has consistently been to interpret meaning manifested in human constructs, both conceptual and physical, in order to better understand human experience. Indeed, qualitative research in the social sciences and education has learned and borrowed much from the humanistic disciplines.

Tracie E. Costantino

See also Aesthetics; Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Critical Humanism; Education, Qualitative Research in; Narrative Inquiry; Oral History; Social Sciences, Qualitative Research in

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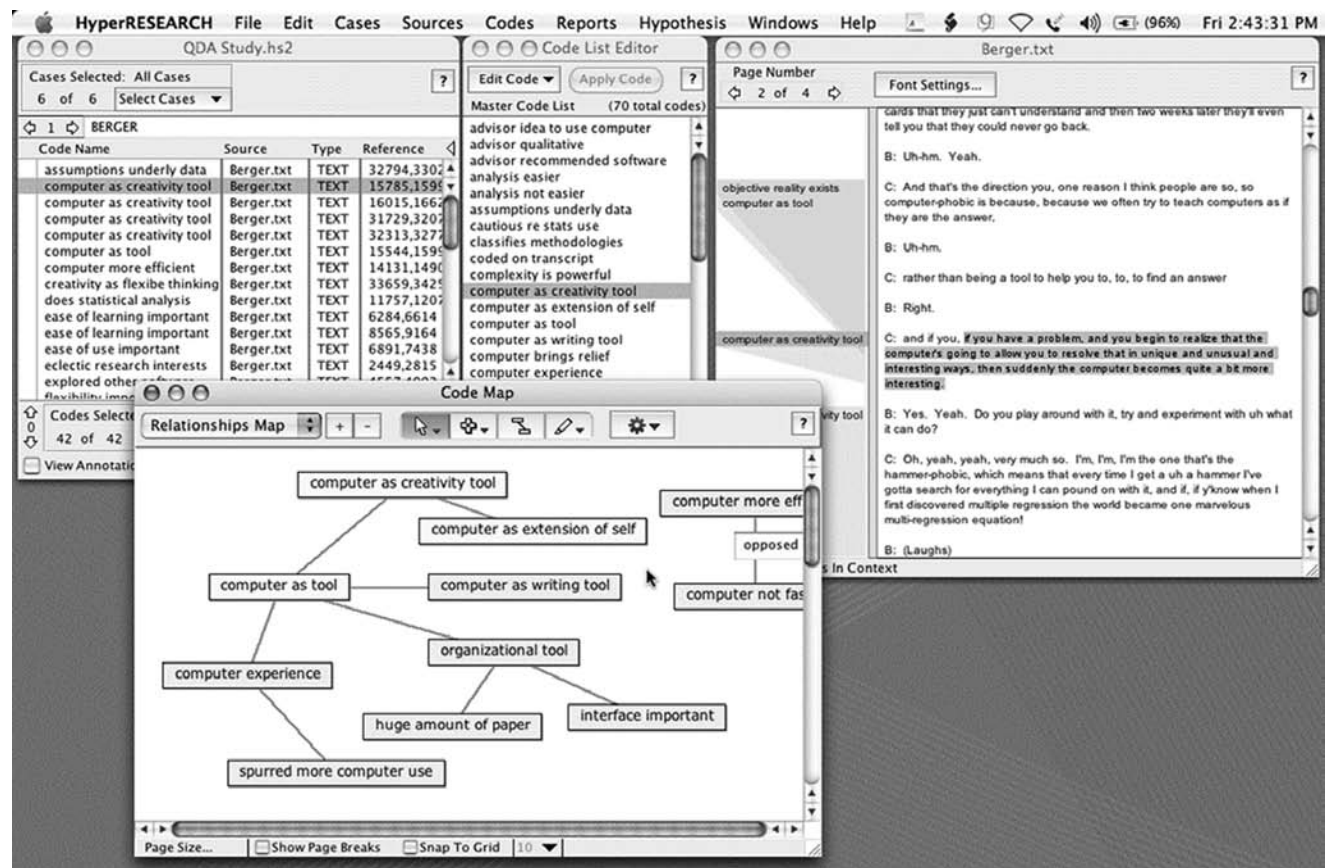
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HYPERRESEARCH (SOFTWARE)

HyperRESEARCH is a commercial software package used by researchers within the sciences, social sciences, and professions including education and medicine. HyperRESEARCH helps the qualitative researcher analyze a range of multimedia data in

addition to text-analysis of data, including graphics, video, and audio. It is useful for visual research including visual ethnography and visual narrative inquiry and provides excellent visual data displays. HyperRESEARCH supports multimedia formats including MPEG-4 and 3GPP and was developed as a cross-platform product to be used on Windows and Macintosh systems.

HyperRESEARCH can also implement grounded theory analyses. It allows the researcher to perform analytical induction on emergent code categories. The program facilitates the coding and retrieval of qualitative data for myriad coding strategies. Its proximity code function allows the researcher to apply a heuristic inquiry to data by establishing potential causal relationships between code categories. The software can auto-code data and create spontaneous memos about specific codes and definitions. One can manage large data sets with the software as a powerful



Screen View of the HyperRESEARCH Interface

Source: <http://www.researchware.com/>; used by permission.

content analytic tool. The researcher can draw concept maps from qualitative data that hyperlinks to original data. It performs network analyses that attach memos, images, and graphics to network maps.

HyperRESEARCH allows the researcher to conduct mixed-methods analyses by exporting data to table-building software programs like CHIPendale. The software also provides for optional automatic backups of all one's data and the quick ability to restore older files.

A team approach to coding and data analysis encourages the comparing and contrasting of code categories to establish intra- and intercoder reliability and validity of coding categories. Off-site tutorials also help researchers practice their analytical skills. HyperRESEARCH is a powerful program, but its simplicity makes it an excellent teaching tool. The software was developed in the college classroom with students possessing varying data analysis skills. HyperRESEARCH contains an easy-to-learn user interface that students can learn intuitively.

HyperRESEARCH developers released HyperTRANSCRIBE, a program that can easily transcribe interview and multimedia material with both Macintosh and Windows systems. Audio and video files can be transported into HyperRESEARCH. Graphical and keyboard controls allow one to play, pause, and loop playback, and QuickTime technology provides for multiple media files, including MP3, WAV, MPEG, AVI, and MOV. Transcriptions can then be exported in other formats.

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber

See also Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Concept Mapping; Thematic Coding and Analysis

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ResearchWare (for HyperRESEARCH products):
<http://www.researchware.com>

HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis is a prediction or tentative statement about the relationship between variables. There are two main research paradigms, or ways of seeing and studying reality: the positivist (typically quantitative) paradigm and the interpretivist or naturalistic (typically qualitative) paradigm. Research paradigms define fundamental concepts and aims in fields of study and determine how evidence is defined, identified, and interpreted.

A hypothesis is typically presented for quantitative research, provided there has been sufficient prior research conducted on the topic to be able to make a prediction. Because much qualitative research is interpretive, exploratory, and broad based, hypotheses are not typically used in this type of research.

Etic and Positivist Approach

Research under the positivist paradigm assumes a measurable objective reality about which a claim or prediction can be made and tested. This etic approach to research studies behavior from the outside, from a distance. It uses hypotheses (prior expectations of how something is supposed to be) in order to define and operationalize the variables and units under study, to build in measurable absolute criteria, and to make predictions about schemas and theories. Because the entire research process is built upon testing these a priori predictions, this approach to research relies on researcher control. This paradigm believes that reality is objective and thus can be represented, predicted, tested, measured, and controlled.

In this approach, a specific prediction is obtained from the hypothesis by deductive reasoning, and research measures the similarities or differences between observed or measured behavior and the predicted behavior (the hypothesis). Knowledge emerges from testing of the hypothesis and is significant as measured by this difference or sameness.

Emic and Interpretivist Approach

Research under the interpretivist or qualitative paradigm assumes the existence of multiple realities. In this type of research, the purpose is to describe, understand, or explain those multiple realities in their

complex and ever-changing nature. This approach is an emic: behavior is studied from inside the system. This standpoint assumes multiple realities and views behavior relative to other behavior, devoid of prior expectations. The ethnographer who is a participant in the field has an emic standpoint, studying the system in depth, from inside, letting the data explain itself with few preconceived notions or predictions.

Because in this paradigm the entire research process assumes emergent findings, this approach to research relies on flexibility, reflexivity, and openness to discovery. Variables are defined and redefined during the analysis. They are discovered, not predicted. In the same vein, schemas, theories, and criteria are discovered as a result of the research, from the analysis, relative to the system and data studied. Knowledge is relative rather than absolute and is significant in its meaning relative to the discovery process.

This process is an inductive approach to decision making that focuses on discovery and constructed reality. Predictions, if made at all, are made as a result of the research findings as they generalize to similar cases or phenomena.

Christine S. Davis

See also Axiology; Deduction; Emic/Etic Distinction; Epistemology; Generalizability; Paradigm; Positivism; Probability Sampling; Quantitative Research

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IDEALISM

Idealism as a systematic philosophy derives from thought's reflecting on itself and comparing the integral unity it discovers with the contingent and apparently contradictory dynamics of the external material world. The outcome of this form of self-reflection is a conception of rational unity as the highest and most perfect form of reality. The internal unity that thought discovers in itself is taken to be definitive of the essential nature of reality as a whole. The possibility of meaning, purpose, and freedom in material nature is grounded, from the idealist perspective, on the truth of the universal rational order that thought discovers when it takes itself for its object. The abiding need of humans to understand the universe as meaningful and purposive and to understand themselves as free explains the enduring importance of idealism long after its methodical theorizations have ceased to be convincing as scientific expositions of the essential nature of the universe in its totality. To explain more concretely what idealism means and what it has contributed to the understanding of natural and social reality, it is perhaps best to begin by considering what the term means in ordinary language.

In colloquial English, *idealist* is generally used as a term of good-natured criticism of anyone who hopes for social changes that rest on principles assumed to be too pure for flawed humans. Hence, *idealism* typically means a form of thought that studiously ignores reality. Reality is taken to be a hard-and-fast limit on human hopes, whereas ideals are regarded as mere aspirations for a world fundamentally different from

idealistic. In this ordinary sense, a hard-and-fast division between reality, on the one hand, and human ideals, on the other, is essential. This division between ideals and reality is the very opposite of their relation in idealist philosophy. Understanding the internal connection between thought and reality is the key to understanding the philosophical meaning of idealism.

The Unity of Thinking and Reality

In all forms of thinking, there is always a distinction between the subject that thinks and the object that it thinks about. In everyday human life, there is rarely occasion to investigate the relationship between subject and object. Humans open their eyes and see, open their ears and hear, touch a surface and feel its texture. These sensory experiences generate content for different mental maps of the world that humans use to negotiate the spaces they have practical reasons to negotiate. In nonphilosophical thought, people do not usually notice that what they are employing to negotiate these spaces are precisely mental maps; people simply assume (and usually there is no cause to assume otherwise) that their mental maps are accurate reproductions of a reality that exists independent of their thoughts. In contrast, the idealist, while not disputing the reality of material structures and processes, points to the necessity of the mental map as the essential condition of there being a meaningful extramental reality. Contrary to the colloquial meaning, idealism does not claim that reality is an arbitrary product of individual minds; rather, it contends that reality is a synthetic unity of material content and

ideal or cognitive form. In the classical way of putting this point, idealism rests on the claim that thinking and reality are identical.

Of all the obscure propositions of speculative philosophy, this claim is the most apt to be completely misunderstood. The bald form of the assertion leads people to conclude that what is really being asserted is that reality is thought and that the subject of thinking is an individual mind. The individual mind is assumed to be posited as free from the constraints of material nature and, thus, at liberty to simply create its own reality. Because reality regularly disconfirms the best-laid plans of people, idealism is (as noted earlier) rejected as mere wishful thinking. However, asserting that thinking and reality are identical is not the same as asserting that reality is whatever each ego thinks it is. Indeed, the principle of idealism imposes the most rigorous constraints on what can count as real. To understand what those constraints are, it is necessary to investigate more closely the difference between the content and form of thought.

The content of thought is as diverse and contingent as the sensory experience and imaginations of every human who thinks, has thought, or will think. Because these experiences and imaginings cannot guarantee their own truth given that they are always changing and obscure (seeing might be believing for the idealist, but it is never knowing), philosophical reflection is obliged to investigate the truth conditions of ordinary experience. To do so systematically, the idealist, noting that there is no immediate access to material reality but that such access is always mediated by consciousness, turns inward or reflects on the subject of experience. The subject is nothing other than the act of thinking itself. Once the act of thinking itself is taken as the object of thought, the focus is no longer on the contingent and individuated content of thinking but rather is on its universal form. By *form*, the idealist means the common principles to which all thinking, if it is to be true, must conform. These principles are, considered abstractly, the foundational principles of classical logic. The idealist does not treat these principles simply as rules for proper inference; rather, the idealist treats them as an objective form of necessary order and unity definitive of the essential nature of thinking and reality. Because these features are common to the act of thinking and not relative to the content of this or that ego, they are universal constraints on true thought. In other words, idealism claims to discover necessary and universal conditions of truth that any and all minds, as well as that which

minds know truly, must obey. The proof of the necessity of the principles is precisely the fact that they are not invented but rather discovered. Hence, individual minds not only are not, but also cannot possibly be, the creators of the reality they claim to know. All minds discover that they must obey the universal principles of thought that they discover in themselves once they reflect on their form in abstraction from the diverse contents of thought. Because all objects are necessarily objects for thought, both the object and the subject must conform to these principles.

The most basic principle of thought uncovered by self-reflection is the law of noncontradiction. In its original formulation in classical Greek philosophy, this principle asserted that it is not possible for that which is to be and not be of the same substance, in the same respect, and at the same time. If a substance is an apple, then it cannot simultaneously be an orange (not apple) at the same time and in the same respect. If this principle is interpreted in light of the basic principle of idealism, then it must hold universally both for that which is thought and for that which exists outside the individual mind. Thought is true when it corresponds to its object. If thinking operates according to necessary and universal principles, and it is true when it corresponds to its object, then it follows that the object also must conform to these principles. In other words, the identity of thinking and reality and the necessary and universal truth of the principle of noncontradiction entail the following conclusion according to classical idealism: That which must be the case according to valid deductions from necessary and universal principles must be the case, for if it were otherwise a contradiction would result, and contradictions can never be true. Generalizing from this conclusion, the basic idealist picture of reality emerges: What well-formed thinking knows to be the case is the case. In other words, reality and thinking (in its formally universal aspect) are identical. Things might exist apart from thinking, but there can be no truth, purpose, or meaning outside of rational cognition.

This conclusion has further important implications for the idealist understanding of reality. If it is the case that the form of thinking determines the content of truth (nothing that does not conform to the universal principles of thinking can be true even when sensory experiences seem to indicate it is true), then it must be the case that thinking is free in relation to the object of thought. *Free* here must be understood in both a negative and a positive sense. First, negatively, thought's freedom means that it is not determined by

experience. Truth does not mechanically imprint itself on the mind through sensory experiences. This negative definition implies a positive corollary: Truth is determined by rational thought discovering the operation of its own principles in a material reality that as appearance is contingent and contradictory. If it is true that reality and thinking are identical, and the essential nature of thinking is freedom in relation to the object (as superficial appearance) of thought, then it follows that the essential nature of reality is freedom. The truth of reality and the truth of thought are identical. The truth of thought is (negative and positive) freedom. Therefore, the truth of reality is freedom as well. The real, for idealism, is a self-unfolding or self-determining objective rationality manifesting itself through various contents to subjective rationality. Thus, true knowledge is a subjective grasp of the underlying rational order and purposes of reality as a whole. Superficial appearances lead rational thought beneath the surface to the underlying truth concealed within. Once one has true knowledge, one understands the universe as a rationally ordered whole or totality. In other words, one understands what it really means to say that reality and thinking are identical. In whatever manner reality presents itself to individual minds as appearance, its truth is determined by the universal necessity that thought discovers. To be true and yet not universally necessary is a contradiction, and contradictions ultimately cannot be true. Therefore, to put the point in the simplest terms, reality is as thinking determines it necessarily (not subjectively wishes it) to be.

Hegel's Absolute Idealism

The most systematic development of this understanding of reality is found in the work of G. W. F. Hegel. Hegel's work reconstructs the history of philosophy and the historical development of reality as a unified process of progressive knowledge of truth. In the terms adopted here, Hegel understood the development of philosophy as progressive insight into the meaning of the basic principle of idealism. Because that principle asserts the identity of thinking and reality, the progressive development of philosophical knowledge depends on the progressive manifestation in objective reality of the rational truth that organizes it. In other words, for Hegel, because truth depends equally on the subject and object of thought, progressive understanding of the truth depends on the progressive manifestation of that truth in the object. This

does not mean that reality literally tears off cloak after cloak in history until finally the truth is revealed in its naked abstraction; rather, it means that human thinking progresses not only by discovering more content (through natural science) but also by gradually learning how to synthesize all of its modes of knowledge into an internally unified, systematic, and meaningful whole. On the one side, human knowledge presents itself as abstract metaphysical systems of thinking (of which the various forms of idealism are the highest expression); on the other side, it presents itself as the distinct research programs of natural science. The truth of both can be found only in their synthesis. This synthesis, which Hegel attempted to articulate in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, claims to reconcile the mechanism of nature as disclosed by the natural sciences with the purposiveness and freedom of the underlying rationality that governs the whole. In Hegel's view, material nature is real but not independent of purposive rationality. To employ a somewhat misleading metaphor, material nature is one "level" of reality but not the most basic one. Natural science explains how nature operates but not its purpose. Because reason demands an answer not only to the "how" of things but equally to the "why" of things, there must be an object that corresponds to the question "why" on analogy with the way in which material nature corresponds to the question "how." This object can be none other than a universal reason. Therefore, reality is the process whereby universal reason progressively realizes itself in the subjectively rational consciousness of humans (the only rational beings that exist). Thus, truth is not simply an individual epistemic achievement; it is the realization of the purpose of reality itself—to come to fulfillment by becoming the object of full knowledge. Truth really exists, for Hegel, only when it is known. Its reality depends equally on the subject and the object. The object cannot be known without a fully developed subjective consciousness. Equally, however, a fully developed subjective consciousness cannot exist without a fully developed object. The entire history of the universe in its natural and human development is the substance of the development of truth.

Hegel's extraordinary attempt at a total synthesis of human knowledge did not survive the continued development of the natural sciences. The dominant tendency in the development of knowledge became methodological specialization, leaving a systematic philosophy like Hegel's "on the wrong side of history" (to employ a Hegelian phrase). No one after

Hegel tried to unite mechanism and purpose, empiricist and rationalist forms of understanding in the absolute systematic fashion attempted by him. Given the intrinsic links between idealism and the demand for an overall rational unity of human knowledge, it is questionable whether idealism, at least in its classic signification, is a living method of social and natural inquiry today. For idealism, the system really is essential, such that if overall systematic unity is no longer credible, then neither is idealism.

Idealism and Contemporary Qualitative Research

That is not to say, however, that the problems posed by idealism, and in particular the problems of purposiveness and freedom, have been solved either by natural science or by naturalistic philosophy. In this sense, idealism lives on in the form of human interpretation of the meaning and purpose behind events and actions. The dichotomy between natural scientific and rational explanations of events first rigorously theorized by Immanuel Kant during the 18th century remains. Kant understood human reason as being driven by an internal demand to demonstrate that what natural science understands as meaningless causal relations between material substances in a spatiotemporal continuum adds up to a whole whose reality is purposive. The sciences can never grasp the universe as a whole as organized in such a way as to provide meaning and direction for human (rational) life. Therefore, it remains the province of philosophy to speculate about that which can never be known. Thus, idealism lives on in spirit, if not in system, everywhere that humans conduct their minds to the ultimate questions of existence—whether our place in the universe is somehow special because of our intellect, whether our lives and actions amount to anything substantially meaningful, and whether our ability to decide on courses of action is an instance of real freedom or only an illusion born of ignorance of the material causes. The tremendous progress of natural science in expanding the content of human knowledge has not brought us closer to answering these basic questions. Thus, the problems that idealism sought to solve remain relevant to qualitative research today even if its historical systems are no longer credible.

Two areas of research in particular disclose the continuing influence of idealist principles. The first is the critique of reductionist and mechanistic methods in the social sciences as developed by, for example, Charles

Taylor, Clifford Geertz, and Jürgen Habermas. Although none accepts any particular idealist system as such, all are concerned to demonstrate that social reality cannot be reduced to a set of objective material facts existing independent of participants. Instead, all argue in different ways (convincingly) that social facts depend as much on the interpretations and background beliefs of social actors as on the objective structures and forces operative in any social formation. This argument clearly depends on a qualified version of the key idealist principle that reality is always essentially linked to the way in which objectivity is cognized and understood by thinking beings. The second crucial area of qualitative research in which idealist principles remain important is the inquiry into the relationship between social context and self-understanding. During recent years, pragmatic interpretations of Hegel (e.g., by Terry Pinkard) have sought to release Hegel's social philosophy from its systematic metaphysical pretensions. This effort has yielded rich insights not only into Hegel's contemporary significance but also, more important, into the intrinsic and irreducible relationship between individual self-identity and social relations. This research has bolstered "communitarian" interpretations of the meaning and value of human action in the debate with liberal conceptions of an abstractly rational self motivated by nothing but rational calculations of self-interest. Thus, although idealism as a metaphysical system has outlived the historical context in which it could thrive, its implications for social philosophy and interpretive social science remain living elements of contemporary qualitative research.

Jeff Noonan

See also Categories; Categorization; Critical Theory; Essence; Essentialism; Meta-Narrative; Subjectivity

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IDENTITY

Identity is a social process involving perception and differentiation. It can be defined as the ways in which individuals and groups regard themselves as similar to, or different from, each other. These perceptions can change over time, so identity is a fluid construct rather than a static one. Identity has both individual and collective dimensions; people identify as unique in certain respects and as members of social groups in other contexts.

Some people are more willing to openly disclose an identity than are others, particularly if the identity is subject to prejudice or negative stereotypes and may result in discrimination. The process of disclosing a previously hidden identity is known as “coming out,” whereas the process of hiding such an identity is called “passing.” However, the danger with these terms is that they tend to imply that identities characterized by ambivalences, fluctuations, contradictions, hybridities, and in-between affiliations are in some ways less developed, or less politically sophisticated, than those with clear-cut affiliations. Qualitative researchers seeking to understand such complex identities disagree with the idea that particular identities must be expressed in certain ways.

Different methodological approaches may be suited to demonstrating particular aspects of identity. For instance, researchers who are interested in the ways in which people change their identities over time, or change the weight they place on particular aspects of their identities, might adopt a longitudinal approach. Qualitative researchers may also adopt a life course approach toward identity to study the impact of both individual agency and social structure. On the other hand, researchers who use narrative methods to study identity often seek to understand how individuals make sense of their world as well as what incentives, constraints, and values influence their choices and how their identities change over time.

People have multiple identities framed around characteristics such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, disability, nationality, and so on. Qualitative researchers adopting a focus on intersectionality and identity examine how these factors interact and under what conditions particular identities become salient. They may focus, for instance, on the contexts in which some identities are privileged while others are marginalized. By focusing on one particular identity, researchers may be able to gather detailed information that helps them to discover similarities and differences among a group's members. Such studies may illustrate the forms of power that influence particular identities.

Some social movements, such as feminism, have been criticized for assuming that identities (e.g., the identity of “woman”) are stable and clear-cut. Spawned in part by Judith Butler's influential critique of “identity politics,” there has been a massive increase in the study of the ways in which identity is performatively produced; that is, discursively constructed in a social environment. Butler's approach focuses on the ways in which identity is performed, produced, cited, and reiterated—raising questions of power, subjectivity, and politics. Because identity always involves a sense of “us” and “them,” this approach highlights the forms of exclusion inherent in any particular identity.

Another approach to the study of identity has been associated with psychoanalysis and has focused on the fantasies, excesses, projections, hesitations, attractions, and other psychic responses to particular individual and collective identities. Psychoanalytic approaches may examine the conscious and unconscious assumptions underpinning conceptions of particular groups or individuals.

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See also Life Stories; Narrative Analysis; Psychoanalytically Informed Observation

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IDEOLOGY

In ideology studies of qualitative research, meaning becomes a political site. In this sense, ideology is defined as the problem of social relations of domination made

intelligible through discourse. Ideology includes multiple responses to social relations of domination, sometimes distorting an accurate understanding of them and sometimes penetrating their structures. Social relations of domination comprise the problem of ideology; depending on the discourse that researchers adopt and the political project on which they are grounded, ideology may promote or negate domination. In addition, ideology is made known through systems of intelligibility, one of which is language as a social practice or discourse. Qualitative research is inscribed by discourses that position both the researcher and participants as subjects of language that is politically regulated. The regulation of discourses defines in a research context what questions may be asked, repressed, or challenged. In other words, ideology studies pose the labor of meaning as part of the political process over power and representation

Background

Historically, ideology has been a pejorative concept, amounting to falsehood and avoided by the astute researcher. It was first studied by French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, who patterned his thoughts after the natural sciences and reacted to metaphysical or idealist constructions of ideas. His study of ideology purported to be a science of ideas. Not long afterward, Karl Marx conceived his own version of ideology with his thesis on false consciousness. To Marx, ideology was falsehood based on the idealist notion that consciousness produced social life, as opposed to the materialist notion that the production of social life gives rise to consciousness. In the Marxist sense, ideology is less a trait that an individual possesses and is more a characteristic of social relations found in capitalism. A qualitative researcher would rather not be implicated with keeping such company, preferring instead a materialist analysis.

Whereas the Marxist perspective regards ideology as a distortion of scientific understanding, textualists consider ideology as an organizing framework necessary for subjectivity. Seen in this second sense, ideology is not something that people need to overcome, as in the Marxist notion of false consciousness, but rather something that is necessary for consciousness itself. As a text, ideology is made known to social subjects through language as a social and regulated practice. Ideology is a way of reading the world and becomes a particular position that people take up through discourse. Compared with the Marxist theory

on ideology, a poststructural rendition of it as text suggests that ideology is constructed out of discourse not as a coherent system but rather as one that is characterized by contention among discourses. Here, qualitative research has been transformed through its focus on linguistic statements and cultural themes through interviews and ethnographic studies.

In a third sense, ideology has been used as a positive or enabling concept. Some intellectuals, such as Vladimir Lenin and Georg Lukacs, spoke of a revolution grounded on a socialist or working-class ideology. Likewise, Antonio Gramsci posited the importance of a power bloc with leadership abilities and a counterhegemonic ideology. Seen in this way, ideology is neither negative nor neutral but rather negating. That is, positive ideology negates structures of domination and relations of exploitation. Qualitative researchers accomplish this move partly by building a critique of the social through concepts that demystify commonsensical assertions in civil society such as progress, meritocracy, and objectivity.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss's project of grounded theory has now become common practice in qualitative research. Most ethnographies and case studies claim to have derived their research narratives out of social interactions that are grounded in a field-site. However, ethnographic researchers who are convinced of the need to ground theory are now struggling over a different kind of geographical terrain—the ideological meanings of a research context. Besides arguing that meanings should be “grounded” in a research site, Glaser and Strauss also used the metaphor of “emerging” to describe how meaning was derived from empirical data. Contributing to this debate, we discuss the feature of grounded theory that suggests that meanings emerge through a natural nonideological process during qualitative research. Instead, we argue that there is ideological friction or the productive rubbing of worldviews between researchers and participants. As such, we propose that the passive view of emergent meanings must be countered by the consideration of ideology in research encounters because meaning-making is far from a natural, politically neutral endeavor.

Ideology in Qualitative Research

By turning to ideology, we invoke a critical qualitative methodology that emphasizes the repressed dimensions of members' meanings or what we call “dismembered meanings.” Dismembered meanings

represent the struggle over ideology in ethnographic research that traditional researchers usually repress because they are reminders that politics exists at the level of discourse. By exposing dismembered meanings, a methodological framework that uses ideology critique labors to make the construction of meaning more apparent. A fundamental goal in traditional ethnography has been to represent “members’ meanings.” Despite the impossibility of pure meaning, many ethnographies or case studies are driven by the researchers’ desire to get the “correct” (or at least an acceptable quantity of the whole) meanings of the group members they observe so that the groups can be understood to the researchers and their intended audiences. Some may admit the impossibility of this task. Nevertheless, many researchers insist that, with appropriate methods, one can arrive at a close approximation of true and complete meanings. This discourse on members’ meanings is linked to the researcher’s emphasis on methods that procure accurate meanings from members located in “natural” environments with little interference from the researcher. This curious closing of the “meaning of meaning” necessitates a vigorous emphasis on methodology as the meta-analysis of methods.

The notion that researchers can reflect members’ meanings without mediation is problematic. In mainstream ethnographies, there is a strong emphasis on method and not enough emphasis on methodology; that is, there is much attention spent on “getting meaning right” and not enough spent on addressing the ideological struggles over meaning and research. In ideological studies of qualitative methods, however, meanings are neither transparent nor fixed; rather, they are sites of contestation for representation of history and social life. Moreover, critical ethnographers are in a position to critique meaning and not merely re-present them. To mimic Marx’s thesis on Ludwig Feuerbach, qualitative studies have merely described the world, whereas the point is to change it. A critical study of methodology uncovers links among ideology, meanings, methodological systems, and power.

One of our goals is to enter the debate surrounding the concept of members’ meanings. By doing so, we hope to extend the dialogue on qualitative studies by suggesting that research is a problem of meaning. How meaning is represented in research and the political consequences around the terms of the debate are central concerns for critical qualitative research at the intersection of ideology and meaning. Second, we stress that meanings do not speak for themselves but

instead are spaces of ideological struggle within and among groups for status and privilege. Thus, in focus groups, we see that disparities in power subvert what Mikhail Bakhtin called the *heteroglossia* where meaning exists in a natural state of slippage or multiplicity. Instead, power relations create the impression of what Valentin Volosinov called *uniaccentuality* or meaning that appears to be fixed and settled. Meanings are not simply stories to be passed along to an imagined audience but rather are points of intersection between members’ worldviews and researchers’ previous ideological commitments. Third, a study of ideology emphasizes the role of critical ethnographers in interrogating the construction of meaning as well as how meanings construct them during the research process.

Traditionally, ethnographers have made apprehending members’ meanings one of their fundamental goals in field research. As strangers to the research site, ethnographers induce the relevant themes for the site participants and the meanings they derive from events that transpire around them. Although researchers readily admit that the members’ meanings they gather fall within the limited universe of their research questions, this perspective does not regard the rendition of meaning ideologically problematic. Within this traditional discourse, participants are meaning-makers and researchers are meaning-getters. Getting meaning may come with difficulties, but meaning itself is not conceived as a problem. Many distortions come between the two parties as researchers attempt to represent the participants’ meanings. Likewise, biases, sympathy with certain participants, and interviewer cues are some of the ways in which researchers taint their quest for objectivity during data collection. However, with greater design and tenacious cross-sampling for different perspectives, it is believed that ethnographers can come to an accurate picture of the meanings members make of their social context. It is assumed that researchers can “get” these meanings with a level of confidence. In other words, grounding interpretation in collected data ensures that members’ meanings are secured. These commonsense assumptions have become a hegemonic core of ethnographic research for several decades.

Ideology Critique as a Method of Inquiry

The centrality of ideology becomes more clear when meaning is regarded as the outward sign of larger material relations. Thus, critical studies of meaning

expose the objective patterns that script subjectivities. In other words, they emphasize ideology critique as a method of inquiry. In this sense, ideology is studied as if it not only has material effects but also is a material entity of social relations. In a mainstream ethnographic study, accuracy of rendition is prioritized over the critical engagement of the social totality that informs the participants' worldviews as well as the ethnographer's predispositions from his or her entrance into the site to the moment he or she exits. We argue that there is currently a problematic separation between ideology and the results of a researcher's protocol. Members' meanings never speak for themselves but rather are mediated by the ethnographer's previous ideological commitments that guide his or her decision-making and interpretive processes. What does or does not count as a meaningful theme is related to the ethnographer's semantic map. In this scenario, the meaning of most worth ultimately becomes a methodological issue rather than an ideological one.

This does not suggest that meanings have nothing whatsoever to do with the participants because their interactions compose the very "stuff" of ethnography. Instead, it implies that meanings resulting from encounters between the researcher and members are always already interpreted, filtered, and then translated by the researcher. Ethnography is a hermeneutical process involving members' ideologies that are themselves interpretations of social life. Ethnographic evidence does not represent the members' meanings as such; instead, the members' meanings result from the interactions and collisions among discourses represented by the totality of discourses that enter the research process.

This shift from the belief in apprehending meaning to the plane of ideology raises the question: At what point is the qualitative researcher warranted to suggest that a meaning has been confidently apprehended? This is indeed a central problematic of good solid research. Yet one only needs to present the written document, whether an ethnography or an interview, to the participants for review to discover that their meanings have somehow been translated into what many laypeople may perceive as "academic jargon." That is, participants are wont to refuse researchers' representations of them. In their zealous attempts to "get meaning right," researchers sometimes double-check with participants only to find out that they failed to represent the issues in their totality. Representations are partial, especially when they are critical of the perspectives the participants embody.

Partiality of Representations in Qualitative Research

Representations are partial in four ways. First, they are partial in the sense that they signify a limited slice of the object of study. This point is acknowledged by most conscientious researchers. However, the multitudinous ways in which researchers select the very data they record in "normal" interactions with their participants often go unrecognized. Because researchers are bodies that enter the site already ideologically inscribed, Leigh Berger would suggest that some choices they make are coded into their instruments of perception. In any research, there are repressed trajectories of meaning—what we have called dismembered meanings—neglected by the researcher's own hermeneutical horizon, discursive spaces in the site to which the researcher has no access, and/or blind spots resulting from hegemonic or unquestioned assumptions.

Second, qualitative research is partial in the sense that researchers do not enter the site *tabula rasa*. Ethnographers and interviewers espouse ideologies that enable them to understand their lifespace and that preclude neutrality. In other words, they are never innocent observers. Certain epistemic systems influence, but by no means guarantee, the qualitative researcher's problematics, some of which are constructed actively and others of which are inherited. Standpoints are constructed with discourses that represent some order of meaning out of an otherwise vertiginous social existence. Communities of discourse, of which researchers are part, signify events in a concrete language practice. As already implied, these discourses in turn create material perceptions that actually register some phenomena and not others.

Third, human representational systems are structured vis-à-vis metaphors. Languages are filled with metaphors that have become so commonplace that we hardly recognize them as such. These metaphors go unnoticed because they have become normalized to the point where their meanings are apparently universal and natural. Yet attempts at truth are steeped in imperfect metaphors that pose problems for researchers. This becomes clear when ethnographers use their own systems of metaphors in an attempt to understand the systems of metaphors used by members of the studied group. It reminds us that there are no universal metaphors absent of geographical, historical, and cultural contexts. As such, apprehending meaning is always open and precarious.

Fourth, the discourse that researchers bring to bear on the evidence constructs their meaning in light of the epistemic rules that regulate discourses. Recent dialogic or collaborative research guards against misrepresentation by co-constructing the interpretation with the participants themselves. In this approach, researchers and participants negotiate the representation of meaning not only (once again) to ensure that the meaning is right but also to empower participants in what has been a historically objectifying process for them. However, a possible outcome of collaboration is the repression of critique in exchange for a “feel good” relationship. A compromise between researchers and participants does not seem to be the answer; that is, co-construction of analysis is not enough. Participants’ increased involvement in the research process does not necessarily address what Paulo Freire termed “limit situations” or those inscriptions that limit the possibilities for liberatory interpretation. Researchers and participants may work together to excavate the meanings that have mystified them, a process in which they have unfortunately participated, but this also suggests that discourse in the research process is constitutive of a particular “reality” that ethnographers observe. Depending on the discourse being deployed, the nature and purpose of meaning will change. For example, a conservative discourse on meaning may emphasize the transcendental value of certain meanings, whereas a critical discourse may render the meanings historical and contingent.

There is also the problem of the context of representation. Sometimes ethnographers and interviewers are charged with taking a statement “out of context,” especially when the interpretation is less than praiseful. Indeed, some researchers engender a less than respectful agenda and wreak representational violence, as in the case of a researcher who is not self-reflexive and treats research as a spectacle where one gathers as much “dirt” as possible. However, like meaning, context is slippery. There is no single context for an utterance, as Bakhtin showed, because speech anticipates its receiver as well as its respondent. Therefore, meanings are in constant conversation with each other in a way that precludes any rigid ownership. This condition of anticipatory dialogue suggests that participants in research studies are members of simultaneous discourse communities as well as constrained by them, sometimes producing dismembered meanings.

Dismembered meanings are semantic domains that are excluded from the official discourse. That is, mainstream ethnographies often represent mainstream

meanings. They marginalize repressed meanings instead of bringing them to the forefront. Even worse, mainstream ethnographies leave ideologies intact and leave the history that interpellates them untouched. Members’ meanings are scaffolded on the mounds of the dismembered meanings they repress. Dismemberment involves an element of discursive violence. It is a process of castrating—of cutting off from view—certain formations of meanings from official discourse. Castration is the incomplete project of representation in which qualitative researchers participate each time they signify an event or render it intelligible through discourse. It is part of the ideological craft of qualitative research when an observer first decides to ask a relevant question and by asking becomes nocent.

Conclusion

Because ethnographic interactions are social, there are multiple contexts that act on and create any singular moment. In any given context, a researcher has a universe of meanings to represent. Derridean deconstruction has shown us how meanings recall the traces of other meanings. In other words, there is an underside to meaning that is repressed, a present absence that is silent but subverts the security of the apprehended meaning. It is this silence that sustains the presence of perceptible data. With a critical lens, it now becomes problematic to charge that a researcher has “read too much” into his or her data. We do not suggest that researchers are free to frame their analysis any way they want. Arguments must be lifted from the data at hand. Yet for an analysis to testify to the complexity of the evidence, a researcher must also venture into meanings that are not readily perceptible in the data but must be deconstructed out of the discursive silences they repress. As such, reading into the data what “is not there” is warranted if the purpose is to excavate muted and marginalized voices. The problem of context is undecidable for the critical researcher who must decide to represent it, albeit on a contingent basis.

As researchers, we have emphasized the ideological nature of meaning. With understanding comes the risk that we have only peered into the appearance of meaning. Thus, ethnographies, interviews, and case studies involve a great amount of uncertainty in the face of needing to decide which meanings to represent. Inescapably, qualitative work is a vocation of interpretation and translation. Members’ meanings do not await us but rather are constructed in the course of

study. We do not re-present meaning as it “exists”; instead, we signify it through signs. As researchers, not only do we make meaning of our site, but also meaning makes something of us in the process. It changes us and potentially transforms our ability to self-reflect on the nature of agency, subjectivity, and ideological purpose. In the end, qualitative work is a political project around the transformation of meaning.

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See also Hegemony; Meaning; Power

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IMAGINATION IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Although seldom singled out in discussions of qualitative methodology, imagination—a cognitive capacity sometimes described as “the creative power of the mind”—shapes the direction and content of research in multiple ways. A better understanding of imaginative processes and their cultural context, therefore, may improve the quality of research and help researchers to avoid common pitfalls associated with inquiry within or between the disciplines.

Imagination and Understanding

Research consists of working to understand something better or accumulating evidence that supports and clarifies a prior insight. Both of these involve coming to perceive a kind of order in the world that was hidden previously. The mysterious quality of this gain in knowledge has occupied philosophers since the time of Plato, and imagination has been portrayed as an impediment to the process far more frequently than it has been seen as a key ingredient. Above all, it is the unreliability of the imagination—its capacity for fantasy and self-deception—that has marginalized it in the principal Western philosophical traditions. Only the Romantics and Existentialists have had much good to say about it, and that is because both traditions cast themselves in an oppositional role to the modern quest for certainty.

As positivism has gradually waned over the past half-century, the iconoclastic, boundary-crossing quality of the imagination has become much more central to the theory and practice of qualitative research. Imagination has rarely been singled out as an object or a means of inquiry, but a better understanding of the functioning and limits of the imagination provides another lens through which the process of research itself can be examined, critiqued, and refined. Arguably, the imagination is a fundamental mode of thought, as integral to Cartesian rationalism as it is to postmodern skepticism, although it is developed in different directions and deployed for very different purposes in each case. Understanding some of the underlying processes could be helpful to researchers from a wide range of disciplines and traditions.

Imagination is “possibility thinking”—thinking of things as possibly being other than they are or both what they are and something else simultaneously. It is clearly linked to the capacity for metaphor, in which we draw selectively on knowledge in one domain to illuminate our thinking about an apparently unrelated domain. Imagination can involve visual imagery, as its etymology implies, but it can equally well involve any other kind of feature from the worlds of direct bodily experience, including sound, taste, smell, touch, movement, effort, and change, and of socially mediated experience, including activities, narratives, personalities, and relationships. Because of this, the imagination is strongly influenced both by personal history and by culture—a point that was overlooked by many Western thinkers but that emerged strongly

during the 20th century through work in psychology, anthropology, literary studies, education, and other fields.

Imagination is also clearly tied to the emotions in the same way as our sense of aesthetics. This strong affective quality seems to be implicated in our ability to choose relatively productive pathways through a huge range of possibilities. It also furnishes another reason that imagination has been distrusted by rationalist thinkers. Emotions muddle thought, and that has long been a central tenet of Western modernity. Ironically, behind this distrust, one can infer a particular imaginative—indeed, metaphoric—conception of reason invested with a strong emotional charge and rendered nearly invisible by its assimilation into habits of thought, speech, and action. Thus, imagination is to be sought not only in the unusual and desirable but also in the routine, unacknowledged, and unwanted—the shadow side of thought.

It follows that imagination in qualitative research is not only a means and an object of inquiry but also a perennial obstacle. Researchers are dependent on imagination for the pursuit of insight and understanding, they are continually confronted with the processes and outcomes of imagination in the ways in which people order and make sense of the world, and they must struggle against the tendency of the imagination to become channeled and restricted over time.

Imagination and Culture

In all of these aspects of the imagination, culture plays a crucial role. In fact, the relationship is a reciprocal one. As imagination is externalized in the form of language, buildings, artifacts, rituals, and so on, it helps to shape the environment and the experiences that will influence imaginative development on an ongoing basis. Humans are peculiarly dependent on their cultural milieu to provide “tools for thinking,” as the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky pointed out many decades ago. The paradigmatic example of such a tool, or rather an indefinitely extensible cultural toolkit, is oral language—a general capacity that must take on specific form in a particular language community to be useful. Over time, such a language system accumulates certain sets of metaphors, descriptive terms, narrative templates, and so on that are central to the culture of the community and, by the same token, vital imaginative resources for its users.

Although such cultural particulars obviously vary greatly, one may ask whether there are also some general features of imaginative thinking in oral language communities. This thesis has been argued by scholars of oral and written culture such as Jack Goody and Walter Ong, and was extended by educational theorist Kieran Egan into a fivefold typology of what he termed “kinds of understanding,” unfolding within the cultural history of modernity and recapitulated in the imaginative development of individuals. The acquisition of written language does not lead directly to the kind of literal understanding that is highly prized in technorationalist societies; rather, it opens the door to a distinctive imaginative style that Egan called Romantic and that is characterized by a fascination with great deeds and extraordinary people, the extremes of reality and limits of experience, and the use of classification and rules to impose human order on natural complexity. Largely excluded from formal education, this form of imaginative understanding is ubiquitous in mass media and popular culture, incorporating within itself elements of older Mythic (oral) and Somatic (embodied) understandings that are rarely acknowledged or examined.

Although qualitative researchers will often take cultural manifestations of Romantic understanding as objects of study (e.g., popular films, books, music, television), their objective is not usually to give a Romantic account of them. Instead, most research—to the extent that it is hospitable to imagination at all—is dominated by two contrasting kinds of understanding that Egan termed Philosophic and Ironical. The former produces theories, methodologies, research traditions, and paradigms, whereas the latter nurtures practices, approaches, communities, and viewpoints. Philosophic understanding underwrote the traditional modern intellectual ideal of steady collective progress toward definitive knowledge; Ironical understanding is Philosophic understanding that has gone reflexive, abandoning some of its pretensions to universal desituated truth telling and taking a more favorable view of the older forms of understanding on which it is built. This, however, is a “best case” scenario, for just as Philosophic understanding can become trapped in its own conceptual schemes, Ironical understanding can be ensnared by un-self-critical skepticism or a totalizing relativism. These are human attempts to bring the universe within our mental compass and, therefore, are flawed and fallible.

Imagination and the Researcher

Limited as this sketch of the contemporary imaginative landscape necessarily is, it serves to highlight three significant challenges to the qualitative researcher. The first of these stems from the way in which we are the products of a particular cultural context—a particular historical moment—that has made available to us only a small fraction of the imaginative resources invented and used by humankind. Among other contemporary illusions, the spread of English has encouraged the notion that one language can be adequate for all intellectual tasks—an impoverished view indeed. There is a similar temptation to limit one's writing and presentations to the safe middle ground of academic discourse, dragging the imagination along familiar ruts, even for avowedly critical purposes. To take imagination seriously is to question some of the most basic assumptions of our scholarly worlds.

Second, releasing the imagination, to borrow Maxine Greene's phrase, is not just a matter of using different language; it also requires different practices. Qualitative researchers need ways of connecting with the worlds they study that transcend their disciplinary or theoretical commitments so that they remain open to surprise, contradiction, and wonder. Some researchers find such a connection through the arts or literature, others may be involved in grassroots activism of various kinds, and still others may participate in some kind of physical or spiritual discipline. Usually these practices will come to inform the research in some way, serving as a guard against routine and complacency.

Third, little is known about ways in which to ensure that groups or institutions become and remain hospitable to imagination. This should be of concern to researchers because all of us are influenced by the cultural milieu in which we work and communicate with others on a daily basis. Some of the policies and practices that have been successful in technological and scientific institutions could perhaps be adapted to the university departments and research centers in which most qualitative researchers find themselves. How different would our research be if we were asked annually to evaluate our contributions to the imaginative vitality of our field and our intellectual community?

Mark Fettes

See also Arts-Informed Research; Cross-Cultural Research; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Metaphor; Researcher as Artist

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IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

In-depth interviews are interviews in which participants are encouraged and prompted to talk in depth about the topic under investigation without the researcher's use of predetermined, focused, short-answer questions. The researcher is not required to prepare an extensive list of questions; rather, the researcher is required to be aware of the major domains of experience likely to be discussed by the participant and be able to probe how these relate to the topic under investigation. In-depth interviews are suitable for data collection in a variety of research methodologies, including grounded theory and ethnography, and are often used as a stand-alone method of data collection without reliance on an underlying philosophical approach.

In-depth interviews are often referred to as semi-structured interviews because the researcher retains some control over the direction and content to be discussed, yet participants are free to elaborate or take the interview in new but related directions. A distinction can be made between structured interviews where a list of preconceived topics are responded to by the participant, unstructured interviews where no preconceived topics or questions are devised, and semi-structured or in-depth interviews where the conversation oscillates among the researcher's introduction of the topic under investigation, the participant's account of his or her experiences, and the researcher's probing of these experiences for further information useful to the analysis. Careful interviewing within this middle ground between rigid structure and complete uncertainty provides the researcher

with in-depth information on the topic of interest without predetermining the results.

Given the versatility of the in-depth interview, it is no wonder that it has rapidly become one of the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research. However, in-depth interviews are not without their criticisms. One criticism is that the in-depth interview provides limited opportunity for interpretation by the researcher because recalling an experience in an interview does not replicate actual observation of the experience or provide insight into the intentions or motivations of the various actors involved. Reliance on the in-depth interview as the sole method of data collection in realist research might not allow a full investigation of the topic because the participant and researcher are limited by the recall of the participant, the ability of the participant to articulate his or her experiences within the timeframe of the interview, and the ability of the researcher to ask the “right” questions to prompt more detailed discussion and aid the analysis. As such, in-depth interviews are often combined with other forms of data, such as observations, diaries, and documents, to produce a rich account of the research setting or phenomenon under investigation. Despite this criticism, in-depth interviews, due to the relative ease and cost-efficiency with which they can be conducted, will most likely remain one of the most popular and effective methods of data collection in qualitative research.

Kay E. Cook

See also Data Collection; Interviewing; Semi-Structured Interview

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INDEXICALITY

Indexicality is the capacity of language to point to something without directly referring to it. All language has the capacity for indexical function, but some expressions and

communicative events suggest more indexicality than do others. This includes indexical expressions, which draw meaning from their surrounding content or context (e.g., personal and demonstrative pronouns such as *you* and *that*, temporal-spatial expressions such as *here* or *then*). In addition to expressions or phrases, larger chunks of discourse can take on indexical meaning, including inside jokes that refer to another occurrence, code switching between languages or dialects, and reported speech or quotes. Indexicality implies these other occurrences' existence and relevance in relation to the current communicative event. Examining indexicality is common in various modes of discourse analysis, including conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, membership categorization analysis, and semi-otic analysis.

Indexicality relies on assumptions that communicative contexts reveal and/or create meaning. In contrast to the referential or denotational capabilities of language use, indexicality requires that the context of communicative production must be considered for meaning to be inferred. Instead of directly naming, or drawing attention to, an unambiguous referent, indexical elements of language draw meaning from their variable contexts (e.g., time, situation, surrounding content). In addition, such “pointing to” requires that surrounding grammatical, semantic, or pragmatic context (other words, available meanings, or inferred content) be observed to be understood.

When examining or analyzing language use, attention to its indexical functions provides insights into speaker intention and sensemaking in ways that attention to more literal referential functions of language do not make available. For instance, in conversation analysis, indexicality directs interlocutors to relevant pieces of the current discursive interaction (e.g., roles, other events, prior turns at talk). This can reveal implied intent or meaning that, for various reasons, is not represented explicitly in talk. In linguistic anthropological treatments of discourse analysis, indexicality is seen as directing interlocutors to power-laden, authorized, and sociocultural aspects of the situation. Thus, from this perspective, indexicality includes attention not only to indexical expressions but also to larger chunks of discourse such as other texts, sociocultural discourses, and power-related mediating symbols.

The conversation analytic treatment of indexicality differs from anthropological treatment in that the former considers indexical referents as grammatically and sequentially manifest, whereas the latter requires consideration of the sociocultural background of speakers

and hearers to analyze indexicality. For example, although race might not be mentioned explicitly in an interaction, knowledge of its potential relevance to the situation may be required to understand an indexical reference to a well-known sociohistorical event that is politically and ideologically loaded. These references point to circulating discourses and sociocultural moments, including the power, opportunity, and membership they imply.

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See also Context and Contextuality; Discourse Analysis; Intertextuality; Semiotics

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INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Indigenous research is systematic inquiry that engages Indigenous persons as investigators or partners to extend knowledge that is significant for Indigenous peoples and communities. Indigenous research is distinct from studies of Indigenous societies and issues that adopt a positivist position that behavior and meaning can be derived best from objective, value-neutral observation and data collection. The emergence of Indigenous research during the latter decades of the 20th century was advanced by parallel developments in qualitative research methods, although divergence from certain conventions of academic practice continue to generate discussion and challenges.

Identifying Aboriginal Peoples

It is estimated that there are more than 370 million Indigenous people spread across 70 countries from the Arctic to the South Pacific. According to a common definition, Indigenous peoples are the descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became

dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement, or other means.

Most Indigenous peoples have retained distinct characteristics that differ from those of other segments of the population. They display resolve to maintain and adapt their heritage and historical links to their territories and associated natural resources.

Indigenous peoples may identify as a single people, such as the Maori of New Zealand, or as belonging to diverse tribes of Native Americans in the United States or distinct First Nations in Canada. Related peoples may span several national boundaries, as do the Inuit of the Arctic region. Intermarriage with persons of other ethnic origins, urbanization, and lifestyle changes contribute to increasing diversity within Indigenous communities. Self-identification and acceptance by the community are the criteria suggested by United Nations (UN) agencies as the most fruitful approach for identifying members of the collective.

An Evolving Research Paradigm

Indigenous peoples and societies have been objects of research interest since the 19th century and the rise of social anthropology as a distinct field of research led by U.S. and British scholars. Indigenous peoples in the Americas and other colonial sites provided case studies for the development of theories of cultural evolution that implicitly legitimized the introduction of civilizing institutions to govern Indigenous homelands.

The 1960s and 1970s were times of social ferment around the globe, characterized by the dismantling of colonial empires, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the articulation of human rights in the international sphere. Particularly in nation-states with a British colonial connection, Indigenous peoples sought redress for neglect and violation of historic treaties. In concert with social movements to link Indigenous peoples within nation-states and across international boundaries, Indigenous writers began publishing trenchant critiques of the power relationships that fostered and maintained marginalization, poverty, and powerlessness among their peoples.

Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto, published in 1969 by Vine Deloria, Jr., was a call to consciousness that reached tribal people in their communities and helped to animate collective action. Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*, also published in 1969, had a similar impact. During succeeding decades, increasing numbers of Indigenous peoples pursued higher education, acquired

research skills, and turned them to the service of political and community development.

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her 1999 influential book, *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research, and Indigenous Peoples*, was able to document the transition of Indigenous peoples' research agenda through four phases: from addressing *survival* as physical, social, and spiritual beings; to *recovery* of territories, rights, and histories; through *development* of inherent capacities and resources for a good life; toward the goal of *self-determination* by which peoples freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Whereas research is intertwined in many ways with political and social development, another more philosophical discourse has developed among a growing cadre of Indigenous scholars—colleagues who are engaged in research with Indigenous communities and others of a more skeptical bent. Exchanges among American, Canadian, New Zealand, and Australian researchers have fostered dialogue particularly on health research and ethics. Developments in international forums have highlighted the practical and potential value of traditional environmental knowledge.

Traditional techniques of sustaining environmental systems in balance with human use are attracting interest, as is knowledge of plant life for agricultural, medicinal, and cosmetic purposes. Commercial exploitation of Indigenous knowledge has prompted efforts to protect the interests of holders of Indigenous knowledge through instruments such as state legislation in Peru and the 1992 international Convention on Biological Diversity.

Indigenous scholars during recent years have attempted to map the contours of Indigenous knowledge in terms that are comprehensible in Western knowledge systems. A common theme in these expositions is the dynamic nature of Indigenous knowledge, a way of engaging with reality rather than an artifact surviving from the past. Indigenous knowledge is specific to place and rooted in history, described in some traditions as reaching back seven generations and looking forward seven generations. It is holistic, involving body, mind, feelings and spirit. It emerges in dialogue and is acquired over time. Indigenous knowledge is expressed in symbols, arts, ceremonial and everyday practices, narratives, and

(especially) relationships. A recurring theme in Indigenous knowledge of diverse peoples is relationship with the land as a living entity that reveals the way of right living.

Indigenous peoples continue to value traditional ways of knowing, looking to elders as the keepers of oral tradition and the sources of wise counsel. Today they are affirming their right to conserve, elaborate, and transmit their knowledge using culture-based methodologies. They maintain that this knowledge base is essential to resolution of the range of problems that confront them. They further affirm that Indigenous knowledge, when shared appropriately, can contribute to well-being in the world at large.

The desire to conserve and develop Indigenous knowledge and to benefit from modern applications of such knowledge is a motivating force in community initiatives to assume a decisive role in research. The emergent field of Indigenous research being defined by Indigenous scholars privileges Indigenous concerns, Indigenous practices, and Indigenous participation as researchers and researched. The seminal question posed in this enterprise to Indigenous researchers and non-Indigenous collaborators alike is the following: Whose knowledge is extended by this research?

Transforming Research Relationships

From an Indigenous perspective, the need to transform research relationships arises from varied but similar historical experiences that have included being displaced from their traditional territories, having their languages and knowledge systems devalued as primitive, having their children removed to undergo aggressive resocialization, and meeting exclusionary and racist responses to their attempts at participating in the dominant society.

As Indigenous peoples contested the alienation of traditional lands, the effects of relocating communities, and harms suffered in residential schools and penal institutions, documentary research was often used to refute their claims. Research was seen at best as a tool of non-Aboriginal experts and at worst as an instrument of oppression. As represented in Figure 1, Indigenous knowledge was largely invisible outside the boundaries of Indigenous communities as it was obscured by hegemonic knowledge systems and the research that affirmed them.

By the 1970s, spaces in academic institutions were opening up to accommodate ethnic students and ethnic

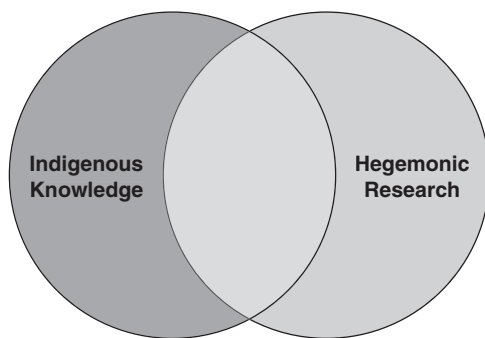


Figure 1 The Need to Transform Research

studies. Intercultural research recognized the legitimacy of insider perceptions of cultural experience, and participatory research explicitly supported voices from the margins in speaking, analyzing, building alliances, and taking action. Despite these shifts, the power to create legitimate knowledge continued—and still continues—to rest with researchers and institutions working within conventional conceptual frameworks. Figure 2 represents the location of intercultural and participatory research in intersecting knowledge systems.

The relatively small size of most Indigenous populations, embedded in larger societies and interacting with them on many fronts, dictates the continuing necessity of intercultural knowledge exchanges. Indigenous scholars and traditional knowledge keepers assert, however, that such exchanges must take place in a more equitable and respectful manner than has occurred to date. In Canada, the concept of creating ethical space is gaining currency. In ethical space, represented in Figure 3, parties acknowledge different ways of knowing and learning; they nurture collaborative relationships and negotiate mutual responsibilities.

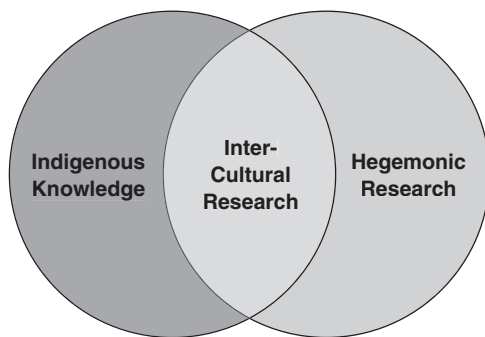


Figure 2 Intercultural and Participatory Research

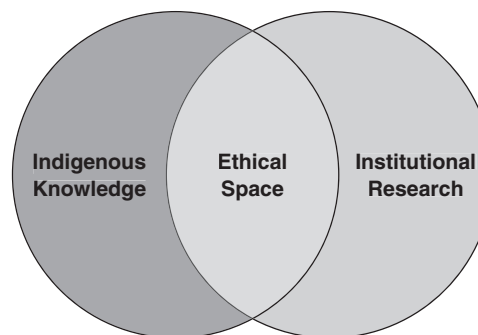


Figure 3 Creating Ethical Space

The goal of self-determination for Indigenous peoples, although endorsed in 2006 by the UN Human Rights Council, remains visionary. The essential work of articulating and conserving Indigenous knowledge and applying it to contemporary challenges requires autonomy of effort that is still constrained by the requirements of institutional funding protocols. The evolution of Indigenous research will undoubtedly continue, motivated by pressing needs within communities and shaped by social and political developments nationally and internationally.

Convergence With Qualitative Research Methods

It is evident from the forgoing discussion that many of the goals and approaches that are characteristic of Indigenous research are supported, and indeed have been enhanced, by the growing recognition of qualitative research methods. Inductive processes for gaining understanding that can be transferred and adapted to new situations are congruent with narrative metaphoric modes of learning in Indigenous societies that favor oral communications. Valuing diverse perspectives, maintaining flexibility in techniques, and negotiating ongoing collaborative relationships between researchers and participants can help to bridge differences between cultures. As noted earlier, participatory research has been embraced by Indigenous peoples in many varied settings.

Critical theory and feminist research have been particularly valuable in altering the landscape in which Aboriginal research is practiced. Critiques by Indigenous intellectuals and activists such as Deloria challenged the representations of Indigenous peoples that appeared in outsider accounts. They laid bare the failure of societal

institutions to deliver justice and humane treatment to disenfranchised peoples. They deconstructed the power relations that perpetuate social inequality.

Coming as it did from outside the academy, this social analysis would have had little impact beyond the populations whose members lived the realities about which Deloria and others wrote without a complementary shift in research in the larger world. Although critical research has been cited for failing to induce change in the conditions it exposes, it nevertheless has reinforced voices from the margins and instilled confidence in young Indigenous scholars that research can be relevant to their experience.

Feminist researchers have given impetus to Aboriginal research by challenging the patriarchal assumptions that underlie language, perceptions, and interpretations in the standard canons of research in various disciplines. They have won recognition that the same phenomenon viewed from different standpoints can produce different “truths”—all of them with legitimate claims to validity. Debates within the feminist research community between women of color and academically trained, predominantly White women have pointed to the distortions of voice and silencing that can occur even when researchers are deliberately reflexive, questioning their perceptions and biases.

Ethics

Indigenous peoples and communities in a number of countries have developed protocols for ethical review and oversight of research involving their members or conducted on their territories. Government agencies in some countries, including Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, have instituted Indigenous-specific guidelines that complement and supplement ethical guidelines of general application. This section highlights some of the concerns around research practice that are addressed in such guidelines.

Ethical guidelines for research involving Indigenous peoples or communities typically recommend or require engagement of community representatives in reviewing research proposals in addition to institutional ethics review. Community review may be as straightforward as approval of a researcher who is known to be trustworthy or as complex as a formal agreement setting out goals, methods, review, and dissemination of results and the risks and benefits anticipated for both the community and researchers in the

Learning Within a Blackfoot Paradigm

Red Crow Community College, a Blackfoot-governed institution in the province of Alberta, Canada, participates in initiatives of the Canadian Council on Learning and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council while applying Blackfoot methodologies in research. In the project “Learning From Place,” core concepts derive from the Blackfoot language and the conduct of research is guided by elders with a deep understanding of traditional knowledge.

For example, *aokakio'ssin* (systems awareness) is described as the requisite pursuit of any hunter and/or gatherer who must seek to embody an ever more nuanced knowledge of regional and local ecologies so as to gain immediate benefit while simultaneously ensuring a sustainable affluence and avoidance of various hazards. Transmitting *aokakio'ssin* to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students involves experiential, ceremonial, and ethical education as well as intellectual formation carried out on the land.

Maintaining the integrity of a Blackfoot paradigm of knowledge requires continuing negotiation with institutions of Western culture through which research support flows.

project. Key issues addressed by such engagement are ensuring respect, relevance, and rigor.

Respect for human dignity is a keystone value in research ethics codes around the world. Guidelines that require informed consent of participants and protection of privacy may require adaptation to be effective in Indigenous contexts. For example, some stories of interest to a researcher may contain knowledge that is communally owned or that can be disclosed only by authorized persons. Formal leaders may be the preferred mediators with outsiders in some cases, whereas their involvement may pose a risk to vulnerable members of the community in other cases. Equitable participation of persons knowledgeable in the local culture to guide the research process is desirable whether or not it is mandatory.

Relevance of research to a participant community is increasingly a condition for engagement in projects. Participation of Indigenous communities is often solicited on the basis that the research will do good for society—if not for the immediate community. Indigenous peoples are fatigued with research often presented by outsiders that neither promises nor

delivers any visible benefits. On the other hand, there are many research needs identified by Indigenous communities—environmental degradation, epidemic health threats, and culturally appropriate economic development, to name a few. Meaningful participation in setting the research agenda at the outset is necessary to practice the ethical values of justice and inclusion.

Rigor in research involving humans surely means producing results that faithfully reflect lived reality that has validity or truth value for both the Indigenous and scholarly communities. People who perceive research as irrelevant or disrespectful are unlikely to volunteer participation or provide reliable information. A dual test of the validity of results is implied in participatory research, although the degree of influence that the community exercises may vary a great deal. Methods for validating research findings might not even figure in ethics protocols. Nevertheless, it is a criterion that community research bodies are imposing with increasing frequency. Indigenous concepts of rigor may conflict with scientific emphasis on objectivity in data collection or generalizations based on statistical formulas, whereas qualitative and participatory methods appear to attract confidence from Indigenous participants.

The ethical response to challenges is to communicate where approaches are similar and to negotiate space for differences, some of which may turn out to be congruent at certain levels. Other differences may just need to co-exist.

Issues in Ongoing Dialogue

Leroy Little Bear, a Blackfoot scholar in Canada, described the encounter between Indigenous knowledge and Western science as “jagged worldviews colliding.” Ethical codes to mediate this encounter, developed with the involvement of Indigenous representatives in several nations, generally refrain from setting out prescriptions on how to resolve differences in research approaches. In part, this is a response to the great diversity that exists from one local community to another and the increasing diversity within communities of self-identified Indigenous persons. In part, it is a statement of faith that peoples of different origins, and with different customs, carrying the burden of failed relationships in the past can meet on the high ground of respect for human dignity.

Ethical space for respectful dialogue has been opened up by developments within nation-states and

international forums during the past 30 years or so. The possibility for dialogue between peoples has been enlarged by new understandings of the multiple ways in which humans create trustworthy knowledge.

The challenges confronting the Indigenous research enterprise and, more generally, research involving Indigenous peoples and issues are also plentiful:

- How to balance group interests and individual interests to promote justice and inclusiveness
- How to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups at risk within Indigenous communities
- How to provide access to data for local benefit and also protect the privacy of members of small communities with dense networks of relationship
- How to enhance the skills and infrastructure in Indigenous communities so that they can engage in equitable research partnerships
- How to respect both the expectations of community accountability and the value of freedom of inquiry
- How to overcome reluctance among academic researchers and students to engage with Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous-led research

These will be challenges for research in Indigenous contexts during the next 30 years or so.

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See also Community-Based Research; Context-Centered Knowledge; Cross-Cultural Research; Cultural Context; Ethics; Hegemony; Multicultural Research

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INDUCTION

In scientific research, induction is a form of reasoning used in pursuit of understanding and knowledge, establishing a relationship between observations and theory. Science applies inductive reasoning to establish theories, the purpose of which is to remove the need for continual observation so as to make statements about reality, using past experience to generalize with reasonable levels of certainty about the future. Research approaches that generalize from a particularity (typically a set of observations of some sort) to a broad statement, such as a theory or general proposition concerning a topic, apply inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning in science is sometimes contrasted with deduction or, more properly, the hypothetico-deductive method, where sense is made of data by locating them within a general or theoretical context. However, induction and deduction may be better considered as complementary components of scientific reasoning.

It has been suggested that induction is of particular importance in qualitative research approaches. Induction lies behind any effort to generate general statements based on observations or efforts to develop theory from empirical data. For example, interview or ethnographic data (particularities) may be used to propose broad understanding or theories (generalities) that are intended to apply beyond the sample of participants interviewed or observed. Whenever such general statements are made, inductive reasoning is required. The validity of reasoning may be supported by probabilistic or statistical assessments; by recourse to claims concerning

representativeness, triangulation with other data sources, previous research, knowledge, or experience; or by analogy with similar generalizations. In qualitative research, inductive reasoning is used whenever it is argued that an explanation or theoretical framing of data from a small sample should be applied more generally. Such generalizations, however, face the problem of induction.

The Problem of Induction

Because induction involves inference, the outcome of inductive reasoning is never binding given that a contradictory case may always overturn the generalization. For instance, if it is argued inductively that all birds fly (based on a series of observations), this reasoning can be overturned when a single flightless bird is observed. Philosophers have identified this as the problem of induction, arguing that all theory must be regarded as tentative and prone to being overturned if a contradictory observation is made. This problem faces everyone using research (whether as a practitioner or as a researcher), especially if theory is contested, as it may often be within the social sciences. Inductively derived theory may provide reasonably dependable propositions that allow people to trust certain regularities in everyday life, be they in the home or in the laboratory. Within the natural sciences, induction has led to many theories that appear to operate in many settings (e.g., the laws of physics or of chemical reaction). However, in the social sciences, the numerous factors that may affect phenomena, the role of reflexive subjectivity in determining many processes, and the dependency on context all mean that theories might not survive translation into settings other than those where they were initially developed. When appraising research based on inductive reasoning, users (be they practitioners or social scientists) must always exercise caution, particularly if they seek to generalize the findings beyond the cases or settings described. They may also choose to postulate alternative explanations of data using rival inductive reasoning. This has also been described as the underdetermination of theory by data.

Philosophers of science have argued that the problem of induction can be overcome partly by incorporating inductive and deductive reasoning within the practice of science. Deductive reasoning contributes to scientific knowledge whenever a general theory, proposition, or axiom is used to explain observational

data, and much scientific activity involves “puzzle solving” using an established theoretical framework rather than development of new theory. Philosopher of science Karl Popper suggested further that scientists should intentionally seek out data that can falsify current theory. Growth in knowledge occurs as falsified theories are replaced by rival theories that explain a wider range of data. However, this does not replace induction within the research process because inductive reasoning is still required to develop new theory on the basis of cumulative observations.

Induction in Qualitative Research

Inductive reasoning is used to develop generalized propositions, hypotheses, and theory from empirical observations in all natural and social scientific disciplines. In social science research, inductive reasoning is of particular relevance in qualitative approaches that are used to extend existing theory into a new setting or to develop understanding and theory where none currently exists. Methodologies such as grounded theory use induction to systematically develop higher-level propositions that explain the structure of data. Theory here is grounded within the data that have been gathered, with the intention being to make claims about the factors that determine not only the activities of the sample but also those of the category of actors from which the sample has been drawn. For example, a study of old people living in residential homes may reason inductively from interview data with a sample of 20 that dependency, infirmity, and fears about the future are factors that more generally affect the population from which this sample has been drawn.

Such inductive inferences are highly contestable because of the underdetermination of theory by data permitting rival theoretical elaborations from the same data set as well as the relatively small sample size in most qualitative research designs. For this reason, qualitative researchers are generally cautious about generalization beyond the setting in which data have been collected. However, theory generated by this kind of research is rarely submitted to falsification using the kinds of hypothetico-deductive approaches outlined earlier. Analytic induction, developed originally by Florian Znaniecki, is one attempt to improve the generalizability of qualitative research by incorporating induction and deductive reasoning. In this approach, hypotheses developed by inductive reasoning from data are systematically tested against fresh data to progressively develop more universal rules or theory.

Case studies are used to stimulate theory building and to probe the plausibility of these theoretical formulations. Crucial case studies are used to attempt to falsify theory and must be selected based on a full understanding of the field of study. When no cases that falsify the theory developed can be found during the research program, this ensures higher generalizability.

Induction is a key element of scientific reasoning in qualitative research studies that seek to develop theory or models, but as an approach to knowledge growth it is limited by the problems of generalization beyond the specific research setting.

Nick J. Fox

See also Analytic Induction; Deduction; Grounded Theory

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INFORMANT

The informant is a special category of research participant because of a particular expertise or knowledge that is brought to qualitative research. Informants know and understand the kind of information that is of interest to researchers. They offer an insider's perspective and in-depth information that can represent the views of a group or even a community. It is the capacity to represent the knowledge of a larger group that distinguishes informants from other types of participants such as respondents to a questionnaire and people who are the subject of observation.

Qualitative researchers use informants in many research contexts, particularly ethnographies, needs assessments, focus groups, policy evaluations, and action research. An informant's contribution to research may be a single interview or continual involvement. An informant will usually provide data through in-depth interviews, often face to face or by telephone. Sometimes an informant will assist during all stages of the research cycle, from identification of research questions to reviewing drafts of research findings.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using informants. Informants are advantageous because they can assist researchers in gaining trust and credibility

within a community, they allow the collection of in-depth information and continuing clarification of data, they may represent a diversity of people's views (including those of silent minorities), they may save researchers time and resources, and they are important gatekeepers for gaining access to additional participants. Disadvantages include the possibility that informants will pass on their own biases and political agendas, thereby influencing the reliability and validity of information obtained. The informant technique can easily be combined with other methods, and triangulation of informant data by using other techniques of data collection is recommended.

Good informants are more than just experts in the area of inquiry; they also reflect on it. This means that they can express a range of informed thoughts, feelings, insights, opinions, and facts about a topic. Researchers will often choose informants by asking members of a community to identify individuals who are both knowledgeable and respected for their expertise in the subject of inquiry. For example, to gain an understanding of popular culture in a high school, informants might include leaders from the student "in-groups" as well as teachers who are respected by students. These informants may suggest additional informants.

An informant is unique by virtue of particular status, experience, or knowledge. An informant is "in the know" for whatever a researcher is investigating. During the initial stages of research, an informant may give new information to a researcher. During the later stages, the information should serve to clarify and validate what the researcher has learned.

Russel Ogden

See also Participant; Respondent; Triangulation

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demand that, other than in exceptional circumstances, participants agree to research before it commences. That consent should be both informed and voluntary.

Ruth Faden and Tom Beauchamp argued that research participants need to understand that they are authorizing someone else to involve them in research and what they are authorizing. In most circumstances, researchers must provide potential participants with information about the purpose, methods, demands, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and possible outcomes of the research, including whether and how the research results might be disseminated. What is going to happen to them and why? How long will the process take? What are the risks? What are the potential benefits? Who is funding the work?

In some cases, providing information to ensure informed consent may take considerable time and effort for both researchers and research participants. In other cases, it may be sufficient to provide potential participants with a list of their entitlements and a range of information they can request. Researchers are generally expected to record participants' agreement to take part.

In general, researchers must negotiate consent from all relevant people (as well as organizations, groups, and/or community elders), for all relevant matters, and (possibly) at all relevant times. Several researchers have argued that consent should be dynamic and continuous and not limited to the beginning of the research project. This point has been made particularly forcefully by anthropologists.

Faden and Beauchamp also depicted informed consent as an autonomous action committed intentionally with understanding and without controlling influences resulting either from coercion or manipulation by others or from psychiatric disorders. However, researchers may find it difficult to assess whether potential participants' circumstances allow them such freedom. In consequence, special procedures are often adopted when attempting to obtain consent or assent from vulnerable and dependent groups.

The complexities of informed consent have proved to be particularly problematic for qualitative researchers engaged in covert research or deception. Deception could compromise the informed and voluntary nature of consent, but some researchers have argued that consent need not be obtained where any harm caused by lack of consent might be outweighed by the public benefit obtained. In addition, it might be impossible to gain access to some participants if other people are not deceived. Qualitative researchers have also had difficulty with the ethics review process when

INFORMED CONSENT

Most professional and institutional, national, and international guidelines and ethical codes for research

institutionally standardized consent processes that mandate excessively formal information sheets or signed consent forms have been imposed. This might jeopardize the safety and autonomy of research participants, the quality of the research, and/or the integrity of the consent process itself.

Mark Israel and Iain Hay

See also Covert Research; Deception; Ethics Codes; Ethics Review Process; Harm; Risk

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IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

An in-person interview is a data collection method where the researcher is in the same location as the participant and asks questions to which the participant responds. An in-person interview is also referred to as a face-to-face interview because the researcher and participant are facing each other during the interview conversation. Interviews are a common source of qualitative data because they are an effective means to learn from participants about their perceptions of and experiences with a study's topic. Therefore, they are an appropriate type of data collection for most qualitative designs and can be implemented using different interview formats such as semi-structured and unstructured. When a researcher decides to conduct individual interviews, she or he must decide whether they will be conducted in person or by other means such as by telephone or web conferencing. In-person interviews have many strengths as a qualitative data source, but researchers must also consider the challenges associated with this method.

In-person interviews are generally the best choice when interviewing individuals who are geographically accessible. As with all types of interviews, researchers

using in-person interviews learn about participants' views in their own words. In addition, by conducting interviews in person, researchers are better able to develop rapport with participants, thereby increasing the likelihood of learning details about their views. Interviewers can also make observations during interviews when they are physically present. Observations may include important nonverbal cues used by interviewees, including hand motions and head nodding. If the in-person interviews take place in the participants' settings (e.g., their homes or places of work), then interviewers are able to observe individuals' context as well.

There are many considerations that must be addressed when collecting data with in-person interviews. Foremost, the researcher must evaluate whether the participant is located close enough to the researcher's location so that they may meet in person. The interview is usually scheduled in advance at a location that is accessible to both the researcher and the participant, preferably a location that is quiet and sufficiently private to protect the participant's confidentiality. To develop rapport, the interviewer should consider issues such as how she or he dresses and speaks to the participant to ensure the participant's comfort with the situation. As with all interviews, informed consent is essential for in-person interviews, and the researcher must decide how information will be recorded and locate suitable recording devices. Lapel microphones that can be clipped to the interviewer's and participant's clothing are particularly useful for audiorecording in-person interviews. Finally, the interviewer should know the questions to be asked and be able to take notes unobtrusively so that he or she is able to listen and maintain eye contact with the interviewee during the conversation.

Vicki L. Plano Clark

See also Audiorecording; Data Collection; Interviewing; Telephone Interview; Virtual Interview

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INSIDER/OUTSIDER STATUS

The term *insider researcher* is used to describe a situation where the researcher is a part of the topic being investigated. For instance, an Aboriginal person who is examining the representation of local Aboriginal art may be defined as an insider researcher, whereas a researcher from overseas studying the same topic might be considered an outsider researcher.

Many academic disciplines encourage researchers to be reflective about their relationships with research participants, but emphasis on whether a researcher identifies as an insider or an outsider has been a particular focus of qualitative research in the areas of anthropology, feminism, and disability studies. The insider or outsider status of a researcher may have a considerable effect on the research process. For instance, being an insider or outsider may affect the way in which the researcher enters the field, the obligations that the researcher has to research participants, the ongoing nature of contact with research participants, and the level of trust demonstrated by research participants.

When a researcher already has established relationships with the research participants (as some insider researchers do), the nature of the investigation is quite different from that when the researcher must enter the field without previous connections. Some insiders report that when they conduct fieldwork, it is relatively easy to gain access to people and resources. Likewise, these insider researchers frequently report that research participants tend to indicate that they trust them far more than they might trust researchers who are perceived as outsiders. However, this shared identity may create tensions for a researcher because he or she can become aware of sensitive material that other community members do not want to disclose publicly. Such material requires careful attention to ethics, and a constant awareness of the need to establish clear boundaries, so as to avoid harm to the researcher and/or research participants.

Unlike outsiders, who tend to have exact dates when their research will begin and end, insiders are usually expected to have an ongoing connection with the research participants. Some research participants, therefore, may expect insiders to be more accountable for their research and responsive to community concerns than are outsiders. They also usually expect

insiders to be more aware of community sensibilities, and to use more appropriate language, compared with outsiders who might not be aware of established cultural practices.

Insider researchers need to be aware of both the similarities they share with research participants and the differences between them and research participants. For instance, a researcher who shares the same ethnicity as research participants may need to be reflective about the influence of differences such as gender, age, education, sexuality, and other factors that may affect the nature of the data collected. Even in the midst of such differences, however, insider researchers need to be reflective about the ways in which their insider status affected the rapport and trust they developed with research participants. By being reflective about the impact of being identified as an insider, and highlighting the effects that this identity had on the nature of the data collected, such connections with the field can be regarded as a strength of a particular form of immersed qualitative research.

Mark Sherry

See also Access; Authenticity; Bias; Credibility; Embodied Knowledge; Lived Experience

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INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Institutional ethnography works from and with people's everyday experience of their lives. It uses various qualitative research methods, including open-ended interactive interviewing, participant observation, and a distinctive approach to analyzing texts. In contrast to sociologies that are theoretically structured, institutional ethnography is a method of inquiry. It discovers the social rather than theorizing it, beginning with actual people, their doings, and how their doings are coordinated. It reaches beyond the scope of standard sociological ethnographies that are restricted to what can be found through observation and/or by drawing on people's experiential knowledge. It makes visible the translocal ruling relations

that are present in, organize, and are beyond people's everyday lives.

Institutional ethnographers have explored changes in managerial organization from the standpoint of nurses, the work of being patients in the context of medicine, how mothers' work contributes to their children's schools, how public discourses enter into and organize people's everyday lives, social work as work, and much more. Characteristically, institutional ethnographic studies such as those listed in Further Readings at the end of this entry explore institutional relations and organization from the standpoint of people's experience of and in them.

Encountering Actualities

Institutional ethnography inquires, investigates, examines, and observes; it does not impose sociologically authorized interpretations. The institutional ethnographer learns by encountering the actualities through observing or talking with those who are directly involved. But what does she or he encounter? There are two problems:

1. One problem is that there is a wild and woolly world out there that can never be tied down to any particular deployment of language (or other medium of representation). It is always more and other. So what should ethnography bring into focus?
2. A second problem is that of the ontology of the social. In other words, how does it exist out there so that we can learn from it rather than imposing our pregiven interpretations?

Institutional ethnography starts, as did Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, with actual people, their work, and the conditions of their work. It adds something that is implicit but not stated—how their work is coordinated. That is the focus. That is how the *social* is identified. Actions or work are not just seen as done by individuals; rather, they are always seen under the aspect of how they are coordinated with the actions or work of others.

Language

Speech, writing, images, and so on are recognized as among people's activities—their doings or work. Sociology in general proceeds with what Dorothy

Smith calls a dual ontology that differentiates activities from what goes on in individuals' "heads"—mind, belief, ideology, theory, culture, and the like. The latter are treated as occupying a different realm from that of action. How they may affect or influence people's behavior then becomes an issue. That dual ontology is rejected by institutional ethnography. Language is action. Institutional ethnography takes up phenomena of language as central to the coordinating of people's subjectivities. This does not mean reducing mind and the like to language; rather, it is an ethnographic practice that attends to what is spoken, written, read, watched, and so on as doings, as embodied, as occurring, active in coordinating people's consciousnesses and, hence, as it is itself coordinated with other doings whether in language or not. Here is where *discourse* in Michel Foucault's sense becomes useful; discourse, as he used the term, is applied to standardized, generalized, and generalizing forms of making statements. Institutional ethnography activates his concept, introducing the presence of people and how discourse coordinates their doings (whether in language or not). For institutional ethnography, there are always people whose work orients through texts to futures, pasts, and elsewhere and to others we may never encounter other than through their written words or their imaging.

Ethnography

Originating during the women's movement of the 1970s, institutional ethnography learned to work with and from people's embodied experience situated in our everyday lives. Explorations do not discard local actualities of time and place, but insofar as inquiry moves into regions beyond anyone's everyday experience, it must do so in the same mode. The social relations that coordinate across particular local settings, and hence cannot be located in any one, must be pieced together by discovering how multiple settings are coordinated.

Sociological ethnography in general has a commitment to the careful and faithful description of people's everyday lives. Institutional ethnography, however, goes further in seeking to discover and explicate the extra- or translocal ruling relations and organization in which people participate, often without realizing. Research aims to explicate just how things come about for us as they do, particularly as the translocal, text-mediated forms of coordinating our work enter

into and organize our everyday lives. Whereas the term *ethnography* preserves the commitment to careful descriptive research, the term *institutional* adds a commitment to discovering how extra- or translocal relations (sometimes called the ruling relations) enter into and coordinate what is going on locally and to discovering how those relations are put together in people's work.

Institutional ethnographies do not just produce case studies. As institutional ethnographies reach into the translocal ruling relations, they engage with and explicate relations that are generalized and that generalize, create commensurabilities, and standardize. Generalization appears in what is described and analyzed. It is there in the ethnographer's data. Each study creates a window from a different angle into the generalizing social relations that rule our societies. Even though each may address a different institutional function, it contributes to our knowledge of how the ruling relations work.

Texts

In the ontology of the social that Smith wrote specifically for institutional ethnography, texts (or documents) appear as key media of coordinating—and controlling—people's activities across local settings. Texts that replicate words or images independent of the presence of speakers or the activity of representation (e.g., acting, dancing) are the objectified coordinators of people at work in different places and at different times. The term *text* here refers to any set of words, numbers, or images appearing in replicable material forms—film, print, television, radio, computer, DVD, and so on—such that the same words and numbers or images can be read, heard, and seen by people who are not directly connected with one another.

In institutional ethnography, texts are not treated independent of people's courses of action. They are recognized and analyzed as they enter into and organize the sequences that form relations coordinating people's doings, our work, through time and across space.

Recognizing texts as in action is tricky. They must never be treated as if they were independent of the work settings in which they are produced and/or read, heard, and seen. Analyzing them as they enter into the organization of people's work is a key move in institutional ethnographic practice. Texts do not need to be a major focus, but in our world of the 21st century there is almost no situation of people's work that is

not somehow or another hooked into translocal relations mediated by a text or texts.

Work

Institutional ethnographers have found the concept of work to be useful in focusing observation and interview talk. As used in institutional ethnography, the concept of work does not mean just what is done at the place of employment; rather, it means anything that people are doing that involves effort, competence, resources, and definite conditions and that is intended. For example, the institutional ethnographic concept of work would include standing in line at the bank while waiting for a teller, waiting for breakfast to arrive in a seniors' residence, reading a newspaper or watching the television news, taking out the garbage, putting on makeup, filling in a form applying for maternal leave, and so on. People have an expert knowledge of work in this generous sense, and institutional ethnographic interviews rely on it. The translocal relations in which our everyday lives are embedded can be explored, as Susan Turner did as sequences of work organized and standardized by texts. Ellen Pence described the processing interchanges organizing judicial processes in domestic abuse cases; texts come in to be worked on (e.g., forms to fill in, reports to write) and are passed on to the next position in the sequence.

Problematic

Starting in the actualities of people's experience locates a study's problematic—how inquiry will orient to the institutional regime or other aspects of the ruling relations. Rather than adopting a concept or theory to frame a study, it starts with people's experience of and in institutional relations or organization and takes direction from there. For example, Alison Griffith and Dorothy Smith started exploring the work that mothers do in relation to their children's schools out of their own experience as "single parents." Beginning where people are and with a concern about what is going on in their lives, inquiry opens up the institutional complex, aiming to explicate just how translocal institutional relations and organization are shaping their lives and activities. Because we are exploring the real world, there are no natural boundaries; the problematic organizes the relevances of inquiry. Thus, Janet Rankin and Marie Campbell explored the restructuring of hospital services in the

province of British Columbia, Canada, examining the new managerial practices from the standpoint of the changing work experience of nurses.

Dorothy E. Smith

See also Community-Based Research; Critical Ethnography; Discourse; Ethnography; Feminist Epistemology; Feminist Research; Field Research; Intertextuality; Interviewing; Ontology; Participant Observation; Text; Textual Analysis

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Institutional research (IR) is any qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodology research activity undertaken in a college, university, hospital, or other

institutional setting that produces data, information, or knowledge in support of the institution's efforts to measure the effectiveness of its mission, goals, and objectives. IR was conceived during the 1950s as a mechanism for centralizing and facilitating the compilation, analysis, and reporting of data regarding an individual college or university, and since that time IR has also been adopted by companies and organizations outside the world of education. The accountability, quality assurance, and institutional effectiveness movements that drove much of higher education and other industry sectors over the subsequent decades, along with new developments in technology and significant increases in reporting demands of federal agencies, served to accelerate and expand the growth of the IR function. Today IR provides a complex and diverse set of activities designed to enhance administrative decision making, respond to the external demands placed on institutions, inform institutional policy development, and provide empirical data to underpin institutional planning and budgeting.

IR is conducted in a collaborative manner similar to action research where the members of the IR office will work with their colleagues from across the organization in planning research and assessment activities and in the actual collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. As practiced within the context of institutional effectiveness, IR personnel help their peers (a) to identify mission-critical policies, programs, personnel, and performances to assess; (b) to collect, analyze, and interpret relevant data; and (c) to use the results of the analysis to improve or enhance the institution.

Functions of an Institutional Research Office

The IR function assumes diverse roles within an organization. While it serves to gather, organize, and make sense of data and information regarding the institution, IR also assists the institution in stepping back, with a measure of objectivity, to reflect analytically on the meaning and import of those findings as they affect institutional growth, stability, and quality.

The IR functions can vary based on the size and nature of the institution. For example, at larger doctoral degree-granting, research-focused, or comprehensive institutions, IR offices may be more likely to

focus on academic research studies, whereas those IR offices found in 2- and 4-year institutions may be more dedicated to conducting environmental analysis studies and outcome assessments. Despite these differences in emphasis based on institutional setting and context, offices of IR typically perform planning support, decision-making support, policy formation support, assessment support, research studies, data management, data analysis, external reporting functions, and internal reporting functions.

Planning Support. To support strategic planning activities, the IR office will typically assist administrative leaders in the coordination, facilitation, and generation of information and analyses to produce integrated planning for growth in the company, facilities, budget, and staffing. In this role, IR personnel will help their colleagues to develop measurable goals and objectives in alignment with the institution's mission and vision, develop data collection strategies and mechanisms, assist with the data analysis and interpretation, and ensure quality and integrity throughout the process.

Decision-Making Support. In a data-driven management environment, IR provides administrators with the critical information they need for decision making. To this end, IR staff members may conduct environmental scans, internal data mining, and longitudinal studies to help administrators discover trends and tendencies and plan for the future accordingly.

Policy Formation Support. As institutions develop policies in new and emerging areas, the administration calls on IR to conduct policy and data analysis, collect information, and conduct research to learn more about the particularities of these areas. A typical project in policy formation support is to collect and analyze exemplary policies from other institutions, professional societies, or governmental agencies that can become the foundation for the creation of the institution's new policy.

Assessment Support. A major function for IR is to provide assessment guidance and support for all offices within the organization. This work includes coordination for planning, assessment, accountability, and provision of data analysis and interpretation and external research to learn more about processes. Projects in

this area include quality improvement or enhancement plans in which units measure their performance in meeting productivity or service goals and objectives.

Conducting Research Studies. IR staff members regularly conduct research and analytic studies such as student or customer opinion research, survey research, evaluation studies for assessing institutional effectiveness, enrollment or product management research, facility use, staffing patterns, productivity (e.g., worker performance), benchmarking, environmental scanning, and emerging industry sector issues. In education, these studies can include measuring the success of a new degree program, measuring differences in learning outcomes by instructional methodology (e.g., online vs. face-to-face instruction), trends in student persistence/attrition and graduation rates, and satisfaction with new facilities.

Data Management. The IR office works with other areas in the organization (e.g., information technology, budget, human resources) to improve the institution's database management systems and its overall collection, organization, maintenance, and/or verification of data. This work can involve developing better data fields, database queries, and reporting formats.

Data Analysis. IR staff members provide their colleagues with a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative data analysis and interpretation assistance. These services include coding and categorization guidance, manual and computer-aided analysis, peer review, and overall quality control.

External Reporting. An IR office often serves as the official source for an institution's external reports, especially those produced in compliance with federal or state requirements. In U.S. higher education, reports filed by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a system of surveys designed to collect data from all primary providers of postsecondary education, are the most important external reports filed each year. In addition to state and federal reports, the IR office may also provide institutional data for guides to colleges or other external organizations such as accreditation bodies.

Internal Reporting. To meet an organization's internal knowledge needs, an IR office will produce data presentations, publish reports, and disseminate data and information to stakeholders within the institution. A major effort in this area usually includes the publication of a factbook or an institutional report card in which important outcomes, events, and accomplishments are reported on an annual basis.

Institutional Review and Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methodologies and methods are used in IR to provide useful insights regarding perspectives of board members, personnel, customers, and other stakeholders critical to institutions and to give context to the numbers. Qualitative research is useful when measuring complex phenomena such as leadership and brand and when gaining insights into diverse academic cultures. Qualitative methodologies can also help to bring both the researchers and the decision makers closer to the research participants, and through this greater proximity can come thicker and richer descriptions, interpretations, explanations, and understandings of stakeholder expectations and needs. For example, naturalistic qualitative inquiry can help researchers and colleagues to follow their customers through stages of pre- and post-sales not only to bring a depth and richness to the outcomes collected but also to learn how customers develop lived experiences of the institution and its products. Finally, qualitative research has special value in IR because generalization of findings outside of the institution may be of lesser importance given that the focus of the particular study may be the individual program, department, factory, or unique corporate culture.

Institutional researchers use a number of qualitative research methods in their work. The most common of these include ethnographic techniques such as interviews, field observations, and participant observation. Focus groups are also popular data collection approaches found in IR work. Because of the institution-specific focus of many IR projects, case studies are broadly used as well. Finally, many IR studies involve document analysis as researchers collect and study catalogs, handbooks, policy manuals, mission statements, and a variety of internal work products.

The circularity of the institutional effectiveness model encourages many IR investigators to employ action research, participatory action research, appreciative

inquiry, and other collaborative research approaches. All of these methodologies have been shown to be effective in IR projects that focus on producing change within institutions of higher education or measuring improvements generated from data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Institutional Review Subject Areas Amenable to Qualitative Approaches

Across the wide array of subject areas on which studies may be conducted by IR staff members, many of the topics are quite amenable to qualitative research approaches. The following examples are just a few of the processes and outcomes that lend themselves to the use of qualitative inquiry.

Learning Outcomes. The major challenge in measuring learning outcomes is to create more direct measures of students' or trainees' acquired knowledge and skills. Whereas indirect measures such as grade point averages and program completion rates can tell the researchers some aspects of participants' learning, organizations are continually seeking measures that will enable them to collect better evidence of student or trainee success. Field observations in classroom, clinical, or corporate settings can allow the researchers to gather firsthand knowledge of how trainees and students are mastering certain competencies. Content analysis of training and educational program participants' work products to determine patterns of quality is another effective qualitative means to produce more direct evidence of learning.

Quality of Life. The question of what makes for a quality work experience for its employees is of critical importance to a company. Workforce stabilization rates can give an institution some general ideas of staff stabilization, but these numeric figures might not tell a company's leadership what difference makes a difference between those workers who stay with a company and those who leave. Case studies focusing on those employees who persist in their departments or those parts of a company that seem to retain higher percentages of their workers can shed new light on what aspects of their corporate lives make the biggest differences in employees' persistence. Such studies can also help an institution to identify best practices and emerging trends, particularly with peer-to-peer relationships.

Engagement. The assessment of engagement, or the degree to which administrators, staff members, and customers perceive their connectedness to an institution, lends itself to a variety of qualitative research approaches due to the subjective nature of the phenomenon. In qualitative engagement studies, IR staff members could conduct group or individual interviews with managers to discover what particular events of their corporate lives make them feel especially connected to their fellow workers and high-ranking leadership in the company. Such interviews would be especially effective when used in connection with some of the standardized questionnaires of engagement for those organizations with diverse workforces or unique corporate structures.

Institutional Culture. Organizations are quite interested in understanding their unique cultures and learning what employee characteristics predict success in their companies. Institutions are also curious to learn more about their corporate identities and how insiders and outsiders come to accept or challenge these self-perceptions. Ethnographic and participant observation approaches can prove to be effective for IR investigators to immerse themselves in their organization's culture and learn firsthand from their current and former stakeholders the customs, rituals, and practices that make the institution culturally distinctive.

Future Trends in Institutional Review

IR investigators, like many of their research colleagues, are increasingly using mixed methodology designs to take advantage of the complementary nature that qualitative and quantitative approaches bring to the study of institutions. By bringing meaning and context to the numbers, and by bringing central tendencies and ranges to individuals' perceptions and experiences, these researchers present institutional decision makers with not only a richer and more varied picture of their institutions but also better information from which to measure the effectiveness of the institutional mission, goals, and objectives.

Ron Chenail

See also Data Analysis; Data Collection; Data Generation; Data Management

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Websites

Association for Institutional Research: <http://www.airweb.org>

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

Institutional review boards (IRBs) are official university bodies in the United States that are authorized to evaluate research proposals to ensure ethical research practices. Comparable bodies exist under different names in different countries. For example, in the United Kingdom they are called research ethics committees, whereas in Canada they are referred to as research ethics boards. The justification for such boards is derived from some of the past century's most notoriously unethical research endeavors. The most egregious of these abuses occurred in the natural sciences, but high-profile instances of ethically questionable research led to IRBs also having jurisdiction over social science research. Qualitative researchers have been critical of this development. They have pointed out that the IRB process is based on alien assumptions about the nature of research and knowledge production, resulting in rules for ethical research conduct that at times do not mesh with the pragmatics of qualitative research.

Today IRBs have jurisdiction over all university-affiliated research in most Western countries. Faculty members and students cannot conduct research without ethics approval from an IRB. Those who do not secure such approval can be sanctioned by their universities, and universities are also accountable to

federal authorities if unapproved research is conducted under their auspices.

The emergence of these boards is usually justified with reference to “research” that Nazis conducted on unwilling research “participants.” In trying to prevent such practices, IRBs are guided by three dominant assumptions and a series of practical policies that follow from these assumptions. The first assumption is *respect for human dignity*. This manifests most prominently in the notion that individuals should formally consent to participate in research in full awareness of the harms and benefits that might be associated with such research. The second assumption is *balancing of harms and benefits*. This entails having researchers adopt the least risky research designs while trying to maximize benefits to participants and society. The third assumption is *justice*. This suggests that the risks or benefits of research should not fall disproportionately on any particular group and also that the ethics review process should itself be procedurally fair.

Qualitative researchers have been among the most vocal critics of such boards, accentuating that IRBs often conceptualize “research” with reference to a classic laboratory setting that does not cohere with the real-world practicalities of much social scientific research. Rules about securing informed consent, for example, are often impractical or unworkable in participant observation settings. Requirements that researchers set out their research questions in advance so that they can be evaluated by IRBs can also clash with the emergent nature of much qualitative inquiry. Such problems are compounded by the fact that IRBs across the United States have occasionally interpreted the official rules in quite different ways.

Kevin Haggerty

See also Confidentiality; Covert Observation; Deception; Ethics Codes; Ethics Review Process; Harm; Informed Consent; Participant Observation

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INTEGRITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Integrity is honesty and probity within the conduct of qualitative research, and it underpins ethical practice in all of the activities that comprise data collection and analysis. It is characterized by openness and wholeness on the part of the researcher and can be understood as a type of “straightforwardness” or “moral uprightness” that rejects intentional duplicity and deceit. Integrity is central to ethical research principles that focus on the responsibility of the researcher to do no harm, to gain informed consent from participants, and to represent respondents’ views as accurately as possible as part of the epistemological process. Integrity within empirical research is not an abstract concern; it directly informs the choice of methods as part of legitimizing knowledge production within an “appropriate” theoretical framework. These methods may include in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and nonparticipant observation, and all entail different forms of ethical rigor in their execution that is centered on taking participants’ accounts seriously.

The collection of qualitative data that describe meaning and experience is rooted in a subjective paradigm that is not value free and is inextricably linked to the goals of the researcher who might not be emotionally detached from the topic of inquiry. In this sense, qualitative research is not neutral or objective, and acknowledgment of the values and assumptions that frame research is an important feature of integrity. Openness, however, is not always fully achievable during the process of connecting experience to understanding, and the sharing of information between the researcher and participants can be problematic and a negotiated process. Thus, integrity can be complicated and compromised, and it is always political.

Politics of Integrity

Balancing rights and responsibilities in the qualitative research process entails equalizing the search for knowledge with concerns about vulnerability, confidentiality, and intrusion in the lives of participants.

These concerns are connected to the power dynamics that are likely to be present in research, and they relate not only to the power relationship between researchers and participants but also to that between researchers and funding bodies/host institutions. There is much in the literature about the personal empowerment of research participants through their contribution to heightening awareness about a particular social issue, but there is less about the empowerment of researchers that can be constrained and sometimes disenfranchised by the requirements imposed by research funders. These requirements can intrude into and color both research conduct and output, with researchers feeling obliged to take account of the political positioning of funding bodies. This suggests that acting with integrity is not a linear construct but rather points to the reality of ethical research practice that is complex and often multifaceted.

Working with participants who are unsympathetic or resistant to the aims of a research project can challenge both the integrity and resilience of researchers and can be stressful for both parties. This raises the question of whether integrity can be seen as conditional and, if so, what are the caveats or constraints that inhibit full openness. Examples from the feminist literature illustrate that the “ideological distance” between researchers and their participants can be bridged by revelation strategies on the part of the researchers that are partial, staged, and characterized by reference to the more general rather than the highly detailed and specific. In some circumstances, full openness must be sacrificed to the needs of completing research effectively, and this may involve some measure of unexplication of researchers’ agendas. This does not signify the collapse of ethical rigor; rather, it points to relative and contextual understandings of “truth telling” that inscribe empirical work within the human and social sciences. Integrity is itself a social construct that cannot be self-serving if it is to be an effective safeguard for researchers and participants alike within sociological research. Ethical research processes, to be meaningful, must be pragmatic and responsive to the circumstances of the research, and the adoption of a narrow purist model may leave areas of human experience hidden and neglected.

The Role of Intention

Integrity within qualitative research is not just an issue at the design stage but also a continuing practical concern

throughout the entire research process, including the analysis and reporting phases where issues of interpretation are key and now seen as part of postmodern intellectual license. Although it is incumbent on researchers to be cognizant of the implications of research both for participants and for policy, it is often intent rather than the consequences that determine whether or not research behavior can be seen as moral. This is because qualitative research is often messy and unpredictable, and researchers cannot be held to account for outcomes that could not have been expected even with the best-formulated plans. The synthesis and analysis of personal experience for public consumption that characterizes much qualitative research carries with it a particular obligation for researchers to adopt an ethics of care approach to ensure that respondents are not subject to exploitation and positioned only in terms of their utilitarian value. This can be challenging for researchers, and not only because any harm that may accrue to respondents from participating in research might not be immediately evident. Being clear and transparent about the extent of the commitment expected from participants together with adherence to confidentiality practices can minimize adverse effects but cannot be a guarantee of “pain-free” outcomes.

The preceding has discussed the main constitutive features of integrity within qualitative research that contributes to ethically sound research practice. Although research must be rigorous, if it is to be regarded as intellectually compelling and politically persuasive, it must also be open to scrutiny in terms of method and process. Probity forms part of an ethical continuum that entails an uncertain slippery path of forward and backward across all of the stages of knowledge production, but it must be remembered that integrity is contingent on context and situation rather than on abstract principles.

Jacqueline Halina Watts

See also Rigor in Qualitative Research

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Excerpt From *The Menopause Club: Five Hot Middle-Aged Women Talk About Their Bodies*

We are all white, heterosexual, professional women in academia, some of us graduate students and others professors, ranging in age from 45 to 61. Our academic areas are communication studies, sociology, and women's studies.

We decided we would engage in interactive focus groups to explore our experiences with being "plus or minus 50." In this project, we seek to understand how our experiences in this time of our lives contribute to our identities, and how—through communication—we construct (interpersonally and socially) our identities as "new middle-aged" women. Through multiple conversations in five interactive focus groups over 18 months, we all acted in alternating roles as facilitators, researchers, and participants. The conversations were audiotaped, transcribed, analyzed, reacted to by each of us, reanalyzed, and written as narrative.

...
 "I used to think I was pretty sexy," Catherine says.

Nancy agrees. "That used to be a pretty big part of my identity, too."

"I thought I could have sex at whim, and I did," Catherine confesses. "It wasn't that I was a party animal per se, but I considered myself a sexual revolutionary. I don't anymore, obviously."

"Why do you say 'obviously'?" Barbara asks the question all of us are wondering.

"I really don't have the sex drive I had," Catherine says with a grimace.

...
 Nancy picks up a book from a stack next to her. "Herrick (2004) says sex is better after 50, after menopause. I want to say to her, 'what hormones are you on, I want some of them.'" We laugh.

Barbara says, "I think sex is just different when you're older. I still really like sex."

...
 "Yet I have to admit that I have hang-ups with my aging body." Leslie looks down, and her voice moves to a whisper. "I try to keep myself covered during sex so Mark can't see my body."

...
 "I constantly fight putting my body down," says Catherine. "I do too," Nancy says. The others are surprised as they think Nancy has a fantastic body.

...
 Leslie interjects. "I think I'm in denial. I remember three years ago looking in the mirror and going, 'wow, my eyes are really baggy and they're wrinkled, and my pores are large,' and I thought, 'oh, it must just be whatever temporary ailment I thought it was at the time.' And then, about six months ago, I thought, 'this temporary situation has now lasted 2½ years.'" Jan suppresses a chuckle as Leslie continues. "Now what's so funny is, I keep thinking, 'I'm not really a heavy person, but I just keep gaining weight, and I haven't been thin

for a long time. This is just temporary.' I don't know when I'm going to come out of that."

...
 "I don't wear any makeup at all," Nancy says. "Not a drop. To me it's too much trouble." Jan thinks about the amount of makeup she has on today and smiles to herself at how we all are in some ways similar and in other ways different.

"I wear eye shadow when I go to work," Barbara adds.

"You have beautiful skin," Catherine says to Nancy. "I never go without makeup."

Nancy nods. "I have nice skin, but now there are changes occurring that bother me. Like with my neck."

"My neck is horrible," says Catherine.

...
 Jan doesn't see anything on Catherine's neck, but she's afraid she'll be rude if she looks too closely, so she turns to examining herself instead. "Yeah, and now look at what my newest aging change is! I read this in a magazine last week!" Jan says, holding out the top of her hand to show the group. She pulls up the skin on the back of her hand. "See how it stays up? It's supposed to go back down if you have young looking skin!" she says accusingly to her skin.

Nancy tries it on her hand. "Oh, great, now there's something else I have to be concerned about!"

...
 "I wonder how much of our aging issues have to do with our bodily changes and how much they have to do with society's unrealistic expectations for women's bodies at any age," Jan thinks out loud. "I guess as we age and our bodies cooperate less with being pushed, pulled, and dieted into strange and unnatural shapes, we feel the conflict more strongly between culture's ideal and our realistic possibilities."

Nancy echoes the thought. "We all seem to not want to be so involved in our body image, to accept our aging bodies. But do we? Are we any different in that respect than our mothers were?"

...
 "What strikes me," Nancy continues, "is our desire to not care so much about our bodies, how we look, yet we keep going back to our appearance over and over and it's clear that it does matter. Actually, I think both things are true. On the one hand, we don't care like we used to. Hey, we can't because we don't have the same options and we know we don't look like young models anymore. We're reasonable and intelligent women, so we don't let ourselves want what we can't have. We also see that other things are much more important. On the other hand, we do care that the aging process changes us so much. The changes are a lot to get used to, and it's nice that we have time to get used to them. So while we don't want to look like 20-year-old models, we do want to look as good as we can and stay in shape. We aren't sure we won't have plastic surgery or make changes, but at the same time we don't want to want to make changes."

INTERACTIVE FOCUS GROUPS

Interactive focus groups, a variation on traditional focus groups, are characterized by a resistance to one facilitator or leader, collaboration in forming research questions, multiple voices, flexibility of conversation and direction, and collaborative writing and analysis. Interactive focus groups let researchers analyze, reflect, and share in vivo, using their group discourse itself as a method of inquiry as well as data to be analyzed. Interactive focus groups allow researchers to equalize the hegemonic power relationship between traditional research participants and researchers through a dialogic process that views all of those involved in the research process as co-participants. The focus of the interactive focus group is threefold: to discuss the topic at hand, to jointly reflect on the discussion in the group, and to analyze the discourse used in the discussion as a way of understanding how meaning is constructed in the group.

Unlike traditional focus groups, which are highly constrained and organized, in interactive focus groups the discussion is as unstructured as possible, allowing for multiple perspectives. Although interactive focus groups have “ringleaders,” all participants are co-researchers, yielding a group process somewhere between that of a leaderless group and a group with all leaders. At different times, different participants may take the lead.

Unlike traditional focus groups in which participants are strangers to each other, and thus their interactions have few consequences past the group session, interactive focus groups typically consist of participants already in an existing “bona fide” group or relationship, and the purpose is to observe how their prior group culture plays itself out in the focus group environment and to watch a system in action and interaction. This process entails multiple focus group sessions to build on previous sessions and encourage reflection, empathy, and trust between sessions. In analysis of interactive focus group sessions, the conversation itself can be investigated as a speech event to understand the joint construction of meaning taking place during the sessions through conversation and interaction.

Interactive focus groups are a moral and ethical methodological choice that let participants have a say in how the research is conducted given that they are able to exert control over the conversation. This approach provides an opportunity to tilt the balance of

power in the research relationship from one single researcher to the group as co-participants.

Specific ethical concerns must be taken into consideration when using an interactive focus group approach. The first is the confidentiality of the information discussed. Although group members can be asked to maintain both confidentiality and anonymity, participants cannot control for this or guarantee it. Participants in interactive focus groups are especially vulnerable to group coercion or pressure to disclose information that they might not have intended to disclose. Creating a safe environment in which participants can share painful and emotional experiences is a challenge that must be met in any focus group, but this is especially true in interactive focus groups because of the tendency for deeper emotional and personal disclosure during these sessions.

Christine S. Davis and Carolyn S. Ellis

See also Focus Groups; Interactive Interview

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INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW

Interactive interviewing is an interpretive practice for getting an in-depth and intimate understanding of people's experiences with emotionally charged and sensitive topics such as childbirth, illness, loss, and eating disorders. Emphasizing the communicative and joint sensemaking that occurs in interviewing, this approach involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers, who tell (and sometimes write) their stories in the context of a developing relationship. This entry discusses the goals, concerns, and practices associated with this type of interviewing.

Interactive interviewing is a collaborative communication process occurring between researchers and respondents in small group settings. The goal of an interactive interview is for all of those participating, usually two to four people (including the primary

researcher), to act both as researchers and as research participants. Each person has the opportunity to share his or her story in the context of the developing relationships among all participants. Interactive interviewing works especially well when all participants also are trained as researchers. If that is not the case, however, participants can be given an important role in determining the research process and its contents as well as in interpreting the meaning of the interviews.

Likewise, the feelings, insights, and stories that the primary researcher brings to the interactive session are as important as those brought by other participants; the understandings that emerge among all parties during interaction—what they learn together—are as compelling as the stories each person brings to the session. Ideally, all participants should have some history together or be willing to work to develop a strong affiliation. It is helpful for the researcher as well as the co-participants to have personal experience with the topic under investigation; if that is not the case, the researcher should be willing to take on the roles and lived experiences of other participants in this regard. This strategy is particularly useful when the researcher is examining personal topics that require reciprocity and the building of trust.

Interactive interviewing requires considerable time, multiple interview sessions, and attention to communication and emotions. It also may involve participating in shared activities outside the formal interview situation. This approach does not have rigid rules for proceeding; rather, it is flexible and continually guided by the ongoing interaction within the interview context. Participants engaged in this kind of research must be open to vulnerability and emotional investment while working through the intricacies of sensitive issues. In some cases, research roles may overlap with friendship, caretaking, and therapeutic roles, and the primary researcher must have plans in place for coping with that possibility.

Interactive interviewing reflects the way in which relationships develop in real life as conversations where one person's disclosures and self-probing invite another's disclosures and self-probing, where an increasingly intimate and trusting context makes it possible for a person to reveal more of himself or herself and to probe deeper into another's feelings and thoughts, where listening to and asking questions about another person's plight lead to greater understanding of one's own plight, and where the examination and comparison of experiences offer new insight into both lives.

This intersubjective process provides a contextual basis for a level of understanding and interpretation that is not present in traditional hierarchical interview situations where interviewers reveal little about themselves, aloofly ask questions in one or two brief sessions, and encourage little or no relationship development with respondents. When interviewers do reveal something about themselves in traditional interviews, it often is viewed as a "tactic" to get respondents to "open up."

Interactive interviewing differs from life history research in its emphasis on the researcher as well as the respondent and in the attention paid to the dynamics of the interview situation. In addition, an interactive interview differs from a therapeutic interview in that intervention and change are not primary goals (although they may be achieved). Furthermore, the relationship between the interviewer and the respondent is not as distinctly hierarchical or as guided by a set of rules as is the relationship between the therapist and the client. Instead, all participants are expected to probe both "self" and "other."

Many practical and ethical questions arise in doing interpretive interactive interviewing, including the following. Who can do this kind of research? What are some of the considerations that should be taken into account? What procedures should be followed? How do participants provide a supportive context that encourages talk about intimate experiences? What precautions should researchers take to avoid doing harm to themselves and to respondents? How might participants handle the silences—what is not talked about—in the interview? How might participants respond if the interview becomes emotional? Is it feasible/desirable to merge the goals of therapy and research?

Many of these questions have been addressed during the past two decades by interpretive social scientists, especially feminist scholars, who have challenged traditional interviewing practices. Many ethical questions and concerns about the ethics of merging therapeutic and research goals continue to be debated heavily. Carolyn Ellis and her colleagues, for example, have suggested that research that does not offer potential healing for self, participants, audience members, and/or positive social change for communities and nations is suspect. They believe that researchers should care about and for participants rather than treating them like subjects. Other scholars have argued that researchers are not therapists and are not equipped to do therapy and that therapeutic goals are not ethical or suitable in

social science research projects. Whatever their position on these matters, those practicing interactive interviews should be aware of the complex issues that arise in this research and should consider them fully in the context of their particular projects.

Carolyn S. Ellis

See also Autoethnography; Co-Constructed Narrative; Collaborative Research; Conversational Interviewing; Interactive Focus Groups; Narrative Interview; Reflexivity; Storytelling; Subjectivity

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INTER- AND INTRACODER RELIABILITY

Inter- and intracoder reliability refers to two processes related to the analysis of written materials. Intercoder reliability involves at least two researchers' independently coding the materials, whereas intracoder reliability refers to the consistent manner by which the researcher codes. Inter- and intracoder reliability is a major point of interest to researchers who believe that qualitative research lacks sufficient analytic rigor.

Both quantitative and qualitative researchers use inter- and intracoder reliability. The former find a strong use in conducting content analysis resorting to calculations and measurements sometimes based on

“agreement indexes” using percentages or statistical techniques, whereas the latter find it particularly useful to analyze interview and focus group transcripts. This entry discusses the use of inter- and intracoder reliability only by qualitative researchers. It should be noted, however, that the existence of computer programs has enabled qualitative researchers to bend their approach toward that of quantitative researchers. Some see this development as a welcome bridge between the two paradigms of research.

Although the formal objective of inter- and intracoder reliability in qualitative research is to produce codes that lend themselves to development of concepts and theory, the latent aim is to train students to analyze transcripts. In this latter purpose, the researcher mentors students (i.e., the other coders) in how to analyze materials. Still, the formal analysis of materials/transcripts remains the primary goal.

The Process of Coding

Becoming wholly familiar with the transcribed text is an urgent requirement for all coders. The coder notes the overt statements as referents to the empirical world, and he or she carefully notes these in the materials. It does not matter substantially whether these notes are placed within the text (e.g., with the use of a word processing program) or are penciled in on the side of the text. Some engage in “line-by-line coding” as suggested by Anselm Strauss, whereas others find it more worthwhile to take somewhat larger chunks of text of, say, two or three “sentences” or even a whole “paragraph.” During this first stage of coding, the coder will also probably pay particular attention to covert meanings that reside within the text.

To achieve intercoder reliability, the two (or more) coders get together after the first round of independent coding to discuss their results. At this stage, they also will discuss the more suitable codes that will lend themselves to analysis. In many instances, however, the coders will maintain virtually all codes until a higher stage of coding is reached. Each coder also takes these opportunities to check for intracoder reliability.

As the coding process thickens, the coders might agree that some codes to statements about the empirical referents should be abandoned, refined, combined, or merged with other codes. Coders might want to abandon codes if they refer to sporadic statements in the text or if they seem to fall outside the parameters of the study. Sometimes coders may seek a refinement,

especially if the code captures a category that is too broad (e.g., “education” might need to be refined as “education for girls”). On further inspection, coders might decide to combine two or more codes into an entirely new code (e.g., “uneasiness” and “flustering” might be combined into “embarrassment”). Finally, when a code occurs too infrequently, it might be more easily subsumed under a more commonly occurring code.

After such reworkings, the coders now engage in a further rereading of the text and pay particular attention to any themes that might emerge from the codes themselves. Again, each coder engages in this process initially independent of the other coder(s), although a time constraint might forcefully parlay itself into this stage of the process and make it impossible to continue on this parallel coding track.

There is one dimension of intracoder reliability that is often overlooked in research and that affects both inter- and intracoder reliability; namely, the pattern of the sequence of codes. As was the case in the focus group research by Deborah and Will van den Hoonaard, described in *The Equality of Women and Men: The Experience of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, the researchers noted a peculiar sequential pattern when coding the empirical referents. When the researchers laid out all of the codes, they noticed that the codes occurred in a distinctive sequential chronological pattern. In each of the 12 focus group transcripts, there was a decisive moment in the transcript when the group started to reflect on, and revise, statements that the group had made earlier in the discussion about group members' experience with equality. This sequential pattern of codes was so consistent that the researchers began to see it as an identifying moment for the focus group. If the researchers had simply summed all of the codes without regard to their relational placement in the whole transcript, they would not have noted this important transition in the consultations of the focus groups. Thus, the researchers were able to identify the “career” of the focus group discussion.

Challenges

To achieve inter- and intracoder reliability, coders should be apprised of several important challenges that lie ahead of this analytic process. First, it might be difficult for the software program to take into account the subtleties of changing the codes along the way. Second, it is not always easy to find the proper balance between having too many codes and having

too few codes; the former will overwhelm the analysis in a meaningless way, whereas the latter will underwhelm the analysis. Third, the time required to develop all of the codes can outstretch resources and the time periods. Fourth, it is difficult to decide when checks on coder reliability are no longer required (only during the initial phase of the coding process or well into the stage of creating concepts?). Fifth, it can be difficult to distinguish overt statements from covert statements. Sixth, the way in which coders come to agree on the relevant codes might not be clear (such agreement cannot always be predicated on the experience of veteran researchers or on the fresh insights of novice researchers). Despite these challenges, many researchers will always be drawn to coder reliability.

Will C. van den Hoonaard

See also Axial Coding; Codes and Coding; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Content Analysis; Document Analysis; Ethnographic Content Analysis; In Vivo Coding; Open Coding; Selective Coding; Thematic Coding and Analysis

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INTERDISCIPLINARY QUALITATIVE STUDIES CONFERENCE

The Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies (IQS) Conference has been held annually in January at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education on the campus of the University of Georgia since 1988 and is one of a handful of such conferences held around the globe. Its purpose is to provide a venue for presentation of scholarship on qualitative research methods, design, epistemology, and related theoretical concerns as well as examples of innovative qualitative work across the human and professional sciences. Although

annual themes and keynote speakers reflect ongoing issues and concerns in the practice and study of qualitative research, presentations represent the range of qualitative study.

The conference typically runs for 2½ days in early January. On days immediately preceding and following the conference, workshops on various skills and topics are offered. In addition to three or four invited keynote speeches or presentations, the conference program is organized around individual papers, papers grouped into symposia, panel discussions, poster sessions, additional workshops, roundtable discussions, and alternative formats proposed by presenters. These presentations are organized in the program by their substantive or methodological subject. All sessions except invited ones are refereed given that the program is intended to support innovation and to provide a safe environment for experimentation and transformative endeavors. Individual research consultations are offered to attendees by senior methodologists throughout the conference.

The IQS Conference originated as an outreach effort of the Qualitative Interest Group (QUIG) at the University of Georgia. QUIG is an association of faculty and staff members from across the university who were brought together in 1985 through a development grant provided by the College of Education. The IQS Conference itself remains a project supported principally by the College of Education but also aided by departments and units around the university that contribute to its interdisciplinary orientation. Still known locally as the QUIG conference, it is coordinated by a rotation of QUIG members, and the yearly theme and keynote speakers are selected by that year's coordinator. Conference themes have emphasized the range of qualitative methods and practices as well as topics such as ethics, fostering diversity and social justice through qualitative research, alternative representation, teaching qualitative traditions, integrating the arts with research, and a variety of epistemological issues.

Judith Preissle

See also Education, Qualitative Research in; Qualitative Research, History of; Social Sciences, Qualitative Research in

Websites

Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies Conference:
<http://www.coe.uga.edu/quig>

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Interdisciplinary research integrates perspectives and methods from two or more disciplines to investigate a topic or an issue. It has been distinguished from multidisciplinary research in which individuals and teams trained in different academic traditions focus on a common problem but are not charged with integrating concepts and methods to address that problem. It has also been distinguished from, or regarded as a subtype of, transdisciplinary research where diverse researchers attempt to transcend disciplinary boundaries to create novel ways of thinking about the topic of interest and to advance methods of investigation. Although interdisciplinary research has a long history, it has gained prominence recently due to the “big science” revolution that encourages and funds large, interdisciplinary, and multimethod research and to technological advances that enhance conceptual and methodological integration. Increasingly, researchers, funders, and policymakers have come to recognize that multiple perspectives and methods are needed to better understand and solve complicated issues. The added value of interdisciplinary approaches has been demonstrated in research on a range of complex questions such as the effects of poverty on child and family well-being; the ethical, legal, and social implications of genetic research; health and health behaviors; and the multiple interlinked influences on child development (e.g., biological, environmental, familial, community, cultural). These are complicated phenomena that require a matching complexity and integration of methods at multiple levels for their study.

Although much has been written about the value of interdisciplinary research and its correlate mixed methods, there is little available about the actual practice and use of qualitative methods in interdisciplinary projects—the ways in which large and diverse research teams have integrated qualitative approaches, the transformations that qualitative methods can bring about, and the real challenges that exist for qualitative methodologists working on interdisciplinary teams or for researchers on the team who are not trained in the methods. Research findings are reported with varying degrees of success at integrating qualitative perspectives and methods, but the activities that lay behind successful or unsuccessful integration are not transparent. This entry provides a brief synopsis of the potential of qualitative methods in collaborative interdisciplinary research and the factors that enhance or impede integration.

The Potential of Qualitative Methods

Increasingly, different disciplines are adopting qualitative methods as one means to investigate pertinent research questions. Until very recently, researchers in fields such as sociology, psychology, education, nursing, and public health were suspect or marginalized if they wanted to employ ethnographic or interview methods in their studies. Although these views have not dissipated entirely, there is more appreciation for the depth of understanding that qualitative methods can bring to interdisciplinary research. If employed at all phases of the research project, from research design through sampling, data collection, analysis, and report writing, qualitative methods can suggest new lines of inquiry, new foci of investigation, alternative statistical models, and novel interpretations of complex phenomena. Methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, life histories, and case studies bring other disciplinary perspectives to a research team by their mere introduction. For example, an explanatory or cultural models type of interview can elicit individuals' ideas about disease causation, symptoms, prognosis, and treatment and can be used in clinic and research settings. There have also been a number of interdisciplinary studies of poverty and child and family well-being that use qualitative approaches. Sociological questionnaires and psychological assessments have provided important information on correlations among societal, familial, and individual variables, but ethnographic research and case studies add holistic accounts of how low-income families raise their children and make ends meet in contexts of limited resources and poverty programs. In addition, they bring theoretical perspectives from their anthropological or sociological origins, such as theories of inequality and social justice, that can be used in interpreting or contextualizing findings from other methods.

The addition of qualitative methods to interdisciplinary research can also uncover expected findings that suggest new foci of investigation or different variables for analyses. For example, the ethnographic component of Welfare, Families, and Children: A Three-City Study (a project examining the effects of the 1996 welfare reforms in the United States on low-income families) found that children within the same family had differential access to health insurance and other resources. This finding was unanticipated and led to new survey questions and statistical analyses. Ethnographic investigations into the complexity of families led to new ways of

thinking about "single mothers" and to different categorizations, or variables, for use in further analysis.

Collaborations between qualitative methodologists and researchers trained in other methods can lead to novel approaches and models. For example, ethnographers' collaborations with a geographer on the Three-City Study led to a new method called *geoethnography*, where ethnographic data from participant observations and interviews are combined with geographic information systems (GIS) technology to map and depict important spatial dimensions of individuals' lives as affected by social structures and processes, in this case, the spatial and temporal aspects of how caregivers of children with disabilities navigated and linked services. Combining ethnographic data and GIS methods helped researchers to see both "context" and "content" in a spatial dimension, and the alternative way of representing data identified issues that would not have been apparent otherwise.

Factors That Enhance or Impede the Use of Qualitative Methods

There are a number of factors that affect the degree to which research is truly interdisciplinary. These include the expertise of members of the team in how to integrate concepts and methods from different academic arenas and how committed they are to adopting unfamiliar methods. Teams of interdisciplinary researchers focused on social science kinds of questions may represent the full range of academic departments. For example, a team investigating the ethical, legal, and social implications of large-scale genomic research is likely to be composed of researchers in medical and human genetics, sociology, anthropology, law, philosophy, and public health. Methods of investigation in each of these fields are different and usually unknown to individuals outside the particular disciplinary tradition. The degree to which an interdisciplinary project will succeed in incorporating theoretical insights and methodological approaches of its diverse members depends in large part on communication and translation. If disciplines are separate cultures, each with its own tradition of thought and practice, then interdisciplinary work, at least in the beginning, is much about coming to an understanding of cultures that are different from one's own.

Linking qualitative and quantitative approaches ideally should begin at project conception. An integrated study can use qualitative research to indicate constructs or hypotheses that need to be addressed

with quantitative data collection. In the next wave, quantitative data can be used to test hypotheses generated from (for example) ethnographic work, ensuring that conclusions drawn from the ethnographic work are not biased due to small or selected samples. Conversely, quantitative data can raise important issues that can be studied in more depth in the next wave of qualitative data collection. That is, the ideal feedback loop entails ensuring that results obtained from one approach are examined during the next wave of data collection using the other method. This process requires commitment from the research team as well as prompt processing and analysis of data from each wave of data collection.

The extent to which the study includes feedback loops between methods will strongly influence the ability to use both sets of data to triangulate results. Three elements of mixed methods research design influence the ability to capitalize on intended integration: (1) what constructs are measured, (2) when assessments take place, and (3) who is assessed. Large longitudinal studies designed to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods vary along all three of these dimensions. Qualitative methods may be used to assess the same constructs as those to be measured using questionnaires or standardized instruments, or the two assessments may be intended to address separate research questions and the constructs of interest might not overlap at all. Failure to collect data on the same domains or constructs eliminates the ability to influence later data collection across methods and makes integration of results difficult or irrelevant. The schedule of assessments may be concurrent or staggered (with one type always preceding the other). Concurrent data collection reduces the sources of discrepancy between findings from the two methods. However, staggering assessments can strengthen feedback between methods. For example, if qualitative assessments are intended to provide insight into the quantitative measures selected, conducting qualitative assessments well in advance of quantitative data collection is advised. Finally, both qualitative and quantitative data may be collected on none, some, or all of the same study participants. Most often, qualitative data are collected on a small subset of participants who are also participating in the quantitative assessments or on a smaller and completely separate sample selected to “match” the larger sample on key variables. Rarely are both methods used to assess the same sample.

The most comprehensive integration can occur when qualitative and quantitative data are collected on all participants. In this case, qualitative data can be analyzed and used to create typologies or variables for use in further quantitative analysis and to provide interpretation and context for quantitative results. Quantitative data can be used to provide statistical support for qualitative interpretations. Combined analyses can extend the validity and generalizability of findings by combining information from in-depth interviews or observations with scores from standard assessments in the same analysis. For example, my colleagues and I have conducted semi-structured interviews with 150 families (250 mothers and fathers) of Mexican and Puerto Rico origin that had a child age 5 years or younger with mental retardation or developmental delay. Interview data were used to rate each parent on a 5-point scale in terms of his or her level of use, awareness, and satisfaction with services, and these outcomes were related to family and child characteristics. In another case, quantitative methods were central to ascertaining the degree to which these Latino families viewed religion as a source of support and what child and family characteristics correlated with this variable, but qualitative data were essential in revealing the ways in which people actually thought about and used religion as a support system. In another example of parents of children with fragile X syndrome, responses from open-ended questions were used to check the consistency and validity of the responses to standard survey questions and to provide a meaningful context for the statistical results.

The biggest challenge in any multidisciplinary team approach is determining the relative weight assigned to each approach. This weight is often reflected both in the amount of resources devoted to collection of both types of data and in who is included in the decisions. It is often difficult to include methods different from those in which most investigators were trained. A longitudinal project is expensive, and there may be debates about the amount of money to allocate to qualitative research. Decisions about the research design are often among the most contentious issues facing a longitudinal research team, and both qualitative and quantitative methodologists must be involved in that process if the team hopes to use both types of data to address research questions. Given these issues, successful integration is influenced by the extent to which the principal investigator and the entire

research team are committed to, and experienced in, integrating data.

Finally, the level of investment of the research team in a specific research question may affect the ability to integrate data. High levels of investment in a given topic can facilitate integration when the research team focuses on that topic, and interest in the topic ensures that adequate resources will be devoted to measurement. In contrast, integration may fail if qualitative researchers are interested in topics that do not interest quantitative researchers and vice versa. Low levels of interest in a given topic make it unlikely that resources will be allocated to measurement of the constructs and changing protocols if discrepant results from the two approaches are obtained. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods should provide more depth and breadth in understanding complex developmental phenomena. Each approach offers sophisticated techniques that promise more precision and validity in measurement, including addressing issues of cultural sensitivity and describing and understanding patterns of change. Although advanced methods in each tradition are available, they are seldom used in tandem and useful models and examples for combining them are lacking.

Debra Skinner

See also Education, Qualitative Research in; Health Sciences, Qualitative Research in; Humanities, Qualitative Research in; Mixed Methods Research; Social Sciences, Qualitative Research in

Further Readings

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

On May 7, 2005, the International Association of Qualitative Inquiry (IAQI) was established during the First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The founding members were President Norman Denzin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Vice President Judith Robinson, University of Liverpool; and Treasurer Grant Kien, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The foundation of the IAQI was a response to the desire of many members of the international qualitative inquiry community for an organization that would facilitate the global development of qualitative inquiry and could actively speak on behalf of the interests and concerns of qualitative researchers. In keeping with these ends, the IAQI seeks to foster shared learning and to advocate and lobby on behalf of qualitative research methods and findings that have a broader social justice agenda.

To discuss the governance and direction of the organization, the IAQI convenes annually during the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Throughout the year, a volunteer-based international advisory committee works to address issues raised at the annual meeting and to provide representation in specific regional and interest-based dialogues.

As of January 2007, less than 2 years after its launch, the IAQI's membership consisted of more than 1,000 members from more than 55 nations. In addition to a membership listserv, the IAQI produces the *IAQI Newsletter*, a quarterly publication that keeps members informed about upcoming conferences, publications, calls for papers, and professional opportunities regarding qualitative inquiry. The IAQI has also partnered with scholarly presses to advance the dissemination of qualitative methodologies. At the time of this writing, negotiations are under way to establish a journal for the

IAQI. Furthermore, the IAQI maintains an archive of white papers making policy recommendations based on the findings and principles guiding qualitative inquiry.

The IAQI takes an interdisciplinary standpoint spanning the fields of educational policy research, the humanities, communications, health care, social science, social welfare, business, and law. It continues to promote discussions that foreground performative, feminist, Indigenous, queer, democratic, and participatory modes of critical ethical inquiry that question the notions of research, science, and ethics as put forth by traditional methodologies.

James Salvo

See also International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry

Websites

International Association of Qualitative Inquiry:
<http://www.iaqi.org>

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

The International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry is a conference and associated workshop series hosted by the International Center for Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The center and congress director is Norman Denzin. The congress is one implementation of the center vision that includes the goal “to facilitate the development of qualitative research methods across a wide variety of academic disciplines.”

The first congress was held May 5–7, 2005, on the theme “Qualitative Inquiry in a Time of Global Uncertainty” and included the launch of the International Association of Qualitative Inquiry. More than 650 papers were presented by delegates from more than 45 nations. The keynote speakers were Janice Morse (University of Utah) on “The Politics of Evidence” and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (University of Auckland, New Zealand) on “On Tricky Ground: Researching the Native in the Age of Uncertainty.” Eleven preconference workshops were held, including “Feminist Qualitative Research in the New Century,” “Autoethnography,” and “Interpreting, Writing Up, and Evaluating Qualitative Materials.”

The second congress was held May 4–6, 2006, on the theme “Ethics, Politics, and Human Subject Research in the New Millennium.” This congress attracted even more papers than the first—more than 900—from an even wider constituency of more than 55 nations. The keynote speakers were Marie Battiste (University of Saskatchewan, Canada) on “The Global Challenge: Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage” and Michelle Fine (National Academies of Science) on “Do You Believe in Geneva? Participatory Action Research, Critical Methods, and Indigenous Knowledges.” Sixteen preconference workshops were held, including “Case Study With Distant Inhabitants,” “Heartbeats: Writing Performance Texts,” and “New Experimental Writing Forms.”

The third congress was held May 2–5, 2007, on the theme “Qualitative Inquiry and the Politics of Evidence.” The keynote speakers were D. Soyini (University of North Carolina) on “Dangerous Ethnography and Utopian Performative” and Julianne Cheek (University of South Australia) on “A Fine Line: Positioning Qualitative Inquiry in the Wake of the Politics of Evidence.” Sixteen preconference workshops were held, including “Doing Situational Maps,” “Evidence-Based Social Work,” and “Writing Lives and Writing Deaths.”

The International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry website includes a call for papers, details of past conferences, a conference paper archive, a facility to join an announcement listserv and view its archive, and a qualitative inquiry community blog.

Anna Madill

See also International Association of Qualitative Inquiry

Websites

International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry:
<http://www.c4qi.org>

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The International Human Science Research Conference (IHSRC) has been held annually since 1982. It provides a collegial gathering place for presentations and dialogue for faculty members, graduate students, and others who are interested in the practice, theories, and

principles that are related to qualitative research. According to the 1988 program, "The conference draws people who are interested in studying experiences as they occur for the individual, taking into account the larger social and historical context of human life. From this perspective, all of us who participate in this conference are researchers. That is, we are searching to discover that which is fundamentally human."

Within the context of this organization, *human science* is defined broadly, although the phenomenological and hermeneutical traditions have been especially influential. The origin of the conference illustrates this point. The first meeting, in 1982, took place at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and grew out of a phenomenology seminar organized by graduate students and faculty members, mainly from education. The invited speakers for the first conference included Thomas Luckmann, Amedeo Giorgi, Max van Manen, and Ton Beekman. The second conference was hosted by Amedeo Giorgi, who chaired the program in phenomenological psychology at Duquesne University and who continues to play a central role in the IHSRC. Over the years, the conference has included qualitative researchers from other orientations such as grounded theory and social constructionism.

Until 1989, the conference was held in either Canada or the United States. Subsequently, the participants decided that it should alternate between North America and Europe. In 1995 it was held in South Africa, and in 2001 it was held in Japan. Most years the conference organizers have selected a broad theme (e.g., "Integration of the Human Sciences," "Ethical Foundations and Implications," "Caring for the Next Generation") as a focus. Although the nature of the conference has remained relatively constant over time, the conference comes to life in a distinct way each year as it is hosted by a new university in a new location.

The IHSRC is unique in that it has existed for a quarter century with minimal organizational structure: it has no officers, board of directors, dues, bylaws, or the other paraphernalia associated with professional organizations. There is just an annual newsletter that is funded out of the conference fees. The organization is kept going by the dedication and enthusiasm of its members.

Steen Halling

Websites

International Human Science Research Conference:
<http://www.seattleu.edu/artsci/psychology/ihsr.asp>

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM) was established at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, in 1998 for the purpose of facilitating the development and use of qualitative methods globally. The objectives were as follows:

- Provide leadership to address issues in qualitative inquiry and facilitate the development of qualitative methods
- Promote excellence in qualitative research through education and research
- Provide a forum for collaboration among international experts in the field of qualitative inquiry

To achieve the IIQM's global mission, the founding director, Janice Morse, initiated an administrative structure consisting of international sites in each major continent, and these sites in turn were linked to universities and research centers within their geographic regions or linguistic groups (called *cooperating sites*). Initially, international sites were established on six continents as follows: North America, University of Alberta; Australia, University of Newcastle; South America, Universidad de São Paulo; Europe and Great Britain/Europe, Universiteit Utrecht; Africa, Rand African University; and Asia, Ewha Womans University. In 2000, two other sites were added: Ibero-America, University of Guadalajara; and the Middle East, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Further expansion in 2006 resulted in the addition of two new sites and some reorganization. Sites for the United Kingdom and Scandinavia were established at the University of Bournemouth and the University of Aarhus, Denmark, respectively. The Australian site moved to the University of South Australia, and the European site was relocated to the University of Berlin, Germany. As of November 2006, these 10 international sites were linked to 115 cooperating sites under the guidance of an international advisory board.

The cooperating sites are responsible for establishing and maintaining their own programs directed toward making qualitative inquiry visible and accessible. Each site is also expected to maintain a website. Support or assistance may be requested from the international site or from the institute at the University

of Alberta. Hence, the IIQM is a huge network of institutions linked with the common goal of developing qualitative inquiry.

Programs

The programs developed by the IIQM and its affiliate sites make for a large movement promoting qualitative research. Space limitations here allow only a general description of these efforts.

Conferences and workshops: Two international conferences, Advances in Qualitative Methods and Qualitative Health Research, are sponsored annually, with conferences often alternating between the Alberta and international sites. Individual language and regional groups also hold annual conferences, including the Ibero-American Conference and conferences held by the Israeli Center for Qualitative Inquiry and the University of Bournemouth. In addition, a weeklong series of workshops, "Thinking Qualitatively," takes place each summer at the IIQM in Edmonton, Alberta.

International dissertation award: A prize is awarded annually for the best qualitative dissertation in any discipline.

Qual Press: The Qual Press publishes a series of excellent qualitative studies, including the winners of the dissertation award, published as monographs.

International Journal of Qualitative Methods (IJQM): This is a quarterly, open-access, web-based journal in which authors may publish innovative work in the development of qualitative methods.

Summer program and internships: This is a 10-week summer program held at the IIQM and typically consisting of two courses: Principles of Qualitative Inquiry and Inside Analysis. The "Thinking Qualitatively" workshops are also offered during the summer.

International collaborative research: The networking available through the IIQM fosters international collaboration and comparative research.

Internal support: The IIQM encourages the development of qualitative research laboratories, networking, journal and writing clubs, and seminars according to the needs at each site.

See also Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference; *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*; Qualitative Health Research Conference

Websites

International Institute for Qualitative Methodology:
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/iiqm>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

The *International Journal of Qualitative Methods (IJQM)* is an open-access, internet-based, refereed journal. Established in 2002, it is published quarterly. The *IJQM* is sponsored by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM) at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

The publishing mandate of the *IJQM* focuses on articles that describe, develop, and disseminate qualitative methods. As a multidisciplinary international journal, the *IJQM* has a readership consisting of academics, students, and professionals who undertake qualitative research worldwide. The regional editors manage article submissions and reviews in languages other than English, as well as posting translations of published articles as they become available.

The current Editor and Associate Editor (Cindy Jardine and Lisa Given, respectively) work out of the IIQM in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and oversee the work of the *IJQM*'s regional editors. As of 2008, these were Margareth Angelo, Escola de Efermagem da USP, Brazil; Dan Bar-On, International Center for Qualitative Methodology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel; Bas Levering, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands; Lea Kacen, International Center for Qualitative Methodology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel; Irena Madjar, University of Newcastle, Australia; Francisco J. Mercado Martinez, PROGICS, University of Guadalajara, Mexico; Neila van der Linde, University of Johannesburg, South Africa; and Kyung Rim Shin, Ewha Womans University, Korea. Moira Calder serves as technical editor.

The journal is divided into sections: full-length articles, keynote addresses, insider insights (short "how-to" methodological briefs edited by Lisa Given, University of Alberta, Canada), and abstracts from the

Janice M. Morse

two IIQM international conferences (Advances in Qualitative Methods and Qualitative Health Research).

Examples of recent articles include the following:

- Agar, M. (2006). Culture: Can you take it anywhere? [keynote address]. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(2), Article 11. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_2/html/agar.htm
- Epstein, I., Stevens, B., McKeever, P., & Baruchel, S. (2006). Photo elicitation interview (PEI): Using photos to elicit children's perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(3), Article 1. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_3/html/epstein.htm
- Jensen, D. F. N. (2006). Metaphors as a bridge to understanding educational and social contexts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), Article 4. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_1/html/jensen.htm

The *IJQM* is indexed in Academic Abstracts FullTEXT, Academic Search, BioMedical FullTEXT, Business Source, Canadian Reference Centre, Canadian MAS FullTEXT, Health Source, Humanities Source, MasterFILE, Public Library FullTEXT, Primary Search, Social Science Center, Sociological Abstracts, and Topic Search.

Janice M. Morse

See also International Institute for Qualitative Methodology

Websites

International Journal of Qualitative Methods:
<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index>

INTERNET IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The internet is a social phenomenon, a tool, and also a field-site for qualitative research. The relationship of the internet to the research project depends largely on how the internet is defined.

The term *internet* originally described a network of computers that made possible the decentralized transmission of information. In popular use, however, *the internet* is an ambiguous term referencing or encompassing innumerable technologies, uses, and social spaces. Because these technologies, the capacities for communication, and the types of social interaction made possible by the internet vary so widely,

qualitative researchers find it necessary to define the concept more narrowly within individual studies. This is complicated by the fact that the study of the internet cuts across all academic disciplines. There are no central methodological or theoretical guidelines, and research findings are widely distributed and decentralized. As a consequence, qualitative researchers may find it challenging to locate previous studies that might prove to be useful in the design and enactment of their own studies.

Depending on the role the internet plays in the qualitative research project or how it is conceptualized by researchers, different epistemological, logistical, and ethical considerations will come into play. The internet tends to be used or studied in one or more of the following ways:

- *The study of any social phenomenon using the internet as a tool for collecting, sorting, storing, and/or analyzing information gathered:* This refers to inquiry related to any topic that uses various capacities and interfaces available on the internet to augment or replace traditional qualitative methods of collecting, storing, sorting, and analyzing information. The internet is also associated with the use of data analysis software, albeit inaccurately given that the internet is not strictly necessary to enable the functioning of such analytical tools.

- *The study of social phenomena that are mediated by, rely on, or are interwoven with the internet for their composition or function:* This refers to inquiry focused on the way in which people use or experience various aspects of the internet or on the cultural formations emerging from or made possible through the internet. Methods drawn from a wide range of disciplines can be adapted to studying internet use or computer-mediated environments.

- *The study of the internet or aspects of it as phenomena in themselves:* This refers to inquiry focused on the network, technologies, or capacities of the internet. This research scenario is distinguished from the preceding ones because of a greater focus on various features and implications of this globe-spanning network of connectivity rather than on those social phenomena resulting from internet use.

These categorizations of inquiry are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Researchers studying an

online community may conceptualize the internet as a tool for collecting information, the field-site, and also as an object of analysis. A researcher exploring the way in which information flows through the network may use the internet as a tool and also consider the social impact of this mapping.

It is important to distinguish between the research scenario, as already categorized, and the characteristics of the internet that will become salient as the purpose of research is identified or unfolds. Depending on the focal point in each scenario, the internet can acquire or display particular characteristics that, in turn, influence the design and enactment of the research project.

As a hypothetical example, consider the following. Researcher 1, studying how breast cancer survivors frame their experiences, defines the internet as a tool, using various internet media to contact participants, schedule interviews, distribute open-ended question lists, collect research diaries, organize and sort data, and so forth. Researcher 2, studying how women feel about being members of a virtual breast cancer group, conceptualizes the internet as a field-site, observing interaction practices and group norms among participants. Researcher 3, studying personal websites created by breast cancer survivors, focuses on hyperlinks among websites, mapping the network of connections created by these common elements. In the first case, the information processing and transmitting features of the internet are salient, but only inasmuch as these tools function effectively. In the second case, the virtual or internet-mediated characteristics of the group are salient, but they are tertiary to the primary focus on the group itself. In the third case, the internet itself is the phenomenon; links among users are the primary focus. Each researcher asks distinct questions that highlight or hide various aspects of the internet.

Salient Characteristics of the Internet

Certain uses and capacities are noted as important considerations in the development of qualitative studies of the internet or in its use. This list is not exhaustive but rather general and intended heuristically.

Internet as a Medium of Communication

Inductive naturalistic principles and processes guide qualitative inquiry. In the examination of the construction, negotiation, and maintenance of human

social practices and structures, qualitative researchers engage in the process of studying communicative practices in context. As a medium for communication, the internet provides multiple means of interaction and performance of identity and community.

Although composed of vast networks of connections between computers, the internet is more associated with the tangible capacities afforded by these instantaneous connections. Users focus less on the networks of connections than on the texts, still and moving images, and sounds facilitated by these networks. People use the internet in ways that parallel, but depart from or extend, earlier media for communication such as letter writing, telephone, sticky notes, and bulletin boards. People can use multiple media simultaneously. These uses can be asynchronous or synchronous; one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many; anonymous or not anonymous. The presentation of self may be represented in writing, sound, moving and still images, video (live or prerecorded), avatars, various displayed artifacts, and so forth.

Use of a particular form of internet medium may appear to be homogeneous at the surface level of activity. For example, the seemingly simple practice of sending text messages could be conceptualized as variously as a conversation continuer, a marker of presence, a sign of status, an opportunity to represent oneself authentically, a move of parental resistance, an opportunity to wear a mask, a location device, or a signal for unified action.

If used as a tool for research, the capabilities of the internet should be matched to the goals, topics, and participants of the project. Because internet technologies are defined and adapted in distinctive ways by different users and groups, this is often an inductive process. Collecting life histories via email may be satisfactory, but allowing participants to create ongoing life history accounts on websites that they can design with color and images may yield richly textured results. Yet although this shift would be quite suitable for certain users, it would be completely foreign to others. For an interview study, real-time chat rooms may provide anonymous participation and spontaneous conversation, but that might not be adequate for certain participants or research questions. Interviewing via video may be preferred by some participants, but others might provide more information if they also had an instant messaging window open; sometimes people cannot say something vocally or face to face but can and will express it in text. Email

interviews may be better suited to participants who have busy schedules and desire time to consider their responses, but they may be unsuitable for users who are more familiar with shorter, more immediate forms of interaction. The key is to make a conscious and measured effort to match the mode to the context, the users' preferences, and the research question.

Internet as Geographically Dispersed

This capacity of the internet is generally taken for granted in everyday communication with others. Internet interfaces disregard location and distance, enabling the instantaneous and inexpensive transmission of information between people and databases. Logistically, the distance-collapsing capacity of the internet allows researchers to connect to participants around the globe. This increases and/or alters the available pool of participants and can enable questions and comparisons that were previously less available.

Research can be designed around questions of interaction and social behavior unbound from the restrictions of proximity or geography. Participants can be selected on the basis of their appropriate fit within the research questions rather than on the basis of their physical location or convenience to researchers. This requires a shift from physical to discursive boundaries for the ethnographic project.

Internet as Anonymous

Certain interaction environments facilitate a sense of anonymity. This has obvious advantages for certain topics or methods of qualitative inquiry. Part of this perception is facilitated by the internet's disconnection from geographic markers, meaning that one's participation in interaction with other people is not necessarily linked to one's physical proximity to others as would be the case in all face-to-face contexts.

In addition to the natural—but not necessary—separation between people interacting via internet-mediated communication, certain interfaces are designed to promote and protect anonymity. These anonymous interaction environments may allow participants to speak more freely without restraints brought about by social norms, mores, and conventions. This feature is useful in studies of risky or deviant behaviors or of socially unacceptable attitudes.

Anonymity and geographic distance both complicate and ease ethical considerations. In meeting the

ethical requirements for conducting research involving human subjects in most countries, researchers are required to, among other things, gain informed consent. In an anonymous environment, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether the user is capable of granting informed consent. The physical and legal markers traditionally available to qualitative researchers in the field are obviously absent if the participant wishes to remain bodiless, nameless, and faceless in an online context. This has raised the question of whether regulations associated with informed consent are appropriately designed to protect human subjects. Using the internet as a method of interacting with participants may actually facilitate protection of human subjects; the participants have many outlets to withdraw from the study, and certain interaction environments can improve the likelihood of maintaining confidentiality. These ethical issues require close attention by qualitative researchers.

As an interpretive issue rather than a legalistic one, anonymity can be discomfiting for researchers who might not know who the participants are, at least not in any embodied tangible way. This raises concerns about authenticity. On the one hand, interacting with participants in anonymous environments results in the loss of many of the interactional qualities taken for granted in face-to-face interviews and observations. This may constitute a meaningful gap of information for researchers who rely on these qualities as a way of knowing. On the other hand, similar gaps occur in more traditional research and interaction environments but are generally considered to be more a problem of interpretive clarity than a natural condition of doing research with unfamiliar participants.

Internet as Chrono-Malleable

In addition to collapsing distance, internet technologies can disrupt the traditional use of time in interaction. Because internet technologies accommodate both asynchronous and synchronous communication between individuals and groups, the use of time can be determined more individually. In real-time conversations, users can see their messages before they are sent. Backspacing and editing are made possible by stopping time in this way. In text-based environments, pauses and gaps are expected. Users may be participating in multiple conversations or tasks at once. Users may experience different speeds of connection or interruptions in service. In asynchronous media such as email and threaded

discussions, these pauses can be quite long, perhaps even weeks or months. In synchronous audiovisual contexts as well, users expect and work around disjunctive and fragmented interactions.

The chrono-malleable features of internet-mediated communication can assist researchers, for example, in conducting interviews. Complications regarding venue, commuting, and scheduling conflicts are less restrictive when interactions occur on the internet.

The elasticity of time can be associated with greater perceived control over the communication process. Because of the time-stop nature of most online media, as well as the knowledge that connections sometimes fail, users have the opportunity to reflect on and revise their utterances and actions. In the midst of a conversation (synchronous or asynchronous), users can reflect on comments or messages before responding and can review their own messages before sending. Designing research to take advantage of these capabilities can significantly enhance both the scope of a study and the collection of information from participants.

Internet as Multimodal

Communication via the internet occurs in multiple modes (alternately or simultaneously). Whether sponsored by software and hardware, a person's individual use, or the emergence of dyadic or group norms over time, these multiple modes operate on the sensemaking practices of users. Consequently, the issue of the internet as multimodal becomes meaningful when designing interactions in the research context.

Users tend to employ more than one communication technology at once. For example, a child might be writing an email, downloading music, updating his or her personal web space, and watching streaming video. When instant messages pop up on the screen, the child is prompted to type a reply within a new or continued conversation.

Qualitative researchers study these complex interplays of time, spatiality, technology, and information flow. They also use these as tools to augment the ways in which they communicate with participants. Researchers can use one channel with a group and use different "back channels" with individuals to interact privately while the larger group activity is occurring. These nondisruptive "whispers" can add valuable data that might not otherwise be captured in the moment.

Certain environments are set up to facilitate multiple simultaneous modes of interaction, such as interactive gaming. Even in straightforward information transmission environments, which were not designed to facilitate a sense of presence, programs can evolve into shared spaces as the meanings, relationships, and communities created by the interactions transcend the limitations of the programs in which people are interacting.

Researchers might study how these multimodal interactions occur or are made sense of in the cultural context, or they might simply use this capacity as a means of augmenting data gathering. Whether the technology provides the multiple modes or the users adapt technologies to a multimodal way of thinking is less important than the fact that these characteristics can influence the way in which users perceive contexts and interact with one another. For researchers, this has great potential for augmenting traditional approaches and creating previously impossible methods of interacting with participants.

Internet as a Context of Social Construction

The internet involves discursive forms of presentation and interaction that can be witnessed immediately or archived in various iterations and moments. These facilitate researchers' abilities to witness and analyze the structure of talk, the negotiation of meaning and identity, the development of relationships and communities, and the construction of social structures as these occur discursively. Linguistic and social structures emerging through social interaction via the internet provide the opportunity for researchers to track and analyze how language builds and sustains social reality.

The internet is not novel in that individual use, habitual practice across groups, and technical capacities constitute patterns of temporal interactions, building social structures that may become concrete realities. These processes describe any language system. The internet is unique, however, in that it leaves visible traces of these processes. Internet technologies allow researchers to see the visible artifacts of this negotiation process in forms divorced from both the source and the intended or actual audience. Websites and website archives, for example, can give researchers a means of studying the ways in which social realities are displayed or how these might be negotiated over time.

Ethical Considerations

When geography no longer determines the boundaries of the study's parameters, researchers can be less constrained by the structure, space, and time within which interactions occur. Social behaviors and texts are easily captured for analysis. Observing internet use as it constructs social reality can be accomplished easily; obtaining access to online groups is a straightforward process, as is downloading and archiving the interactions of these groups.

This deceptively simple process of access must be balanced with ethical considerations. Not all qualitative researchers conduct studies that involve human subjects, but even this distinction comes into play in debates about ethics in internet research. In general, although this list certainly is not all-inclusive, ethical challenges and controversy arise in the following circumstances:

- Some users perceive publicly accessible discourse sites as private. For example, although many online discussion groups appear to be public, members may perceive their interactions to be private and may be surprised or angered by intruding researchers. Other groups know that their communications are public but nonetheless do not want to be studied.
- Anonymity (where necessary) is difficult to guarantee. For example, some users have writing styles that are readily identifiable in their online communities, so that researchers' use of pseudonyms does not guarantee anonymity. Also, search engines are often capable of finding statements used in published qualitative research reports.
- Online discussion sites can be highly transient. For example, researchers who gain access permission in June might not be studying the same population in July.
- Vulnerable persons are difficult to identify in certain online environments. For example, age is difficult, if not impossible, to verify in certain online environments.
- Confidentiality of participants' talk in these groups is nearly impossible to preserve with the sophistication of search engines. Ongoing discussions and statements about ethical problems and guidelines can provide researchers with useful background information on how others have approached and dealt with these complex and evolving concerns.

Ethical guidelines and stances vary by person, institution, and country. Given the variations in ethical

stances, as well as the diversity of methodological choices, each researcher must explore and define research within his or her own integral framework. Comprehending and critically evaluating the broader discussions about ethics is essential—not only discussions within internet studies or disciplines but also discussions within communities of qualitative researchers.

Annette N. Markham

See also Anonymity; Email Interview; Ethics and New Media; Multimedia in Qualitative Research; Virtual Community; Virtual Ethnography; Virtual Interview; Virtual Research

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INTERPRETATION

Data do not necessarily speak for themselves. Rather, findings can be viewed from multiple perspectives. The process by which a researcher construes meaning from research findings is referred to as interpretation. It involves helping the readers to make sense of the findings produced in a research study. A qualitative researcher may use theoretical orientations to provide interpretations of findings or may generate interpretations a priori.

Interpreting qualitative findings begins with a researcher's own assumptions regarding the world, life, and people. In this manner, worldviews tend to influence how one comes to make meaning or sense of data acquired from a research study. Nobody lives in a philosophical or worldview vacuum; the paradigms that a researcher comes to accept as true tend to color the results of his or her research findings.

Considerable debate exists among contemporary qualitative researchers regarding the role of interpretation, particularly with respect to grounded theory. Traditional models posed that researchers must work vigilantly to hold their own life paradigms at bay when viewing qualitative research results. In this model, qualitative researchers exercise disciplined restraint, so that they essentially avoid interpretation. That step should be left to the readers to make.

More recent approaches, in contrast, view interpretation as an apt part of the qualitative process. In this model, researchers are free to explore a variety of perspectives on the study's findings. Theories or paradigms are fair game for helping the readers to best understand a context for the study's results or to place the findings into larger frameworks.

Some researchers argue that interpretation is a necessary component of the qualitative method. For example, most feminist qualitative researchers rely on a predetermined set of assumptions to make meaning from their data collections. If they were studying, say, a group of Amish women who told the researchers that they were happy living in subordination to their husbands, the feminist qualitative researchers likely would interpret those findings from a preset grid of understanding. Simply giving voice to these women typically would not complete the research project. Rather, such researchers would integrate these findings through a feminist paradigm. That step is interpretation.

Qualitative researchers sometimes argue that everyone possesses assumptions about life and to deny these is simply to deny one's humanity. Consequently, rather than attempting to stay their interpretive bent, a qualitative researcher's role is to explicitly state the perspective used to make interpretations. In this thinking, qualitative researchers' role is to interact with findings based on their theoretical orientation while clearly informing the readers how that orientation was used to generate conclusions.

Finally, postmodern thought has contributed significantly to the role of interpretation in qualitative research. Essentially, this is the notion that absolute truth does not exist and the context of a situation determines its meaning. Postmodern researchers tend to argue, therefore, that all research findings are relative to the perspective of the readers. As such, interpretation becomes a valuable component to assist the readers with context and meaning for best understanding the research results.

Michael W. Firmin

See also Grounded Theory; Postpositivism; Textual Analysis

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INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY

Interpretive inquiry, as is the case with all other forms of qualitative inquiry, focuses on understanding (interpreting) the meanings, purposes, and intentions (interpretations) people give to their own actions and interactions with others. What distinguishes interpretive inquiry from the other approaches to qualitative research is the desire to step aside from various issues that have long been central to discussions about the nature and purposes of social and educational research. Drawing on the work of philosophers such as Richard Rorty, interpretivists believe that researchers should drop their concerns about theories of knowledge; abandon the philosophical doctrine of realism/neorealism; recast major concepts such as objectivity, subjectivity, and relativism; and rethink the role of methods in the research process.

This major conceptual shift means that interpretive inquirers do not see social and educational research as “scientific” in the conventional sense of that term. To the contrary, they emphasize the idea that research is a moral and practical activity that shares much in common with other forms of inquiry such as those practiced by novelists, journalists, and ordinary people in their day-to-day lives. These ideas, especially the idea that there are no special research methods that automatically and inevitably lead to the truth, mean that the knowledge claims made by researchers cannot be seen as automatically and inevitably superior to the knowledge claims made by nonresearchers.

Philosophical Issues

For interpretivists, the most crucial philosophical realization of the recent past is that there can be no theory-free observation or knowledge. Although nearly all researchers agree that observation/knowledge is influenced strongly by the interests and values of the observer, interpretivists are the most aggressive in pursuing the implications of this realization. When this idea is taken to its logical conclusion, they conclude that it undermines various key elements of both quantitative research and the methodically driven

forms of qualitative research. In particular, this realization undermines the philosophical doctrine of realism/neorealism.

Most approaches to social and educational research are based on a realist/neorealist position holding that there is a reality “out there” that can be known or depicted as it really is, at least in principle, independent of the interests and purposes of researchers. Interpretivists find this claim to be unintelligible. Although they have no problem with the idea that there is a reality “out there,” they argue that the idea of no theory-free observation/knowledge means that as finite humans we can never access that reality as it really is. There is no way to factor out or eliminate the influence of the particular interests and purposes of particular researchers.

This does not mean that interpretivists are antirealists in the sense that they believe that nothing exists outside of our minds. They are nonrealists, meaning they believe that there may be a reality “out there,” but our descriptions/interpretations of that reality are not “out there.” Social and educational reality is always something we make or construct, not something we find or discover.

This nonrealist position leads to a number of crucial issues that differentiate interpretive inquiry from other forms of research. First, interpretivists are antifoundationalists in the sense that they do not accept that there is a foundation (Archimedean point) on which to base knowledge claims because there is no privileged position from which to interpret the world. There is no theory-free knowledge and, accordingly, no foundation on which to adjudicate different claims to knowledge. This means that no interpretation or construction of reality can be judged as uniquely right or wrong. Various constructions of what is happening in a social setting at any particular time can be given, but none is free of further interpretation and reinterpretation based on different interests and purposes.

Nonrealism also results in a redefinition of the important concepts of objectivity, subjectivity, and relativism. Objectivity usually refers to researcher detachment and accurate depiction, whereas subjectivity conventionally means that someone has let particular interests and purposes influence the research process and, thereby, distort reality. This is unintelligible to interpretivists. If reality cannot be observed independent of particular interests and purposes, then it is impossible to distinguish between who has been objective and presented an accurate representation of

reality and who has been subjective and presented an inaccurate representation of reality. For interpretivists, objectivity is best seen as a compliment one pays to another who happens to agree with one’s interpretation or construction of reality. Subjectivity, in contrast, refers to disagreement or the idea that another has introduced an interpretation that one considers beside the point.

Relativism has long been defined in terms of “anything goes,” a situation in which every claim to knowledge is considered to be as good as every other claim to knowledge. Interpretivists do not accept this sweeping definition; rather, they argue that relativism is an expression of our human finitude in the sense that all we can say about knowledge is to describe the particular forms of justification for knowledge that are contingent on time and place. There are no permanent or time- and place-free criteria (extralinguistic criteria) available for sorting out claims to knowledge. However, interpretivists add that this contingency does not mean that researchers are exempt from presenting the best cases possible for their interpretations or constructions of reality. Some claims to knowledge are better than others, but they are better for moral and practical reasons, not for epistemological reasons.

Conceptual/Practical Issues

The actual inquiry procedures employed by interpretivists are the same as those used by other qualitative researchers. The major difference is that most qualitative researchers (and all quantitative researchers) hold that certain methods must be employed to obtain a valid study. Interpretivists do not accept that certain techniques are necessary minima and argue that exactly what an inquirer does when in the field or how fieldnotes are analyzed can vary from situation to situation. For example, in some instances an inquirer might decide that something like member checks are needed, whereas in other situations member checks might be judged as unproductive and, hence, unnecessary. However, just because interpretive inquirers do not see any particular procedures as mandatory does not mean that they see them as arbitrary. Inquirers always are obligated to make a case for the procedures they employed and did not employ.

The goal of interpretive inquiry is the interpretation of the interpretations people give to their own actions and the actions of others (double hermeneutic). This is a process that is very much like ordinary conversation.

The major difference between researchers and lay-people is that the former undertake the process more self-consciously and more intensely. The regulative ideal for this conversational interest in understanding is what Rorty referred to as human solidarity rather than objectivity, meaning that interpretive inquiry has an ethical/moral basis, not an epistemological one. Thus, inquiry and the search for knowledge can be understood only in practical and moral terms. Inquiry is a moral activity in that it focuses on the understandings we construct about ourselves in relation to others and is a practical matter in the sense that it has implications for the task of building the kind of society in which we would like to live.

How, then, do interpretive inquirers distinguish good research/interpretations from bad ones? For the process of interpretation and understanding, there are no fixed criteria, as presumably is the case for other research approaches, for making such decisions. Interpretivists hold that such judgments are practical accomplishments, taken through dialogue and persuasion, that are worked out as we go along. There are three points of interest here. First, interpretive criteria are not rules that determine judgments but rather characterizing traits, expressed as values, that influence judgments. This allows that any particular criterion one poses can be variously interpreted at different times and under different conditions.

Second, the traits that are expected from inquiry are gathered into lists that are open-ended in that they are constantly subject to change and modification. A list can be added to, subtracted from, and generally recast. The limits or possibilities for such recasting are the result of the actual use to which the list is put. The limits are a practical matter; they are established in practice and cannot be distilled into abstract formulas. Finally, judgments about the quality of inquiry are not only a practical activity but also a moral endeavor because they always must respond to questions of the following kind. What kind of person do I become if I choose to honor one interpretation over another? What kind of society will we have if we decide that this interpretation is better than another interpretation?

Interpretivists have bypassed many issues central to the more conventional understandings that dominate quantitative research and many versions of qualitative research. The focus is on the interpretation of the interpretations people give to their own actions and activities. The regulative ideal for interpretation is not objectivity but rather human solidarity. For this reason,

interpretivism is thought of not as a scientific activity but rather as a practical and moral undertaking.

John K. Smith

See also Hermeneutics; Relativism

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INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

Interpretive phenomenology, also called hermeneutical phenomenology, is based on the assumption that humans are interpretation through and through. Humans dwell in the world with no capacity to be completely free of the world. Interpretive phenomenology holds that there is no access to brute data (i.e., data containing no presuppositions or preunderstandings). Human science mirrors humans in that humans are the kind of beings who allow other beings to be revealed and known. Interpretive phenomenology can be contrasted with transcendental phenomenology that seeks to reduce things down to their essence—their least interpreted essence of a thought or mental process. Transcendental phenomenology seeks to bracket presuppositions and try to approach something as though one had no prior experiences, ideas, suppositions, or expectations.

Background

Interpretive phenomenology is at once philosophical and methodological. It seeks to overcome Cartesian epistemology that holds to a representational view of the mind and a mind–body dualism. An interpretive phenomenological understanding of the human is distinct from the Cartesian private subject standing over against or apart from an objective separate world. The

human is embodied, situated, finite, and thrown into a particular culture, time, and place. This situated, social, and sentient person dwells in a world of common meanings, habits, practices, meanings, and skills that are socially prior to the individual and are socially disclosed or encountered. These socially situated meanings, habits, practices, and skills are the foci of interpretive phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology relies on disclosive practices that allow social practices, embodied intentionality, common taken-for-granted background meanings, habits, rituals, practices, and everyday life to show up (i.e., become visible and intelligible). The mind–body–world problem will not be solved so long as we have only the two grids: theories of the disembodied mind and theories about the physiological mechanistic body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's insight was to dissolve the mind–body problem by studying the situated, sentient, and social body. The distance between the Cartesian theoretical grids of mind with explicit beliefs and thoughts and the bottom-level physiological theories of cells, tissues, and organ systems is too great. Intermediate middle terms such as those experienced by the situated, sentient, embodied, and socially constituted person are needed to understand the connections within the embodied mind and world. Such middle terms include habits, practices, skills, rituals, and so on. But more important than dissolving the mind–body dualism handed down from René Descartes is the human's commonsense self-understandings in everyday life, when the body in the world is working well, and when it breaks down as in illness.

Merleau-Ponty, drawing on both Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, understood the centrality of the body for any access to the world. Charles Taylor, in his book *The Explanation of Behavior*, used Merleau-Ponty's nonmechanistic, holistic understanding of the body to dismantle the grip of behaviorism on psychology. Likewise, in his philosophical papers, Taylor worked on constitutive and expressive theories of meaning using Alexander von Humboldt and Johann Gottfried von Herder, German Romantic thinkers, to demonstrate how we dwell in language. These thinkers expand the theory of meaning beyond correspondence and truth condition theories of meaning to theories of the constitutive and expressive functions of meaning.

New words can constitute new self-understandings and perceptual experiences. Likewise, bringing an expression into public can change the mood, climate, and focus of a group. Once an aspect of our experience

is articulated, given language, and given public expression, we have a different access to it. To dwell in a world is also to dwell in a language, or even multiple languages, and in multiple worlds of discourse and culture. And as noted by Ludwig Wittgenstein, one cannot adequately understand or imagine language without understanding the form of life that gave birth to the language.

Once the epistemological assumptions of the atomistic, monological individual are discarded, it becomes easier to understand how language and expressive constitutive meaning are possible. The old vision of an instrumental self-making self, the one who observes rather than participates in language, is replaced by a situated, social sentient participant. This socially constituted person dwells in a world of common meanings, habits, practices, meanings, and skills. These meanings and practices are socially disclosed rather than hermetically sealed in private minds, cut loose from a knowing body. Embodied intentionality is accessible. One can study the breakdown situation of illness and what illness disrupts in everyday life can be. The “other” becomes a means of discovery of self as well as other. The interpretive researcher seeks to identify and articulate particularities, situated actions, and thinking in action. Commonalities and distinctions are sought rather than sameness described as decontextualized properties and formal attributes.

The Method

To take up the method of interpretive phenomenology, the goal is to enter the hermeneutic circle in the most propitious way to study the phenomena at hand. This requires a lot of thought about developing lines of inquiry in ways that will allow for extending, disconfirming, and/or expanding the researcher's understanding. The researcher also reflects on his or her own assumptions coming into the research with the aim of making them as clear as possible. The researcher still holds open the expectation that, in doing the research, new unnoticed assumptions will be uncovered and the previously described assumptions will be challenged. The researcher may read the text in a stance of idealization, rejection, or some other systematic misinterpretation of the text. Here it is useful to have an interpretive team to reach consensual validation of interpretations of the text. The interpreter does well to keep in mind the maxim that “the person's world is livable.” Total rejection or idealization means that the

interpreter does not yet have the best grasp of the participant's lived experiences. The possibility of understanding the speech, text, activities, meanings, habits, and practices of the other is based on the phenomenological assumption that these meanings, practices, and the like are shared and public rather than private and idiosyncratic. Consequently, they are intelligible and accessible by persons sharing common humanity, language, and some degree of access to the culture or subculture.

The interpreter's project is to understand the world of the participants or events. A dialogue is created between practical concerns and lived experiences of the group or practices being studied and the researcher's engaged participation, observation, and dwelling in the immediacy of the participants' world. The interpreter moves between situations and practical worlds of the participants, examining the foreground and probing the background meanings and practices that make the foreground possible.

The aim of interpretive phenomenology is dialogue and understanding, and this requires an ethos of respect for the voice, actions, and texts of those studied. Reducing the interpretive account to power terms, or theoretical constructs and causal explanations based on hidden meanings or mechanisms, is not the goal. Being true to the text, or articulating the phenomenon in its own terms, is the aim. This is not as simple or straightforward as it sounds given that the interpreter is working off of taken-for-granted background meanings and practices that might not have ever been clearly articulated or given good public language. The researcher follows his or her paths of understanding and interpretation and keeps track of transitions in understanding as well as transitions in the situation. An insightful and successful articulation gathers up the most meanings and gives the best grasp of the situation, accounting for more in the text than do rival interpretations. Natives reading the account might comment that the research has put into words what they had always known but had not been able to say or describe.

The interpreter moves between parts of the text and the whole of the text, examining congruities and incongruities. The interpreter seeks to discover commonalities, incongruities, puzzles, and repeated unified concerns. Three discovery and presentational strategies are typically used: paradigm cases, thematic analysis, and exemplars. Each is described briefly in what follows.

Paradigm Cases

Paradigm cases are strong instances of a phenomenon. The paradigm case may just stand out to readers as being a strong example of "something" before the interpreter understands what the paradigm case illustrates. This gives the interpreter an open-ended inductive approach to the text. Contrast and similar paradigm cases, such as "coping with stigma," may help the interpreter to identify and articulate prevailing meanings in the paradigm case. The paradigm case is used as both a discovery method and, later in writing up the findings, as a presentational strategy.

Thematic Analysis

Themes within and across participants or events may be identified. Themes express meaningful patterns, stances of the participants, or concerns. Themes may be qualitatively distinct from one another. A theme is kept close to the text, and textual examples of the theme are required to identify another portion of text exemplifying the same theme.

Exemplars

Paradigm cases and thematic analyses may be augmented by exemplars. Exemplars illustrate common patterns of meaning, common situations, and embodied skilled know-how. They are useful in presenting the interpretation so that the readers understand the practical world(s) being articulated.

Summary

Interpretive phenomenology focuses on understanding practical worlds, skilled know-how, situated understanding, and embodied lived experiences. The embodied knower is irrevocably connected to the world and is socially constituted. Rigor involves staying true to the text, engaging in consensual validation, and allowing the readers to participate in the validation process by presenting texts associated with the interpretations made by the researcher. Phenomena to be interpreted may be found in practical worlds, cultural encounters, experiences of coping, skilled know-how, habits, practices, and common meanings. The interpreter uses participant observation, observation, first-person experience/near accounts of real events, videotapes, interviews, and all sources of text

relevant to the lines of inquiry being pursued. Films, novels, biographies, and memoirs may also be used.

Patricia Benner

See also Hermeneutics; Phenomenology

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INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH

Interpretive research is a framework and practice within social science research that is invested in philosophical and methodological ways of understanding social reality. It is widely viewed as a practice (and a set of paradigms) embedded in different theoretical frameworks ranging from ethnomethodology to critical feminist theory. As an epistemological framework, it has been used widely across the social and human sciences, especially anthropology, sociology, communication, cultural studies, social work, and education.

Central to the interpretive framework is the notion of *Verstehen* or understanding (first discussed by Max Weber). Since Weber, several philosophers and social scientists have emphasized the inseparability of

understanding from interpretation. At some level, then, all social research is interpretive because all such research is guided by the researcher's desire to understand (and therefore interpret) social reality. Whether the focus is on *quanta* or *qualia*, at bottom it is still understanding that is being sought by researchers across the board. In a Nietzschean sense, then, there are "no facts, only interpretations." However, the kind of understanding being sought is usually determined by researchers based on the varying ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs to which they subscribe.

Having said that all social research is interpretive, it becomes important to somewhat disentangle what interpretive research means within the larger complex web of qualitative research. Within qualitative research, interpretive paradigms, practices, and methods have become central and have been constantly shaping and reshaping specific research methods. This antinaturalistic framework (from postpositivist naturalism to interpretivism and postmodern hermeneutics) focuses on understanding and meaning-making, as opposed to explanation, as the main purpose of research.

Schools of Thought in Interpretive Research

Over several decades, social science researchers have emphasized that qualitative understanding of any phenomenon is based in making meaning of specific experiences and, therefore, is inherently an interpretive practice.

Hermeneutics

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutics (literally the study of interpretation with its historical roots in biblical interpretations) recognizes that our being and doing are intimately connected. This is the way we are fundamentally, and philosophical hermeneutics focuses in different ways on the relationship between the predisposed self-understanding of the interpreter and the "active character" of everything that addresses this understanding.

Ethnography and Interpretation

Clifford Geertz criticized what he called the "casual references" to the *Verstehen* approach or emic analysis and emphasized the need to acknowledge that

it is interpretation, rather than an exact understanding, that qualitative researchers can hope for. At bottom, according to Geertz, anthropological research and representation is only interpretive—and second- or thirdhand at that—given that the firsthand “understanding” or “interpretation” really lies with the “subject” such as the individual, group, or community being studied.

Qualitative Methods and the Interpretive Turn

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln discussed the tension in qualitative research between the interpretive and postpositivist sensibilities. In interpretive research, meaning is disclosed, discovered, and experienced. The emphasis is on sensemaking, description, and detail. For the antinaturalistic interpretive researcher, human action constitutes subjective interpretations of meanings. Therefore, meaning-making is underscored as the primary goal of interpretive research in the understanding of social phenomena.

Traditional Ethnography, the Chicago School, and Decolonizing Research

Over time, interpretive theories have shifted from colonizing postpositivist theories toward emancipatory theories such as feminism. Traditional interpretive research saw colonizers (missionaries included) and White male anthropologists interpreting the “native” through the study of “other” cultures. By the end of the 19th century, the Chicago School emphasized the development of an interpretive methodology that focused on narrative life histories allowing the researcher to tell the subject’s story. Although this was a huge shift from earlier paradigms methodologically (for the first time, life stories were told as spoken by ordinary people and were accepted as scholarship), this project was still implicated in a racist one. The underlying suggestion was that first colonizers and then White male scholars provided the natives and people of color across the world with history and research. A large part of scholarship in the social sciences and the humanities was geared in aiding this process. Feminist writer bell hooks, in her reading of the cover of Stephen Tyler’s book *Writing Culture*, illustrated the intersection of race and gender in these othering Orientalist studies of culture and meanings.

According to Ngugi Wa Thongo, both the legality and the life advancement power of the Western, privileged written word established a postcolonial situation where even natives worldwide tended to abide by the implications of the written text. From then to the next moment into the modernist phase was a huge leap. At the same time, certain colonial notions continued in these postcolonial musings and struggles with research. The “underprivileged” and the “socially cheated” became the focus. New interpretive theories of ethnomethodology, phenomenology, critical theory, and feminism evolved, and the recognition of the native as a colonial notion that needed to be decolonized and no longer deferred began to gain more and more prominence. The focus shifted to provide the space for voices that were earlier unheard. The need for emancipatory facilitatory research was recognized.

The Blurred Genres

This phase saw interpretive researchers with set practices and methods moving to “local” meanings. The scientific article was gradually being replaced by the essay as a form of representation. Sensemaking and the role of the researcher in the project started to become central to the different interpretive paradigms. The crisis of representation analyzed the various aspects of the written word. The difference between writing and fieldwork began to be addressed, and the three sets of representation (the researched’s interpretation of the phenomena in question, the researcher’s interpretation of the researched’s interpretation, and the readers’ interpretation of the researcher’s representation of his or her interpretation) gained significance.

The postmodern experimental struggle arose out of these crises. The idea of the detached observer had been abandoned, and the continuous, complex ontological and methodological struggle with meaning, subjectivity, and researcher reflexivity began to gain more and more grounding.

Interpretive Theories/Paradigms and Communities

There are several interpretive theories/paradigms and research communities today. Denzin and Lincoln discussed important interpretive theories and paradigms, including ethnomethodology, phenomenology, positivist and postpositivist models,

constructivist–interpretive models, critical and feminist–poststructural models. These various theories and paradigms are embedded in and complicated by each other and, therefore, are grouped together here. They are also further complicated by various interpretive communities. Among these theories and paradigms in which qualitative research lies embedded, there are various research communities and fields that have evolved and enriched interpretive research practices. Some of these are cultural studies, queer studies, Indigenous research studies, ethnic studies, and Marxist studies. Although all of these theories, paradigms, and communities lie entangled in each other and speak to each other in interconnected and varying ways, here they are divided into two sections to provide a quick, at-a-glance map of this complex web called interpretive research.

Interpretive Theories and Paradigms

Positivist and Postpositivist

This type of research has included both quantitative and qualitative work. The focus has been on modeling the method of inquiry on that of the natural sciences, and the usual method of representation is the scientific report. The focus is on criteria such as internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

Ethnomethodology

This is a theoretical framework as well as a method. It has features in common with naturalism (e.g., a reluctance to impose meanings), focuses on details and being embedded in the subject of study, and locates this detailed process in “how” questions of social phenomena. David Silverman discussed ethnomethodology’s location in the study of talk-in-interaction.

Phenomenology

Literally speaking, phenomenology is a philosophical theoretical system of ideas that discusses the ways in which humans experience phenomena in the world. Put simply, a phenomenological approach, then, is invested in the meanings of these various phenomena. This complex concept was made famous by the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Alfred Schultz.

Constructivist–Interpretivist

Here the focus is more on conducting interpretive case studies based on ethnomethodological

perspectives. Criteria and questions of validity still remain central; however, the postpositivist ideas of criteria are replaced by terms such as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. The idea that all reality and interpretations are socially constructed is core in this paradigm.

Feminist Theory

Over time, feminist theory has reformulated interpretive theory in building theoretical constructs that deal with “difference,” privileged a materialist–realist ontology, and argued that difference is constructed through gender. The deconstruction of the category “woman,” and destabilization of the notion of the privileged woman ethnographer studying women in feminist anthropology, extends to interpretive research as it highlights the centrality of feminism and the performance of gender in every discourse.

Poststructural feminist discourse highlights the problem of traditional texts and their inability to describe and capture lived experiences, especially of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed.

Interpretive Communities

Critical Cultural Studies

This is a field of research that brings together a hybrid body of theories across disciplines ranging from postmodern to feminist to queer theory and is invested in the significance of cultural representations, texts, practices, and subjectivities in understanding language, culture, and identity. A major emphasis on praxis marks this paradigm, and tensions between a cultural studies project committed to lived experience (meaning) and a more structural project embedded in the effects of experience, seen through lenses of race, class, and gender (among several other structurally dominant oppressive realities), are key debates in this field.

Queer Studies

This is a minor subdiscipline committed to challenging and interpreting social reality outside of the dominant, normative, heterosexist social order. New ways of understanding the body, and nonnormative sexualities that include lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual, and bisexual, are constantly evolving and questioning the everyday performance of gender in this field.

Indigenous and Resistance-Based Studies

This is an emerging field that complicates the long ongoing debate of who studies whom and why. These projects are about people of color in the United States and across the world conducted by people of color themselves. Questions of privilege still exist across this very broad category of people of color based on gender, class, caste, disability, and sexuality. Decolonizing research methods and trying to weave research reflexively through the various privileges and discriminatory histories across the world remain the central foci of this field.

Marxist Studies

This is a body of research that privileges emancipatory research, focuses on dialogue, and has evolved into a field that now underscores class, race, and gender in various economic, historical, and sociocultural analyses.

These interpretive theories, paradigms, and communities continue to inform and complicate each other through a variety of methods and practices. The intersectionality of race, gender, class, caste, disability, and sexuality underscores and informs these constantly evolving theories, paradigms, and fields of study/communities.

Common Methods Used in Interpretive Research

Various methods across disciplines are used in conducting interpretive research, including a variety of ethnographic methods, classic traditional interviews, case studies, focus groups, observational studies apart from ethnographies, and analyses of cultural records, archival documents, artifacts, visual materials, multimedia texts, or personal experiences.

Future of Interpretive Research

The call now within this set of interpretive practices is that the social sciences and humanities turn into sites for critical social change through discussions about race, gender, class, caste, sexuality, disability, nation, democracy, globalization, and war. The rigid binary between what gets called social science and how it is distinct from the humanities needs to be questioned further, focusing on making scholarship more accessible and productive toward the goal of progressive social change.

Himika Bhattacharya

See also Empirical Research; Ethnography; Phenomenology

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INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Intersubjectivity refers to shared understanding. Drawing on the philosophical notion of subjectivity (i.e., that meaning is necessarily colored by one's experiences and biases), intersubjectivity recognizes that meaning is based on one's position of reference and is socially mediated through interaction. In other words, knowing is not simply the product of individual minds in isolation. In qualitative research, intersubjectivity not only points to the ways in which we share understanding with others but also indicates that meaning and understanding lie along a continuum of mutual intelligibility. This notion is of particular interest to researchers who study verbal social interactions in general. In various modes of research on discursive processes, shared ways of knowing are of particular interest in trying to reveal analytic positions on the

way in which complex social systems come to create meaning for their participants.

Methodologically, intersubjectivity has influenced many social science disciplines' approaches to language, meaning, learning, and identity. It posits that the social and cultural contexts in which communicative events take shape affect individuals' sense of self and ways of knowing via their interactions with other selves as well as with the larger social structures into which these interactions coalesce. Intersubjectivity implies that knowing or understanding is not an individual endeavor but rather is socially situated; knowing cannot exist in a vacuum or a cognitive abstract system.

Although ways of knowing rely on shared understanding, we cannot share understanding completely with others. When two parties communicate, each party may have a sense of understanding the other. In addition, someone analyzing this interaction may have a different sense of how those parties understand each other. For example, someone may notice that her friend's chair is about to break. She may elicit a straightforward warning ("the chair you are sitting on is about to break") or a more indirect one ("you might soon land where you least expect"). In both of these cases, the intended message is disputable from the perspective of the speaker, hearer, or observer. In the former, the speaker may mean that the chair sitter is overweight; in the latter, this may be a routine joke they share indicating that someone is about to fall. In either case, and with all communication, there is a possible range of intersubjectivity, both intended and realized.

Due to the range of intersubjective overlap, analyzing qualitative data or facets of social life requires an appreciation for gaps in understanding, ways in which to minimize these gaps, and an understanding of what existent gaps signify. At an analytic level, intersubjectivity is a construct that allows one to conceive of how others can be understood when analyzing interactions, texts, or artifacts. At a disciplinary level, intersubjectivity within modes of research perspectives allows researchers and audiences to understand the underlying assumptions, ideologies, and beliefs grounding their research projects.

Kate T. Anderson

See also Meaning; Objectivity; Situatedness; Subjectivity; Understanding

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INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality is a basic principle of interpretation. As a mode of literary interpretation, intertextuality holds that the interpretation of a text is often based on possessing critical knowledge of other key texts. At first, this dealt with the identification and interpretation of various allusions, or references, from key texts in the canon of Western knowledge. Up until the end of the 20th century, it was assumed that most readers in Western countries had a working knowledge of the Bible, Greek literature, philosophy and mythology, and Shakespeare, among others. Intertextuality often consisted of identifying allusions from these canonical works in other literary works.

With the advent of the postmodern era, as delineated by Jean-François Lyotard, these grand narratives were no longer assumed to hold. Instead, the emphasis was shifted toward looking at how literary texts were defined in relation to other texts. This work, first pursued by Julia Kristeva, was itself based on the relational insights of the structuralists. Structuralism held that most, if not all, important concepts did not possess absolute definitions but instead were defined by how they were related to other concepts. This work had its own beginnings in phonology but soon was extended to linguistic and other code patterns. Kristeva drew her primary insights from Mikhail Bakhtin.

Qualitative research sometimes looks for patterns of intertextuality in narrative texts and in particular field narratives. The main role of intertextuality in our field, however, centers on intertextual relations among various systems of codes. Early proponents of this view included Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology and Roland Barthes in cultural analysis.

As a structuralist, Lévi-Strauss was interested in discovering relational codes within various cultures. In his research, he also sought universal codes across cultures in areas such as kinship relations and taboo.

In both cases, he found that seemingly absolute notions such as “who is related to whom” and “what is edible and inedible” are defined by relations of codes to other codes within a culture. Barthes, another structuralist, explored similar issues when looking at matters within popular culture in France during the 1950s and 1960s. Barthes’s work is the basis of much current work in diverse contemporary areas such as marketing analysis and mass media studies.

With the turn to poststructuralism, there was also a turn away from looking for cultural universals. The lesson from intertextuality in literature was the fact that there are no independent texts given that no text can stand on its own but is determined by other texts. In our contemporary milieu, researchers have taken this same stance toward codes. Qualitative researchers, therefore, are more interested in discovering reflections of code systems in relation to other code systems. These systems may be quite similar on the surface, such as codes dealing with consumerism and power, or quite dissimilar, such as codes dealing with family issues and market exchange. Current thinkers, including Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard, continue this lively sort of intertextual code critique and interpretation.

Gary Shank

See also Postmodernism; Poststructuralism; Structuralism

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guides summarize the content that researchers cover during interviews. At one extreme, they may provide very minimal directions, leading to “less structured” interviews that are designed primarily to explore the participant’s own perspective on the research topic. At the other extreme, interview guides may contain elaborate specifications to ensure that the researcher’s topics of interest are thoroughly covered.

At the least structured end of the continuum are approaches such as James Spradley’s ethnographic interviewing, which avoids substantively oriented topics in favor of general questions that draw out the participant’s own accounts. For example, Spradley’s approach often begins with “grand tour” questions such as “Tell me about a typical instance of. . . .” These grand tour questions help to locate the basic elements that the participant associates with the research topic, and the interviewer follows them with “mini-tour” questions such as “You mentioned [topic]; can you tell me more about. . . ?”

In contrast to unstructured interviews, the most highly structured format is undoubtedly the survey questionnaire, which amounts to an interview guide that prespecifies both the content and the possible responses for each question. Most qualitative interviewers prefer to position themselves between these two extremes by using a semi-structured interview. In that case, the interview guide typically contains a general framework for the interview, but the researcher also has the freedom to pursue the questions in a different order and to allocate more time to some questions than to others depending on what is most appropriate for discussing the research topic with each individual participant.

Another common distinction is between question-based guides and topic-based guides. Questions are the more common format for interview guides, so that the expected content of the interview is outlined in terms of a series of questions the interviewer intends to ask. In contrast, a topic-based guide consists of a list of areas and issues the interviewer wants to hear about, and these also are often organized in an outline format to make it easier to monitor which topics have already been covered.

One likely reason for the popularity of question-based interview guides is their ability to suggest probes and follow-up questions that can elaborate on the basic set of questions. Because the list of basic questions suggests a sequence for the overall content of the interview, it points to places where a further probe or follow-up question can either extend the discussion of the current question or move the conversation toward the next question. More formal versions of interviews will contain specific probes and follow-up questions that the interviewer can use in conjunction with the basic questions. (Note, however, that general probes such as “Can you give me an example?” and

“What else can you tell me about that?” are rarely written out in interview guides.)

David L. Morgan and Heather Guevara

See also Semi-Structured Interview

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INTERVIEWING

Interviewing is a conversational practice where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group of interviewees. Unlike everyday conversations, the research interview is most often carried out to serve the researcher's ends, which are external to the conversation itself (e.g., to obtain knowledge about a given topic or some area of human experience). In most cases, research interviewing involves a “one-way dialogue” with the researcher asking questions and the interviewee being cast in the role of respondent.

The qualitative research interview has become one of the most widespread knowledge-producing practices across the social scientific disciplines. Although interviewing was a marginalized practice in many social science disciplines for years, it is part of the mainstream today.

Many different forms of interviewing exist. Interviews can be formally conducted in surveys, through the internet, over the telephone, or in face-to-face interaction, and they can be informally conducted; for example, as part of ethnographic fieldwork. Research interviews can be more or less structured. In survey research interviewing, standardized questions are posed and the answers are given in forms that are amenable to quantitative procedures. Most qualitative research interviews are semi-structured as a consequence of the agenda being set by the researcher's interests yet with room for the respondent's

more spontaneous descriptions and narratives. Some interviews approach a more unstructured form, including the life history interview, which sometimes operates with just a single opening question, inviting the interviewee to recount the story of his or her life.

The Process of Interviewing

The concrete interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is just one stage in the process of doing interview research. The interview itself is carried out to enable the researcher to answer one or more of his or her research questions. These are formulated in advance when the researcher thematizes and designs the study. Before deciding to carry out the interview, the researcher should always consider whether interviewing is in fact the most adequate way in which to answer the questions that interest the researcher. One should not do an interview just because one (mistakenly) thinks that it is the easiest way of doing research.

The Actual Interview

The interview conversation is introduced by a briefing in which the interviewer defines the situation for the participant and informs him or her about the purpose of the interview. Usually, the interviewer has prepared an interview guide in which the research questions are given a form that renders them suitable to be posed directly as interview questions. Good questions are typically brief, simple, and open, and often the researcher will be interested in concrete descriptions of the respondent's experiences rather than more abstract reflections. Concrete descriptions are obtained by posing “what” and “how” questions (e.g., “what happened when . . . ?,” “how did you react when . . . ?”) rather than “why” questions. Small differences between questions can elicit different kinds of responses (e.g., the difference between asking “what did you think about it?” and “what did you feel about it?”). The interview is normally rounded off with a debriefing, which may include giving the participant a chance to add some comments or pose questions about the study.

Transcriptions

Most research interviews are audiorecorded and then transcribed. Unless the researcher works directly with the audiorecording of the interview, it is the transcription

rather than the original oral interview conversation that serves as the researcher's primary data source when he or she interprets and analyzes the interview. Transcribing interviews is an interpretive process that demands prolonged practice and sensitivity to the many differences between oral speech and written texts, and the disembodied and decontextualized nature of texts should be kept in mind during the later processes of analysis. Some researchers videorecord their interviews; this provides the possibility of taking nonverbal aspects of the communication into account, but the downside is the huge amount of information that can be difficult and time-consuming to categorize and analyze.

Different kinds of computer software can be helpful in the process of structuring and (especially) coding the interview material, most commonly in the form of texts but also as audio- and videorecordings. There are, however, a wide variety of modes of interview analyses in addition to coding where assistance from computer programs is less helpful (e.g., narrative analysis, discursive analysis, deconstruction).

Analyzing and Reporting Interviews

The way in which the researcher proceeds with analyzing the material should depend on the purpose of the interview study. Is the study carried out as action research with the goal of enabling the participant to improve his or her practice, is it conducted to obtain knowledge for its own sake, or is the purpose something entirely different? The purpose of the interview study should also be borne in mind during the final stage of the research process, which is the reporting of the results obtained. Writing a good and readable research report is an art that, in the case of interview research, involves the dilemma between pages filled with (too many) interview quotes, on the one hand, leaving the readers with the sometimes bewildering task of understanding and analyzing the material, and pages filled with the researcher's interpretations without corroborating and contextualized evidence from the actual interviews, on the other hand.

Ethics

Ethical issues should be considered at all stages of the interview process. Qualitative interviewing is a practice that has the potential to probe deeply into the private lives of the respondents with the intention of

placing their accounts in the public arena. Consequently, confidentiality, informed consent, and a consideration of the consequences of participating in the study should be taken as ethical rules of thumb. Concerning the consequences, it is an ethical challenge to the interviewer that the openness and intimacy of the interview situation can lead the respondents to disclose information they may later regret, and there is a risk that the interaction may become a quasi-therapeutic relationship for which most researchers have not been trained.

History and Epistemologies of Interviewing

We can presuppose that humans have interviewed each other in some form or other for as long as they have mastered the use of language. Many different kinds of professional uses of interviews have been developed in the course of human history. Religious confessions, oral examinations, and legal interrogations are interview practices that are older than journalistic, therapeutic, and research interviewing. The term *interview* came into use during the 17th century, and the first journalistic interview (with Mormon leader Brigham Young) was published as late as 1859.

An early systematic use of interviewing as a means of obtaining validated knowledge is found in Plato's dialogues. Here Socrates seeks knowledge through dialectical questioning. When the modern social sciences emerged during the 19th century, interviews became a preferred method of inquiry, albeit often in the form of quantifiable survey interviewing. Members of the Chicago School of Sociology practiced qualitative interviewing from the 1920s onward, and other early interview researchers (not often acknowledged as such) include Sigmund Freud, who developed psychoanalysis through his interviews with patients, and Jean Piaget, who interviewed children in natural settings.

Qualitative interviews also became part of industrial research to maximize workers' effectiveness (e.g., at Western Electric's Hawthorne plant in Illinois during the 1920s with more than 21,000 interviews conducted), and since the 1950s commercial and market interviews, especially in the form of focus groups, have been a growth industry. Today, interviews are pervasive in what some have called the "interview society," where everyone's opinions seem worthy of being brought forth and where interviews function as

a confessional social technique in the construction of people's identities. And with the rise of postpositivist social science since the 1960s, interviewing has become a significant research practice in phenomenological, interpretive, discursive, poststructuralist, and related approaches.

Important epistemological discussions concerning the objectivity, validity, reliability, and generalizability of the knowledge produced through interviewing continue in current debates. One aspect of this discussion that is integral to the practitioners of interviewing concerns the issue of whether interviews can provide a more or less direct pipeline to the participants' lifeworlds provided that the interviewer engages in nondirectional unbiased questioning. Some researchers question this idea and argue that interviews are active meaning-making practices that produce, rather than uncover, antecedent meaning elements. If an interview does not give direct access to the respondent's psyche, more attention should perhaps be directed to the interview situation itself as a discursive practice to understand the potential of interviewing as a research method.

Svend Brinkmann

See also Interview Guide; Open-Ended Question; Semi-Structured Interview; Structured Interview; Transcription

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IN VIVO CODING

In vivo coding is the practice of assigning a label to a section of data, such as an interview transcript, using

a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data. This entry describes this practice and some applications and problems associated with it.

The aim of creating an in vivo code is to ensure that concepts stay as close as possible to research participants' own words or use their own terms because they capture a key element of what is being described. Some common examples are vernacular or memorable terms used by participants to describe a feature or type of person relevant to their social world (e.g., "hot-rodger," "old-fashioned guy").

In vivo coding is associated chiefly with grounded theory methodology. Here it is differentiated from other types of coding that assign conceptual or theoretical terms to sections of data that are drawn from the wider literature or the researcher's own interpretations. As such, in vivo coding is associated with the earlier stages of coding one's data when concepts or categories are being identified or developed. However, in vivo coding is also relevant to other methodologies that are concerned with the specific words or phrases used in the material being studied, including discourse analysis, membership categorization analysis, and thematic analysis.

Whatever methodology is used, in vivo coding may create problems of reliability and validity at later stages of the research process because generalizing across cases can be difficult. Some researchers, therefore, would caution against overusing in vivo codes to segment data or at least would suggest choosing them carefully and only if the same words or terms occur with relative frequency throughout the whole data set.

In vivo coding has also been both incorporated into and encouraged by the development of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) packages. Many of these packages have a simple in vivo coding option built into the software. However, depending on the software package, it might not be easy to differentiate in vivo codes from those created by an alternative method such as conceptual or theoretical coding. Therefore, researchers using CAQDAS have used a variety of methods for indicating whether a code has been created in vivo, including enclosing the word or phrase in quotation marks. Despite this limitation, software packages provide researchers with the ability to easily retrieve, explore, and modify different instances where in vivo codes have been used across their data sets.

In summary, in vivo coding enables qualitative researchers to maintain a connection to the terms used

within their data while undertaking more formal methods of analysis such as concept and theory building.

Andrew King

See also Codes and Coding; Discourse Analysis; Grounded Theory; Membership Categorization Device Analysis (MCDA); Rigor in Qualitative Research

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J

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY ETHNOGRAPHY

The *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* is a peer-reviewed, international, and interdisciplinary forum for research using ethnographic methods such as participant observation, unobtrusive observation, intensive interviewing, contextualized discourse analysis, and field sampling to analyze social life as it occurs in natural settings. The journal publishes in-depth investigations that examine a wide range of social interactions and practices from a variety of academic disciplines, including anthropology, communications, cultural studies, criminal justice, education, health studies, management, and sociology.

The *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* was first published in 1972 as *Urban Life*. Later it changed its name to *Urban Life and Culture*. The journal is currently published six times a year. Most issues have three to five lengthy academic articles. Examples of articles in recent issues include “Color-Blind Ideology and the Cultural Appropriation of Hip-Hop,” “The Balikbayan Researcher: Negotiating Vulnerability in Fieldwork With Filipino Labor Brokers,” and “Telling the Code of the Street: An Ethnomethodological Ethnography.” Other pieces explore identity and inner-city gangs, the impact of social class on parents’ attitudes toward their children’s education, and ambivalence in the K-9 officer–patrol dog relationship. The journal also publishes book reviews, mostly in the

form of review essays. From time to time it offers single-themed special issues dedicated to such topics as indicated by the following titles: “Ethnography Under the Gun: Fieldwork in Zones of Conflict, War, and Peace,” “Gender Crime and (In)Justice,” and “Analytic Autoethnography.”

In 2005, in his inaugural issue as the editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Scott Hunt explained that the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* publishes ethnographies that are “close-up” and “analytic” descriptions of social life. In other words, close-up ethnographies are those where the researcher has been physically close to the persons and settings of the study and has also spent a significant period of time in the field. This type of work allows ethnographers not only to “tell” about modes of life, but to portray points of view and perspectives of the people under study. Another important characteristic of the ethnographic pieces published in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* is that they are analytic, that is, the articles identify patterns and regularities of social life. Although most articles published in this journal are characterized by being close-up and analytic, there is ample room for variation.

Gisela Ernst-Slavit

See also Ethnography; Ethnomethodology

Websites

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography: <http://jce.sagepub.com>

JOURNAL OF MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

The *Journal of Mixed Methods Research (JMMR)* debuted in 2007 as an international and multidisciplinary publication venue that focuses on methodological, theoretical, and empirical articles about mixed methods research across the social, behavioral, health, and human sciences. *JMMR* is published in English on a quarterly basis and is available both in print and via online access through Sage Publications' Journals Online. This journal publishes two types of articles: methodological-theoretical discussions and original mixed methods research, which are peer reviewed by expert reviewers, including members of *JMMR*'s distinguished editorial board. Each issue also includes an editorial from the founding editors, John W. Creswell and Abbas Tashakkori, as well as book and/or software reviews.

JMMR defines mixed methods research as research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry. Therefore, this journal is appropriate for research that combines qualitative research with quantitative research, but not for research that combines multiple types of qualitative (or quantitative) research (i.e., multimethod research). Methodological-theoretical articles address topics such as paradigm stance, designs, and analytic techniques which advance understanding of mixed methods research.

Original research articles in *JMMR* must report and explicitly integrate both a qualitative and a quantitative strand. Since the overall goal of this journal is to advance mixed methods research, the original research articles also discuss their contributions to and implications for mixed methods research.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, mixed methods research has emerged as a viable and increasingly popular approach to research as well as a field of inquiry of its own. Despite this interest in mixed methods, most journals tend to publish either quantitative or qualitative research and scholars using mixed methods research often have difficulty getting their studies successfully reviewed and published. Additionally, scholars writing about the methodological aspects of mixed methods research often published their work in diverse disciplinary-based journals, making key writings in the field of mixed methods difficult to locate. Therefore, *JMMR* was founded to provide a dedicated forum for the growing community of international and multidisciplinary scholars of mixed methods research and aims to be the premiere outlet for scholarly discussions about and applications of mixed methods research.

Vicki L. Plano Clark

See also Mixed Methods Research

Websites

Journal of Mixed Methods Research:

<http://jmmr.sagepub.com>

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K

KEY INFORMANT

Key informants, or key actors, are individuals who are articulate and knowledgeable about their community. They are often cultural brokers straddling two cultures. This role gives them a special vantage point in describing their culture. Key actors play a pivotal role in the theater of qualitative research, providing an understanding of cultural norms and responsibilities. Key informants represent an efficient source of invaluable cultural information. It is impossible to interview everyone and observe everything in a community and, logistically, it is easier to work with one or two reliable key informants than it is to assemble a series of focus groups.

Key informants help to establish a link between the researcher and the community. They may provide detailed historical data, photographs, manuscripts, knowledge about interpersonal relationships, a contextual framework in which to observe and interpret behavior, and a wealth of information about the nuances of everyday life. Key informants typically provide information through interviews and informal conversation. In research on communities and large organizational studies where there is a paucity of relevant archival documentation, particularly concerning vested interests and power dynamics, key informants are especially valuable.

Key informants generally answer questions about the group in a comprehensive, albeit meandering, fashion. Key informants provide not only personal feelings or opinions, but reflect on larger social patterns as

well. They are considered “teachers” by some ethnographic researchers because they impart information, insight, and understanding. However, their insights are rarely accepted blindly. Their views are compared and combined with interviews, observations, and survey data in order to make a complete study. More to the point, key informant and qualitative researchers are collaborators, using questions, answers, and probes to better understand how and why things work.

The competency of key informants is often measured by length of time they have been in the community, knowledge of community and neighboring communities or organizations, knowledge about a specific topic, and type and degree of interaction with community members. Key informants are often assessed in terms of *inter-coder reliability*, or the degree to which they interpret the same event in the same manner. In some cases, they are measured by the ability to offer completely different perspectives about the same situation, based on their different roles in the community. There are several drawbacks to using key informants, including bias (particularly as a result of selection, role, and/or proximity to phenomena under study), memory failure, distortion, and guilt by association. Qualitative researchers and evaluators traditionally rely most heavily on a few key informants throughout a study or research project to triangulate findings and enhance rigor.

David M. Fetterman

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Ethnography; Fieldwork; Informant; Triangulation

Further Readings

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KNOWLEDGE

As a first take, one might argue that *human knowledge* (called *knowledge* hereafter) is the holding of accurate information or warranted understandings and beliefs about the universe and any thing or idea or concept that resides within it. This includes understanding of material and nonmaterial phenomena, characteristics of these phenomena, and relationships among these phenomena. Still, there is no universally accepted definition of knowledge. Therefore, in this entry, I focus less on a Platonic or essentialist approach to definition and rely more on what Ludwig Wittgenstein called the family resemblance approach to definition. My goal is for readers to experience some important meanings and issues surrounding the concept of knowledge. I consider the ontology of knowledge, the “problem of knowledge,” and the 20th-century “received view” of knowledge, and offer a critique of the received view. Last, I provide an inclusive conception or theory of knowledge that respects qualitative and quantitative notions of knowledge. Throughout this essay, I make reference to important philosophers and social theorists that I recommend beginning readers examine in more depth; links to websites that can be used for this purpose are listed at the end of the entry.

The Knowledge Family

There are many members of the knowledge “family.” One can contrast scientific knowledge (knowledge about scientific “objects” that come into conceptual existence as researchers define and describe their objects of study); commonsense knowledge (knowledge based on traditions and day-to-day experiences, enabling people to make sense of their worlds, providing

order and predictability); and religious knowledge (metaphysical knowledge such as knowledge of God(s), an afterlife, spirituality, religious ethics, and morality). It is not uncommon for polemicists from these knowledge communities to attempt to colonize others—for example, someone working in the scientific community may claim to have the “best” or superior knowledge of human development or the origins of the universe vis-à-vis religious knowledge, or vice versa. Intellectual expansionism of this sort is perhaps the key reason for paradigm and cultural “wars” periodically seen in academia and popular culture. The debates typically are, at their core, about knowledge (what is it and who has it) and power.

One knowledge typology in cognitive psychology juxtaposes declarative knowledge (knowledge of factual information represented in declarative sentences and propositions) with procedural knowledge (knowledge of how to do something or reach a goal, sometimes characterized by production rules). Psychology also discusses situated knowledge (knowledge that appears to be context dependent). Another contrast is explicit knowledge (which is expressed in words and numbers) and what Michael Polanyi calls tacit knowledge (which is intuitive and difficult to articulate and share with others).

Another typology contrasts subjective knowledge (knowledge based on experience and thought but often understood in individual or personal or nuanced ways); intersubjective knowledge (knowledge created, shared, and understood in a language or cultural community); and objective knowledge. Objective knowledge is sometimes defined as timeless or universal knowledge, sometimes as the stuff of our empirical experiences, the “reality” that we sense through interaction with our environments; this sort of knowledge often is claimed to be available to everyone. The concept of objective knowledge is often defined differently and is controversial; it is not uncommon for objective knowledge to be defined simply as what people agree to be true, which is what I call *intersubjective knowledge*. Many additional types of knowledge can be added to this list.

Ontology of Knowledge

Knowledge is conceptual, and it is discovered and constructed by humans. It is nonmaterial (but real); it is “stored” in our brains (in ways we do not fully understand); and it is processed through physical relationships operating in our brains. Without humans,

this knowledge would no longer exist. However, some philosophers contend that many true statements would be true even in the absence of human life (e.g., Kant's synthetic a priori truths, such as the mathematical statement $2 + 2 = 4$). Many philosophers (e.g., Plato) and scientists have claimed that many truths are universal, necessary, and unchanging. I show below that many philosophers consider knowledge literally to be *justified, true belief*.

One might argue that knowledge exists in the sense of storage in many physical ways—for example, in brains, books, libraries, cultures, and computer chips. Although knowledge is physically housed in individuals and their artifacts, knowledge also exists (as an emergent property) at the intersubjective and group levels of social reality. This reality is the focus of disciplines such as sociology, political science, anthropology, and economics.

Social and cultural knowledge emerge from brains (that are socialized, enculturated, educated) but it exists as a higher (i.e., social) level of reality. Émile Durkheim expressed this point in his *Rules of Sociological Method* when he argued that *social facts* (e.g., status, roles, culture, language, shared beliefs, social practices, and patterns of behavior) are “things” that cannot be reduced to psychology and they are “*sui generis*” (which is a Latin expression meaning of its own kind, unique, or independent). Again, knowledge exists at an individual level, but it also exists, according to most social scientists, as an emergent social reality. I argue that this emergent reality is an intersubjective reality or, using Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman's language, an objectified reality. Durkheim and most social theorists contend that social reality is shown in “choices” and impacts of choices that individuals make in their environments. This view of social reality is formally called *structuralism* (see Émile Durkheim, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, and poststructuralists Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida).

The Knowledge Problem

Debates about knowledge have continued unabated since at least the time of Socrates. For example: (a) Is truth universal or relative? (b) What is the foundation of knowledge? (c) Is truth obtainable or is inductive probability the best we can obtain in the human sciences? The famous Greek dialogues concerning truth and knowledge are still highly relevant today (e.g., *Meno*, *Protagoras*, the *Republic*, *Theaetetus*), especially

the debates between Socrates/Plato and the Sophists (such as Protagoras, who famously said “man is the measure of all things,” and Gorgias). As constructed here, the Platonic position sees knowledge as necessary, absolute, and unchanging, and this includes knowledge of axiological concepts such as justice and virtue. For Platonists, knowledge is desired and distinct from “mere belief.” Statements are true or false. The lack of a third possibility is called the “law of the excluded middle.” Fuzzy logic and other projects in philosophy, including some versions of skepticism, deny the concept of necessary truth and the law of the excluded middle (e.g., Gorgias). The Platonic position regarding knowledge stands in contrast to the Sophist position, famously detested (“sophistry”) by Socrates and Plato and most other Western philosophers over the ensuing 2,400 years. The Sophists were quite satisfied with knowledge as belief that is well received and widely held by educated people, and they viewed truth and knowledge pluralistically and relative to social, cultural, and individual agents, and saw it as changing over time (historicism). The Sophists' view of knowledge equates with relativism. Much Anglo-American (in contrast to Continental) philosophy still defends the “Platonic” notion of knowledge as absolute, universal, and unchanging.

This long-standing knowledge debate between absolutism and relativism is at the core of the quantitative versus qualitative paradigm wars, with advocates of quantitative research taking the Platonic position (assuming that researchers produce true knowledge about a lawful world), and advocates of qualitative research taking the Sophist or relativist position (assuming that researchers write about local or contextually specific knowledge). Regarding many social and psychological phenomena, some version of relativism appears warranted. It would be helpful if *varieties* of relativism (ontological, epistemological, ethical, methodological) were better articulated in the literature. Mixed methods research (i.e., the third methodological paradigm along with qualitative and quantitative) draws on the “truth- or use-value” obtained through the use of qualitative *and* quantitative viewpoints; this is done under the banner of philosophical/methodological pragmatism (claiming that the most one can hope for in research is warranted assertability about claims); pluralism (there are many truths and realities); and perspectivalism (i.e., many true statements can be said about the same phenomenon, all of which might be informative). It is unlikely that the

“knowledge problem” of absolute versus relative truth will ever be fully resolved because there are too many conflicting and countervailing values, issues, perspectives, and forces operating simultaneously.

The Received View

In Anglo-American philosophy, the standard view of knowledge has long been that knowledge is *justified, true belief*. This idea is commonly called the JTB theory of knowledge (or simply JTB). According to JTB, the three ingredients (justification, truth, and belief) are necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge; therefore, they provide an essentialist definition of knowledge. One component of knowledge is *belief*; it is necessary that one believe something. One might believe that income *tends* to increase with education; one might believe that opposite poles (+, −) on *all* pairs of magnets produce attractive forces. Second, it is necessary that one’s belief is *true*. Using the same examples, it would have to be the case that income increases with college education (in all cases, for universal or necessary knowledge, and in many or most cases, for inductive or probabilistic knowledge); in the second example, it would have to be the case that opposite poles always result in a pulling force because it was a universal claim. Third, one’s true belief must be warranted or *justified* in order to constitute knowledge. Unlike, truth, however, justification comes in degrees; to meet this third criterion, justification must be considered strong or adequate (presumably as decided by an expert). Again, if you have a justified true belief, then you have knowledge according to JTB.

JTB is a useful starting point for much philosophical research and debate. Some widely discussed theories of truth include correspondence theory (a statement is true if it corresponds to the facts in the world); coherence theory (a belief is true if it is logically consistent with the other beliefs in one’s knowledge system); and pragmatism (a statement is instrumentally true or meaningful or warranted if it allows one to successfully adapt to one’s environment and if it works in practice). Some popular theories of justification include Cartesian foundationalism, modest foundationalism, coherentism, evidentialism, reliabilism, and truth tracking. Throughout history, various forms of skepticism have questioned the possibility of the necessary or universal truth that JTB assumes. Much of Anglo-American epistemology focuses on challenges and technical revisions to JTB.

Some Problems with JTB from a Human Sciences Perspective

In addition to technical problems identified with JTB in the literature, several commonsense problems arise when we try to define what counts as truth from the perspective of human or social science. First, JTB focuses on what we “know,” but can we *know* that we *should* or *ought* to use JTB? It seems that one should make explicit the epistemic values presupposed by JTB; that is, JTB highly values or prizes truth and what one might call logical-rationality. There are, however, other potential, additional, or alternative epistemic values that one might desire in one’s theory of knowledge such as taking an instrumental approach and valuing explanation, prediction, and control, or taking a humanistic approach and valuing assertions that provide personal and social meaning and contentment, personal growth, personal freedom to differ, and social or political claims.

Second, JTB works well for propositions that result in true or false conclusions, but many natural language statements (especially value statements) do not fit this form. Statements such as “John Dewey was a good person” or “Apples taste better than pears” are excluded from JTB analysis because they do not result in true or false statements. Regarding values and rationality, perhaps a reasonable person would agree with some value-laden statements (e.g., slavery is wrong, Hitler was evil, murder is wrong), but there is no universal agreement on the truth or falsity of many other value judgments (e.g., abortion is always wrong, Søren Kierkegaard was the first existentialist, the democratic party is correct on the issue of class equality, Jacques Derrida was a better writer than Michel Foucault). Many statements about concepts, values, and social issues are better viewed along truth continua than as true–false binaries.

Third, JTB assumes the existence of a universal rationality (an assumption that became commonplace during the Enlightenment). In direct contrast, many human scientists (e.g., anthropologists, sociologists) have shown that what is reasonable to people varies by time, place, culture, person, and along many additional dimensions. Psychologists Daryl and Sandra Bem (in a social psychology book written in the 1970s) labeled individuals’ reasoning process *psycho-logic* because it varies by person. Qualitative research also shows that rationality is just one of many characteristics of humans. To focus only on the dimension

of rationality is to misunderstand the complexity of humans.

Fourth, I would argue that David Hume's *problem of induction* is closely related to this issue of proof in human scientific research; according to this problem, all we can ever obtain is knowledge of what we experience, but all we experience are particulars. Relatedly, the future might not resemble the past (perhaps the sun will not appear tomorrow), and what we have not observed might be different from what we have observed, eliminating the possibility of certainty in theoretical generalizations and statements about unobservables. Many theories, generalizations, and laws in science, however, make claims to universal knowledge (e.g., the law of universal gravitation in physics, the law of effect in behavioral psychology). The law of universal gravitation in physics might be true, but we cannot ever know if it is, and the law of effect in the psychology of learning clearly is not true in a strict sense.

The last problem is that JTB theory appears to assume that propositions exist and can be tested in isolation. JTB excels in examining single, particularistic statements; it falters when examining webs of statements. As Willard van Orman Quine has shown, scientific statements are best viewed *holistically* (i.e., as embedded in webs of interrelated statements) rather than existing separately. This is why hypotheses cannot be tested in isolation and why theories survive when particular predictions and claims are not empirically supported; a researcher can modify the web or theory, adjusting it to fit the particular finding that the researcher does not want to reject by modifying a different part of the theory. In relation to the paradigm wars, internal contradictions and intra-paradigmatic differences oftentimes are glossed over because of the desire to emphasize inter-paradigmatic differences.

As argued here, strict adherence to classical JTB theory can lead to problematic conclusions, especially for the human or social sciences. An irony is that social researchers claiming to adhere to JTB, strictly speaking, *do not have knowledge* about the vast majority of phenomena about which they claim to have knowledge. In one sense, qualitative research would appear to fare better than quantitative research because it focuses more on the here and now, on the particulars, the local, which do not appear to seriously violate the problem of induction. At the same time, qualitative research views the world as relational, complex, and constantly changing, which would suggest

that knowledge is at best fleeting or ephemeral. Quantitative research would appear to be in serious trouble if universal knowledge or laws are claimed (which is a long-standing goal and practice of traditional science). Perhaps JTB can only be a true theory of knowledge if it is defined as such, which would make it a tautology (although one could still consider it a useful tautology). My view of JTB is that it provides an important and useful starting point (and comparison point) for thinking about knowledge, but for the human sciences, it is problematic because of the questionable assumptions of universal rationality and deductive and foundational truth. This is likely why inductive reasoning and standpoint epistemologies have become common in the philosophy of social science and qualitative research.

A Current View of Knowledge?

Since the late 19th century, many developments have occurred that provide insight on the nature of knowledge and the problem of knowledge. I will briefly mention a few. At the end of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche introduced the concept of *perspectivism* (or perspectivalism), which rejects the idea of objective or absolute truth and argues that there are multiple ways to view the same phenomenon or object. What is called truth or knowledge often is simply a name for a point of view. Other writers (such as Richard Rorty) have echoed this idea. A related concept is hermeneutics, which refers to the interpretation of texts. Applied to knowledge, the idea becomes that knowledge and meaning is a type of narrative that always is open to new interpretations (e.g., Derrida, Foucault). Derrida famously said "there is nothing outside the text." We change over time and it seems natural that new and sometimes better "textual" interpretations will occur. Derrida also argued that binary oppositions (deep structures assumed by the structuralist Lévi-Strauss) are neither pure nor independent (e.g., qualitative and quantitative, male and female, day and night), and that each opposing category is present to some degree in the other (e.g., in what Derrida called a *supplement*). The world cannot be analyzed in the sense of cutting it into pure (objective) categories. Foucault argued that knowledge is not separate from power; the categories of knowledge and power overlap and cannot be untangled. Where one finds the operation of knowledge, one also will find the power. Many "free" choices are made by individuals because they

have internalized the knowledge structures of their communities.

Thomas Kuhn made many important points about knowledge in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, where he suggested that scientific knowledge has a large social component and that observation always is theory-laden. Researchers operate within paradigms that use exemplars, languages, conceptual systems, and value systems that inform members how to do good science and provide the theories and ideas to presuppose. In Kuhn's system, most researchers work day to day trying to "solve puzzles" during normal science, rather than trying to overthrow the paradigm or its assumptions. Kuhn believes that knowledge is the result of psychological and social factors *and* objective (i.e., empirical, measurable) factors operating in experience and the world.

Perhaps the best position on knowledge for the social sciences came from a monograph by Peter Berger (a sociological theorist) and Thomas Luckman (a phenomenologist), written in 1966 and titled *The Social Construction of Reality*. They provided a reciprocal model of knowledge based on the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization. People act on their world, creating culture and practices (externalization). Through these actions and beliefs, social knowledge is objectified and it, therefore, is real; social constructs and knowledge exist beyond any single individual but it is housed within the consciousness of community members. This social reality, in turn, causes people not only to believe certain things, act in certain ways, and to be certain kinds of people through the process of internalization (operating through socialization, but also operating through other forms of social control such as formal and informal laws, and interpersonal reinforcement and punishment). Because people internalize the ideas of their cultures and subcultures, the beliefs are "taken for granted" and seem natural (almost like "instincts") and justified and right. A cyclical process of externalization, objectification, internalization, and subjectification continues over time and varies by community or place. Social constructivists are right that we construct social thought, but the "scientific" structuralists also are right that we are born into structures that help make us what we are. There also is human freedom within structures, and individual perspectives help determine our personal identities, experiences, and schema systems (e.g., Jerome Bruner calls individual constructivism the "personalization of knowledge").

Here are several tentative conclusions about knowledge: (a) knowledge is based on empirical reality, but it also is socially and individually constructed, and, therefore, arguments that only one of these statements is true rely on a false choice; (b) the truth component of JTB is too strict and needs to be reconceptualized for the social and human sciences; intersubjective agreement among thoughtful community members (e.g., experts) is, perhaps, a better criterion; (c) a more commonsense definition of knowledge (than JTB) works fine in most language communities or "language games," and those definitions typically are "true enough"; (d) much human and social knowledge is perspectival and in most cases this is not a logical problem of contraction because many true statements can simultaneously be made about the same social or scientific object; (e) much of what is considered to be knowledge needs to be indexed to time, place, and culture (i.e., what we consider to be knowledge changes); and (f) it is important to carefully analyze the various meanings of the term *knowledge*, especially when one operates in different language communities.

R. Burke Johnson

See also Constructivism; Epistemology; Intersubjectivity; Objectivism; Ontology; Pragmatism; Realism; Relativism; Subjectivism

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Websites

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- EpistemeLinks: <http://www.epistemelinks.com>
- Social Science Dictionary: <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/sshglo.htm>



LEAVING THE FIELD

Gaining access to a field of research in qualitative designs raises issues concerning self-presentation, negotiation of roles, research bargains and interactions, and personal relationships with informants and other participants. However, these issues are also important when completing a piece of fieldwork and leaving the field for the last time. Relations between researcher and those researched built up during the period of fieldwork may have ramifications for participants after the researcher has left the field. It is therefore an issue of research ethics how field relations are terminated, and working in the field has interpersonal dimensions for a researcher: There may be psychological and emotional sequelae for a researcher seeking to leave a field setting.

Ethical Dimensions of Leaving the Field

Power relations between field researcher and those researched may become evident in the expectations of these parties when fieldwork ends. Researchers may have greater access to resources (physical, intellectual, cultural) than those they research. Also, during fieldwork, a number of formal or informal research bargains may have been struck between researcher and participants, such as an agreement not to undermine hierarchies or other commitments concerning behavior or confidentiality. Such research bargains with informants may meet psychosocial needs; for example, to have an interested, unengaged, or neutral

ear to listen. Participants may be willing to talk or be observed, so long as their anonymity is respected. Sometimes there will be a more tangible bargain; for instance, to assist in some project or struggle or to provide feedback to support participants' objectives. When leaving the field, the researcher's commitment to these bargains needs to be confirmed explicitly so that participants are reassured that their trust and participation in the research are respected and rewarded.

Informal relations may also have developed during fieldwork, including emotional or psychosocial engagements with researchers. These affective relations must be addressed before a researcher leaves a field, and culturally appropriate forms of valediction must be undertaken. Researchers may need to use informants to check what kinds of expectations are held by participants concerning departure.

Consequences for the Researcher

Fieldworkers may experience loss when leaving a field setting where they have built up working and living relationships with informants and participants. This loss must be managed and acknowledged. There are accounts of relations being sustained subsequent to leaving the field, and this is acceptable, subject to cultural constraints.

Other Issues in Leaving the Field

Field relations do not fit within a standardized pattern and, on occasion, unusual research bargains may have been struck. There may be financial issues to be settled, if money or goods have been promised to research

informants or participants. Other research bargains may involve providing education or training, facilitating connections to influential persons, or sustaining personal contacts where friendships or relationships have emerged between researcher and participants. More frequently, there may have been an agreement to present findings from the study to participants in one form or another.

Nick J. Fox

See also Ethics; Informant; Negotiating Exit

Further Readings

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LIFE STORIES

Producing life stories is an increasingly popular form of narrative-based inquiry in fields as diverse as anthropology, education, gerontology, history, law, medicine, psychology, sociology, and women's studies. Methods of inquiry into lived experience appear under such labels as autobiography, biography, autoethnography, life history, and oral history. Despite their differences, the common purpose of these methods is to inquire into lived experience and to re-present that experience in a narrative form that provides rich detail and context about the life (or lives) in question. Life storytelling can be understood as an intellectual site where the narrative turn in the social sciences meets the desire to exercise the descriptive and analytic processes that C. Wright Mills famously called the *sociological imagination*.

Although distinctions between life stories, oral histories, autobiographies, and life histories are contested and problematic, they typically seek to provide accounts and analyses of how people make sense of their lived experience in the construction of both individual and social identity. Some life historians claim that the analysis of the social, historical, political, and economic contexts of such experiences is what transforms a life story into a life history. That is, life histories situate stories of individual lives within a bigger picture. This contextual location of a life story (or stories of lives) allows us to explore the generative interplay

between individuals and culture that characterizes a life history.

By positioning descriptions of everyday life within the contexts in which they occur, life history narratives can convey a sense of how individual lives are not free-floating, but are socially constructed. For example, from many studies of teachers' careers and lives, Ivor Goodson concludes that the significance of various limits and possibilities for individual lives are both contained and enabled by their location in the social world; otherwise, individuals are inevitably constructed as victims, powerless in the evolution of their lives.

Foci for continuing debate among life historians includes the relationship between researcher and researched and how this affects the construction of life histories. The postmodern turn in social research has also brought under scrutiny questions about the nature of identity, truth, structure, and agency and the warrantability and defensibility of claims about the veracity of individual and collective voices in the representation of lives and experience. For example, William Tierney argues that a goal of life history work in a postmodern age should be to break the stranglehold of meta-narratives that establish rules for truth, legitimacy, and identity.

Noel Gough

See also Autobiography; Autoethnography; Biography; Narrative Inquiry; Oral History

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LIMINAL PERSPECTIVE

A liminal perspective toward analysis studies the in-between space in relationships, social roles, and contexts in times or at places of transition and change. Victor Turner furthered the idea of liminality as manifested through ritual as social actors move through

ambiguity and transition. To Turner, the liminal phase was the stage of a transitional ritual in which a person is between social states (which Turner referred to in the title of one of his key articles, “Betwixt and Between”). Turner found that people sharing liminal spaces were in an antistructure state of communities in which they were relatively equal to and bonded with each other, while othered and marginalized by the rest of society. Turner specifically studied the role of rituals in these liminal spaces.

As a type of cultural analysis, studies of liminality look at social spaces in which change takes place, the boundaries between and around these spaces, and the borderlands surrounding these spaces. Researchers studying liminality would look at the way communication, ritual, and processes mark social spaces and move people between and through them.

The liminal perspective has been used in research concerning chronic illness and disability, ethnicity and immigration, group oppression, and bisexuality, among others. For example, Jean Jackson’s 1991 research studied the liminal space of chronic pain as a borderland between the mind and the body, while Joanne Warner and colleague Jonathan Gabe’s 2004 study examined the gap between mental health service providers and the otherness of the people with whom they work. Donna Goodwin and colleagues looked at the language (metaphors) used to indicate and describe the position of social liminality occupied by persons with a disability. Anette Forss and colleagues’ 2004 study examined the liminal space of uncertainty among women who had received abnormal Pap smear test results.

Ben Rampton’s 1999 study of multiracial youth, Samuel Marc Davidson’s 2006 study of bisexual Latino men, and Paul Tabar’s 2005 study of a Lebanese folkloric dance performed by immigrants from Lebanon living in Australia all used the lens of liminality to explore the discourse involved in forming, transforming, and articulating new identities.

The study of liminal spaces is important because it is at places and moments of change and transformation that one can see most clearly the processes of domination and resistance, of inclusion and exclusion, and of marginalization and socialization. It is in society’s borderlands that one is challenged to recognize the other and the self and to see oneself in another.

Christine S. Davis

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Marginalization; Marginalized Populations

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LITERATURE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Literature is an art form that requires readers to attend to its details and imaginatively engage with characters and situations for emotional and intellectual impact. Unlike texts where individuals pay particular attention to information, literature invites readers into a literary space of human experience, which is of particular interest to qualitative researchers. Numerous genres constitute the field of literature in qualitative research including novels, short stories, poetry, drama, e-literature, and forms of nonfiction such as autobiography and personal journalism. In some instances, the qualities of the oral storytelling tradition are important, especially in genres such as ballads, myths, folktales, and legends. Qualitative researchers may use literature as a focus for participant response either through discussion or creation; they may use literary genres to represent the data or the larger study; or they may refer to the literary text as a data source. Specific advantages for researchers using literature are noted at the end of this entry.

Types of Literature

Any literary form may be used depending on the purposes of the researcher. Below are four common types of literature with some examples of genres that are used regularly by the qualitative researcher.

Poetry

Poetry has the advantage of conveying specific sensory details, rhythmic structures, and evocative images in a compact and carefully crafted structure. From very few words, the reader can experience the impact of the experience being related. Researchers have used poetic forms to represent the cadences of participant voices, the details of a research context,

and representations of research literature and their emotional interpretations of research events. Poetry also has been paired with other art forms such as painting, particularly in arts-based research. Poetry has a distinct advantage because its rhythms and figurative devices enable an embodied sense of the research, which is more difficult to achieve in prose.

Fiction

This type of literature commonly includes genres such as novels, short stories, and dramas. Other examples used in qualitative research are novellas, letters, and diary entries. Researchers rely on fictional texts to focus or elicit participant response and for reporting research findings. The advantages of using fiction include the possibility of representing participants as characters, engaging readers in a narrative of the research site and events, highlighting participant voices and dialogue, and more accurately representing situations where the need for confidentiality is great. Researchers have been debating the ethical implications of portraying participants through the personae of characters, especially when including thoughts as well as dialogue. Some researchers restrict representation of participants to actual responses and observable actions, while others include inner dialogue when it can be supported by the data. Still other researchers argue that they create fictional characters to represent an amalgamation of several participants, details of which can be supported by the data.

Nonfiction

Nonfiction, when categorized as literature, includes such genres as biography and autoethnography. This type of literature represents a shift in the field of journalism from an emphasis on objective reporting to the recognition that fictional and poetic techniques can add to the veracity of the portrayal. Autoethnography, which is particular to qualitative research, is a genre that challenges the notion of the objective observer and the silent author through using literary techniques. Researchers write from their own experiences, relating them to historical, social, and cultural contexts. This reflexive process enables a deep look at self-other interactions. An advantage to using nonfiction (or what is sometimes called *creative nonfiction*) is its similarity to more traditional forms of reporting research.

E-Literature

This emerging form of literature is taking on greater prominence as researchers investigate digital literacy and online activities. E-literature relies on the characteristics of digital technology such as hyperlinks and multimedia representations as well as readers' comfort with ambiguity and willingness for interaction with the text. Although it is not yet common to see research results represented online beyond basic hypertexts, the number of researchers who are asking participants to use and report on their interpretation of e-literature is growing. This area will gain more prominence in the years to come.

Research Possibilities With Literature

The versatility of literature enables writers to portray the breadth of human experience. In a similar vein, it offers researchers a variety of approaches for exploring what and how participants understand and for representing those insights. There are three main areas where literature is used in qualitative research: participant response, representation of data, and as data itself.

Participant Response

Literature has long been used, particularly in education, as a focus for participant response. These studies take several forms including having an individual or group read the literature and then respond to the literary experience with their insights about the text, its connection to their experience, and their recognition of literary processes. Researchers also use literature to raise issues that they wish to discuss with participants. For example, a number of educational researchers have invited teenagers to read young adult novels to prompt discussions of adolescent experience. In other instances, researchers invite participants to read literature and then represent their interpretations through other art forms such as multimedia productions or artistic creations.

Researchers also rely on the participants' creation of literary forms. For example, they may invite participants to write in various literary forms to explore issues of identity, literacy, writing processes, or the development of insight. Some researchers use a combination of reading and writing literature as a way to research experience such as exploring the construction of female identity through story and poetry.

Representation of Data

Over the past 10 years, qualitative researchers have increased their use of literary forms to represent their data. Some researchers report on their study through a short story or a drama. Others have used a series of poems. Many researchers use a combination of more traditional academic forms interspersed with narratives, poems or other literary genres. Using literature as a form of representation sometimes enables a researcher to respect confidentiality through the veil of fiction. For example, some studies have been represented as a novella or as a collection of poetry to protect participants' identities.

Researchers need to be cautioned that literary forms, particularly poetry, demand skillful writing. A badly executed poem, such as one that does not attend to word choice or rhythm, can diminish the quality of the research report. Many researchers who are interested in writing literary forms join writing groups, read books about writing a particular genre, or carefully study published forms of the literature. As the use of literary forms gains greater acceptance in the academic community, researchers are expanding the variety and possibilities of literature in research.

Literature as Data

The literature that participants create can be used as a data source and analyzed according to themes, metaphors, or other literary aspects. Researchers also use literature as data in discursive research. A published novel, poem or other literary genre can become a source for analysis. For instance, a researcher might use a novel by Virginia Woolf to investigate the complex phenomenon of human consciousness. Literature, because of its detailed representations of human experience, is often used in hermeneutic phenomenology as another perspective about the topic in question. For example, in a study that investigates the experience of beginning teachers, researchers can refer to a novel that represents such an experience as an instance of the phenomenon.

The Advantages of Using Literature in Qualitative Research

The very reasons individuals appreciate literature as a cultural art form are the reasons that make it a powerful choice for research—either to elicit or represent data. Literature is a source of sensory details, figurative

language, and experiences with human consciousness. These qualities can offer verisimilitude to research. Furthermore, through writing research reports in literary forms, researchers can demonstrate their theoretical framework such as illustrating poststructuralist writing.

Literature also offers alternatives to ethical issues in qualitative research. Readers can explore various perspectives and voices through reading literary forms that better represent the complexity of human relations. Furthermore, by representing data in a literary form, researchers can create more confidential reporting about participants. Finally, literary writing often makes research texts more readable and can broaden the audience for qualitative research.

Rebecca Luce-Kapler

See also Autoethnography; Creative Writing; Fictional Writing; Poetry in Qualitative Research; Writing Process

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of a literature review is very much a plural rather than a singular one as there are many literatures a researcher must examine to produce a coherent literature review. For example, by doing qualitative research, the researcher is joining an ongoing debate in some shape or form. The originality of an idea, an approach, or a theoretical reinterpretation

adds to existing literature. The objective of this entry is to describe the plurality of literature, to underline the difference between general and specific literatures, to highlight how to use theoretical literature as a tool to increase understanding of a subject area and test a research question or hypothesis, and to examine the methodology and data literatures that form important parts of the research process.

One of the most important considerations for the qualitative researcher is the plurality inherent in the idea of a literature review: A number of reviews of different aspects of literature have to take place before a coherent research project can begin. In a subject like education, there are so many categories and therefore literatures that a review can look almost frightening. For example, in a review on the topic of education policy, one is seeking to examine the concept of education policy, looking for policy examples to apply to that concept and looking for relevant education research that uses a policy framework. Within this notion, one could be looking for a context or a history of an education policy document. One might also seek a wider understanding by looking at the philosophy or sociology underlying the policy document. One will need to decide whether to use traditional sources; that is, books and journals, or edited sources from the World Wide Web—for example, records of governmental committees and commissions. That really is the tip of the iceberg. Les Bell and Howard Stevenson begin their book on education policy with what they do not seek to explore surrounding the concept. The lesson for the researcher is to define literature boundaries; that is, to acknowledge the complexity of a concept and then underline what aspects of the concept a literature review can address.

An understanding of the general and specific literatures is crucial for all researchers considering the construction of a research proposal. Knowledge of where to find the relevant sources is therefore crucial. With both undergraduate and postgraduate students, a balance is necessary between the traditional print sources (i.e., books and journal articles) and up-to-date and free electronic resources available on the World Wide Web. The internet has changed the way people view knowledge and has made information more accessible to those who know where to find it. A good application of social theory here is Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. So, one does not just need to know where to find literature sources; one needs the resources and technology to access the

information. For the researcher, finding literature can be a frustrating experience, but it is the tutor or the supervisor's role to guide the student to the literature. It is up to the student to decide what is and what is not relevant literature to use within research designs.

The use of theory and theoretical literature is also an important consideration. Once a research design has been created, ideas and theoretical frameworks can be used and tested to both question and increase understanding of the qualitative research being carried out. For example, the views of a modern social theorist such as Max Weber can be put into context and applied to a contemporary research problem. There are again literatures in relation when using somebody like Weber. There are the famous texts such as *Economy and Society*. There is Weber's published PhD dissertation: *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*. There are the recent published works within the academic community that keeps the Weberian discourse fresh and up to date in both book and journal form. One can even divide the Weberian journal literature up with *Max Weber Studies* and the publications applying a Weberian perspective to wider ranging subject literature. Weber was German, so if one considers his original works have been translated into English, that adds even more potential references and literature sources to a potential literature review. However, are these sources available to the researcher—for example, what happens if literature is not translated from German into English?

What is often neglected by researchers is the method, methodology, and data literature that encompasses different, but important parts of the qualitative research processes. Method literature relates to how to use different techniques; that is, interviews or participant observation are used in the field. Methodology refers to how a researcher uses methods and sets out how methods are used and data are collected. There are interestingly two distinct literature reviews for both method and methodology that can be confusing for the researcher. The position of the data collection, presentation, and analysis chapter within a research proposal or project often means that the literature revolving around data is often neglected by researchers. David Silverman has written extensively on data analysis. How data are presented is also worth literature review as this is one of the more enjoyable parts of the research project as empirical data can be used to begin to test the research question.

It is important to apply the different literature elements to a particular source; for example, using

Colin Robson's book to see whether different literatures are covered or not. There is no intended criticism of the text, so a question could be, which aspects of the research project are covered and which are not? For a researcher, one of the best places to look for literature sources is the reference list or bibliography. Robson has a reference list and author index of over 30 pages. The reference list is user-friendly, as each entry has a number in bold that indicates where the publication is referred to in the book. Looking at the contents page, there is a list of references in a further reading compilation. This list allows the researcher to focus on relevant key texts that relate to particular literature sources that correspond to different parts of the research process. Unfortunately, there is no actual literature review chapter in the book. The idea of flexibility applies to all aspects of research design, including the literature review. It is good to see, in Robson, two parts of the book dedicated to the methods of data collection and dealing with the data, including further reading lists at the end of eight chapters. This alleviates some of the fear expressed in the previous paragraph. Most research books have chapters on data. The issue to raise here is that many researchers neglect data literature and need to plan more time to explore this part of the research project rather than focusing on data presentation and analysis.

Reviewing literature is a complex but enjoyable part of qualitative research. There are many different aspects of literature from general subjects to the specific, through theoretical approaches, into method and methodological literature, and finally into data collection, presentation and analysis. It is worth working through what Chris Hart titles a chapter "Bibliographical Framework," in his text *Doing a Literature Search* (2001), but I think it is worth finding a balance between traditional sources of books and journals with a coherent use of information communication technology knowledge and techniques. Another way for researchers to extend their knowledge and increase understanding is to read reviews of the academic literature within journals. Access to literary sources is the perennial issue for researchers and electronic access to global literature is a research skill that researchers are having to engage with and develop as more sources become available in this format.

Richard Race

See also Literature in Qualitative Research; Methodology; Research Design; Research Literature; Research Question

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LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lived experience, as it is explored and understood in qualitative research, is a representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge. Lived experience speaks to the personal and unique perspective of researchers and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other roles and characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives. Lived experience, then, leads to a self-awareness that acknowledges the integrity of an individual life and how separate life experiences can resemble and respond to larger public and social themes, creating a space for storytelling, interpretation, and meaning-making. Lived experience allows a researcher to use a single life to learn about society and about how individual experiences are communicated.

Carolyn Ellis and colleagues have done extensive work on the usefulness of lived experience as a research technique, investigating emotions, gendered experiences, loss, and the inevitable transitions of life. Pioneers in the field have demonstrated writing and research

techniques that best utilize this method of privileging the voice and experience of the author-researcher, including autoethnography, memoir, narrative writing, and performance.

Lived experience responds not only to people's experiences, but also to how people live through and respond to those experiences. The body of work on lived experience focuses on everyday life occurrences and self-awareness. As a life history or life story, lived experience concentrates on ordinary, everyday events (language, rituals, routines) while privileging experience as a way of knowing and interpreting the world. Lived experience also offers a perspective through which to make comparisons for research and serves as a testimonial to survival.

The lived experience method does not critique individual lives, but rather it presents them for comparison with others. The method is evaluated based on its verisimilitude and ability to evoke an emotional response from readers and scholars. The work represents common experiences that are life changing and life affirming. Lived experience seeks to understand the distinctions between lives and experiences and tries to understand why some experiences are privileged

over others. The method concentrates on what people do and how they do it.

Research questions for this method are generally centered on the lived experiences of the participants, but they also focus on the topic of research. Lived experience acknowledges every aspect of a person's life and identity, even those areas that are not directly connected to the research topic or question.

Robin M. Boylorn

See also Autobiography; Autoethnography; Embodied Knowledge; Ethnography; Everyday Life; Fictional Writing; Identity; Memoirs; Reflexivity; Storytelling

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MARGINALIZATION

Marginalization is the process through which members of some segments of society find themselves out of the mainstream based on their membership in socially meaningful groups. Groups may become marginalized based on a variety of characteristics such as religion, social class, ethnicity, visible racial characteristics, gender, age, and sexual orientation. People's social status related to these characteristics is based on an interpretation of their meaningfulness rather than on any innate qualities they might have.

This entry looks at the promise of qualitative research methods to bring to light the life experiences of members of marginalized populations. It outlines how researchers have used qualitative research methods to explore the experiences of members of marginalized groups and to understand the social world of disenfranchised groups. The entry also demonstrates how the strategies that members of marginalized groups use to negotiate their role as research participants can be used as data to enrich an understanding of the shape of their marginalization.

Researchers have traditionally used qualitative research to access the points of view and, more recently, the voices of members of groups who find themselves ignored by those who have the power to establish the generally accepted definition of the situation. One way to think about this process is through the concept of the hierarchy of credibility. In any group, people take for granted that those with the highest social status have the greatest understanding of any situation or setting and, therefore, the right to

explain or define the way things are. For example, if one wants to understand the state of affairs in a prison, one is more likely to ask the warden for his or her explanation than the prisoners'. People tend to believe that not only does the warden know the "truth" about how things happen in a prison, but also that his or her point of view is likely to be more accurate and unbiased than those of the prisoners who are incarcerated there. If one was to seek the point of view of the inmates, one would likely discover a perspective that is markedly different from that of prison officials.

Similarly, in political processes or in the media, those who are at the top of the hierarchy of credibility appear as experts whose point of view reflects societal consensus. Members of groups who are marginal are often referred to as special-interest groups whose point of view and understanding of reality reflect a biased and self-centered position. It is unheard of, for example, to see corporate executives referred to as special interest groups even though their points of view are just as likely to reflect their self-interest as anyone else's.

Just as individuals may experience marginalization because of their membership in particular groups, some areas of research are marginalized and therefore accorded less value because of the topic being studied and/or the method being used to conduct the study. For example, studies about family life may be accorded lower status than those about issues related to the work-force because of their association with women. Similarly, studies related to aging, and therefore the researchers who carry out such studies, are marginalized within their disciplines. As well, as society has become more urbanized, the vast majority of research has involved urban populations. Rural populations

often are not considered in research, and the issues that affect rural social contexts are noticeably absent.

Early Uses of Qualitative Research

The Chicago School of Sociology, which originated in the early 20th century, used qualitative methods, specifically ethnographic field methods, to study groups that existed on the social margins of society. Classic studies include Harvey W. Zorbaugh's 1929 study, *The Gold Coast and the Slum* and Nels Anderson's 1923 book, *The Hobo*. In 1943, William Foote Whyte published *Street Corner Society*, an ethnography of the subculture of poor Italian youth. All of these books were groundbreaking in that the authors spent time hanging around with and participating in the social lives of the poor men whose lives they were seeking to understand. These groundbreaking studies presented the points of view and the everyday lives of the people whose situations they were studying rather than the professional interpretations of, for example, social workers whose mandate was to improve the lives of those less fortunate by finding ways to assimilate them into the mainstream.

Later scholars of the Chicago School also studied marginal groups. In 1963, Howard S. Becker published *Outsiders*, which explored the so-called deviant worlds of marijuana users and dance musicians. This book argued that deviance, rather than being an innate characteristic of some people, was a result of their being labeled and that so-called deviant acts were social constructions created by moral entrepreneurs. In 1967, Elliot Liebow authored *Tally's Corner*, which explored the social world of young, African American men in a large city.

Later Uses of Qualitative Research

These early studies explored the impact of marginalization that was based on social class, ethnicity, and race. In the latter part of the 20th century, qualitative research began to explore the lived experience of groups whose marginalization was premised on gender, age, and sexual orientation. As well, researchers began to look at how the social place of people affected the way they understood their role and participated in qualitative research.

Early feminist scholars, for example, argued that when women interviewed other women, the power differential between the researcher and the researched

was not as present as in traditional, survey research. Ann Oakley, for example, described women's interviewing other women as a contradiction in terms. Marjorie L. DeVault suggested that when women interviewed other women, they needed to acknowledge that women, a marginalized group, had a standpoint that could not be encompassed by categories developed, in advance, by male researchers. These and other feminist scholars argued that qualitative research methods could allow scholars to understand the lived experience of those who inhabited the social margins of society. Their philosophy privileged the points of view of the members of marginalized groups rather than those of higher status—in this case, men.

The Marginalization of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research occupies a marginal position in many disciplines. Those who carry out qualitative research may find it very difficult to publish in core journals in their fields or to acquire research funding. Qualitative researchers have responded to this situation by creating journals dedicated to qualitative research—for example, *Qualitative Sociology* and *Qualitative Inquiry*—and by founding organizations such as the International Society for Critical Health Psychology. In Canada, there is an annual conference, The Qualitatives, which provides a venue where qualitative researchers do not have to apologize for or justify their use of qualitative methods.

Howard S. Becker in "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research" has outlined some of the social processes that demonstrate the lower status of qualitative research. One indication is quantitative researchers' practice of asking qualitative researchers to explain their research using the language of quantitative research; for example, reliability, validity, and hypothesis testing. They do not address the questions related to the way qualitative researchers judge good work; for example, accuracy and breadth. This phenomenon is reminiscent of the situation of colonized groups who find that colonizers think that everything should be translated into their own language. Also, quantitative workers in the social sciences often require that qualitative work answer to their criteria—that is, reliability, representativeness of samples, and the using of comparison groups—rather than to the criteria that make sense within the epistemology of qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers might well use their own experience of marginalization when they consider work they are doing with marginalized populations. DeVault argues that qualitative researchers should avoid using routine research procedures that lead them to conventional understandings that are tied to the interests of the powerful. She also cautions qualitative researchers to include racial-ethnic positioning when they develop their analyses in qualitative studies. In *Liberating Method*, DeVault provides an example of her narrative analysis of an African American dietician that takes into account the situation of a woman of color who is being interviewed by a European American woman. DeVault notes that members of marginalized cultural groups learn skills that allow them to adapt their speech to different cultural contexts. Members of dominant groups have no need to develop this skill, for, like the quantitative researchers, they are confident that their speech is the standard, taken-for-granted way of speaking.

Participant observation provides a powerful qualitative method for understanding the social world of marginalized groups. Timothy Diamond, for example, studied the social world of workers and residents in nursing homes in *Making Gray Gold: Narratives of Nursing Home Care*. Diamond went to nursing assistant school and worked as a nursing-home assistant in several nursing homes over a period of years and gained precious insight into the social worlds of nursing assistants, most of whom were immigrant women, and nursing-home residents. Similarly, Elliot Liebow provides an incisive understanding of the situation of homeless women in *Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women*. Liebow volunteered in homeless shelters for women over a period of time. He went to great lengths to provide homeless women with a voice in his research. He gave copies of his manuscript to both a homeless woman and a shelter administrator and included their comments about his analysis in the book.

The desire to study marginalized populations in an ethical fashion raises issues that may not be envisioned in codes of research ethics. For example, in studying captive populations, it may be more challenging while at the same time more important to preserve research participants' privacy and confidentiality. Such research may require the collaboration of officials and staff members, which may lead to the "pet" factor (i.e., where the researcher may be viewed as on side with officials) and once again, compromise confidentiality.

There are also particular ethical issues in the study of Aboriginal populations. Historically, researchers often collected information and stories from Aboriginal groups that they then took away with them. This practice has led to a concern of cultural appropriation as well as loss of voice and history. Researchers must be particularly cognizant of possible cultural differences (e.g., a focus on collectivities rather than on individuals) that may go unrecognized. Some writers have argued that anonymity in the reporting of research takes the voice and identity away from participants in research.

The Experience of Marginalization

One facet of marginalization is the experience of interaction with members of dominant groups. In fact, one might argue that one learns that he or she is marginal through how others treat or react to him or her. For example, as a woman becomes older, she will find that people begin to treat her differently than they did when she was younger. They may make comments about how young she looks for her age, feign surprise that she is old enough to have grandchildren, or joke with her on her birthday that she is decades younger than she really is. Remarks of this kind communicate to a woman that people now perceive her as old enough to be an appropriate target of these kinds of statements. At the same time, a woman in this situation will begin to feel invisible and may discover that her opinion is not taken as seriously as it used to be. In a sense, this individual is learning to be old through the way others treat her; that is, as a member of the marginalized group of older women. Nonetheless, some women report this experience as being liberating because they no longer have to worry about what others think about them.

When an older woman becomes a widow, she becomes doubly marginalized through being a member of two marginalized categories—old women and widows. Some scholars refer to this type of situation as double jeopardy, and an older widow who is a member of visible minority may experience multiple jeopardy. She may come into a research situation feeling a considerable level of uncertainty. The next few paragraphs illustrate how a widow's feelings of subordination affected the interaction in a primarily interview study of older women's widowhood experiences.

The Widows' Journeys

In the 2001 study, *The Widowed Self: The Older Woman's Journey Through Widowhood*, Canadian women over 50 who had become widows within the previous 10 years were asked to share their experiences in in-depth interviews. Scattered throughout the interviews are terms or phrases that characterized the women's speech and stories as intrinsically trivial. Consequently, several women used terms like "gabbing," "yakking," and "rambling" to describe their way of participating in the interview. Here are some examples of these self-deprecating remarks:

- Emily: I think I've said a lot of rambling and likely you've . . . already heard all of this.
- Betty: I'm spending a lot of time yakkin' to you for nothing. It won't do any good; it's just history.
- Eleanor: I haven't given you much chance to ask a question. I've been doing an awful lot of gabbing.
- Sarah: I've yakked on for quite a while here.

Source: van den Hoonaard, D. K. (2005). "Am I doing it right?": Older widows as interview participants in qualitative research. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 19, 393-406.

Interaction Strategies as Data

Deborah K. van den Hoonaard's 2001 *The Widowed Self: The Older Woman's Journey Through Widowhood* presents the results of an in-depth interview study in which the participants were Canadian women over 50 who had become widows within the previous 10 years. The questions were broad in order to encourage the women to explain what they thought was most important about their experience with becoming widows. Nonetheless, many participants asked for reassurance throughout the interview that they were being competent research participants. Questions about whether they were answering the questions correctly were interspersed throughout the interviews. In addition, some women were concerned that there might be a correct answer to a question or whether their answers made sense or were coherent.

It is possible to gain a better understanding of the shape of a group's marginalization by how they attempt to compensate for or guard against falling into stereotypic behavior. Using the example of older widows, the stereotype of older women's being overly

garrulous became visible through comments that they made during interviews suggesting they have internalized this stereotype. The women worried that they might be "gabbing on" or "yakking" too much. The women also indicated a concern that they might be straying away from the topic at hand.

Older women have a spoiled identity. Being an old widow means having an identity that is doubly spoiled. Widows recognize that most people do not want to hear about their experiences. Their approach to the interview situation and their desire not to talk too much or too negatively communicated aspects of the women's experiences as widows. They told of the precarious nature of the women's identity: at any moment they might have been discredited as competent research participants.

Older widowers, however, present a contrasting approach to becoming marginalized as older men and as widowers. One can gain an understanding of their situation by looking at the way they negotiate their role as interview participants. Van den Hoonaard studied the experiences of widowers over 60, most of whom were Canadian. Older men, especially widowers, in the interview situation worked very hard to present themselves as real, masculine men. They were reacting to a precariousness in their identities as men by using impression management to reinforce their masculinity.

The widowers' task was a difficult one, for there is no available, familiar image of being an old man and a widower that men can adopt in their presentation of self and still portray themselves as masculine. They used the symbols and practices borrowed from a repertoire of dominant masculinity they had learned in their youth. Analyzing the interactional strategies the widowers used as data makes visible the marginal, untenable position of old men who are subject to ageism and have no model of old masculinity on which to depend. The situation elicited a particularly forceful effort on the part of the participants to establish themselves as real men through taking charge of the interview by interrupting the female interviewer, using diminutive language to refer to women, lecturing the researcher about a variety of topics including the essential differences between women and men and older women's unattractiveness, and emphasizing their heterosexuality by referring to themselves as bachelors.

Some widowers used strong, masculine language and profanity that is not usually used by women of their generation or in the presence of women by men of their generation. They expressed their marginalization through an amplified demonstration of hegemonic masculinity.

Another example of an interview strategy that reflects marginal status comes from Deborah K. and

Will C. van den Hoonaard's ongoing interview study of non-European immigrants to the Maritime provinces of Canada. A very homogeneous population originating primarily from the United Kingdom and France characterizes this region. In the previous two examples, the marginalized groups included people who had previously been members of more dominant groups; that is, younger married women and men. In this case, the participants were members of a persecuted religious minority (i.e., Baha'is) who had come to Canada as refugees.

Unlike the participants in the first two studies, members of this group had occupied a marginal position all of their lives. Thus, they had not experienced the social process of becoming marginalized. Although the members of this group were socially marginal in their communities because they were both a religious and visible minority, they were in a more secure position than they had been in the past. Participants in this study were appreciative of the host community and reluctant to appear to be ungrateful for the improvements in their lives and aspirations. They expressed their marginality through describing examples of their overcoming prejudice rather than through complaining of their marginal status. For example, one woman spoke with pride about her solution to her neighbors' fears that she might be a terrorist by inviting that neighbor for a tour of her home.

These three examples viewed together demonstrate that members of marginal groups communicate levels of discomfort with their role in research that reflect their marginal social status. The ways the participants communicate and manage their discomfort can reveal a lot about being members of those groups and the social meaning of their status as members of marginalized groups.

The social process of interaction during interviews, when used as data, can contribute to an understanding of the way people, particularly those in marginalized positions, experience their everyday lives. Researchers can learn much by problematizing the interaction that takes place during interviews rather than taking it for granted or seeing it merely as a problem of methodology.

Deborah K. van den Hoonaard

See also Action Research; Feminist Research; Hegemony; Marginalized Populations; Multicultural Research

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MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

Marginalized populations are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized populations include, but are by no means limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status. To what extent such populations are marginalized, however, is context specific and reliant on the cultural organization of the social site in question.

Acknowledging marginalized populations in research necessarily involves acknowledging unequal power relationships between groups within society. These power imbalances occur either within the research process or within society more broadly to shape the way research is conducted, interpreted, and acted upon. It is argued that, given the dominant voices that underpin quantitative research, research that aims to emancipate marginalized populations must be qualitative in nature. This belief is suggested, as qualitative research aims to "give voice" to participants and allow them to tell their stories. However, participants in qualitative research often remain as participants and are sought out by the researcher (rather than seeking out the researcher) to participate in the researcher's (rather than their own) agenda. As such, the research process remains deeply political, as researchers and participants may not share a common power base and may instead come at the issue from different perspectives. New approaches, however, challenge traditional demarcations between researcher and participants and provide new ways to both engage marginalized populations in research and use research to challenge marginalization in society.

Participatory research methods provide ways for both researchers and participants to identify research topics, gather evidence to illustrate these, and disseminate findings. As such, participatory research provides a framework for reflexivity during the research process to identify issues such as voice, representation,

vulnerability, and control. Often participatory projects also contain an action component where participants take an active role in deciding how the results are used to their own, and the researcher's, advantage.

Critical research methods provide another avenue through which unequal power relationships can be documented and challenged. Although some critical approaches are also participatory, often they assume more traditional researcher and participant roles and instead focus on exposing the underlying differentiations between groups and the social functions they perform. The advantages and disadvantages of these differentiations and the power hierarchies used to enforce them are scrutinized with the purpose of highlighting inequities and championing the cause of marginalized groups.

In conclusion, marginalized populations have come to be a focus of qualitative research, particularly for those examining oppressive social structures, such as critical researchers. Researchers working with marginalized populations should be acutely aware of the political nature of their research and seek to minimize the power differentials. Action and participatory research methods have been identified as offering the most promise to dissolve traditional research hierarchies.

Kay E. Cook

See also Critical Action Research; Critical Ethnography; Critical Research; Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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MARKET RESEARCH

Traditionally, market research has been understood as the process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data about a particular market—and the products,

brands, or services within that market—to help organizations make better business decisions. Finding out what the customer (current, past, or potential) wants lies at the heart of market research. Often organizations think, or assume, that they know what their customers need and want and how their products and services are perceived. Market research can deepen this understanding and can also raise questions about the assumptions that organizations make about their customers. It provides a dispassionate and structured perspective that enables organizations to better understand their customers and, as a result, to develop products and services that more closely match their needs. Data obtained from market research is fed into a broad pool of information, such as sales and economic data, trends, and predictions, which are gathered from a variety of sources. This information pool is used by marketers or strategists within the organization to help develop corporate strategy and consumer communications.

However, over recent decades, the role of market research has broadened, and it has moved away from a purely data-gathering function. Currently, market research is often used to help identify potential opportunities for the future. Instead of data, market researchers are increasingly expected to help develop ideas and concepts that are an extension of the data and that help clients to develop their markets. Many market researchers and clients view research as a creative process, which is useful when developing new products, services, brands, or advertising. It can also be used to help define organizational strategy. Although the core qualitative skills of moderating, analysis, conceptual thinking, and presentation are just as relevant from this creative perspective, they are applied to different methodologies, such as brainstorming, creative thinking sessions, idea generation, and evaluation. Sometimes this approach is called *marketing research* to differentiate it from *market research*.

Adopting this broader definition, marketing research is seen as a process of helping clients (whether commercial or noncommercial organizations) to better understand their target audiences; to help create, develop, and fine-tune their products or services; and to more precisely tailor their communications for this target audience. Consumers are involved as active participants in this process rather than as sources of information. They work with the researcher to develop ideas or help shape the ideas developed by the client. At the same time, research has broadened its scope—for example, it may involve

input to organizational restructuring, employee communications, and external communications as well as specific products, brands, and services. There is a strong consultancy component that is implicit in this way of understanding market research.

However, there are researchers who would regard these areas as outside the remit of market research. These researchers feel that the role of market research should predominantly remain within the area of data gathering to preserve its authority by providing objective and scientifically based input. This is a time of change for the market research industry, and it is therefore difficult to clearly define the borders of market research.

To a large extent, these two different perspectives reflect philosophical directions in society as a whole. Traditional market research has grown out of a scientific model. Marketing research, which is more concerned with usefulness than scientific rigor, has grown out of social constructionism and postmodernism, with their emphases on context, interpretation, and the speed of change and innovation. Qualitative market research in particular often adopts a social constructionist perspective and has its theoretical basis in phenomenology and ethnomethodology. These perspectives explore how the social world is constructed by people rather than by assuming that social relations are given.

Market Research Within the Broader Field of Research

Market research needs to be differentiated from the broader area of research. There are large areas of research, mostly in the academic field, that bear little relationship to market research. Market research implies research that is conducted as a commercial activity by specialist market research practitioners. However, this definition does not necessarily mean that the research is carried out solely for commercial organizations. Although market research techniques were developed largely to cater to commercial-sector needs, they have spread into almost all areas of contemporary life. Commercial research now includes research conducted by professional researchers for noncommercial or not-for-profit organizations; for example, central government, charities, broadcasters, educational, and health services. It is also conducted within organizations, helping to shape corporate change and employee communications, and it is carried out to examine the interaction between staff and customers, with a view to improving staff–customer

relations. It has been carried out among almost all occupations, among children, and among different ethnic groups, nationally and internationally.

It is also important to note that the focus in market research is quite different than that of academic research. The value of commercial market research rests largely on the usefulness of the findings themselves—rather than the methodological approach. By contrast, in academic research, the methodological and theoretical knowledge gained through the study is regarded as at least as important as the findings. One consequence of this difference in emphasis, which is discussed above, is that commercial researchers have developed approaches that go beyond research into the area of idea generation, creativity, and consultancy to better meet the needs of their clients. Commercial research also differs from academic research in terms of project size and time scale. A commercial project may be quite small-scale and completed in a month or two—and researchers may be involved in 10 or more diverse projects over the course of a year. An academic study is more likely to be extensive in scope and to take much longer than an equivalent commercial study.

What Do Market Researchers Do?

Essentially, a market research project, in very simplified form, involves the following elements:

- An organization (the client) identifies a need for information about an external group, such as its current and potential customers or users of a particular product or service. The client believes that this information can be gained by interviewing and/or observational, ethnographic, or other participant data-gathering methods.
- A researcher or team of researchers, usually specialists from an outside research agency, is invited in to discuss the issues or problems with the client team at a briefing meeting. The project will be discussed and the research objectives will be refined. A project design will then be decided. This design includes details of the basis on which research participants are selected (the research sample).
- In interview-based research (the dominant methodology in commercial research), the research agency will arrange for the appropriate research participants to be recruited. In observational or other field methods, the researcher will engage in detailed observation of people or situations or ask research

participants to carry out specified data-gathering tasks, as agreed on with the client. These tasks may include unstructured interviews. These activities are known as fieldwork.

- Often, in interview-based work, researchers will use a topic guide, which outlines the key areas that need to be covered in the research. However, this guide is an aide-memoire, not a questionnaire. The researcher will amend and refine their inquiry as the research process develops. The aim is to elicit useful and relevant information, not to produce answers to pre-prepared questions.
- The material that is produced from the research—audiorecordings, videos, notes, drawings, and so on—is then analyzed and interpreted. This process involves intensive immersion in the data to draw out overall meaning and highlight its relevance to the concerns of the client.
- The researcher then presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the client in a presentation or debrief and sometimes followed by a written report.
- The project may be followed up with workshops within the organization. The purpose of the workshops is to disseminate the findings and encourage different interest groups to draw out the implications of the research for their own work.

Market Research Methodologies

There is a host of different market research methodologies, although all of these are rooted in either a quantitative or qualitative approach, as in academic research. Quantitative research is concerned with numbers: the proportion of people who do, say, think, and behave in a particular way—the classic survey research. Qualitative research is concerned to know not only what people do, but also why they do it; not what they want, but why they want it. In this sense, it is the “softer” side of research. Although research projects may be complex, with mixed or hybrid methodologies, they are usually able to classify the various elements of a market research study as either qualitative or quantitative in focus. As qualitative and quantitative methodologies are discussed in detail elsewhere, this section will outline the ways in which market research methodologies differ from academic approaches.

In the past, qualitative and quantitative market research were treated as more or less separate entities. Qualitative research could either be employed as an initial research stage, followed up by quantification, or

the two approaches were used separately, depending on the nature of the research problem. Increasingly, qualitative and quantitative approaches have come together, with the realization that they offer different perspectives rather than being opposing approaches. As a result, mixed methodologies are now common.

This mix is part of a general broadening of approaches, which has been particularly marked in qualitative methodologies. Until the past few years, qualitative market research was largely synonymous with focus groups and in-depth interviews and did not have the breadth and methodological focus of academic research. This tendency was driven largely by time pressures—groups are fairly quick to set up, analysis can be carried out fairly quickly by the researchers involved, and groups are easy and convenient for clients to view. However, this emphasis on group work is changing for a number of reasons; for one, it is a result of more marketing-literate consumers due to client demands to experience the consumer firsthand and because of concerns about the artificiality of the interview situation.

Within market research, and particularly within quantitative research, new technologies are having a growing impact. For a start, a whole new field of research topics has been created around internet usage. However, technology has also had a wide impact on methodologies. Online interviewing and focus groups, blogs, self-completion questionnaires online, and so on are changing the relationship between the customer, organization, and, often, the research agency. It is too early to gauge the effects of these changes on the market research industry.

Market research is a fast-moving industry and has become fragmented, with different sectors catering to different client needs. This fragmentation is likely to continue in the future as the market research sector continues to grow and diversify. As Philly Desai points out, we live in a time of rapid social change and declining trust in authority. This cultural change has created challenges for research, which has traditionally relied on relatively fixed categories of identity that are assumed to remain stable over time. From a postmodern perspective, this can no longer be assumed. Market research is going through a process of reassessment in order to deal with these changes.

Sheila Keegan

See also Association for Qualitative Research (AQR); Ethnomethodology; Phenomenology; Positivism; Postmodernism; *Qualitative Research* (Journal); Quantitative Research; Social Constructionism

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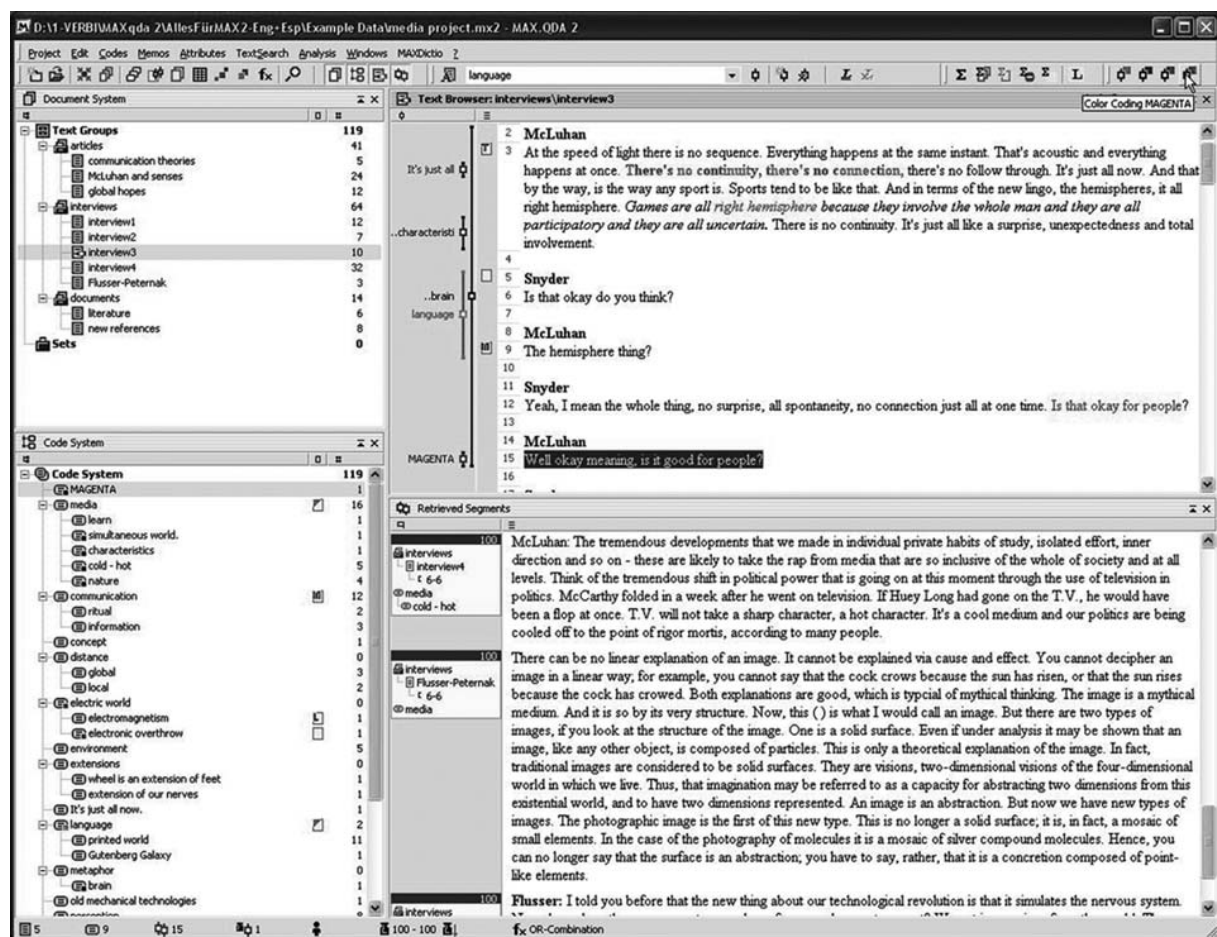
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MAXIMUM VARIATION SAMPLING

See PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

MAXQDA (SOFTWARE)

MAXqda is a computer-assisted data analysis software program, which originates from a program called MAX that was developed in the mid-1980s. This entry relates to MAXqda2, released in 2004. MAXqda is user-friendly with many quick-access buttons that facilitate the



MAXqda Windows Screen View

Source: Copyright MAXqda; used by permission.

coding and analysis process. The program only handles text files in rich text format, but these may contain graphics. Text cut from documents or websites can be pasted to create new documents. MAXqda supports and facilitates the development of a hierarchical code system, which may be useful for grounded theory analysis. Alternatively, all codes can be entered as first-level codes to avoid a code hierarchy.

The coding process in MAXqda is quick and flexible. Once a segment is selected, coding can be done by selecting and clicking a code or by dragging the segment to the code. Once a code is selected, it can be attached to successive segments with a single click. In vivo coding can be used to create codes from words in the text. There is also an undo function for removing assigned codes. In MAXqda, the user-interface default setting integrates four viewers: documents, codes, text, and retrieved segments in a single screen; this ability keeps the researcher close to the data. Codes are displayed in the margin of the Text Browser in different colors that can be chosen by the researcher. The coded transcript can be printed.

MAXqda enables relatively sophisticated manipulation and analysis of codes. Complex code combinations, using Boolean logic and user-defined proximity relationships, can be identified and retrieved. Analysis of code co-occurrence is facilitated by the Code Relation Browser, which graphically depicts the code coincidence, while the Code Matrix Browser shows the occurrence of codes or selected codes by source. These tools are quickly accessible as buttons on the user interface. Autocoding is possible, although the size of the autocoded segment is somewhat less flexible than in some packages.

An unusual feature is the inclusion of a code-weighting facility. Weights from 1–100 are user-defined and can be used to indicate the degree to which a code is relevant. The weighting factor can be used as a filter when retrieving segments and adds a degree of flexibility compared to a more conventional categorical coding system. There are two supplementary programs available: MAXdictio, which provides word-frequency counts for quantitative content analysis, and MAXmaps, a mapping tool. MAXqda 2007 has many new features, increasing flexibility and visualization of codes and code relationships.

Ruth Rettie

See also Codes and Coding; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis

Websites

CAQDAS Networking Project:

<http://caqdas.soc.surrey.ac.uk/index.htm>

Online QDA: <http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk>

MAXqda: <http://www.MAXqda.com>

MEANING

The word *meaning* denotes an association between at least two semiotic elements: (1) something that expresses or represents something else, and (2) something that is expressed or represented. Following Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralist semioticians call (1) above a *signifier*, and (2) a *signified*, and their unity a *sign*. Within structuralist perspectives, meaning is often seen as arbitrary. For example, although it is known that the word *dog* refers to quadrupeds of the canine family whereas the word *cat* refers to their feline counterparts, any other words or combinations of sounds—such as *chien* and *chat* in the French language—can function equally well as long as their use becomes commonly shared. Although most signifiers stand in arbitrary relationships with their signifieds, structuralist theories posit that meanings are generated by complex systems of signification based on formal and abstract rules. These rules give birth to meaning by creating structures of opposition. Thus, for example, one understands the meaning of the word *white* in association with, and in opposition to, the meaning of the word *black*. Theoretical perspectives derived from structuralist semiotics, such as the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the social theory of Louis Althusser, and the psychology of Jacques Lacan, tend to view meaning as relatively stable across time, relatively fixed in the deep structures of language and culture, and relatively independent of individual instances of situated speech.

Even though structuralist theories of meaning have been dominant in the social and cultural sciences, over the past 3 decades their hegemony has been considerably weakened by the advent of post-structuralism (which emphasizes polysemy—or the multiplicity of meaning—and the power of interpretation) and the renewed interest in pragmatism. Together with pragmatism and some versions of post-structuralism (like social semiotics and the cultural theory of Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin), phenomenological, hermeneutic, pragmatist, and

constructionist perspectives tend to differ from structural theories of meaning in important ways. From within these perspectives, following the work of semioticians like Charles Sanders Peirce, one can understand meaning to be emerging from a triadic relation between an object, a sign vehicle that expresses that object, and the sense that someone makes of this association. Because interpretation is always situated in contexts defined by historical, ideological, economic, spatial, and technological boundaries as well as embodied in social beings, the concept of meaning here takes on more dynamic features. For example, within pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, meaning lies in the response to an act; within phenomenology, meaning originates in the lived experience of being in the world; and within hermeneutic perspectives, meaning arises from awareness of contexts and the dialectical relationships between contexts and texts. Supporters of these perspectives—despite their subtle differences in emphasis—tend to agree that meaning is actively constructed and renegotiated by social agents interacting with one another. Meaning is thus relative, open to interpretive freedom, and transformation; meaning varies across contexts, groups, and instances of speech.

Phillip Vannini

See also Hermeneutics; Semiotics

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MEMBER CHECK

The member check (also referred to as member or respondent validation) is a strategy most often used to optimize the validity of qualitative research findings. Research participants are asked to evaluate one or more of the following: whether (a) researchers accurately rendered their experiences that were the target of study, in the service of what Joseph Maxwell described as *descriptive validity*; (b) researchers fully

captured the meaning those experiences had for them, in the service of what Maxwell called *interpretive validity*; or whether (c) researchers' final interpretive (e.g., ethnographic, phenomenological) accounts of those experiences do justice to them, in the service of what Maxwell called *theoretical validity*. Here the member check constitutes what Jeasik Cho and Allen Trent described as a transaction between researchers and participants whereby data are played back to participants to ensure that researchers get it right: that their understandings correspond with those of the participants from whom those data were derived. Members' evaluations are the gold standard against which researchers' analytic and interpretive efforts are judged.

When conceived as an instrument of validation, member checking may be embedded in primary data collection procedures as, for example, when researchers ask participants to elaborate on or clarify what they have said in interviews or done in observed scenes or when researchers sum up what they have heard at the end of an interview or seen following an observation session and then ask participants to comment on the accuracy of these summaries. Member checking here is an ongoing process that is integral to data collection, as opposed to a separate procedure. Member checking can also be a separate event occurring some time after primary data collection has been completed with each individual participant, as soon as some analysis has been completed of that participant's data, or after all data have been collected and partly or fully analyzed in a study. Member checking may be conducted with all of the participants in a study or with a purposefully selected sample of them.

The Debate Over Member Checking

Member checking is a controversial practice as it embodies what is commonly referred to as "the crisis of representation," or the problem of how faithfully to render the lives of others. Member checking raises a host of epistemological and ethical questions, most notably: What data or interpretations are research participants in a position to validate? What is the right course of action should participants decide researchers got it wrong? Does a member's refusal to validate a researcher's interpretation invalidate it? Is member checking appropriately conceived as a validation enterprise at all?

Although participants are certainly experts regarding their own lives, they may not be able to authorize summaries and interpretations of data that encompass other people's lives. If these interpretations are in the form of theories, phenomenological descriptions, or other renderings intended for audiences of qualitative researchers, they may be totally inaccessible to participants. Whether participants can certify the "truth" of a text depends on what text they are shown. Participants may not necessarily be in a position even to verify data-near texts, such as transcripts or descriptive fieldnotes, derived from their own lives. Participants may have forgotten what they once said or did, regret having said or done it, and therefore see the member checking process as a way to erase the past. Seeing transcripts of what they said in the past may engender discomfort in participants. Yet, participants may also validate researchers' interpretations out of a desire not to offend researchers or be completely uninterested in such an exercise. Moreover, narrative accounts are themselves inherently revisionist as every telling of an experience leads to a retelling of it. Accordingly, participants' accounts of an event offered at different times, and even within the same interview session, may be inconsistent as they are constantly being revised in the very act of telling. These are only some of the reasons scholars have increasingly proposed that member checking is less about optimizing validity and more about an opportunity for further reflecting on members' own experiences and for self-transformation.

The member check is located in the highly contested terrain between voice and discourse, or between interpretive and theoretical validity. A prime directive in qualitative research is to "give voice to the voiceless," yet participants' voices are muted when researchers represent their lives in ways they had not anticipated or that they find offensive. Whenever members feel that researchers have misunderstood them, researchers are faced with the serious issue of narrative ownership as they must decide, for example, whether members' refusal to authorize an interpretation means that researchers must abandon it and whether this abandonment serves the interests of either knowledge development or social advocacy.

The member check requires researchers to clarify its purpose and how it will be accomplished. Researchers must decide exactly what will be checked by whom, and what influence the outcome of this

process will have on the findings of the study. The inherently narrative nature of human beings and social nature of the research enterprise make the member check a practice to be used with caution, discernment, and regard for both getting it right and doing the right thing.

Margarete Sandelowski

See also Authority; Ethics; Narrative Inquiry; Validity; Voice

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIZATION DEVICE ANALYSIS (MCDA)

Membership categorization device analysis (MCDA) is a qualitative methodology that aims to describe the processes involved in the way members of society invoke and use categories to organize and understand the social world. MCDA was developed by Harvey Sacks alongside his work on conversation analysis. MCDA is part of the ethnomethodological tradition where the data are treated as the topic of analysis. Attention is paid to describing the underlying structures and procedures employed to accomplish the activities under study.

Membership categorization is a fundamental part of social activity and as such is also a moral activity. It is used to attribute social identities and attain social order. Investigating members' use of categories and devices in any setting (e.g., news story, everyday conversation, interview account) is a means of showing how identities, social relationships, and institutional phenomena are produced.

If one wants to describe members' activities and the way one produces and organizes them, one needs to establish how he or she chooses among the available category sets for grasping some event. MCDA does this by constructing the machinery that would produce the actual occurrences that are part of social life. Take as an example a simple sentence, "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up." This sentence is the focus of a seminal paper by Sacks in which he describes the basis of MCDA. One can begin to examine what it means and, importantly, the rules that underpin this understanding. The mother picking up the baby is heard to be the mother of the child. The mother and child are recognized as a pair of related categories. This meaning is evident as it is a standard type of pairing. The fact that the mother picks up the crying baby also infers that this activity is bound to her role as a mother. It is the responsibility of a mother of a child to attend to the child if he or she is crying. This inference exemplifies the way in which one attends in daily life to members' methods for producing a world that one recognizes as orderly and moral or as rule-governed.

When people do description, they use categories from a collection; for example, family (mother, father, children). This process is called a membership categorization device (MCD). A collection will contain at least one category that may be applied to a population containing at least one member. Using rules of application, the collection of membership categories provides for the pairing of at least one population member and one categorization device member. An MCD is then a collection plus rules of application. Sets of categories are inference rich in that they store a great deal of the knowledge that members have about their society. Members generate and use categories in their descriptions, such as in interview accounts or newspaper stories. Description is done through the selection of particular categories and the setting up of particular rules (social norms) regarding their use.

Categories can be related to each other; for example, as pairs that may be contained in a collection

containing laypeople. This collection will contain a set of rights and responsibilities concerning the activity of giving help (between laypersons). Another collection of categories may be set up composed of laypeople and professionals. These will be set up as two separate classes. The professional class is constructed by reference to special distributions of knowledge existing about how to deal with some trouble. An example of a professional class would be medical doctors. Accordingly, they have special rights for dealing with some trouble; for example, illness. In such a context, all those who are not professionals are laypeople. So, for example, analysis of patient interview accounts about the experience of health care may reveal how laypeople construct the respective roles and responsibilities of patients and doctors.

The Research Process

MCDA can be carried out on most types of discourse. The starting point for analysis is to treat the data as the topic of investigation. The next step is to become familiar with the data through reading and rereading and to identify central categories such as people and places. This step will enable the location of standard relational pairs such as doctors and patients or contrast pairs such as patients happy with their care and those who are not. These categories are sometimes explicit, or they may be implied through the activities happening in the discourse. The following stage is to describe the activities associated with each of the categories. What is inferred is important as well as what appears to be explicit. Reference to Sacks's work on the different types of rules used in membership categorization may be useful at this stage. At this point, one can look closely at the categories together with the work associated with them to describe the social actions that are implied. For example, in studying an interaction between a doctor and a patient, the responsibilities associated with the respective roles may become evident through the way patients describe their experience of consultations with doctors in qualitative interviews.

Value and Limitations of MCDA

MCDA research may be aimed at academic and applied audiences. Studies may focus on the specifics

of social interaction revealed in the analysis that will add to a particular body of academic knowledge; for example, studies of everyday conversation. Research may also be conducted to develop understandings of institutional phenomena, such as health care.

It is important to emphasize that MCDA is a methodology that entails a method, rather than a technique that can be applied atheoretically. It is therefore most appropriate to in-depth data analysis.

Moir J. Kelly

See also Conversation Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Ethnomethodology

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MEMOIRS

Memoirs, or life stories, are collections of significant or memorable events in one's life that are captured in narrative form. The researcher or author is the main character of a chronological or fragmented story that highlights significant or memorable events during the research or author's personal experience in the field. Memoirs are based on a compilation of information gathered during the process of discovery and the process of writing. These stories can be written from fieldnotes, journals, taped interviews, transcripts, and memory.

Memoirs hold collaborative potential as a research tool because they represent the researcher's knowledge and understanding of a particular subject matter; they can also be used as research material. Some researchers have relied on memoirs to serve as data for projects and opportunities to get an insider view of the field they are studying.

Writers make themselves vulnerable by reflecting on their experiences in the field, reflections that include uncomfortable situations and potential biases they may have had prior to the study, exposing themselves as a participant in their own research endeavor. The negotiation of the writer's positionality becomes a part of the story being told and details that would not be included in the final research report are detailed in the memoir of the research experience. Memoirs require authors to name their experiences, identify commonalities, and make personal judgments, giving the reader the insight of the researcher's point of view and the benefit of his or her experience. Memoirs reflect research scenarios, techniques, and potential outcomes that prepare researchers for the field experience and the postfield experience.

Memoirs require writers to have the capacity to write evocatively with amazing detail and description, merging the immediacy of their experience with the intellectual jargon of their field. As a research method and approach, memoir writing can be beneficial and therapeutic for the writer, but some of the limitations of the method include the focus on a single experience and interpretation of an experience that might lead to overgeneralization or dismissal of other experiences.

"I Offered My Heart": Excerpt From a Memoir

If and when I fall in love, she never promised it would last, only laughed at the possibility, pretending to know how pitiful and desperate I would become, how sprung and wide open I would be. My mother envisioned an attractive man with a ridiculous name. She warned me to guard my heart and not wear it on my sleeve. Importantly, I must learn how to dress for church, how to wear a slip, how to put on stockings. Defiantly, at eighteen I stopped wearing slips, and was undoubtedly labeled a hussy when a staring eye could detect my pantyline. My heart, because it didn't understand the logic of caution, was unguarded, unprotected from the honey smooth lines of a pretty man. Needy for the love and affection I could only get from a man, I offered my heart as a token of my affection, and usually had it returned, broken.

Source: Boylorn, R. (2003). *Finding voice: African American women in the new American South*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Another concern for memoir writers is that the story has the capacity to implicate identifiable characters in the life of the author. In order to protect the integrity and anonymity of characters, these stories occasionally include some fictional elements and pseudonyms.

Though the story focuses on a specific event or a turning point, it also tells the overall story of a life over time, including predictable everyday life occurrences. Memoirs are somewhat one-sided because even though they may consider and mention alternative perspectives, the voice, truth, and ideology of the author is privileged. Memoir-style writing is used in qualitative approaches such as autoethnography, reflexive ethnography, and narrative inquiry.

Robin M. Boylorn

See also Autobiography; Autoethnography; Creative Writing; Diaries and Journals; Everyday Life; First-Person Voice; Life Stories; Lived Experience; Reflexivity; Storytelling; Writing Process

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MEMOS AND MEMOING

Memoing is the act of recording reflective notes about what the researcher (fieldworker, data coder, and/or analyst) is learning from the data. Memos accumulate as written ideas or records about concepts and their relationships. They are notes by the researcher to herself or himself about some hypothesis regarding a category or property and especially relationships between categories. These memos add to the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research and provide a record of the meanings derived from the data. There are no rules pertaining to memoing; however, each memo should contain one idea and should be dated and referenced. Memos

evolve as the research proceeds and may differ substantially in style and manner.

Unfortunately, the human mind tends to forget much that has been experienced or observed at quite a rapid rate. When doing research, some method is needed to overcome this tendency, as recalling details is an extremely important contributor to the qualitative research process and its credibility. Credibility can be defined as the confidence that can be placed in both the data and the analysis. Credibility is synonymous with validity in quantitative research. One of the means to enhance credibility is to jot notes. As the researcher cannot rely on memorization, jotting notes adds to the defensibility of the results. However, the research setting does not always allow for jotting notes, and memoing can even compromise the credibility in certain situations, in which case mental notes must be made. Unfortunately, these electrical traces in the brain have an even higher rate of decay. By jotting down cursory phrases, quotes, key words, and the like, during inconspicuous moments, the researcher can jog her or his memory when comprehensive fieldnotes are later compiled.

Another important use of memoing is for qualitative data analysis purposes, such as in ethnography and grounded theory. Ethnography is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the discovery and/or comprehensive description of the culture of a group of people. Grounded theory is another form of qualitative research that aims at generating and developing a theory from data that are systematically gathered and analyzed. In both ethnography and grounded theory, data analysis happens at two levels: textual and conceptual. The first entails reading the complete corpus of field data and memoing throughout. Barney Glaser has emphasized that memoing is prioritized, or stated differently, when an idea occurs and the researcher pauses and records it. This process is often referred to as *open-ended coding*. It is as if the researcher must build a puzzle without a picture and starts sorting through the pieces of data. As the researcher forms ideas, they are written down as memos. Theoretical memoing is about attempts to derive meaning from the data. Methodological or operational memoing comprises reminders, instructions, or critiques that the researcher writes to herself or himself as the analysis unfolds. The conceptual level entails theorizing about concepts, categories, properties, and themes and the relationships between these. This theorizing is often referred to as *axial coding*, and integrative memos are used. The researcher begins to fit the

pieces of the puzzle together. Sometimes a piece that initially appeared to fit is discovered not to fit. As the researcher becomes more theoretically sensitive, the fit between conceptual pointers and categories becomes easier. It is quite feasible that initial memos later appear rather naive and erroneous as the researcher gains a better understanding and interpretation. However, the two levels mentioned are never clearly demarcated. The analysis is mostly simultaneous or parallel and often entails recurring phases of data collection, coding, memoing, and sorting. Memos help the researcher to achieve an analytical distance from the raw data and force the researcher to conceptualize.

Memoing involves total creative freedom. There are no rules regarding writing, grammar, or style. A memo is purely an instrument to capture the outflow of ideas, insights, and observations. When the researcher writes the thoughts down, they become concrete, and they are recorded. There are no wrong or poorly written memos. Each researcher develops her or his own style. Memos evolve and increase in complexity, density, clarity, and accuracy as the data analysis progresses. Memos written later may negate, amend, extend, and/or clarify earlier written ones. Memos keep the researcher embedded in the empirical reality and contribute to the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Trustworthiness is synonymous with reliability in quantitative research. For this reason, regardless of time constraints, memoing should never be regarded as superfluous. It is a very important element of qualitative data analysis.

There are a few hints or technical features for good memoing. It is not advisable to write in the margins of transcripts or fieldnotes because initial notes might call for review and might result in confusion. Memos should always be dated and referenced with regard to what they refer to. Memos should contain a heading and should be cross-referenced. A list of emerging codes should be kept handy to avoid duplications. Memos are never about people, but rather about conceptual ideas derived from incidents. Researchers should never be hesitant to modify existing memos. Restrict each memo to one idea. If two ideas are together on one card, this complicates the sorting later.

Diagrams are graphic memos and play a very important conceptual role. Diagrams are visual devices that depict something. They illustrate the density and complexity of the qualitative analysis. A diagram helps the researcher discover gaps and flaws in the relationships of categories and of the logic. Often diagrams are preceded

by listings, especially early in the analysis process. These listings provide a foundation for diagrams.

There are several versions of personal computer software packages available for qualitative data analysis that lend themselves to memoing. There are also blogs on the internet that the inexperienced user may access for tips and ideas regarding the use of such software. Some programs further enable the researcher to graphically display and examine both hierarchical and relational connections among codes.

Thomas Groenewald

See also ATLAS.ti (Software); Data Collection; Fieldnotes; Theoretical Memoing; Writing Process

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META-ANALYSIS

Meta-analysis is generally defined as the analysis of analyses. The term generally is associated with quantitative methodologies, but it does have qualitative analogs. This technique is distinctly different from secondary analyses where the original data from a study are reanalyzed.

Meta-analyses can be separated into two categories: integrative and interpretive studies. Integrative studies focus on summarizing the data and are usually

quantitative in nature. Interpretive studies focuses on developing concepts and operationalizing concepts a priori. Interpretive analysis can be carried out using quantitative and qualitative approaches, does not have a priori concepts to test, and leads to the development of new interpretations from the analysis of multiple field studies. The goal is not to aggregate the data (e.g., determining and overall effect size) but to reinterpret.

Quantitative meta-analysis reviews statistically a collection of analyses from related individual studies in order to provide a summarization or integration of the results. The core of this review is the calculation of an effect size. The effect size can be based on the difference between two groups divided by their pooled standard deviation or a correlation between two variables. Gene Glass's work is the point where quantitative meta-analysis, in its current form, became a popular integrative methodology, but he was not the first to use quantitative techniques to integrate research observations.

Qualitative meta-analysis also involves the synthesis of evidence from primary studies, but there are numerous forms of synthesis with different goals, though most are interpretive techniques. Meta-ethnography, meta-study, realist synthesis narrative summary, thematic analysis, and cross-case analysis are some examples.

Meta-ethnography is comprised of three techniques for synthesizing qualitative studies: reciprocal translation analysis, which is the identification of key metaphors or themes in studies; refutational synthesis, where key metaphors or themes are identified and contradictions between studies examined; and lines of argument synthesis, where a general interpretation is developed based on the observations in the separate studies.

Meta-theory, part of the meta-study group of techniques, along with meta-method and meta-data, is a critical analysis of specific theoretical frameworks. Meta-method is an analysis of the methodologies utilized and how the methodologies affect specific research areas. Meta-data is a synthesis of data presented in articles and reports.

Realist synthesis is a theory-driven technique for synthesizing evidence. The technique uses a wide variety and types of data in a support or refutation model of a specific theory. Narrative summary allows for the selection and description of primary studies along with interpretation. Mathew Miles and A. M. Huberman provide systematic multiple strategies for

intercase synthesis such as meta-matrices for clustering and separating data.

James B. Schreiber

See also Data; Meta-Ethnography; Meta-Narrative

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META-ETHNOGRAPHY

When several studies deal with the same topic, the researcher may want to analyze the relationship between them by carrying out a research synthesis. Meta-ethnography is an approach to research synthesis that is especially appropriate for qualitative studies. It is important to understand its history as a genre of research synthesis, how meta-ethnography maintains the fundamental assumptions of qualitative research, the types of syntheses possible, and what other qualitative approaches have been developed from meta-ethnography.

The growth of research in education and social and behavioral sciences in the 1960s and 1970s made research synthesis a key topic in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This interest was sparked by a range of developments including the reemergence of qualitative research methods, expansion of research funding, and a shift in universities to emphasize scholarship. As the volume of studies expanded, methodologies for synthesizing this research also developed. On the quantitative side, meta-analysis was developed. On the qualitative side, meta-ethnography was developed to avoid what was seen as the tendency of quantitative studies to simply add or aggregate results. In anthropology, there has been an ethnology tradition, but it

was linked to a theoretical school that was in decline because of its inability to explain conflict. As the number of qualitative studies increased, the pressure was to say what this burgeoning scholarship was yielding.

George Noblit and Dwight Hare in their 1988 book, *Meta-Ethnography: Synthesizing Qualitative Studies*, argued for an approach that focused on engaging the theoretical or interpretative schemes each study employed. To avoid simple aggregation, they used a translation theory of explanation in which the metaphors or themes of each study would be translated into the terms of the other studies. The process then involved translating the set of metaphors or themes from each study into each other. Three types of synthesis were identified. A reciprocal translation is used when the studies seem to be addressing similar ideas. The synthesis task then is to either decide which set of metaphors can subsume other sets or develop a new set of metaphors that can account for all the studies involved. A refutational synthesis is appropriate when studies disagree on key points, and the synthesis task becomes specifying the nature of the refutation and its salience. A line of argument synthesis is when studies are not fully commensurate but speak to different aspects of a larger phenomenon. The synthesis task is to specify the larger phenomenon and how the various studies can be taken as a line of argument about the nature of the larger phenomena.

Meta-ethnography has led to a family of similar techniques including meta-study and meta-synthesis as well as grounded theory approaches. Each of these approaches has developed in response to a particular set of interests and all remain important. Meta-ethnography is being used in fields such as medicine, medical sociology, nursing, and education. This has been in part spawned by interests in evidence-based practice. However, this usage is controversial because it requires a theory of the relation of research to practice that is unspecified. Meta-ethnography has also been used to advance theory. Yet theory is used in different ways in different qualitative approaches, and the ramifications of this usage needs to be explored. Finally, history needs to be conceptualized as meta-ethnography is used to speak about studies over time.

George W. Noblit

See also Meta-Analysis; Meta-Narrative; Meta-Synthesis

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META-NARRATIVE

Meta-narrative can be understood in two ways: (1) as a narrative *about* narrative or (2) as a narrative *above* narrative. Both understandings are discussed in this entry.

A narrative is a story that describes a particular sequence of events in the context of particular characters. The content and structure of narratives are deliberately (although sometimes unconsciously) selected to support a particular point of view and to encourage a particular interpretation or understanding. The analysis of narrative—that is, the narratives constructed in the course of thinking about narrative—creates meta-narratives. Thus, for example, when Robert McNamara reconsidered the Vietnam War in his book *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy*, he created a meta-narrative about the Vietnam War. When Errol Morse made the film *Fog of War* about McNamara's book, he created a further meta-narrative on both the war and McNamara's views of it. Similarly, researchers who use narrative analysis to study family caregiving or teaching may construct meta-narratives in the course of their analyses.

Postmodern thinkers have identified meta-narratives that function not only as explanations but also as mechanisms of social control. These meta-narratives, which may include classic texts (e.g., the Bible or *The Little Red Book of Mao Zedong*), archetypal accounts (e.g., stories of scientific discovery or “rags to riches” biographies), or grand, cultural epics (e.g., *The Ring of the Niebelungen* or Gilgamesh) form the basis for the totality of a society's beliefs. Meta-narratives, according to postmodern thought, function in society as universal and absolute truth. Jean-François Lyotard, who developed the concept of grand or master narratives, asserted that the most pervasive of all stories was the emancipation narrative, which asserted that the whole of history makes sense and furthermore is a history of progress toward some greater good. Postmodernists reject meta-narratives and, in particular, the notion of any universal, overriding, decontextualized truth, positing that such

beliefs should be replaced by more local, contextual, and limited accounts of society and the world.

Lyotard's concept of the emancipation narrative can be seen in the view of normal science described by Thomas Kuhn as a paradigm, and some scholars equate meta-narratives with paradigms. As such, meta-narratives provide an organizing framework for knowledge and, through this mechanism, distinguish between knowledge that is legitimate and knowledge that is unjustified. People may also organize their experiences according to a meta-narrative. For example, the meta-narrative of psychoanalysis structures an individual's childhood memories differently from the meta-narrative of symbolic interactionism.

Lioness Ayres

See also Narrative Analysis; Narrative Inquiry; Narrative Texts; Postcolonialism; Postmodernism

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METAPHOR

In its most basic form, metaphor is a rhetorical trope, or figure of speech. As a trope, it is keenly related to two other tropes—simile and synecdoche. In the case of synecdoche, an entity is equated with one of its most important parts. For instance, a *car* might be described as one's *wheels*. With simile, one object is described as being like another (usually unrelated) object. For example, one could say that a *rose* is like a *lover's tears*.

Metaphor is a very powerful trope. In the case of metaphor, one goes beyond the mere comparisons of simile and actually equates two objects that are on the surface not related. By doing so, one often forces the reader to consider some aspect of the main object that might not come to awareness without this powerful

equating process. Here is an example—my *dog* is my *lighthouse*. In literal terms, this sentence is simply false and most likely meaningless. In metaphorical terms, it highlights the role of the author's dog as a beacon of stability, safety, and protection.

Over the years, awareness of metaphor has extended well beyond its basic role as a figure of speech. In particular, there has been a long and complex conversation on the role of metaphor in meaning. For analytic philosophy, metaphor was a difficult puzzle to solve; the insistence of the role of denotation and other literal modes in meaning made such figurative approaches as metaphor problematic.

Figurative approaches to meaning in general, and metaphors in particular, have played an important role in qualitative research, both in terms of writing up results and in conceptualizing findings. First, qualitative researchers need to be sensitive to the metaphors their informants use in their field studies. These metaphors are often important clues into the interior lives and meaning patterns of these informants. Second, metaphors are often encoded in the ordinary ways of looking at things. These are called *dead metaphors*. Common dead metaphors include *table legs* and *eyes of needles*. Reflecting on dead metaphors, especially those from different cultures, often reveals deep-seated differences among cultures. Finally, metaphors are powerful writing tools in that they allow one to foreground important findings in a vivid and economical fashion. The most extensive theoretical treatment on metaphor, and one that has extensive practical application to qualitative research, was conducted by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Lakoff and Johnson powerfully assert that all thought is metaphorical. These metaphorical dimensions can be orientational (good is up), structural (arguments are war), or ontological (mind is a machine). Identifying these sorts of hidden metaphors in ordinary discourse and conceptualization has extensive practical potential for qualitative theorists and researchers.

Finally, there is also a potentially fruitful interplay between qualitative research and semiotics in the area of metaphor. In particular, metaphors are clear examples of abductive reasoning and can therefore be systematically linked with other abductive endeavors dealing with the search for clues, patterns, omens, and hunches.

Gary Shank

See also Abduction; Meaning; Semiotics

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META-SYNTHESIS

Meta-synthesis refers to research approaches that integrate the collective products of extant bodies of qualitative research findings using systematic, formal processes for the purpose of generating overarching inductively derived claims about phenomena of interest. Where sizeable bodies of published qualitative work exist within a field of study, meta-synthesis serves as an inquiry approach with the potential of generating comprehensive and substantial claims beyond those that can be warranted on the basis of individual qualitative studies. Meta-synthesis has become particularly popular in academic fields in which public policy is driven by reliance upon evidence because it offers the appeal of rendering the kinds of insights that qualitative research typically yields into more conclusive forms of knowledge within that evidentiary context.

The Essence of Meta-Synthesis

Qualitative meta-synthesis differs from the conventional or critical integrative literature review in that the new conceptualizations it produces result from a systematic, structured, and auditable analysis and synthesis of the entire body of qualitatively derived knowledge within a field. The original studies constitute the data and, upon them, coherent procedures for generating the research question, selecting the sample selection, collecting and analyzing data, and coming to conclusions are applied. Unlike quantitative meta-analysis, which seeks simplification through aggregation, or qualitative secondary analysis, which seeks expansion and clarification, qualitative meta-synthesis demands exploitation of variations and complexities within the data set toward an integrative conclusion that extends beyond the scope of what would have been achievable within the temporal, spatial, or epistemological confines of individual studies or programs of research.

Although various approaches exist for summing up a collection of similar studies or contrasting findings derived from similar methodological approaches, meta-synthesis is distinct in explicitly acknowledging the objective of synthesizing new knowledge on the basis of products that are interpretive accounts of cases, events, or phenomena. Because the extant research may draw upon such diverse inductive approaches as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and interpretive description, meta-synthesis methods must account for both process and product before credible substantive claims can be made about what is known as an outcome of the systematic synthetic process.

Styles of Meta-Synthesis

Meta-Ethnography and Meta-Theorizing

Meta-ethnography, an early approach to meta-synthesis, reflects an attempt to push at the edges of conventional anthropological research so as to enlarge upon existing scholarly discourse without falling into the trap of mere aggregation of findings. It advances a series of theoretical steps by which findings of one study can be reinterpreted using the analytic schema of another such that some of the more pervasive puzzles of human phenomena might be more fully explored. Similar approaches have also been applied within sociology in which meta-theorizing has emerged as an effort to align divergent theoretical approaches toward increasingly coherent social theory.

Meta-Study

Drawing inspiration from the approaches devised for the purpose of meta-theorizing, meta-study involves three distinct analytic operations prior to synthesis of new knowledge. It requires a distinct critical analysis of (1) the theoretical biases and disciplinary assumptions upon which existing research products within a field have been developed, (2) the implications of the methodological approaches that have been taken toward understanding a particular phenomenon, and (3) an aggregative analysis of the nature and characteristics of the data sets upon which the extant findings have been generated. Deconstructing the existing knowledge by exposing and critically examining the foundations upon which it has been built, meta-study invites a synthetic integration within the context of self-conscious recognition of the limits of that understanding.

Formal Grounded Theory

Formal grounded theory builds upon the logic of grounded theory methodology and applies it to strategies by which researchers can integrate preconceived understandings of the field with the theories that emerge among and between scholars exploring basic social processes. It has been envisioned as a means by which original studies become the bricks within which larger and more coherent theoretical structures might eventually be built. In keeping with the traditions from which grounded theory methodology emerged, this approach relies upon constant comparative analysis among and between emerging theories about phenomena such that the variations permit an increasing strength to the theoretical logic that can be produced. Using formal grounded theory, scholars attempt to generate explanations that work “for now,” recognizing that, in the context of complex phenomena, new and increasingly elegant theories inevitably emerge. In this way, formal grounded theory holds the potential of representing a state of the science within a field of social theory.

Qualitative Meta-Synthesis

In addition to these specific methodological approaches, there has emerged a diverse body of literature within the applied health sciences on approaches to synthesizing bodies of qualitative research. Although initial attempts referenced aggregating qualitative findings or conducting qualitative meta-analysis, the fundamental problems associated with reliance upon cumulative approaches has yielded a common understanding that contextual considerations related to the production of original research must be accounted for if the synthetic product is to have any utilitarian value within the practice or policy-making world.

Qualitative meta-synthesis has, therefore, come to represent a research approach that forcefully addresses the conditions and approaches that went into the making of primary research findings. It increasingly relies upon communicable and systematic interpretive techniques that peel back the layers in how current knowledge has been constructed and attempt to rebuild increasingly credible understandings of the patterns and themes that can be detected within those aspects of human experience for which qualitative research holds particular promise. Where it meets its objective, it advances a synthesis that thoughtfully accounts for all

of the ingredient parts that went into the production of the new coherent whole.

Procedural Basics of Meta-Synthesis

Most scholars writing about qualitative meta-synthesis caution that it is not an appropriate method for the neophyte researcher. Perhaps because the collection and construction of data in many qualitative studies is highly time-intensive, inexperienced or impatient researchers may be initially attracted to the idea of engaging in qualitative analysis without having to deal with the complexities of exhaustive primary field research. However, where such attempts have been made, they tend to appropriate the label of qualitative meta-synthesis for what is essentially a critical literature review, and often on the basis of a highly circumscribed set of original papers.

Because the potential to re-create original biases is accentuated if one does not detect and understand them, qualitative meta-synthesis requires large-scale and highly systematized approaches to each phase of the research process. First, an initial review of the literature is required to determine that there is a sufficiently mature body of published qualitative work within the field to warrant a meta-synthesis and, if so, to frame the research question that will orient the entire project. From that foundation, the methodological strategy requires a predetermined set of rules with regard to finding and selecting studies. Beyond having access to excellent search capacities across a range of databases and information sources, the meta-synthesist must establish and refine inclusion–exclusion criteria and generate a defensible and auditable set of rules with regard to such complex matters as what constitutes a qualitative study in the first place, what boundaries will be set for the search (i.e., the manner in which unpublished research, graduate theses and dissertations, and “gray” literature will be handled), and what variations on the substantive question will and will not be considered relevant in answering the new research question at hand. This process requires as careful of an accounting for the studies not selected and the basis for exclusion as for those that become part of the eventual sample.

Once the data set, including all research fitting the inclusion rules, has been retrieved and agreed upon, a systematic coding and data management system must be applied so that the attributes and the findings of each study can be examined and interpreted against

those of all others. Because it is difficult to determine the intricacies of all such challenges before a full appreciation for the nature of the data set is possible, the rules for extracting and documenting study attributes and summarizing findings must be worked out and explicitly recorded to ensure that the approach is both systematic and auditable. Once a viable data management system has been achieved, there are still inevitable problems with such issues as resolving contradictory findings within and among studies, deciding how to handle multiple reports of single studies and secondary analyses of groups of studies, and working with research products at highly disparate levels of conceptualization. Although studies whose reports reflect some form of thematic analysis of the study phenomenon may be relatively straightforward to consider against one another, those whose results are underanalyzed or paradoxically, those whose reports are already configured as highly conceptualized overarching or metaphoric representations are particularly challenging in this regard.

Once these matters of data management are resolved, the meta-synthesist is confronted with the challenge of attempting to work out how the various study findings might play out if reinterpreted according to analytic frameworks that have been presented in relation to the other studies. Formal analysis is conducted in relation to the characteristics and products of the primary studies across a set of common scales, which permit estimates of what might be termed *effect magnitude* of the major elements. Typically, within the range of schema that have arisen from the data set there will be several that can be set in competition for their relative utility in accounting for the variation within the phenomenon and at the same time resolving the problems that led to the disparate conceptualizations that have been suggested by the original researchers. Ultimately, the meta-synthesist's task is not simply to determine a best fit, but rather to transform the data set that exists, with all of its inherent strengths and limitations, into a new conceptualization with the capacity of integrating the entire body of qualitatively derived knowledge about the phenomenon.

Challenges for Meta-Synthesis

Qualitative meta-synthesis properly conducted is a major research initiative well beyond the scope of individual scholars working alone. Because what is known through qualitative findings about a particular

phenomenon typically includes studies using different disciplinary assumptions, methodological approaches, spatial locations, and temporal moments, interdisciplinary teams of experienced researchers are most likely to possess the knowledge and resources to do justice to the enterprise. However, because qualitative meta-synthesis is not yet widely accepted as a coherent methodological strategy for producing evidence, funding such major team projects remains a challenge.

Within the qualitative meta-synthesis scholarly literature, there are tensions between appreciation of the essentially deconstructive aspect of the enterprise (scratching below the surface to expose the bases upon which one thinks one knows) and between that which strives to be constructive (transforming the existing knowledge into a product that is better and more usable). These in part arise from the epistemological variations within the genre, with many bodies of qualitative research reflecting a full range of knowledge representations from social construction to objective truth. Thus, even for the most seasoned of scholars, these matters of what it means to come to a conclusion remain highly contested.

A surprisingly difficult aspect of qualitative meta-synthesis is the matter of evaluating the quality of original research products. Because they typically reflect such disparate study forms, theoretical scaffolding, sample sizes, inductive approaches, and levels of conceptual integration, the quality measures of various historical and disciplinary periods feature prominently in what has been recorded. Many reports of qualitative studies have also been dramatically shaped by the page limits and format requirements of various scholarly journals, which have been variously friendly to the products of qualitative scholarship. Thus, in many fields, there is much that is published in a form with which one might take issue. If excellent insights contained in less methodologically tight vehicles are eliminated from consideration, qualitative meta-synthesists run the risk of reproducing methodological fetishism and, perhaps, technically accurate, but sadly "bloodless" findings.

Perhaps the foremost challenge relates to ascertaining the role that qualitative meta-synthesis is to play in the larger goal of research integration. If the underlying motivation is to put qualitative findings to use, working out approaches to synthesizing the accumulated knowledge obtained through qualitative approaches is an essential step toward learning how best to integrate that species of knowledge with the

current state of the science deriving from quantitative forms of inquiry. When knowledge within a field can be effectively informed by the products deriving from quite disparate scientific approaches, proponents of meta-synthesis will have achieved their objective.

Sally E. Thorne

See also Health Sciences, Qualitative Research in;
Meta-Analysis; Meta-Ethnography; Social Sciences,
Qualitative Research in

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METHODOLOGICAL HOLISM VERSUS INDIVIDUALISM

This entry speaks to the nature of the individual element. Individualism says that the individual element is an independent entity that has self-contained properties, although of course it draws on resources around it. An example is the popular idea that the individual is responsible for his or her own fate. One's success and failure depend ultimately on how hard one works.

Holism says that the individual element is inextricably tied to other individuals. Individuals are interdependent, and they are internally related in the sense

that each is imbued with and constituted by the qualities of others. An example is a child in a family. The child's psychology depends utterly on the way he or she is treated. Any intrinsic tendencies are modulated and mediated by experience. From this perspective, the child is not entirely responsible for his or her behavior.

Holism regards individuals or elements as reciprocally influencing each other. The child affects the family while being affected by it. This dialectical relation of individuals and elements comprises a system, or a whole. The whole is composed of individuals and affected by them. It is not independent of individuals. However, the whole is not simply a sum of independent individuals sequentially summed together, one after the other. The whole is more than the sum of the parts.

Solomon Asch explains the holistic nature of social interactions in the case of two boys carrying a log. The boys adjust their actions to each other and to the object. The two do not apply force separately. There is a unity of action that embraces the participants and the common object. This performance is a new product, unlike what each participant would do singly and also unlike the sum of their separate exertions. What each contributes is a function of his relation to the other and how the other acts. The other's actions lead to changes in the self's behavior. Self is permeated by other. Larger social units, such as teams and institutions, manifest other kinds of emergent properties.

Emergence is central to holism. It denotes that the whole is different from the sum of the individual constituents. This whole then affects the qualities of the constituents. They are not self-sufficient, independent qualities.

These examples illustrate how the two approaches construe the nature, or existence, of the individual. These ontological perspectives of individualism and holism entail corresponding epistemologies, or ways of acquiring knowledge.

An ontology that construes individual elements as self-contained and self-determining and as combining arithmetically to form groups necessarily insists that knowledge of things consists of reducing complexity to simple, separate individual elements—for example, a group is simply a collection of individuals coexisting. An ontology that construes elements as part of a system of relations that constitute them insists that knowledge of things requires understanding elements as complex, multifaceted entities that are dialectically related to other things and embody their features.

Individualistic and holistic ontologies and epistemologies also entail distinctive methodologies.

Methodological Individualism

Positivism

Methodological individualism is the hallmark of positivism. Positivism construes phenomena as simple, homogeneous, and separate variables. A variable is defined as qualitatively invariant and only quantitatively variable. The reason it is qualitatively invariant is because it is separate from other variables. This separation prevents others from imbuing it with their qualities, altering its quality and complicating it. Intelligence, depression, aggression, and all other psychological phenomena are construed as separate variables with simple, fixed qualities; only their degree varies in different conditions. This ontology leads positivists to concentrate on measuring quantities of variables. They eschew investigating or theorizing about their qualities that are taken for granted as obvious, simple, and fixed.

Methodological individualism is also evident in positivistic instruments such as questionnaires. Each item on a questionnaire is a separate (discrete) element that supposedly taps a discrete psychological attribute. Items are randomly presented in order to prevent any association among them that would bias the subject away from responding to each one independently. In addition, each response is treated as a separate element that is accorded equal weight and can be summed with the others. Sums are indifferent to the order of the elements: $5 + 3 + 1$ is the same sum as $1 + 3 + 5$. Sums presume that items are independent of each other and that a 5 at the beginning is the same as a 5 at the end of a sequence. Of course, responses are statistically correlated together (e.g., in factor analysis). However, it is a correlation of separate, independent items.

Qualitative Methodology

One might suppose that methodological individualism, or atomism, is the basis of positivistic, quantitative methodology, while holism is the basis of qualitative methodology. However, this division would be a simplification. In fact, individualism is pervasive in qualitative research along with holism.

Individualism in qualitative methodology takes the form of treating individual subjects as self-contained individuals who create their own meanings and behaviors. Researchers focus on recording and reporting individuals' subjective accounts. They do not attempt to understand an individual's subjectivity as influenced by other people and conditions. This treatment is characteristic of a good deal of discourse analysis. Although some analysts relate discourse to cultural values and practices, many emphasize discourse as an invention of the individual speaker. Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter (1987) advocate this position.

This perspective appears, for example, in Wetherell's analysis of a 17-year-old boy's sexuality. She analyzes the discourse Aaron, the 17-year-old boy, had with his friends about a weekend during which he slept with four girls. At one point, his friend Paul wondered whether Aaron had deliberately set out to have lots of sex ("out on the pull") that weekend. Wetherell analyzes the conversation as follows:

What I wish to note is Paul's new description of Aaron's activities as "out on the pull." This account seems to be heard [by Aaron] as an uncalled for accusation in relation to the events of Friday night and Aaron and Phil issue denials . . . in attempting to reformulate and minimize the actions so described—"just out as a group of friends." (Wetherell, 1998, p. 399)

Wetherell construes dialogue as a way that individuals represent themselves to each other and themselves. She focuses on the mechanics of how individuals accomplish this representation: Paul describes Aaron; Aaron hears the description; he responds. This methodology does not go beyond identifying sequential conversational acts. It does not utilize long patterns of dialogue to interpret statements, code them, organize them, or make inferences or deductions from them concerning psychological or cultural issues. This restriction conforms to discourse theory that speech is an invention that expresses the individual—it is not a reflection of cultural or psychological processes. Wetherell is not interested in the nature of Aaron's sexual desire—that is, whether it is impersonal, egocentric, loving, considerate, domineering, instrumental, and so on—and how these sexual qualities might reflect macro cultural factors. She is concerned with how individuals voluntarily present sex in discourse.

Methodological Holism

Holistic methodology is only found in qualitative methodology. It does not appear in positivistic approaches to research. One of the most important applications of holism in qualitative methodology is Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics. The central idea is that the psychological significance of any behavioral expression can be discerned only by relating that response to other responses. The significance of a response is not transparent in a single behavior. For example, to know whether a remark is a joke or an insult, one must situate it in a context of other comments, the speaker's countenance, and other behaviors. By itself, the comment is ambiguous. The context disambiguates the element.

This relating of behaviors in order to disclose psychological phenomena is known as the hermeneutic circle. If one wants to hermeneutically interpret the psychology of a mother who spanks her child, for example, one must know how the child acted before he or she was spanked, how the mother behaves toward him or her in other situations, what she says to him or her during and after the spanking, how she behaves toward him or her after the spanking, her facial expression during the spanking, how she explains the spanking to her husband and friends, and so on. Only this complex configuration of related behaviors reveals whether her spanking was motivated by concern for the child's well-being, hatred for the child, revenge against the child, or by frustration that was provoked by an event unrelated to the child.

Similarly, the cognitive processes that enable students to perform well on math tests are only known by observing their extended solution to several math problems in different situations. Test performance may express a number of psychological phenomena. It may reflect the student's ability to memorize material, or it may reflect test-taking ability, anxiety, or mathematical reasoning. Which of these possibilities is operative is only disclosed by observing the pattern of steps that pupils take to solve problems in different situations.

Kurt Goldstein used a hermeneutic analysis to diagnose neurological deficits. He observed the pattern of responses by which patients match a colored stimulus with objects of similar color. Normal and impaired subjects often find the same number of objects that match the hue of the stimulus; however, their pattern of responses is quite different. The patient proceeds sequentially by first matching the stimulus to an object that most closely resembles it (O_1), then matching

another object (O_2) to (O_1), then matching (O_3) to (O_2), and so on. In contrast, normal subjects compare each color directly with the stimulus color. The qualitative difference in the behavioral patterns reveals the patient's deficit.

This process is a hermeneutical, holistic analysis because it examines patterns of interrelated responses that indicate the quality and significance of each. The fact that O_3 is matched to O_2 rather than to the stimulus hue makes it a different (impaired) kind of response and indicates it to be a different kind of response. Hermeneutic methodology that elucidates patterns is holistic. In contrast, counting the number of correct matches and comparing the sums for normals' and patients' obscure patterns and the qualitative differences of responses within them. As mentioned, sums of responses are indifferent to their order and their interrelationship. A sum treats each response as separate and independent. Sums are individualistic forms of methodology, while patterns are holistic.

Cultural Hermeneutics

The highest form of methodological holism not only elucidates patterns of behaviors among individuals, but also recognizes the internal relationship between psychological phenomena and cultural phenomena. This cultural-hermeneutical interpretation of psychology was actually the crux of 19th-century German hermeneutics. It has been largely overlooked as hermeneuticists focus on the behaviors of individuals apart from culture. However, Dilthey maintained that the interpretation of meaning belongs to the larger science of history. To understand means to understand historically. It means to understand that psychological phenomena such as self-concept, sexuality, motivation, reasoning, memory, emotions, perception, mental illness, and developmental processes are integral components of macro cultural factors such as institutions, artifacts, and cultural concepts, and embody their features. Cultural hermeneutics elucidates this cultural quality of psychological phenomena, as Carl Ratner explains in his writings.

A Synthesis

In their current forms, holism and individualism approach psychological phenomena very differently and are antithetical. However, a synthesis is possible. This synthesis cannot be an eclectic, unprincipled,

combining together, for this type of synthesis would combine weaknesses as well as strengths. Nor can the synthesis take the form of a golden mean that is in between the extremes, for that negates the strengths of the positions by watering them down with their opposites.

A workable synthesis requires a reformulation that makes holism and individualism logically consistent through a set of common principles. Lev Vygotsky explained what this synthesis involves. He said that an analysis of complex patterns into units is necessary and workable. It requires construing the part as embodying qualities of related parts, patterns, and wholes. This process reformulates the individualistic concept of an element as an independent entity with a self-contained quality. It makes the unit logically consistent with its holistic existence, internally related to other units.

Vygotsky (1987) explained this process as follows:

A psychology concerned with the study of the complex whole must replace the method of decomposing the whole into its elements with that of partitioning the whole into its units . . . in which the characteristics of the whole are present. . . . In contrast to the term “element,” the term “unit” designates a product of analysis that possesses all the basic characteristics of the whole. . . . The living cell is the real unit of biological analysis because it preserves the basic characteristics of life that are inherent in the living organism. (pp. 46–47)

These units can be studied, counted, and added. The benefits of analysis can thus be integrated into methodological holism. This ability enables holism to become a precise, rigorous, scientific approach. It loses its pejorative connotation as a mystical, ineffable, and impractical methodology.

Carl Ratner

See also Objectivism; Reductionism; Subjectivism

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METHODOLOGY

Research methodology consists of the assumptions, postulates, rules, and methods—the blueprint or roadmap—that researchers employ to render their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and/or adaptation and to choose research methods. This term is often used interchangeably with research methods, but in this entry it will refer to research methods as the tools or techniques with which researchers collect their data. These tools or techniques are wisely chosen only when they are derived from and related to the larger set of assumptions and procedures that constitute the overall research methodology the study utilizes. All empirical research, regardless of whether it is considered to be qualitative, quantitative, or both includes a discussion of research methodology. Most qualitative research methodology books and texts refer to the constituent components of research methodology as defined in this entry—guiding paradigms, aspects of research design (study community, population, sampling and analysis units), methods of data collection, and analysis and dissemination. This entry includes all of these under the same rubric.

What Research Methodology Is Not

Theory is not included in this entry as part of research methodology. Theory is extremely important in providing the initial arguments for the study, framing its formative conceptual model, and guiding directions in data collection and analysis. Methodology consists of the actions to be taken in the study and the reasons for

these actions in testing or generating theory. Ethical considerations are also very important in any research involving human or animal subjects, participants, or partners. Research ethics, however, will not be considered in this entry, even though when one considers questions such as what is the importance of this research or with whom should one conduct the research and in what kinds of partnerships, or whether particular approaches to data collection might be harmful to study participants, one is raising ethical considerations that affect one's methodological decision making.

Methodological Decisions.

Decisions about qualitative research methodology include (a) selection of guiding paradigm; (b) identification of research questions; (c) development of a formative conceptual model; (d) site selection, study population, and study sample; (e) topics, procedures, and tools for data collection; and (f) and procedures for data analysis and interpretation.

Guiding Paradigms

Qualitative research typically includes positivist, interpretist, constructionist, critical, and participatory paradigms. The positivist perspective stems from the long history of naturalistic observation in real-world situations. Views of positivism range from conservative to progressive-activist, but all involve the belief that reality is external to self and can be observed using tools that produce information that can be understood and interpreted by others. Positivism is linked historically to social activism through the idea that social situations can be studied, critiqued, and subsequently changed. Positivists may collect data through observations or various forms of instruments and often derive explanations for their results from preexisting theory without concern for whether the study population understands or agrees with their views.

Interpretivist approaches focus on the meanings attributed to events, places, behaviors and interactions, people, and artifacts. These meanings have historical depth and are widely shared, negotiated, and co-constructed. Approaches that fall under the interpretivist rubric are phenomenological, interactionist, constructivist, and hermeneutic. They assume that social phenomena are constructed or co-constructed by self and can be discovered by collecting and analyzing

conversations and texts. Interpretivist approaches are heavily dependent upon the researcher's involvement with the study community since meaning emerges both through interaction among participants and between the researcher and the participants. Verification of the research results occurs through interaction with study participants.

Critical approaches view individual and group behavior and meaning as shaped by structures and processes of dominance. Critical researchers study and reveal different patterns of locally, nationally, and internationally situated dominance and control; the ways in which they are sustained and reproduced; and the responses of individuals and groups to these structures and power differentials, which may involve agency, resistance, voice, and various forms of advocacy. Critical approaches often, but not always, involve participants as partners in uncovering and addressing power imbalances, inequities, and injustices.

Social ecologists situate human behavior in the context of interactive spheres of social and other forms of influence with varying degrees of proximity to or influence on the individual. These spheres (e.g., family, peers and friends, community social institutions, and macrosocietal influences [media, political parties, etc.]) are interactive, changes in one sphere influence changes in other spheres and individual actions can also bring about change in any sphere. Thus, ecological research is also potentially activist and participatory, though not necessarily with reference to changing structures of power and dominance.

These frames of reference or paradigms are not mutually exclusive. Researchers can choose positivist interpretivist or critical and ecological approaches simultaneously, depending on the study topic, research question, and personal preferences.

Defining the Research Question

Most people begin asking questions about the world around them as soon as they begin to speak. The questions that social science researchers ask about the work around them come from a number of different sources. These sources include queries stemming from the observation of discrepancies in what people do, between what they do and what they say, differential historical or developmental trajectories, perceived inequalities, observed differences between one's own and others' beliefs and experience, and questions about what accounts for differential outcomes in educational,

health, or other experiences. Qualitative research questions are usually framed as explorations of behaviors, factors accounting for behaviors, the meanings associated with behaviors, and contexts in which meanings, behaviors, and other factors occur. Questions may also address changes over time—for example, has parental involvement in children's education at Humbolt Community School changed over time; has it changed because of an intervention or because of the program for parental training; or has it changed because organized times and places have been arranged for observed parent and child interaction (see Table 1).

Framing paradigms will shape the ways in which questions are framed. For example, interpretivists will focus more intensively on the meanings parents give for their actions; critical theorists will focus on contexts and factors associated with the power differentials shaping and explaining differential parental behavior. Ecologists will combine factors and contexts to consider the immediate social, environmental, organizational, political, and other aspects that influence parental involvement.

Formulating a Conceptual Model

Qualitative researchers are best advised to generate a formative or exploratory conceptual model prior to

beginning a study. This model is sometimes referred to as concept mapping, a process that identifies domains and the relationships among them. More linear conceptual models (as shown in Figure 1) identify a primary dependent or focal domain (e.g., educational inequality or mental health treatment access) and the primary independent domains that are believed to be correlated with it and, possibly, to predict it (e.g., the effect of allocation of educational resources, teacher training, or union policies or language gaps on student performance, or stigma attributed to mental illness or limited knowledge of depression symptoms on help-seeking behavior). These domains can be further disaggregated or deconstructed prior to entering the field, resulting in taxonomies that constitute initial coding schemes and an initial guide to field research. The model and coding schemes are modifiable, with modifications beginning with field work.

Defining the Study Site, Study Population, Study Sample

Study Site

The study site is the location where the research takes place. Study sites may include institutions (clinics, hospitals, schools and university campuses, voluntary

Table 1 Sample Questions

Explorations or descriptions of behavior	What are the ways in which parents in Humbolt Community School are involved in their children's education?
Factors accounting for behaviors	What are the factors that account for differences in the involvement of Humbolt Community School parents in their children's education?
Meanings associated with behavior	What are the meanings and values that Humbolt parents attribute to different types of involvement in their children's education?
Contexts related to meanings, behaviors, and other factors	What are the school, community, historical, or other conditions that facilitate or impede parental involvement in children's education in Humbolt Community School?
Changes over time	Has parental involvement in children's education at Humbolt Community School changed over time?
Changes because of an intervention	Has parental involvement in children's education at Humbolt Community School changed because of our program of parental training?

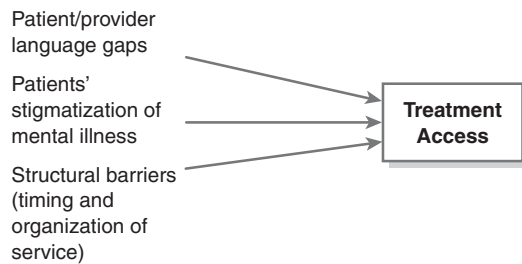


Figure 1 Example of a Simple Conceptual Model

organizations, social groups, recreational areas, community organizations, businesses of different sizes, and cyberlocations or networks). All forms of qualitative research take place in a community defined by place and time in which interactions occur among members either directly through face-to-face interaction or via electronic forms of communication (telephone, videoconferencing, internet). Communities also may be defined by ethnic and/or racial membership along with other social and cultural characteristics such as ability level and links to a specific institution. The study site is chosen as a place where the study questions can be answered through the use of interactive research methods that require face-to-face engagement or its equivalent (in the case of distant or internet research).

Study Populations

An important methodological consideration is the selection of the study population. Any qualitative study must provide good reason for the identification and selection of the study population. The study population may be defined as the group or groups of interest to the researcher in relation to the study question. In collaborative research designs, it would focus on those members or groups within the study population that are willing to partner with the researchers. The rationale for selection of the study population may include one or all of the following factors: the study question, population need, research design considerations, personal values, and funder requirements. Study population may refer to a variety of units of investigation and analysis at multiple levels—census districts, towns, families, and individuals. Thus, for example, if one wanted to study variations in women's participation in milking cooperatives and prior experience suggested that characteristics of the village made a difference in fostering participation, one could say that the first-level study population would consist of

all villages that include women-run milk cooperatives and that the second-level study population would include all women in each of these villages. Similarly, in a comparative study of elementary school students' participation in exercise, all elementary schools in the study area or community would constitute the first-level study population, and all students in those schools, the second-level study population. The study design would consider using sampling from each of these levels to obtain representative data on the study topic. Making these strategic decisions is part of the methodology of a study.

Study Sample

The study populations constitute the universe or basis from which to choose the study sample. Making decisions about the study sample or samples, like making decisions about the study population, are central to a study's methodological considerations. Sampling units may include individuals, events (e.g., occasions when the topic of interest occurs, such as classroom events when students are asked to problem solve or students clash with instructors, or community events when people gather for civic ceremonies, such as the U.S. Fourth of July Independence Day celebration), or cultural rituals (e.g., jazz or fiddle festivals or Veterans Day in the United States, honoring those who have died in national wars). Even if the research design calls for the study of a single community, school or clinic, or student, researchers must still make decisions about which units to choose for sampling purposes and why. Further, in mixed methods designs, study methodology must differentiate and coordinate sample selection at different levels (e.g., school, classroom, student) and for qualitative and quantitative study purposes.

Rubrics for Sampling

Qualitative methodology usually follows sampling rubrics that are based on principles that differ somewhat from those used by survey researchers. Rubrics for qualitative sampling include various types of criterion sampling, used when representation is desired and randomization is not required, and probability sampling when representation and randomization are required. Since science calls for rigorous explanation and definition of research decisions, sampling choices must always be explained. Criterion sampling refers to the criteria that delineate characteristics desired in

the study units to be selected. Researchers may decide to choose sampling units for convenience or coincidence, an approach that may be useful in the initial stages of a study or in conducting a pilot study. Better and more systematic approaches to criterion sampling include respondent characteristics, ideal case, ends or midpoint of a continuum, uniqueness or geographic representation (as in targeted sampling), or respondent driven sampling, a network or snowball approach to sampling that promises accurate representation of a population. Larger studies calling for representative sampling to obtain the full array of variation in the designated study topic utilize systematic selection (identification of cases based on intervals; e.g., every fifth patient) where the universe cannot be bounded or defined, and random sampling, using a table of random numbers to select individuals, each of whom has an equal chance of being selected where the universe is known and can be delineated. Qualitative research methodology requires delineating of sampling decisions made on the basis of these rubrics.

Methods of Data Collection

In qualitative research, methods of data collection almost always involve face-to-face interaction with the study community and the study participants. The researcher is the most important instrument of data collection. This collection calls for considerable introspection, reflection on possible biases, and maintenance of personal notes that help the researcher sort out how his or her personality, personal values, and implicit prejudices may interact with the research situation or influence the setting, and therefore change the data that can be collected or to narrow or otherwise bend or influence what the researcher observes or notes. Collection of face-to-face data occurs in two ways: through observation (what the researcher sees) and through interviewing (what respondents tell researchers). Observation and interviewing can be conducted along a continuum from less to more involvement in the study site, depending on which paradigm the researcher prefers, as well as what the object of the study is. The more structured or predefined the observation or interview process, the more it imposes on the participants' lived situation and the less it engages the researcher in interaction with the participant.

Qualitative data collection techniques (research methods) focus on data collection at the sociocultural (collective) and individual levels. Methods involve

obtaining information on observations and reported perceptions regarding rituals, ceremonies, patterned activity, formal and informal social and organizational relationships, history and historical events, norms, beliefs and shared attitudes, and stories illustrating main themes or concerns in the research setting, and so on. At the group or cultural level, basic data collection methods include various forms of setting and group observations, interviewing, elicitation techniques, networks, GIS mapping, and some forms of photography.

At the individual level (personal views and experience of the respondent), data collection methods include open-ended, timed open-ended, and timed and precoded observations of individuals or groups in a naturalistic setting (classroom, park, playground, etc.) and unstructured and semi-structured open-ended interviews with individuals or groups. Unstructured open-ended interviews are used to discover the characteristics of a domain in the research model from the perspective of the individual. Semi-structured interviews, which ask all individuals in a selected sample the same open-ended interview questions, obtain patterns of similarity and variations that can characterize the study sample of individuals and, at the same time, provide the items important for constructing surveys to be used with a larger group. Networks, photography, and elicitation data including individually drawn maps can also focus on individuals' personal experience and perceptions.

There are many special data collection techniques that can be utilized at both levels, including various forms of elicitation (where interviewees respond to photographs, drawings, or other material designed to elicit variations in response), GIS mapping, family or extended kinship networks, and narrative-based performances that generate audience response and dialogue. In framing study methodology, the job of the researcher is to determine which of these approaches to data collection are useful to obtain relevant cultural and individual level data for a study and how they should be applied in the study setting.

Recording Qualitative Data

Qualitative data consists of recorded observations and interviews in the form of fieldnotes. The strength of a qualitative study depends on the quality of these recordings. Some forms of qualitative research rely heavily on observations in the field; that is, in the community or other setting in which the research

takes place. Other forms of qualitative research may focus on reports of experience and interviews of various types and less on observed context. Fieldnotes can be recorded either by hand using pencil and paper and later entered into a computer, or they may be recorded utilizing audiovisual equipment such as tape or digital voice recorders or digital photography or video cameras. The least intrusive form of recording consists of a small notebook in which the researcher records jottings. Jottings are words, abbreviations, diagrams, quotes, and other brief notes that follow the subject matter and sequencing of the observation or interview and can be transformed into full-scale descriptions with quotations as quickly as possible following return from the field. Some researchers prefer to dictate their jottings in the form of more elaborate fieldnotes on a digital recorder and download them into computers from which they can be easily transcribed. Others use handheld PDAs or small computers. Reliance on forms of recording other than pencil and paper invariably introduces complexities in the field ranging from technology failure (before or after recording) to loss of tapes or digital recordings and reactions from participants. Transfer time required to make these recordings useful in the form of text also is greater.

Data Analysis

Decisions about which protocols for analysis of qualitative data to use are based on the interaction of research questions, study model, and text and archival and audiovisual data. All qualitative data can be manipulated and coded. Coding categories can range conceptually from more concrete to more abstract and reflect themes and patterns found within and across domains in the study model. Continuous comparisons, as analytic codes emerge, should produce a final set of codes that can be applied to the entire data set and a set of comments, memos, and analytic summaries that can be utilized for overall analysis and interpretation.

Analysis generally proceeds by conducting comparisons and contrasts to extract themes and patterns first within and then across domains, extracting new domains and finally refining and testing the revised theoretical model against the data. These analysis steps can include triangulation of all forms of qualitative and quantitative or survey data. A variety of software packages are available for coding, extracting comments quotes and summaries, and constructing text-based

and visual relationships among coding categories and analytic domains.

Final methodological decisions center on uses of research results. Qualitative research results can be used to improve services, formulate and test interventions, contribute to survey research development, change or critique policies, and support advocates for various forms of social change. Dissemination and use decisions include the selection of research or dissemination partners, and a consideration of specific audiences, appropriate formats, and the roles and responsibilities of members of the research team in the dissemination process.

Jean J. Schensul

See also Ethics; Methods

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METHODS

The term *methods* refers to the ways in which qualitative researchers collect data to build their argument. Regardless of paradigmatic preference, all qualitative research methods have common characteristics. They are conducted in an exchange between real people. They focus on meanings as conveyed by participants in the research setting in addition to behavior. And they take into consideration the social, cultural, and physical contexts within which individuals live, work, and interact. All forms of qualitative research including ethnography are most noted for their commitment to learning about and understanding the perspectives of others rather than imposing the researcher's own

views, biases, and theories in explaining differences across populations or communities in beliefs and behaviors. Most qualitative researchers believe that people's beliefs and behaviors, no matter how different from their own, are understandable and make sense in the context in which they live. Sensemaking through the eyes and lived experience of the people is at the heart of good qualitative research.

The roots of qualitative research methods lie in the experiences of early travelers in Europe and the Middle East who wrote down their observations in the form of representations of the people whom they met in their travels and in the German folklorists and interpretivists of the late 19th century who focused on folk knowledge and folklore. Administrators in the British Colonial Service formalized ethnography as a tool for improving indirect rule, and early American anthropologists, influenced by researchers such as Franz Boas, sought to use observations, interviews, measurements, and interpretations of cultural works to understand the perspectives of American Indians and immigrants and to debunk notions regarding racial differences in intellect and capacity.

Certain methods, such as participant observation (PO), are central to qualitative research. PO calls for engaging with people residing in communities such as neighborhoods, towns, schools, clinics, self-help groups, or other gatherings who share a common history, goals, and directions; entering into relationships with them; learning from them; and recording their behavior. Other methods, such as interviewing, are favored by qualitative researchers who do not necessarily go into the field (where people live and work), but instead rely heavily on respondents' oral and otherwise recorded reports of their lives and experiences.

There are many approaches to methods (or data collection techniques) that can be subsumed under general headings. These may include: observations and other forms of visual documentation (i.e., what researchers see), interviews (i.e., what researchers learn through verbal or, occasionally, written reports from respondents or participants), elicitation techniques (i.e., what researchers learn from providing visual or oral stimulate with which respondents are asked to engage), and various forms of mapping. Each of these approaches can be further subdivided—for example, interviews may be conducted with key informants or local experts about community or organizations wide issues or dynamics, and in-depth interviews or narratives may be conducted with individuals about

their own personal beliefs, behaviors, and experiences. Network interviews focus on the breadth, composition, and behaviors of social networks. Group interviews may be formal (e.g., organized by the researcher) or informal (e.g., carried out in the context of daily observations in research settings) and may focus on individuals' beliefs and experiences, life histories, and social networks. Finally, surveys, while not qualitative, are ethnographic to the extent that they derive from local needs, issues, meanings, and measures and are administered on a face-to-face basis.

Researchers make choices about research methods depending on a number of factors, such as: level (e.g., social or community or personal), time availability (e.g., length of time needed to complete data collection), financial resource availability (e.g., cost of data collection including interviews or observations and transcription, translation, and coding), and cultural or situational appropriateness (e.g., type of interaction, privacy requirements, and literacy). This entry discusses the major approaches to methods of data collection in field or qualitative research, reasons for choice, and strengths and limitations.

Observation

Observation is considered as fundamental to good qualitative research. Observation can be used to collect various sorts of behavioral or interactional data. The collection of observational data ranges from open-ended (a search for pattern) to closed and coded (a search for pattern confirmation). Observations also vary along a continuum from participatory, where the researcher is accepted as someone who is regularly present and a member of the study community, to non-participatory, where the researcher is an outsider who conducts systematic observations without interacting with anyone.

Participant Observation

Researchers involved in PO enter the community setting; establish positive relationships with key gatekeepers, stakeholders, and local experts; and, over time, are invited to participate in the life of the community and are given access to many or most settings and activities. Often the researcher affiliates with a family or a mentor that is ideally a neutral force who can provide introductions to many sectors of the community, support when things are not clear or go

wrong, and language instruction if the researcher needs to learn the local language. Active participation in the life of the community, which may mean taking on certain responsibilities, teaches the researcher how to behave and to think and understand how decisions are made in that cultural setting.

PO is a form of apprenticeship in which the researcher does not lose or hide his or her identity on entry, but adds to it by learning new roles and responsibilities; for example, teaching in an elementary school in northeastern Australia, producing maple sugar in Connecticut, or hunting reindeer in Lapland. Participant observers record what they observe in the form of fieldnotes based on their own voice recordings, paper and pencil jottings, and computers. As they observe and record, they note what terms, material products, and rituals mean and how activities are carried out, and they observe patterns such as gender differences in roles and responsibilities and decision making, power differentials, and resource distribution in families and communities, or influences on the acquisition of basic medications. After an initial period of entry, PO is not intrusive (it generally does not bring about changes in behavior patterns and beliefs), and for most researchers with social skills, it increases the social and content validity of the data collected. PO is stressful for researchers because it constantly tests their ability to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations in the field and challenges their ability to remain engaged enough to gain understanding, but disengaged enough to observe and record their observations and conversations that constitute the record of data accumulation in the setting.

Systematic and Structured Forms of Observation

As observers narrow and focus their interests, they may wish to observe more systematically by using a process of comparison and contrast, which seeks to describe variation in events, processes, or behaviors identified in PO and to discover what might account for these variations. Once the range of variation is identified and described in general, researchers may further sample specify the nature of their observations, using coding or observation schemes, indices and other qualitative or even quantitative measures, and collecting data in specific locations and at specified time intervals. For example, researchers interested in site-based factors promoting drug use in

dance places and bars might list and observe in different types of locations varying by size and configuration of space, type of music, type of client, and items sold on the premises. Having classified sites, they may wish to observe, using an observational checklist or coding scheme in a sample of each type of site, and to schedule their observations hourly over a 5-hour basis to monitor changes over time. Focused observation can be carried out with preexisting observation schemes imposed on a setting. Good qualitative researchers, however, will use PO approaches first to evaluate whether and how an externally derived observation scheme can be made more relevant to the setting and study problem.

Interviews

Like observations, qualitative interviews can range from unstructured to highly structured, but all interviews are open-ended in that respondents can answer in whatever way and to whatever extent they wish and in that there is some interaction with the interviewer who may probe, extend questions, or raise new topics. Interviews are usually carried out in a place that offers privacy to protect confidentiality, often at a distance from the field site. The relationship between a researcher and a key informant is generally personal and intimate and endures over time. Thus, key informants are not usually paid for most of their interviews. However, in-depth interviews carried out and recorded with individuals about their personal experiences may be compensated with material goods, gift certificates, or actual cash. There are many different types of in-depth interviews, which call for different interviewing techniques in the field. But all of them require face-to-face interviews (although some interviews may be conducted by telephone or online), the jotting down of responses (or audiorecording), and the transcribing of what respondents have said in as much detail as possible. Interviewers must have ways of transcribing and translating interviews as quickly as possible after the interview so as not to lose information.

Key Informant and Local Expert Interviews

Ethnographers seek out key informants or local experts who can provide information about the community or the particular topic in which they are interested and who can link them with other knowledgeable

people. Key informants often become close friends and confidants and can become partners in the research. They are helpful in validating the hunches of the researcher and can protect the researcher and the community from misrepresentation. They may also provide personal insights and experience, but their main contribution lies in their knowledge and understanding of events, relationships, and meanings at the community level. Examples of types of people who have local expertise are block club leaders, school hall monitors, administrative assistants, and small shopkeepers. Key informant or local expert interviews are open-ended and usually initiated with a handful of questions that cover very general topics. A good local expert provides lengthy responses to questions and enjoys reflecting on and sharing information about the subject matter.

In-Depth Interview on Individual Experience

Qualitative researchers carry out in-depth interviews on individual experience, beliefs, behaviors, and meanings in order to discover and explore the range of variation among individuals and to find patterns of similarity and difference. These interviews can be open-ended initially and can move toward semi-structured interview schedules in which a sample of respondents are asked the same open-ended questions and responses are compared to identify variation as well as common patterns. In-depth interviews are utilized to look for themes and higher-order patterns (i.e., relationships among themes) and to explain and theorize them. In addition to general open-ended interviews about respondents' personal opinions and experiences, in-depth interviews can include qualitative network interviews in which interviewers ask about people with different types of relationships to the respondent and narrative interviews that query in detail respondents' histories in relation to historical and current events, life careers, and other such themes. Various types of formal and informal group interviews also call for open-ended interviewing protocols structured in accordance with the needs and the requirements of the research.

The most important consideration in in-depth interviews is that respondents must be allowed to answer in their own words and at length in order for researchers to understand the interviewee's meanings, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and descriptions of their own behavior. At the same time, the interviewer must have some

questions ready to ask if there is a lull in the conversation requiring the researcher to attempt to structure a direction in the interview. Interviewers must be able to redirect respondents' responses and to recognize when they wish to avoid or divert the question.

Multimedia Documentation

Many ethnographers use various forms of audiovisual and multimedia documentation to record their work. The simplest and least intrusive form of documentation is the audiorecorder. Most audiorecording uses digital recorders, downloading the results of interviews to computer files for transcription. Considerations in purchasing a recorder include recording capacity and clarity of microphone. Using an external microphone placed midway between the interviewer and the interviewee is recommended. Audiorecording group interviews is not recommended since most equipment does not record accurately voices at different distances from the equipment or the interplay of conversation as speakers interrupt one another. Audiovisual records of events and conversations allow for capturing interpersonal interaction in natural or contrived settings. Video cameras are relatively inexpensive and produce records in digital format that can be downloaded, entered into a text-management program, and coded for visual, contextual, and interactional voice cues and conversational topics. Some types of analysis (such as discourse analysis) require careful recording of conversations and cannot be carried out without the use of video cameras. Digital cameras are used for a variety of purposes in the field. The simplest use of digital cameras involves obtaining a visual record of people, activities, rituals, daily routines, and a general description of the field setting. They must be accompanied by text data describing the persons or activities in the photograph and providing other detailed information in order to act as valuable records.

Photographs can be used to reveal details of settings or situations that are not readily accessible. For example, photographs of low-income urban housing might illustrate the idea that an external view is insufficient to determine the degree of deterioration of housing conditions by collecting distance views that do not show deterioration, external close-up views that show external deterioration, and interior views that show extreme interior deterioration. Photographs of bridges might be used to display vulnerability to invasion or natural disasters. Satellite photographs

might be used to illustrate the distribution of greenery or erosion in an environment. As with other forms of qualitative data, photographs are as important as the theories behind them, so qualitative researchers should think carefully about the reasons for taking photographs. Although photography may be well received in some settings, it may be rejected in others. Researchers must take care to discover the etiquette surrounding photographs in their field settings and should not assume that all people are willing to have their photographs taken. Improper attention to these details may result in unpleasant conflicts and confrontation. Qualitative researchers should always ask permission, especially when photographing individuals who might be recognized.

Audiovisual data collection may require consent, which can be problematic when researchers are interested in a group process. Photographs may also require release forms if they are to be used in scientific publications or for commercial or promotional purposes.

Cultural Elicitation

Many qualitative researchers are interested in the way groups of people organize their understandings of the world. Some refer to this process as *cognitive mapping*. Although individuals may map their world cognitively, cohesive groups of individuals do so collectively. Cultural elicitation is an approach that involves obtaining simple listings or comparisons from a small number of people on the components of a known cultural domain and submitting them to computer programs that analyze them, using forms of proximity analysis to produce cultural portrayals of the way group members organize the components. The most commonly used approach to cultural elicitation is pile sorting. Pile sorting uses a procedure of free-listing items within a cultural domain and subjecting them to sorting in a small sample of representatives (15–30). Other approaches involve triad sorting, Guttman scaling, consensus analysis, and decision-making models. When using these approaches, it is important to remember that where there is previously known variation, elicitation protocols should be utilized with groups that are known to differ (e.g., parents and children, teachers and students, youth and older adults, young women and young men). There may be differences across age, ethnicity, language grouping, organizational affiliation, and so on. Thus, cultural elicitation research and results are best interpreted

when more rather than less is known about the study community beforehand.

Social and Other Forms of Site Mapping

Mapping settings is an important, ongoing activity for qualitative researchers working in any kind of field setting, even if their primary focus is the collection of in-depth or focus group data and consists of a set of techniques that is widely recommended for use by all qualitative researchers. For those researchers involved in PO, mapping settings geographically involves drawing a diagram of the setting that includes specific landmarks, groups, and the locations of activities. Since settings change over time, researchers should map their sites continuously to demonstrate continuities and changes over time. Qualitative researchers can also invite respondents to map their activity spaces or their communities. Maps can then be compiled across respondents, and respondents can be compared across different age or other social categories to see if there are cross-group differences in the construction of activity spaces. GIS (geographic information system) mapping now allows for more rigorous and complex overlays of databases on geographic space. With GIS, one can more easily observe disparities of various kinds. GIS also allows for digitized mapping of local spaces not found on existing digital maps. For example, students can map their school and locate places where students play, learn, and harass each other. These spatial differences can contribute to interventions designed to improve the quality of play and reduce various forms of harassment.

Ethnographic Surveys

The term *ethnographic survey* is not commonly used. In this entry, it is used to refer to the construction of survey variables and scales that are obtained through other forms of qualitative inquiry in the field site rather than from generic theory applied to the research problem. Scales may emerge from qualitative data collected during the formative stages of a project, from dimensions that appear to be important in the field that have counterparts in existing scales, or from some combination of both. Survey items, scales, and variables are pilot tested in the study site and utilized to demonstrate a range of variation and correlates and predictors of the main dependent variables. Most surveys are constructed

based on previously identified domains and scales. Some research shows, however, that scales constructed based on formative research measure important dimensions more accurately than generic scales and are better predictors of variance in the dependent variable. For this reason, it is recommended that ethnographic researchers construct their own surveys to make sure that the surveys reflect cultural realities in the field. It is possible to construct cross-culturally valid and acceptable surveys in which the meanings of variables and scales are clearly understood across different settings, age groups, and other differences. This process takes time and cross-translation. There is no guarantee that scales developed in one location and in one place and time will be relevant to other locations, places, and times. All questionnaire components including those derived from other locations and studies must be piloted in the local setting to ensure that the items have meaning and social validity (i.e., that they measure what they are intended to measure).

In summary, there are many methods available for the collection of qualitative data, and each has its strengths and disadvantages. Many if not most of these approaches can be used in a single study, and all of them can be used in empirical nonparticipatory or participatory research models.

Jean J. Schensul

See also In-Person Interview; Methodology; Probes and Probing; Structured Interview; Unstructured Interview

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MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

As a new approach to conducting social and health inquiry research, mixed methods research has attracted substantial interest and followers during the past 20 years. With the current acceptance and legitimacy of qualitative research and the long-term use of quantitative research, mixed methods provides a means for combining the strengths of both approaches to best understand research problems. Researchers need to be aware of the possibility of combining qualitative and quantitative methods when appropriate for addressing their research questions.

A Definition

Mixed methods is defined as research in which the inquirer or investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of study. This definition is the current one being used in the call for manuscripts for the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*. This definition permits viewing *mixed methods* as a broad umbrella term encompassing perspectives that see it as a research method of data collection and analysis, a methodology that spans the process of research from philosophical assumptions to interpretations, a philosophy of research, and a set of procedures used within existing research designs such as case studies, experiments, and narrative projects. Overall, this definition has general agreement among leading mixed methods writers today.

When researchers apply this definition, they employ an approach that has several characteristics. They are collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. This suggests that two "strands" are implemented in a mixed methods study, and that the researchers have the skills needed in both quantitative

and qualitative research to engage in these procedures. It also suggests that the collection of multiple forms of qualitative data (or multiple forms of quantitative data) would not constitute a mixed methods study. This form of research might be considered multimethod research. Also in applying the definition, researchers will mix, combine, or link the data in certain ways. Three ways are apparent in the mixed methods literature for mixing the quantitative and qualitative data: by combining or integrating them, by connecting them from the data analysis step of the first source of data to the data collection step of the second source of data so that one source builds on the other or helps to explain the other, or by embedding one secondary or supporting source of data into a larger source of data to provide additional information in a study. In the process of research, these three forms of mixing—merging, connecting, or embedding—will occur during various stages of the research, such as during data collection, data analysis, or interpretation.

Reasons for Mixing in Different Research Designs

Regardless of the form of mixing, the reasons for mixing the methods in a study need to be clearly identified by researchers. One reason for using mixed methods research is that the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches will provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach alone. In this case, the researcher might collect both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time (concurrently) and merge the data to form one interpretation of the data. This interpretation would provide both quantitative information about magnitude and frequency as well as qualitative information from individual perspectives from participants and the context in which they were commenting on the research problem. This design is called the triangulation or concurrent mixed methods design. A triangulation design in mixed methods is not the same as the use of the term *triangulation* in qualitative research in which inquirers draw evidence from different sources or different participants to develop a code or a theme. In mixed methods, it means that the quantitative data and the qualitative data are merged by the researcher in the analysis. Another reason for mixing is to follow up on initial exploratory findings. This reason applies when the researcher seeks to explore first qualitatively and then to test this exploration with a large quantitative

sample of a population. For example, the inquirer might collect and analyze qualitative data in the first phase of the study. The results of this analysis might then be used to identify items for a questionnaire or to build a typology of categories to be further tested quantitatively in the second phase. This design is called an *exploratory sequential mixed methods design*. Another reason for using mixed methods is that the researcher may want to better explain initial quantitative results. This situation occurs when the researcher begins with quantitative data collection and analysis in a first phase and then follows up with a second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis to help explain in more detail the results of the first quantitative phase. This type of design is called an *explanatory sequential mixed methods design*. A final reason for using mixed methods research is to enhance a larger data set with a smaller, more focused data set. For example, an investigator might conduct an experiment and within that experiment collect qualitative data that provides information as to how the participants experienced the intervention. This design would be called an *embedded mixed methods design*.

Mixed Methods as a Field of Study

The clarification of these types of mixed methods designs and the reasons for using them has evolved since the 1980s. Although researchers have collected both quantitative and qualitative data throughout the 20th century, the development of mixed methods as a systematic approach to research is a relatively recent phenomenon dating back to the late 1970s. The writings on triangulation in 1979, for example, illustrate the idea of integrating both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. These were followed by authors who felt that research problems might be best studied using both qualitative and quantitative data. By 1989, several evaluators had documented the varied purposes of conducting mixed methods studies and had mapped the various evaluation studies that incorporated this form of inquiry. Sociologists also began writing in the late 1980s about the processes involved in conducting mixed methods research. By the late 1990s and early 21st century, writers such as Abbas Tashakkori, Charles Teddlie, John Creswell, and Vicki Plano Clark had extensively mapped the landscape of mixed methods research and its designs and procedures. Today, numerous

disciplines and fields have published empirical studies and methodological discussions about mixed methods, including areas such as sociology, evaluation, education, counseling psychology, family science, nursing, and family medicine.

Advances in Mixed Methods Research

From this short history, it is possible to sketch several advances in mixed methods that characterize the field of mixed methods research as it is known today. Much work has been done to specify and to classify the types of mixed methods designs used by researchers. A parsimonious set of four designs can now be specified as general models for conducting this form of inquiry. Also known are the types of decisions needed to select one design over the others. Researchers decide on their type of design by asking themselves if the qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in tandem, or concurrently, or with one following or building on the other sequentially. Further, the researchers decide on the weight or priority to be given to the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study and on how the two approaches will be mixed in a merged, connected, or embedded fashion. Researchers also decide whether they will use a theory or philosophical perspective as an overall lens for their project. Such a lens might be drawn from feminist perspectives, racial or ethnic perspectives, disability perspectives, or social or health science theories.

Advances have also been made in considering the philosophical foundation for conducting mixed methods research. From an either-or adversarial position between quantitative and qualitative research in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the field has evolved into exploring and debating the philosophical basis for mixed methods, the identification of one “best” philosophical paradigm to use, and the use of multiple paradigms in a mixed methods study. The paradigm debate about whether one can mix different realities of quantitative and qualitative research (and thus conduct mixed methods research) were heatedly debated during the middle 1990s, especially in the field of evaluation. This debate is still present, but writers such as those in the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* edited by Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie have recently advocated for pragmatism with roots in John Dewey,

George Herbert Mead, and William James as the best paradigm. Pragmatism has been interpreted to mean that researchers employ multiple approaches, focus on what works, and acknowledge the importance of the research question rather than the specific methods used. Other writers, such as Donna Mertens have advocated for a transformative-emancipatory perspective as the best approach, a perspective that recognizes the principles of social justice and the study of underrepresented groups. Amid these calls for a best paradigm are those writers such as Jennifer Greene, Creswell, and Plano Clark, who suggest that multiple paradigms may be used in mixed methods research and that they need to be honored, acknowledged, and related to the types of designs chosen by the inquirer.

Another development has been the move toward standardizing the language and terms employed in mixed methods research. For example, terms mentioned earlier for describing the types of designs (e.g., triangulation design) are becoming more frequently used. New terms that have a bimethods orientation are reported in the mixed methods literature. For example, Tony Onwuegbuzie talks about legitimacy as a substitute for validity, Udo Kelle refers to inferences rather than to conclusions, and an entire glossary of terms for mixed methods research is found in Tashakkori and Teddlie's *Handbook of Mixed Methods*. A language of notation for creating diagrams of designs has also developed using arrows to indicate sequence and pluses to show the combination of procedures. Even the shorthand labels of mixed methods (QUAL, QUAN) provide equity in the number of letters and an abbreviated form used in describing mixed methods studies.

The name for this form of inquiry—mixed methods—is also open to debate. It has been called multi-method research (especially in the health sciences), integrated research (suggesting that there is a combination or mixing of information), hybrid research (indicating that it is neither qualitative or quantitative alone), triangulation (showing that the strengths of one method are offset by the weaknesses of the other method), combined research (emphasizing the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches), and mixed research (illustrating that more than methods are being mixed). Since 2003, with the publication of Tashakkori and Teddlie's *Handbook of Mixed Methods*, the term *mixed methods* has, for the most part, been the standard term used to label this form of inquiry.

Challenges

As mixed methods research attracts interest and reaches an increasingly wider audience in fields of study and around the world, some individuals are voicing challenges to this form of inquiry. Writers are concerned about whether qualitative research has been relegated to secondary status in mixed methods experiments that include a small, embedded qualitative component. They are also concerned about integrating incompatible views of reality when researchers combine postpositivist views of a single reality with constructionist views of multiple realities. Some individuals are concerned about the dominance of certain voices in the discussion about mixed methods and whether the discourse is open and accessible to all writers. Others focus on issues of confidentiality in using the same participants in both phases of a sequential two-phase project.

Unquestionably, more discussion is needed about the adaptation and acceptance of mixed methods in various social and health science fields. Continued work needs to be done to better understand the procedures of sampling, the ways of merging quantitative and qualitative data, the suitability of current software programs to aid the mixed methods researcher, how individuals on research teams can effectively coordinate their individual expertise in quantitative and qualitative research, how to bridge the emerging division between philosophical approaches and method approaches, and the challenge to beginning researchers to understanding three approaches to inquiry—quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. Despite these challenges, the movement of mixed methods continues to advance and its growth is seen in an enhanced understanding of it as described in journals, in books, and at national and international conferences.

John W. Creswell

See also *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*; Quantitative Research

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MULTICULTURAL RESEARCH

The term *multicultural* was coined in Canada in the 1960s and initially used in reference to the ethnic and cultural diversity in the population. Over the years, it has been adopted in most Northern and Western countries and is increasingly used in countries of the South. In many places, the term has been expanded to include other aspects of social diversity including gender, (dis)ability, sexual identity, and social class. In all of its iterations, the term is used in three distinct yet interrelated ways:

- to describe a demographic reality,
- to refer to state and institutional policies designed to manage or respond to demographic diversity, and
- to designate an ideal that brings together commitments to include all members of a society or community in the affairs of that entity, to recognize the importance of group identities, and to work for social justice in all spheres of activity.

Multicultural research, then, investigates the range of phenomena associated with the three definitions of multicultural. Of particular note in the realm of qualitative research have been discussions about ensuring research includes voices and perspectives reflecting the range of diversity within the community, examining existing research paradigms and epistemologies to uncover the ways in which these are inherently exclusionary, and considering how research ethics need to be modified to accommodate a multicultural reality.

Research About Diverse Groups

The recognition of demographic diversity caused some researchers to think about ways to include members of minoritized groups among the participants in various

research studies. In the field of marketing, for example, considerable effort continues to be given to conducting focus groups that reflect the demographic diversity of a community. This desire to be more inclusive in terms of participants has been met with mixed results as researchers across a variety of fields have discovered that members of minoritized groups are not always pleased to be asked to participate in research that is designed by “outsiders” for purposes that may have little or no importance for the minoritized group or groups in question. Some attribute this distrust to the legacy of research that was done to (rather than for or with) members of minoritized groups. This past experience has included horrendous examples, such as the medical experiments done on African American men in Tuskegee, Alabama, in which the subjects were allowed to suffer through syphilis with little or no treatment in order that the scientists could study the progress of the disease within this segment of the population. In the social sciences, there have been numerous examples, especially in anthropology, of studies of particular ethnocultural groups that have presented static and distorted pictures of groups. Although not as deadly as the Tuskegee experiments, this type of research has had an insidious effect on how members of dominant groups have perceived members of minoritized groups.

In part, establishing trust is being addressed in some disciplines by attention to creating a more diverse population within the research community. The American Anthropological Association, for example, established a committee on minority participation as early as 1970 for the express purpose of encouraging more researchers of minority backgrounds to enter and stay in the discipline. To this end, the committee has sponsored research on the reasons that people of minoritized backgrounds feel marginalized within the field and has developed mechanisms to support the work of researchers from minoritized groups. Similarly, the American Sociology Association has recently (2005) conducted a study to examine the reasons members of racialized groups are underrepresented in that field. Based on the findings, it seems that members of minoritized groups are being pushed out of the discipline, especially in doctoral studies and in the professoriate. Further research has been recommended to understand the issue more clearly and to develop solutions to the problem.

Additionally, some research bodies have attempted to facilitate collaborative relationships with minoritized

communities such that those being researched become partners in the research process instead of objects of study. In Canada, for example, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council entered into a dialogue with Indigenous researchers to establish new approaches to conducting Aboriginal research. The new paradigm rests on a number of premises including respect for Indigenous knowledge traditions, ensuring Indigenous communities benefit from the research, and placing the research primarily in the control of Indigenous peoples.

Examining Conventional Research Paradigms

As early as 1985, educational researcher John Stanfield noted that true inclusion was more than just a matter of doing research about or with minoritized groups. He pointed to the ethnocentrism that was inherent in the epistemologies underlying existing approaches to social science research. Feminist scholars, such as Patti Lather, raised similar concerns about the sexism that had become an integral part of the traditions of quantitative and qualitative research. This awareness has led researchers from minoritized groups to develop ways of “talking back” to accepted research paradigms and approaches. A number of methods that center decolonization, gender, and race and question taken-for-granted paradigms such as ability and heteronormativity have been and are being developed and refined. Although many of these new paradigms have their roots in concerns about one issue (e.g., sexism or racism), they are increasingly developing in ways that account for the range of diversity.

Critical race theory (CRT), for example, which originated in legal scholarship in the United States specifically for the purpose of drawing attention to the ways in which legal processes and scholarship systematically discount race and support existing regimes of racism, in its more recent iterations examines issues of gender and class as indivisible from issues of race. Closely related to CRT is queer legal theory (QLT), which in turn has been adopted and adapted by researchers in other disciplines. CRT and QLT begin by assuming the permanence of racism and heterosexism, respectively. They draw attention to the ways in which arguments are constructed so that White privilege and heteronormativity continue to be supported even when programs and policies are developed that are ostensibly for the benefit of minoritized groups.

Perhaps most important, they both use the technique of counter-storytelling as a way of challenging the status quo. Because conventional approaches to social science research tend to reinforce notions of minoritized groups as deficient, CRT and QLT ask researchers to ground their analysis in the lived experience of members of minoritized groups and to construct counter-stories that highlight the micro-aggressions, or the everyday injustices, that members of minoritized groups encounter, the systemic barriers and systematic campaigns that are used to claw back policies or programs that might promote the interests of minoritized group members, and the ways in which the lived experience of minoritized group members makes unique contributions to social science knowledge.

The concerns about the ways in which mainstream epistemologies are in themselves oppressive and discriminatory has also led a small number of researchers from dominant groups, working individually or with colleagues from minoritized groups, to think more deeply about their own practice. In the field of communications, for example, Fred Jandt and Delores Tanno have examined the ways in which imperialism, domination, and ethnocentrism are built into research processes. Their work has highlighted the process of othering that has taken place through conventional research traditions and the multiple ways in which the identities of the other have been defined in negative terms. Their argument for paying attention to the ways minoritized groups define themselves echoes across the social sciences. Additionally, they point to the need to think and talk more about the phenomenon of who is allowed to study whom. In particular they note that for a variety of reasons, it has been acceptable within the disciplines for members of dominant groups to study minoritized groups, but that research by minoritized groups about dominant groups has been far more contentious. This tendency is an issue that deserves more attention and discussion among qualitative researchers across the disciplines.

Research Ethics

Conversations about the ethics of research have been taking place across many disciplines as researchers become more familiar with the implications of doing multicultural research. In particular, concerns have surfaced about whether the conventional approach to ethics in research involving human subjects is sufficient to address the issues that arise in working across

a multiplicity of cultures. An issue that is receiving considerable attention in areas such as health care is that of the appropriateness of an ethical model based on an assumption of the primacy of the individual and a model of a contractual relationship. This attention has raised a number of questions that researchers across the disciplines ought to engage. For example, in traditions where major decisions are made collaboratively, is it sufficient or even appropriate to approach people as individuals to become involved in a research project? Might it be necessary to think of ways that informed consent becomes an issue of a collective rather than an individual? Where the basis for relationship is more personal than it typically is in the mainstream of Northern and Western societies, are there ways of thinking about informed consent that can move beyond signing forms that appear to be contracts and can thus interfere with the relationship between researchers and participants? In the quest to find new ethical standards for multicultural research, do we need to abandon the moral fundamentalism on which the current ethics practices are based? Ethical standards have been introduced to protect people from the types of heinous acts that have been committed in the past in the name of research, and they are designed to ensure that issues of integrity, justice, and nonmaleficence remain forefront in the interactions between researchers and research participants. Thus, it is imperative that qualitative researchers engage with others involved in research practice to rethink existing approaches to ethics.

Doing multicultural research requires thinking with colleagues about the range of issues that arise in learning about and representing the diversity that exists in our societies. Above all, it is a matter of working for social justice through all aspects of research.

Reva Joshee

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Cultural Context; Diversity Issues; Marginalized Populations

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MULTIMEDIA IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Over the years, scholars have employed various media and multimedia approaches in the practices of qualitative research. Whereas people often associate the term *multimedia* with electronic or digital media, the practices of recording and representing cultural processes and artifacts through multiple forms of photography, film, or audiorecording go back to the earliest days of cultural anthropology. What is interesting is that as the theoretical assumptions of research and representation in qualitative research have changed, so too have the ways in which researchers have employed media and multimedia approaches in their research designs.

The History of Multimedia in Qualitative Research

In a certain sense, multimedia has been a part of qualitative research since its beginnings. When 19th-century anthropologists attempted to salvage cultures they believed were doomed for extinction due to the spread of modernity, industrialization, and commercial culture, they documented these cultures through photography, early methods of audiorecording, and film.

Among the best known of early salvage ethnographers was Edward Sheriff Curtis, a North American who photographed the Native American Indians in the late 1880s. In 1900, commissioned by J. P. Morgan to produce a series of volumes on Native Americans, Curtis took over 40,000 images and made over 10,000 wax cylinder recordings of Native American language, songs, and rituals. Although these documents are a product of 19th-century romanticism that reflect many racist assumptions concerning Native American

culture, they remain an important collection of one of the few glimpses into earlier Native American life available for contemporary Native Americans, and constitute perhaps the earliest example of multimedia use in qualitative research. Robert Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* (1922), on the lives of Arctic people in a hostile environment, is another key example of these early days of media use in qualitative research. Flaherty, convinced that he was documenting a fading culture, famously edited out all evidence of modern adaptation on the part of the natives he was filming. In the work of Curtis, Flaherty, and many others, media were viewed as unproblematic methods for relaying a realistic portrayal of the cultures under examination. This view of media and the knowledge constructed through qualitative research more generally would not be challenged for several decades.

Film and methods of audiorecording were expensive and cumbersome in the early years of the 20th century. Thus, sociologists as well as anthropologists of this era experimented with the more affordable and more portable medium of photography. One example is Lewis Hine, who had studied sociology under qualitative researchers W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki at the University of Chicago. Drawing upon the urban focus of the Chicago school, Hine became known as a chronicler of the urban conditions of New York City. He photographed thousands of the immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in the United States between 1904 and 1909 and served as photographer for the National Child Labor Committee in the 1920s and 1930s. Hine's work set the standard for urban sociologists and photojournalists who wished to employ visual methods to produce a sympathetic vision of society's disadvantaged.

Although audiorecording was introduced in the United States after U.S. soldiers brought back its techniques from Germany, initial machines were too cumbersome to use in fieldwork settings. The introduction of the audiocassette recorder in the early 1970s forever changed the method of the audio interview in qualitative research. One of the important appeals of the audiocassette recorder was that it bore the promise of an enhanced rigor within qualitative research methods. With cassette recordings, researchers could move from selective, summarized notes to verbatim transcripts and could produce and analyze data using increasingly sophisticated technologies.

The introduction of the audiocassette recorder and later the relatively portable video recorder coincided with the moment of blurred genres within qualitative

methodologies. During this era from roughly 1970 to 1985, researchers embraced a range of theoretical foundations for their work, some of which—such as semiotics, feminism, and cross-cultural and ethnic perspectives—challenged the realist assumptions of media use that had been central to qualitative research in the decades before. Films, photography, audiorecordings, and other multimedia products came to be seen as objects and artifacts in their own right, and qualitative researchers thus grappled with the crisis of representation through multimedia in differing ways. Feminist sociologists experimented with the collection of oral histories and the multimedia presentations of individuals and groups, often forging presentations that broke conventions of academia to bring attention to the ways in which knowledge was co-constructed dialogically. Filmmakers such as Les McLaren and Annie Stiven eschewed the paternalistic voiceover of earlier films in favor of experimental efforts to reflect the complexity of the thought, language, and culture of Papua New Guineans. Others made the processes of filmmaking and writing part of the final research product. Tim and Patsy Asch's *The Ax Fight* is a key reflexive film in this regard as it shocks, then explains, and finally instructs the audience on the power of filmic editing in the construction of cultural knowledge. Rather than attempting to capture and relay what was observed, media in the context of qualitative inquiry thus became an alternative way of contributing to the perception of culture and cultural activities.

Reflexivity about the process of documenting also raised the issue of who was behind the camera, recorder, or pen. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, colonial rule was coming to an end in places such as Bangladesh, Algeria, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Belize, and many Western qualitative researchers shifted knowledge production processes into the hands of those who had traditionally been represented by those of the West. A growing desire to construct their own images and narratives led many Indigenous communities to produce their own films, oral histories, and videos, and, later, CD-ROMs, web pages, and exhibits.

Multimedia in Contemporary Qualitative Inquiry

Today, the use of various media in qualitative inquiry extends through the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, education, and other humanities and social

sciences and is informed by various approaches, including grounded theory, discourse analysis, textual analysis, cultural analysis, visual theory, social learning, and material culture studies.

Currently, several anthropologists are experimenting with documentary filmmaking and the recording of everyday life, constructing documents that aim to engage with contemporary social problems. Elinor Ochs, director of the Sloan Center on the Everyday Lives of Families, is working with colleagues to create a digital video archive of middle-class families engaging in such practices as dinnertime and the return home after work and school. Building on traditions of film and visual anthropology, Lucien Taylor and Lisa Barbash have produced *Made in USA* (1990) on child labor in the Los Angeles garment industry and *In and Out of Africa* (1992) on taste and race relations in the African art market.

With the crisis in representation, scholars from various disciplines increasingly engaged with media cultural studies, as that field problematized the practices of both the construction and the interpretation of mediated materials. In the 1980s, scholars engaged in qualitative interviews organized around television watching, music and radio listening, and the viewing of visual culture. Research by David Morley and Charlotte Brundsen, David Buckingham, Angela McRobbie, and others in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia theorized that cultural practices of media interpretation were creative within the constraints of a hegemony articulated by and reinforced within mainstream media productions. Elihu Katz, Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Ien Ang, and others articulated the situatedness of media constructions and interpretations within various cultures as globalization introduced mediated cultures across national borders and boundaries. Theories of the active audience, while relatively short-lived within media studies itself, continued to have resonance among disciplines that had heretofore approached media unproblematically as propaganda or mechanisms for the unproblematic transmission of meanings.

Several branches of scholarship have broken ground in multimedia qualitative inquiry in recent years. Some researchers have immersed themselves in mediated environments for observation and documentation, such as Sunaina Maira's study of second-generation South Asian immigrants and the "ethno chic" scene of bhangra parties, and Rob Drew's observations of karaoke culture in the United States.

Other scholars have immersed their research participants in the process of media creation for the purpose of observing and analyzing the construction of knowledge and of communicating identities to others. Elizabeth Bird has observed as research participants have engaged in the creation of fictional television programs, Jane Brown has invited adolescent girls to use fashion magazines as the raw materials from which to construct collages, and David Gauntlett has encouraged participants to play with and envision new video games. Equally of interest has been the proliferation of studies of game creators and creative personnel and processes within the media industries.

The digital media environment has created a host of new applications for multimedia within qualitative inquiry, including not only new methods of gathering, archiving, and presenting data, but also new ways in which researchers might interact both with each other and with research participants. During the 1980s and 1990s, researchers began to participate in listservs on qualitative inquiry and constructed web pages through which to share detailed information about ongoing studies. As a larger percentage of the population engaged in online ventures throughout the 1990s, qualitative researchers experimented with studies of online communities and online gaming. In the first decade of the new millennium, qualitative researchers extended earlier listserv and web-based conversations to specialized blogs such as *Savage Minds*, the site for anthropological inquiry. Digital media studies scholars experimented with the creation of digital art that comments on emergent social situations through social theory, art, sound, and animation. In recent years, scholars have posted video essays on YouTube and in various online collaboratives. The internet and email have made online interviewing more accessible, and virtual ethnographies provide opportunities for participant observation in online spaces. Software for the rigorous analysis of qualitative inquiry has further provided legitimacy to methodologies, and online archives provide opportunities for comparative and historical research in ways not dreamed possible in earlier times.

For scholars interested in multimedia methods within qualitative inquiry, the development of new theories to address the emergent digital realm has become a significant challenge. As multimedia qualitative inquiry continues to develop in relation to the assumptions of the field, its new form will no doubt be

reflexive, transdisciplinary, richly sensory—and both inherently problematic and deeply intriguing.

Lynn Schofield Clark

See also Audiorecording; Ethics and New Media; Film and Video in Qualitative Research; Internet in Qualitative Research; Photographs in Qualitative Research; Videorecording

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MUSIC IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Music in qualitative research can refer to both qualitative studies focusing on musical contents and issues and to research shaped by musical concepts and approaches.

Research on Musical Contents and Issues

This section provides a brief overview of qualitative research in social sciences disciplines that focus on musical issues, specifically ethnomusicology, sociology of music, and music education.

Ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicology emerged in the late 19th century and early 20th century in Germany and central Europe, practiced by composers such as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály and musicologists such as Curt Sachs, shortly after taking roots in the United States. The discipline of ethnomusicology draws its intellectual roots, theories, and methods primarily from musicology and cultural anthropology. Ethnomusicologists are typically concerned with broad questions on the use and function of music, the role and status of musicians, the concepts that lie behind music behavior, and other similar

questions, aiming to understand music in the context of human behavior and meaning-making. As leading scholars Alan Merriam and Bruno Nettl have noted, the emphasis is upon music in its total context: the investigator aims to gain a broad knowledge of the way music fits into and is used within the wider culture. Given these goals and the early recognition (decades before other social sciences disciplines) of cultural context and situated meaning as shaping knowledge and understanding, ethnomusicology has drawn on qualitative methods from the beginning.

Initially ethnomusicology focused on non-European music of oral traditions, but in more recent years the field has expanded to embrace various musical styles from all parts of the world, including Western vernacular settings. In the postmodern turn of the past 30 years and the eroding distinctions between mainstream versus exotic cultures, as well as the juxtaposition of research genres and methods, ethnomusicology has provided an important research model for other music disciplines, including the sociology of music and music education.

Sociology of Music

Sociology of music is commonly defined as the application and development of sociological theories and methodologies to examine the role of music in society and to study music behavior and attitudes as part of social action. Sociology of music originated in the early 20th century in Europe and the United States, mostly using philosophical and quantitative approaches. In the past 30 years, as a result of the postmodern turn that affected all the social sciences and the expansion of research issues and contents in sociology, its methodologies encompassed qualitative methods. The paradigm shift from an objective reality (as exemplified, for example, by Immanuel Kant's notion of universal taste) to multiple, constructed realities that are grounded in specific social contexts and are worthy of attention required exploratory research methods that examine what people do and the meanings they attributed to it. Sociology of music is closely related to the sociology of culture; in particular, the sociology of popular culture. The view of music as a sociological and cultural entity heightened attention to the issues of identity formation through music. Other important areas of research are the ongoing construction of musical fields including the systems and logics of production and consumption, meanings,

and attitudes; patterns of evolving musical taste; and the role of music in everyday life.

The interest in diverse social classes and cultures and their respective values, recognizing the need to understand different social perspectives, motivated researchers to reach beyond their traditional disciplinary boundaries to disciplines such as ethnomusicology and folklore in conceptualizing and designing research studies and analyzing and interpreting behaviors and events. Thus, the expansion of the field is manifested in the number of publications, the softening of boundaries between disciplines with increased dialogue and interchange, and in the range of theoretical perspectives and diversity of methodologies.

Music Education

Research in music education, dating to the 1930s, initially was modeled after psychology, drawing mostly on quantitative methods with the occasional philosophical and historical research. The 1980s witnessed the cautious but steady emergence of qualitative studies, opening up new directions for research, including the study of school music, with a focus on the operational, perceived, and experienced curricula; musical cultures of children; and creativity, composition, and musical thought processes of listeners, composers, and conductors. The recognition that music teaching and learning are embedded in social contexts and meanings acknowledged the diversity of students' cultural and musical values and made for a more pluralistic worldview.

The use of qualitative methodologies increased significantly in the mid-'90s and after. An increasing international exchange of ideas and scholars brought in phenomenological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives. This culture of openness and expansion generated new venues for research, including the two qualitative conferences at the University of Illinois, at Urbana-Champaign (1994, 1996); the biannual *Research in Music Education* in Exeter, England (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007); and *Narrative in Music Education* (2006, 2008) in Arizona and established new research journals such as *Research Studies in Music Education* and *Music Education Research*. Cumulatively, these events and journals are evidence of the growing prominence of qualitative scholarship.

Research in music education encompasses diverse qualitative genres, from the applied genres of evaluation, formative and action research, to the more basic

genres of ethnography and phenomenology. The examination of the educational aspects of musical cultures informed by ethnomusicology and studies of people's lived experience of music informed by phenomenology co-exist with and inform the school-based, practice-oriented teacher and action research and formative research with its emphasis on the development of materials and use of technology.

Research Shaped by Musical Concepts and Sensitivities

The first section centered on qualitative research that examines musical contents and issues. This section discusses how musicianship can contribute to the processes and products of qualitative research. This discussion is part of the broader domain of aesthetic and arts-based inquiry. In the conversation surrounding arts-based inquiry, starting in the 1990s, it was the disciplines of visual art, literature, and drama that have taken a leading role; the voice of music was mute. Ironically, researchers in music education, like colleagues in other scholarly disciplines, have privileged the visual, the numerical, and the textual over the auditory, the embodied, and the textural.

However, there is an increasing recognition of the important contributions of music to research in the social sciences. At the heart of music-based inquiry is the assumption that the personal and cultural dimensions of lived experience can be better understood by drawing on what are essentially auditory and musical experiences, addressing areas of qualitative inquiry that have not been explored. Involvement in music as creators, performers, and listeners requires engagement with the evanescent aspects of world, aspects essential for research in the human sciences.

The contributions of musicianship to social science research can be applied to three aspects of the research endeavor: design and data collection, drawing on embodiment, improvisation, and dialogue; data analysis and representation, drawing on musical elements and concepts; and the communication of research, including music presentation as research that draws on performance.

Conceptualizing and Cultivating Sensitivities

Viennese conductor and philosopher of music Victor Zuckerkandl observed that in seeing, touching, and tasting, one reaches through the sensation to an object, to a thing. Tone is the only sensation not that of

a thing. Highlighting the evanescent, processual qualities of music, musicologist David Burrows has suggested that we see the world as a noun and hear it as a verb. The theme of stability versus fluidity is developed by philosopher of music and music education Wayne Bowman, who has pointed out that there is no sonic counterpart to the constancy and objectivity characteristic of vision: sonorous experience is invariably the experience of process and change—change of direction, of quality, of intensity. Cultural historian Walter Ong comments that all sensation takes place in time, but no other sensory field totally resists a holding action, stabilization, in quite this way. Vision not only can register motion, but it can also register immobility. Indeed, it favors immobility, for to examine something closely by vision, one prefers to have it quiet.

Given that fluidity is basic to all lived experience, cultural and personal, working within the fluid auditory mode heightens attention to qualities of experience that are hard to capture by traditional methods. Drawing on these qualities, researcher of music and arts education Liora Bresler highlights the fluidity of observations and interviews, the attunement they involve, and their embodied and improvisatory nature that attends to the temporal evanescent nature of lived experience. Learning to hear cultivates sensitivities that are essential to the conduct of educational research, fieldwork as well as analysis, involving a tuning that is essential in establishing connections and achieving empathic understanding. It is this tuning that allows improvisation, an interaction with participants and with data that is responsive.

Conceptualizing and Structuring Qualitative Research

Musical processes are parallel to (and some would say, inherent to) qualitative research processes, shaping data collection, data analysis, and data representation. Traditional scientific research has focused on rigorous and replicable methods and representation that adheres to a formal scientific style. However, as Karl Popper has observed half a century ago, scientific methods emphasize the prespecified aspects of refutation, rather than the messier, complex processes of generating conjectures and theories. Music-based inquiry attends to these processes of meaning-making and the construction of knowledge and understanding.

The notion that musical concepts can provide structures for conceptualizing and communicating qualitative research was raised in Bresler and Robert Stake's chapter in Richard Colwell's *Handbook on Research in Music*

Teaching and Learning (and exemplified in Bresler's writing) and by Fred Erickson in his important work on musicality in speech. Gertina van Schalkwyk uses the metaphor of a concerto and the polyrhythmic patterns of an African ceremonial rituals for organizing and structuring research. Peter Gouzouasis and Alexandra LaMonde chose the musical form of a sonata to examine tetrads, cognitive models of a simple fourfold structure, to refine or discover entities in cultures and technologies that are hidden from view in the psyche.

A third category of music-based inquiry is what Melissa Cahnmann refers to as stand-alone art, where musical performances are presented as products of research. Following the tradition of A/r/tography, music educator Gouzouasis integrates the roles of the artist-researcher-teacher in his music performances.

Challenges

For the past 40 years, the scholarly qualitative research community has discussed and debated the appropriateness of various criteria, generating alternative trustworthy criteria for both processes and products. Music-based inquiry, hoping to expand research not only beyond the quantitative but also beyond the verbal, faces the challenges of creating new sets of criteria compatible with the new goals and understanding of its research. Still at its infancy, the next decades will tell what is good music-based inquiry and what music-based inquiry is good for!

Liora Bresler

See also Aesthetics; Arts-Based Research; Humanities, Qualitative Research in

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N

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Narrative analysis refers to a family of analytic methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form. As in all families, there is conflict and disagreement among those holding different perspectives. Analysis of data is only one component of the broader field of narrative inquiry. Methods are case centered, and the cases that form the basis for analysis can be individuals, identity groups, communities, organizations, or even nations. Methods can be used to interpret different kinds of texts—oral, written, and visual.

The term *narrative* is illusive, carrying many meanings and used in a variety of ways by different scholars, often used synonymously with story. In the familiar everyday form, a speaker connects events to a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings listeners are supposed to take away from the story. Events are perceived as important, selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular listener. The definition emphasizes the contextual nature of oral stories; they are told (indeed performed) with the active participation of an audience and are designed to accomplish particular aims. Oral stories are strategic, functional, and purposeful. Other forms of oral communication include chronicles, reports, arguments, and question and answer exchanges.

Among scholars working in the human sciences with personal (first-person) accounts for research purposes, the narrative unit can differ, and its form is often linked to a discipline. In anthropology and social history, narrative can refer to a life story that the

researcher weaves from threads of interviews, observations, and documents. At the other end of the continuum lies the very restrictive definition of social linguistics. Here, narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centered and temporally organized. Resting in the middle on a continuum of working definitions is research in psychology and sociology. Here, personal narrative encompasses long sections of talk—extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of single or multiple interviews or therapeutic conversations. The diversity of working definitions underscores the absence of a single meaning or unit of analysis. The term is employed in the social sciences to refer to texts at several levels that overlap: stories told by research participants (stories, which are themselves interpretive), the interpretive account an investigator develops based on interviews and fieldwork observation (i.e., a story about stories), and even the interpretive narrative a reader constructs after engaging with the participant's and investigator's narratives. Analytic work with visual materials pushes the elusive boundaries of narrative definition further.

In my thinking over time about the burgeoning field of narrative research, I have grouped the various forms of analysis into a simple typology: thematic, structural, dialogic-performative, and visual narrative analysis. The thematic form interrogates what a story or group of stories is about, while the structural form attends to how a story is composed to communicate particular communicative aims. These two broad approaches are the building blocks of all narrative analysis; others draw on components of them and add

other dimensions. The dialogic or performative analysis interrogates how talk among speakers is interactively (i.e., dialogically) produced and performed as narrative; the investigator is actively present in the text. Finally, the visual narrative approach links words and images in a visual narrative analysis in which investigators interpret found images (in archives and other collections) and craft a narrative where the researcher is part of the image-making process. In all four analytic approaches, study is grounded in the particular: how a speaker or writer assembles and sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning, that is, to make particular points to an audience.

Attention to sequences of action distinguishes narrative methods from other qualitative approaches. Narrative analysts interrogate intention and language—how and why events are storied, not simply the content to which language refers. Narrative analysts ask the following questions: For whom was the story constructed and for what purpose? How is it composed? What cultural resources does it draw on or take for granted? What storehouse of cultural plots does it call up? What does the story accomplish? Are there gaps and inconsistencies that might suggest preferred, alternative, or counternarratives? There are many ways to narrate an experience: How a speaker, writer, or visual artist chooses to do it is significant, suggesting lines of inquiry that would be missed without focused attention or close reading. Some investigators in the social sciences attend to language, form, and social context (including audience) more than others do.

Elliot Mishler contrasts category-centered approaches in social research, which strip individuals of agency and consciousness, with case-based approaches that can restore agency in research and theory; individuals are respected as subjects with histories and intentions. The study of cases can generate categories or, to put it differently, theoretical generalization; the histories of the physical and social sciences are full of examples where theoretical propositions were derived from close study of individual instances. Narrative analysis joins this long tradition of case-centered inquiry, interrogating stories developed in interviews and fieldwork and in archival documents and visual media.

Catherine Kohler Riessman

See also Interpretive Research; Narrative Inquiry; Storytelling; Visual Narrative Inquiry

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NARRATIVE GENRE ANALYSIS

Narrative has been studied extensively in the social sciences as a privileged communication mode by means of which social actors make sense of their self and the world around them. This focus has implicated a longstanding inquiry into personal experience (i.e., autobiographical) narratives of nonshared past events (i.e., either in the form of life stories or of key-events stories) that are normally elicited in research interviews. In the light of this history, the questions and methods of narrative genre analyses have been shaped by the use of such a type of narrative as a point of entry into tellers' identities. For instance, the emphasis has been on what a well-formed structure or a rupture of structure in a telling may mean with regard to the teller's sense of self.

Overall, the dominant view of the narrative genre's main characteristics can be summed up as follows: a coherent and well-structured telling with a beginning, middle, and an end that grants the teller strong telling rights. This telling is about a series of temporally ordered events that build up to a complicating action that is normally resolved. The teller employs a variety of linguistic and other semiotic means to show the significance (i.e., tellability) of the events and the emotional impact they have had on him or her.

Underlying the above view is a tradition of essentializing and homogenizing narrative as one archetypal genre. The move to the exploration of narrative variability has thus been slower than in other genre analyses. The scrutiny of the different types of stories people tell in a variety of ordinary and institutional contexts can mostly be found within socially minded linguistic studies. These studies have demonstrated that the kinds of stories told and the ways they are told depend both on the local context (e.g., who tells a story to whom and why) and on the larger social and cultural contexts. This context-specificity involves the types and degrees of co-construction between teller and audience, the kinds of events narrated, how (much) a story is embedded into its surrounding discursive context, the emphasis placed on presenting the events as factual and authentic, and so on. Genre analysis has also shown that variations from the narrative prototype of personal past events are frequent outside the narrative interview. For instance, stories of shared (or known) events and of future or hypothetical events abound in conversational contexts. Thus, the importance of including these and other types of stories in narrative genre analysis not just as atypical but as stories in their own right that serve specific purposes in specific contexts is becoming increasingly recognized.

On a final note, narrative genre analysis has moved away from an earlier emphasis on prototypical text features to an exploration of narrative genres as social practices: as routine and socioculturally ways of acting in ways that link with and produce social life.

Alexandra Georgakopoulou

See also Autobiography; Context and Contextuality; Narrative Analysis; Narrative Interview; Textual Analysis

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NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding experience. It is also a research methodology. It is, then, both a view of the phenomena of people's experiences and a methodology for narratively inquiring into experience and thus allows for the intimate study of individuals' experiences over time and in context. Beginning with a narrative view of experience, researchers attend to place, temporality, and sociality, from within a methodological three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that allows for inquiry into both researchers' and participants' storied life experiences. Within this space, each story told and lived is situated and understood within larger cultural, social, and institutional narratives. Narrative inquiry is marked by its emphasis on relational engagement between researcher and research participants. Narrative inquiry, across various disciplines and multiple professional fields, aims at understanding and making meaning of experience through conversations, dialogue, and participation in the ongoing lives of research participants. Each discipline and field of study brings slightly different ways of understanding and different contexts to the narrative study of experience that deepen the methodology of narrative inquiry.

The introduction of narrative inquiry as a research methodology has reshaped the field of qualitative research, especially with its close attention to experience as a narrative phenomenon and its emphasis on relational engagement that places relational ethics at the heart of inquiry. This entry reviews the process of narrative inquiry and its philosophical foundations, describes the creation of field and research texts, and explores ethical issues that are raised with this methodology.

Narrative in Qualitative Research

Over the past 2 decades, researchers have taken a narrative turn to understanding experience. Although there is a history of narrative work within the traditions of narratology, in the 1990s researchers began to specifically develop a research methodology called narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry and narrative research, terms used almost interchangeably in the current research literature, signify a research methodology. However, within the broad field of qualitative research, there are many analytic methods or forms of

narrative analysis. Some forms of narrative analysis are used as methods within other qualitative research methodologies.

In studying and understanding experience narratively, researchers recognize the centrality of relationships, the relationships among participants and researchers, and the relationships of experiences studied through and over time and in unique places and multilayered contexts. Amidst these relationships, participants relate and live through stories that speak of and to their experiences of living. The process of narrative inquiry is composed of engaging with participants in the field, creating field texts, and writing both interim and final research texts. Throughout this process, ethical considerations require that researchers remain attentive to ethical tensions, obligations, and responsibilities in their relationships with participants.

Philosophical Underpinnings

John Dewey's theory of experience is most often cited as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry. Dewey's two criteria of experience, interaction and continuity enacted in situations, provide the grounding for attending to experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality. Jerome Bruner's ideas about paradigmatic and narrative knowing in psychology, David Carr's ideas about the narrative structure and coherence of lives in philosophy, Mary Catherine Bateson's ideas about continuity and improvisation as a response to the uncertainties in life contexts in anthropology, and Robert Coles's ideas about narrative in life and teaching practice in medicine also provide a philosophical base for narrative inquiry. As narrative inquirers seek to inquire into experience, they must begin their inquiries with narrative self-studies into their own experiences. Narrative inquiries, thus, have both autobiographical narrative groundings as well as more theoretical groundings. The autobiographical narrative inquiries are the starting points for initially shaping and deepening the research puzzle.

Process of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiries begin with inquiring into researchers' own stories of experience. Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to inquire continually into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry.

Within the methodology of narrative inquiry, there are particular methods that are employed. There are two starting points for narrative inquiry: listening to individuals tell their stories and living alongside participants as they live their stories. The most frequently used starting point is with telling of stories, and the methods most commonly used are interviews and conversations or interviews as conversations. Some narrative inquirers also use artifacts to trigger the telling of stories. In the second starting point, narrative inquirers begin with living alongside participants using visual media and/or participant observation. For narrative inquirers who begin with living stories, telling stories using methods such as conversations, oral histories, and interviews also plays a part. Whether the beginning point is living or telling stories, inquirers need to attend to the ways individual narratives of experience are embedded in social, cultural, and institutional narratives. Each inquiry reflects the ambiguities, complexities, difficulties, and uncertainties encountered by the inquirer as she or he lives in the field and writes field texts and interim and final research texts.

In the Field

Prior to engaging with research participants, narrative inquirers need to undertake a reflective inquiry process into their narrative understandings in relation to the particular research phenomenon with its attendant research puzzle. These narrative reflections are central to the research process and become part of the research texts. Entering the field begins with negotiation of relationships and the research puzzles to be explored. Negotiations of purpose, transitions, intentions, and texts are an ongoing process throughout the inquiry. Narrative inquirers also negotiate ways they can be helpful to the participant(s) both during and after the research.

As the negotiations begin, narrative inquirers are attentive to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space and attend to experience temporally, socially, and spatially. Once in the field, researchers recognize that narrative inquiry is a way of living in the field and as such, the research becomes part of life. Given the complexity and depth of the research, researchers' lives become entwined with participants' lives.

Field Texts

Depending on the starting point of the inquiry (living or telling), different methods are used to compose field

texts. Field texts, commonly called data, are composed from conversations, interviews, and participant observations, as well as from artifacts. Artifacts that may become part of the field texts include artwork, photographs, memory box items, documents, plans, policies, annals, and chronologies. Field texts are co-compositions, reflective of researchers and participants, and need to be understood as telling and showing those aspects of experience that the relationship allows. Field texts are composed with attention to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Temporality comes into play in two ways: the first is that field texts are composed over multiple interactions with participants; the second, through participants' reflections on and of earlier life experiences. Sociality directs attention inward toward the participants' thoughts, emotions, and moral responses and outward to events and actions. Place directs attention to places where lives were lived as well as to the places where inquiry events occur.

Field texts are embedded within research relationships and reflect multiple nested stories. Field texts are shaped into interim research texts, which are shared and negotiated with participants prior to being composed into final research texts. Research texts are composed from field texts and interim research texts.

Narrative inquirers are well served by participating within a response community. Within a response community, works in progress (interim research texts) can be shared and discussed. Response communities are critical elements within the inquiry, as they help inquirers recognize how they shape both the experiences of their participants and their research puzzles. These communities consist of people the researcher values and trusts to provide responsive and responsible dialogue about the unfolding inquiry. Response communities, marked by diversity, can enrich the research, particularly if they are composed of interdisciplinary, intergenerational, cross-cultural, and academic and nonacademic members. Given the iterative nature of narrative inquiries, there is continuous interplay among field texts, interim research texts, and final research texts.

Research Texts

During the composition of research texts, narrative inquirers are attentive to both participants and possible public audiences. Research texts are shared with participants, who remain the most influential voice in the move to final research texts. Research texts need to reflect the narrative quality of the experiences of

both participants and researcher and the ways these stories of experiences are embedded within social, cultural, and institutional narratives.

Research texts are negotiated between researcher and participants. Researchers, however, also owe responsibility to the scholarly community and must compose research texts that answer the questions of "so what?" or "who cares?" These questions speak to the social significance of each narrative inquiry. Research texts can take multiple forms, including textual, visual, and audible forms.

In narrative inquiry it is imperative to address the question of how larger social, institutional, and cultural narratives inform our understanding and shape the researchers' and participants' stories by which they live. Paying attention to these contextual narratives enables researchers to further deepen the complexity of the living and telling of stories.

Ultimately, research texts develop out of the repeated asking of questions concerning the significance of the research. Research texts also attend to the personal and practical significance of the research, paying attention to the growth for researchers and participants that can occur in the (re)living and (re)telling of the experience.

Ethics

Because narrative inquiry is a relational research methodology, ethical issues are central throughout the inquiry. Ethical requirements move beyond institutional requirements of privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent. Attending to the way participation in a narrative inquiry shapes each participant's life, the negotiations of entry, exit, and representations of experience are central ethical concerns. Issues of informed consent bring forth questions of who has the right to give consent, how one maintains informed consent throughout the inquiry, and how participants consent to final research texts that reveal personal experiences and place those experiences within a larger context. Researchers require thoughtful sensitivity and wide-awakeness as they compose research texts, particularly when they work with marginalized and/or vulnerable populations, such as with children and in cross-cultural settings.

Narrative inquirers have to balance issues of voice, signature, and audience. Within each inquiry, researchers attempt to represent the multiplicity of voices and signatures, which are reflected in the

importance of diverse textual structures and accounts. Narrative inquiries are always filled with rich temporally unfolding narrative accounts, as they represent the lived and told experiences of participants and researchers. Yet, as narrative inquirers come to know in relational ways, the inquiries also become an intervention, which requires the researcher to remain attentive to ethical issues long after leaving the field and composing final research texts.

D. Jean Clandinin and Vera Caine

See also Collaborative Research; Narrative Analysis; Relational Ethics; Visual Narrative Inquiry; Voice

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History (JNLH). The working definition of narratives is that they usually concern real or pretend memories, often largely in the past tense, though there are narratives given in the future or historical present tense. Narratives often contain a chronological sequence of events, but not always. Narratives are often spoken, but there are musical, pictorial, dramatic, and other performed narratives. At present, some focus on the analysis of narrative; others, on its use. All studies of narrative require interpretation—hermeneutic scholarship, necessitating the use of qualitative methods.

As of mid-2006, *NI* published 394 contributions, including 247 reports of original research, 120 responses to original research, 22 book reviews, and 5 editorials. Of the reports of original research, 76% used exclusively qualitative methods and 24% used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. No articles were exclusively quantitative. Of the articles that used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, over 80% dealt with developmental psychology and education, especially language acquisition involving children exclusively or children speaking with adults (e.g., parents, teachers, or policemen). Although there is no reason that qualitative methods cannot be used in conjunction with quantitative methods, the nature of narrative inquiry about individuals past adolescence does not seem to lend itself to the grouping variables essential for quantitative analysis.

The qualitative methods used in *NI* articles come from diverse academic traditions, including psychology, linguistics, education, English, language studies, sociology, anthropology, medicine, nursing, health studies, history, communication studies and disorders, journalism, geriatrics, and political science. The *JNLH* was conceived of as an interdisciplinary publishing venue. What is astonishing is that after over 15 years practitioners of such diverse disciplines still find common ground in the study of narrative.

Narratives from individuals of many cultures and walks of life are published in *NI*. Though most are from North Americans and/or from Europeans, South Americans, Asians, Africans, mid-Easterners, and others are also common. All socioeconomic groups are represented, though special attention is given to marginalized individuals—including Holocaust survivors, prostitutes, beggars, illegal immigrants, and mental patients. Qualitative methods are especially adept at facilitating one's understanding of individuals very different from oneself.

From the outset, *NI* published responses to others' scholarship, and such responses constitute 30% of

NARRATIVE INQUIRY (JOURNAL)

Narrative Inquiry (NI) began publication in 1991 and was originally known as *Journal of Narrative and Life*

what is published. In this way, too, the scholarship of *NI* recruits qualitative methods for close listening and careful reading of others.

Allyssa McCabe

See also Marginalization

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NARRATIVE INTERVIEW

A narrative interview is an interview that is organized to facilitate the development of a text that can be interpreted through narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is guided by a theory of narrative, and these theories of narrative vary in the influence of the reader, the text, and the intent of the author on interpretation. For this reason, the content and structure of a narrative interview will depend both on the theory of narrative being used in the analysis and on the research question. That being said, there are some commonalities among all narratives that will facilitate interviews for use in narrative analysis.

Informants often relate experiences in narrative format; that is, they select and order events in ways that both reflect their own meanings and convey those meanings to others. The content and structure of the narrative contains implied meanings that are as important to understanding the narrative as the overt meanings—and perhaps more important. Narrative interviews provide informants with many opportunities to select and order events themselves rather than to put events into a preordained structure. For this reason, narrative interviews are often organized temporally, in the manner of a life story or as in life history research. Questions such as, “When did you first notice . . .” or “How did you begin . . .” allow respondents to set the perimeters of the temporal context they find relevant. Decisions about relevant and irrelevant content are made during the course of the interview, both by the informant and in collaboration with the researcher, but no information is a priori ruled out, for any event or interpretation can contribute to the meaning of a story.

Narrative interviews can use semi-structured or unstructured formats depending upon the research

question and the goal of the analysis. Questions should be sufficiently open-ended to encourage participants to explain themselves fully, but it is not necessary that every question elicit a story. Often narratives are constructed by the researcher from component parts offered by the informant across the interview or interviews. Questions that are closed (i.e., require a yes or no answer) or that offer a set of fixed choices (e.g., always, sometimes, never) do not facilitate the development of narratives. However, questions that begin, for example, “Tell me a story about . . .” may intimidate informants who do not normally think in those terms. Narrative interviews, thus, require artful design, with questions carefully ordered to build on previous questions. Narrative interviews are also facilitated by the use of neutral probes that elicit information about actions and explanations. Questions such as, “How did it happen that . . .” or “What did you do then?” elicit the thinking that underlies the connection of the events or experiences selected for the informant’s story. Revealing those connections is the primary goal of the narrative interview.

Lioness Ayres

See also Life Stories; Narrative Analysis; Narrative Inquiry; Narrative Texts

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NARRATIVE TEXTS

Narrative texts are a form of discourse that has been fixed by writing. Some postmodern scholars have defined text to include anything that can be interpreted, from a photograph to a film score. For this entry, Paul Ricoeur’s definition of a text as a discourse fixed by writing is used; however, it is important to recognize that some scholars recognize forms other than the written word as having textuality.

Scholars of rhetoric divide texts into different types depending on the author’s intent. Narratives are characterized by temporal organization: beginning to

middle to end. Events unfolding over time constitute the plot. Other central features of narratives include characters, a setting for the plot, and a theme or message that is conveyed both by the words of the story and by the selection and ordering of events that are included within it. Narratives, as compared to expository texts, use voice to convey a particular point of view—all narratives take a point of view, although the point of view may be that of an omniscient observer. Point of view is used to support the narrative's theme by supporting the credibility or worthiness of the narrator. The purpose of a narrative text is to tell a story, usually the story of a resolution to a problem.

In contrast, the purpose of expository texts is to explain, inform, or teach. The voice of expository texts is therefore neutral and objective. Recipes, laundry lists, and textbooks are examples of expository texts. Research reports are often structured as expository texts, using language that minimizes the author's voice and obscures the role of selection and exclusion of events or information in the development of a theme or message. Many qualitative researchers have decried this approach and developed alternative forms of research representation, some of which include narrative elements such as the story of the research or the researcher.

Both narrative and expository texts can be used as qualitative data. For example, historians often rely on expository texts such as lists of supplies ordered by a military unit during a particular period of World War I or by cataloguing the equipment advertised for use by nurses in the 1940s. Similarly, interviewers may request expositions from informants, perhaps as journal entries or logs, or may elicit expositions in interviews and then fix those expositions as texts via transcription. Interviewers may also elicit narratives from informants, either in writing or as discourse.

The boundary between expository and narrative texts is itself controversial. Some scholars contend that all texts are narrative because of the meanings they convey and because of the deliberate selection or omission of events or information. This liminality is nowhere more apparent than in qualitative research reports in which the exposition of findings, the voice of the author, the context of the study, and the narratives of informants come together.

Lioness Ayres

See also Life Stories; Narrative Analysis; Narrative Inquiry; Rhetoric; Storytelling; Voice

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NATURALISTIC DATA

Naturalistic data can be defined as data that make up records of human activities that are neither elicited by nor affected by the actions of social researchers. The test for whether data are naturalistic is if the social researcher is ill, interviews and ethnographic observations would have to be cancelled, but therapy sessions, parliamentary debates, and everyday phone calls would still take place.

From the start, social science has worked largely with self-reported materials (e.g., surveys or interviews) or researcher-manipulated materials (e.g., experiments). Occasional critics argued for unobtrusive measures, yet in practice this attempt took the form of indirect measures of behavior (e.g., garbage as a cue to consumption habits) or the use of materials such as diaries with little discussion of their analysis. Although ethnographers often collect material through observation, this collection is typically in the form of fieldnotes or interviews that embed researcher categories into the material, making it particularly hard to recover the original patterning of the interaction.

The analysis of records of people interacting was stimulated most fundamentally by Harvey Sacks and the tradition of conversation analysis that he and his colleagues developed. This work started to exploit developments in audio and now videorecording technology.

Advantages commonly offered for working with naturalistic data include the following:

1. It does not flood the research setting with the researcher's own categories, which are embedded in the questions.
2. It avoids encouraging participants to provide normatively appropriate descriptions, as interviews often do.
3. It does not leave the researcher to make a range of potentially problematic inferences from the data

collection arena to the topic of study. Claims about health helplines, for example, are not dependent on what callers or nurses say about health helplines.

4. It can open the researcher to novel issues and concerns that were not predicted at the start of the research.
5. It is a rich record of people living their lives, pursuing goals, managing institutional tasks, and so on.

Naturalistic data can allow readers and referees of research reports to access transcripts of the material and, increasingly, web-based audio and videorecords.

In practice, a variety of sources of reactivity may arise, for participants will be aware of the recording and may have some idea of the research questions. Moreover, the processes of transcription themselves involve theoretical and analytic judgments that prioritize some phenomena (e.g., overlap between speakers) and downplay others (e.g., regional accent). Although naturalistic data may not be orchestrated by the researcher as in an interview or experiment, it is not entirely independent of researcher's categories and judgments. For this reason, the term *naturalistic data* is preferable to natural data.

It is likely that social researchers will increasingly work with naturalistic data as new digital technologies make it simpler to capture and work with high quality audio and videorecords of people living their lives.

Jonathan Potter

See also Conversation Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Discursive Psychology; Observational Research; Participant Observation; Transcription

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in life experiences. This type of inquiry stems from the naturalistic paradigm that situates itself opposite the positivist paradigm. The naturalistic paradigm, or naturalism, makes specific claims about epistemology (i.e., how one comes to know), ontology (i.e., the nature of human existence), and axiology (i.e., one's values) that influence naturalistic inquiry.

Characteristics of Naturalistic Inquiry

There are several characteristics fundamental to naturalistic inquiry. One value central to naturalistic inquiry is that reality is multiple and socially constructed. The concept of multiple realities resists the notion that the truth of human experience is out there waiting for researchers to discover it. Reality is subjective rather than objective. Subjective and multiple realities are possible because all knowledge is socially constructed. The concept of social construction places emphasis on human interaction, and the context in which those interactions occur, as the basis for how one comes to know or understand phenomena. Researchers cannot understand human behavior outside of its context or natural environment such as village life, organizations, night clubs, and classrooms. In addition, the researcher, the people under investigation, and the setting influence each other; thus, no explicit distinction exists between the researcher and the researched. The lack of a distinct boundary between the investigator and informants acknowledges the implicit and explicit influence researchers have on the setting. The relationship between the researcher and the object of inquiry (which includes the people and the context) are interdependent, thus influencing observations and findings.

The relationships between the researcher, research participants, and context inhibit value-free, neutral, or unbiased inquiry. In addition, other preexisting factors contribute to the value-laden nature of research, such as personal experience and interest in a particular topic, because they will shape researchers' understanding of phenomenon. Naturalistic inquiry is value bound because paradigmatic and theoretical choices guiding inquiry dictate the methods used for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Conducting Naturalistic Inquiry

Naturalistic inquiry is based on the notion that context is essential for understanding human behavior, and

NATURALISTIC INQUIRY

Naturalistic inquiry focuses research endeavors on how people behave in natural settings while engaging

acquiring knowledge of human experience outside of its natural context is not possible. Conducting research in participants' natural environments is essential. Researchers must meet participants where they are, in the field, so that data collection occurs while people are engaging in their everyday practices. Research conducted in the field allows investigators to observe participants in action in an effort to obtain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. During the process of engaging in naturalistic inquiry, the researcher becomes the instrument for collecting data. Human beings as data collecting instruments are necessary because only humans can gather and evaluate the meaning of complex interactions. Attending to these processes in the field is necessary because the complexity of human interaction is available only in the settings of everyday life, not in a controlled laboratory setting or through created instruments.

Conducting naturalistic inquiry is an inductive and emergent process where researchers build upon and ground their findings in the data collected. The process of conducting naturalistic research, including study design, emerges from experiences in the field while an investigator is actively engaged in inquiry because human phenomena and action cannot be predicted. Thus, observations in the field will influence and promote changes to a study's design. Researchers entering the field intent on studying a specific behavior may find another type of interaction worthy of investigation. Although study design is inductive and changes as research progresses, strategic planning is necessary for successful inquiry.

Selecting a Site

Selecting a site or multiple sites for investigation should involve purposive or deliberate sampling to ensure that participants have direct experience with the issues or topics under examination. This type of sampling increases the breadth and depth of data collected. There are several techniques for identifying sites for studying human behavior within its natural context. Researchers can study locations to which they already have access and familiarity or seek out unknown settings where gaining access or entry requires permission from the party or parties with the authority to grant access. Once access is granted to an unfamiliar scene or a researcher decides to enter a context in which she or he is a member, the researcher

must then engage the various methods she or he will use to collect data systematically.

Data Collection

Naturalistic inquiry employs several qualitative methods for data collection because these approaches capture the complex nuances of human experience. Naturalistic researchers can use ethnography, ethnomethodology, critical ethnography, or autoethnography to conduct naturalistic inquiries. Each of these methodologies includes some type of observation. Researchers complete this observation in the roles of participant-observer, complete participant, observer-participant, or complete observer. The site of field research, including any restraints against how data are recorded, dictates the type of role a researcher uses and will determine a researcher's level of immersion in the scene. Researchers record observations from the field in the form of fieldnotes. Not all scenes allow investigators to take notes while simultaneously engaging in observation. In these instances, researchers record observations as soon as possible after leaving the field. Experiences are recorded in fieldnotes chronologically. Fieldnotes should describe observations in significant detail, incorporating interactions between and with participants. Fieldnotes include researchers' impressions, thoughts, and feelings about exchanges. To supplement fieldnotes, researchers may conduct in-depth interviews with participants. Individuals who can provide the observer with additional insight or historical knowledge about the scene are ideal for in-depth interviews in naturalistic inquiries. Researchers complete the research and leave the scene when observations yield no new information or when observations become redundant (this state is also known as theoretical saturation).

Analysis

Explaining one or more aspects of human behavior is the goal of analysis in naturalistic research. Researchers conduct inductive analysis during the data collection process and after leaving the scene use grounded theory and the constant comparative method. This approach allows researchers to situate their findings in the data. Context-specific hypotheses emerge from these findings, and although not generalizable to large populations, propositions are applicable

to specific settings and often offer some insight into different but similar settings.

Reporting

Naturalistic researchers select methods of reporting that allow detailed description of the constructed multiple realities gleaned from the setting. There are three common methods for writing up the case: realist, confessional, and impressionist tales. Written in a distant third-person voice, realist tales place emphasis on the participants' experiences. Alternatively, confessional tales are first-person accounts of a researcher's experience in the field. Impressionist tales take greater artistic license than either realist or confessional tales to bring the reader into an unfolding narrative of the field experience. Other methods for reporting findings, such as performance and photography, are also available for presenting findings.

Issues of generalizability, validity, and reliability are raised during the reporting stage of the naturalistic research process, although researchers may receive inquiries from participants and interested others about these issues during all phases of the study. Objectivity, prediction, and control are three of the goals of scientific research; however, they are not the focus of naturalistic inquiry because of the epistemological orientation of naturalism. Claims about cause and effect as they relate to human experience are not an aim of naturalistic inquiry. Thickly describing observed phenomena and illustrating the multiple realities of a scene take precedence. When qualitative researchers, including those who conduct naturalistic inquiry, use the term *generalizability*, they are referring to the ability to identify common patterns in human interactions rather than to making broad assertions about large populations; some researchers refer to this concept as *transferability*. How research is conducted and reported answers questions about the validity and reliability (otherwise known as dependability or credibility) of a study. The writing up of research should resonate with participants, reflecting their experiences. Successful reporting of findings from naturalistic inquiry will resonate with participants. Researchers also reveal their positionality for participants and audiences, giving readers insight into the investigator's personal experiences and biases, increasing the ethos of interpretations.

Ethical Issues

The ethical issues of conducting naturalistic inquiry are vast and are in constant need of negotiation throughout the research process. In addition to gaining access and receiving the proper approval from a researcher's ethics review board, investigators should seek approval to conduct research from participants. However, researchers should view their ethical responsibilities as only partially complete when they receive informed consent in writing from participants. As the research study design emerges and as changes are made to accommodate these developments, researchers should inform participants. Revisiting the issue of consent throughout a project is important as a researcher gains the trust of participants and personal relationships develop. In addition to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants and informants, researchers negotiate the ethics of conducting naturalistic research by returning to the field to share findings and interpretations with participants.

Summary

The goal of naturalistic inquiry is to describe and understand human behavior as it occurs in its natural contexts. The naturalistic paradigm that influences inquiry makes several claims about how researchers make sense of human interactions. Naturalistic researchers understand reality as multiple and socially constructed and therefore subjective. Context interacts with human experience to create and shape human reality. Separating knowledge from its natural context is impossible. In order to understand human phenomena, researchers must enter the environments of the people or phenomena they seek to understand. Working in the scene or field links the researcher with the researched; they are inseparable and influence researchers' understanding of what they observe and how those observations are interpreted. Value-free inquiry is not possible because the researchers cannot separate their experiences from what they observe in the field. No researcher is neutral. These tenets of naturalistic inquiry influence how research is conducted and dictate the types of claims a researcher may make about human phenomena.

Several qualitative methodologies fall under the naturalistic umbrella. These methodologies rely primarily on some form of participant observation, making the human researcher the instrument of data

collection. Researchers need to purposively select the participants and scene necessary to respond to their interest in a topic or issue. Once in the field, researchers take fieldnotes documenting their observations. In addition to collecting data in the field, researchers may also conduct in-depth interviews with informants to substantiate or supplement observations. Research is collected until theoretical saturation is reached.

Although situated in observations, study designs in naturalistic inquiry are emergent because human phenomena are unpredictable. In addition, this approach allows researchers the flexibility necessary to make adjustments to the focus of observations. Analysis of data uses grounded theory, allowing researchers to situate findings and interpretation of those findings in the data. Findings are reported in a format that is conducive for describing human behavior in rich terms. Interpretations of findings should represent the experience of participants. Therefore, reports of a study's findings should resonate with participants. Resonance should not, however, compromise ethics in a naturalistic study. The spirit of naturalistic inquiry requires researchers to pay special attention to their human subjects to gain understanding of human interactions and behavior while maintaining ethical mandates like confidentiality and privacy, be they institutional or relational.

Jillian A. Tullis Owen

See also Autoethnography; Critical Ethnography; Emergent Design; Epistemology; Ethics; Ethnography; Ethnomethodology; Fieldnotes; Fieldwork; Generalizability; Grounded Theory; In-Depth Interview; Theoretical Saturation; Thick Description

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NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION

The central defining features of naturalistic observation are that it takes place in the natural setting for the phenomenon of interest, the researcher does not attempt to manipulate that setting in any way, and no constraints (e.g., predetermined categories) are placed on the outcome of the investigation. Naturalistic observation seeks to provide authentic, rich descriptions of the behavior of interest as it naturally exists and unfolds in its real context. It emphasizes understanding and describing social activities from the point of view of the participants themselves. Naturalistic observation asserts that such understanding is possible only through firsthand accounts.

Data collection typically involves unstructured observation and informal interviewing, with note taking, audiorecording, and occasionally videorecording used to record data. Particular attention is paid to what participants say as a way to understand the meanings they attach to events and activities. Naturalistic observation is also characterized by emergent research design, purposeful sampling, and inductive data analysis. Believing that data must come from real life, researchers work to get as close to their data as possible. At the same time, investigators strive to be as unobtrusive as possible so as not to disrupt the natural setting being studied.

A major strength of naturalistic observation is that the data collected closely reflect the real, naturally occurring context and the actual actions of the participants in that context. The trustworthiness of the data arises from this emphasis on the natural setting. With its flexible, unstructured approach, naturalistic observation often captures behavior that may not have been anticipated while also allowing for focusing on specific areas of interest. Naturalistic observation affords opportunities to explore complex phenomena (e.g., interactions between individuals in everyday life settings such as work places) not easily investigated by other more structured methods such as surveys or field experiments.

The major weakness of naturalistic observation is its potential for generating reactivity or observer effect. This weakness may be addressed through the use of

multiple observers and tests of intercoder reliability, although this strategy could result in even more reactivity in some settings, such as those involving only a few participants in a relatively small space. Member checking, while intrusive, is also helpful. Some researchers employ covert observation to reduce reactivity, although this approach is not always seen as acceptable in that it violates the principle of informed consent. Closely related to the problem of observer effect is the problem of observer bias, the idea that data will be limited by the characteristics of the individual collecting those data. Naturalistic observation typically yields large amounts of textual data that require a lot of time to manage and analyze. Finally, naturalistic observation is not effective for studying infrequently occurring or unpredictable behaviors, as this would require inordinate amounts of time in the field.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Naturalistic Inquiry; Observational Research;
Observer Bias; Unstructured Observation

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NATURAL SETTING

Qualitative research is conducted in natural settings. This means qualitative researchers study things as they are. They do not manipulate the environment. For instance, there are no experimental and control groups. Although multiple approaches to research are used (i.e., case study, ethnography, phenomenology, arts-based, feminist, critical theory, etc.), data are collected in the field, not in a lab. Ordinary events and behaviors are studied in their everyday context. This process generally involves interacting with people by interviewing them and observing the setting. Rather than removing people from their settings, qualitative researchers go to the people, allowing for the gathering of sensory data: what is seen, felt, heard, and even tasted or smelled.

Research conducted in the field (fieldwork) requires the researcher to have the basic skills of interviewing

and observing as well as the ability to analyze artifacts. The data that are gathered are transformed into thick, rich description, a hallmark of qualitative studies. Fieldwork can be conducted in a variety of settings. Common settings include organizations such as banks, nonprofit organizations, school classrooms, the military, hospitals, clinics, and sports teams, among others. For her research, Carol Rambo Ronai spent time at an exotic dancing club. When the research is focused on individuals, common settings for interviews include the person's home, restaurants or coffee shops, or other settings of their choice. Mark Neumann conducted his research at the Grand Canyon, interviewing the people who live, work, and travel there.

Ethical issues need to be considered when entering natural settings for research purposes. Access to settings needs to be gained and sometimes negotiated. In addition, provisions for exiting the site need to be considered so that participants do not feel abandoned or exploited. Reciprocity is important: Although it is clear the researcher will gain something from being in the setting, what the participants will gain deserves contemplation. It is important to realize that the researcher's presence in the setting may unintentionally change it; recognition of this potential is essential. Researchers need to be conscious of the roles they may be asked to or tempted to take on in the setting. For example, as trust is gained, researchers may be asked to intervene in difficult situations; they may feel compelled to right what they consider to be a wrong; they may form close friendships with participants. Ethical issues are innately embedded in natural settings.

Rather than measure and predict, qualitative researchers describe, interpret, and analyze. Natural settings are recognized as complex, interactive systems, and the focus is not on discrete variables. This focus makes natural settings (as opposed to labs) appropriate sites for conducting qualitative research.

Karen E. Norum

See also Everyday Life; Fieldwork; Naturalistic Data;
Naturalistic Inquiry; Naturalistic Observation

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NEGATIVE CASE ANALYSIS

Negative case analysis is a central data analytic approach in qualitative methods and is essential to the rigor of most data analytic plans. It is seen in what grounded theorists call constant comparison procedure and what Michael Agar refers to as “breakdown” and “resolution.” Negative case analysis is necessitated by purposely sought or spontaneously appearing pieces of data that differ from the researcher’s expectations, assumptions, or working theories. Although there is always some dread attached to the appearance of cases that appear to call into question one’s carefully constructed analytic framework, negative cases are integral to strengthening findings. As Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman suggest in their seminal text on qualitative data analysis, the outcome of negative case analyses can run the gamut from refuting to refining findings.

Whether actively sought (“occasioned breakdown” in Agar’s terms) or spontaneously occurring (what Agar calls “mandated breakdown”), negative cases are not a rare occurrence, but rather are a natural part of any study. It would be highly unlikely in real life for everything to fall exactly in line and act the same, and particularly unlikely in the early stages of analysis and hypothesis creation. Finding and understanding negative cases not only strengthens a good study, but these cases protect against researcher biases in what and how data are seen and reported. These negative cases can be, among other things, people, places, or events that differ in meaningful ways from other data points. Miles and Huberman describe how well-organized data displays can simplify the process of locating outliers by a simple scan of the data array.

The proper response to these negative cases is to seek to understand where and how these new data diverge from the rest and from the standing theory, to make the necessary revisions to the theory to include these unique findings, and then to test these revisions

in the iterative manner that is synonymous with qualitative analysis. It is important to note that, unlike in traditional quantitative methods, in qualitative methods, outliers are neither ignored nor is the working theory necessarily rejected when countering evidence is found. In fact, Miles and Huberman caution not to discard the working hypothesis too quickly, pending analysis of the proportion of positive and negative evidence.

Even on the rare chance that no spontaneous negative cases appear naturally, most qualitative methods advocate that researchers actively search for disconfirming evidence. This search includes seeking outlying data that could disprove the working hypothesis or confirm an alternative one, intervening variables that might refute assumed causal relationships, as well as collecting new data from additional sources. Miles and Huberman also suggest seeking out a friendly skeptic to review your working hypotheses and data. It is only through actively seeking to test and refute one’s findings and to explain not only the consistent, but also the inconsistent data that one can truly come to a final, rigorously defensible understanding of one’s research findings.

Anne E. Brodsky

See also Constant Comparison; Data Analysis; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Verification

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NEGOTIATING EXIT

Negotiating exit from a research site resembles gaining initial access: handling relationships; deciding how, when, and if to return to the field; balancing requests for reciprocity; identifying and responding to information needs of various stakeholders; arranging disposition of data; and ensuring program continuation once researcher support disappears. Negotiating exit is a key step in preparing to leave the site of a research project,

particularly where researcher–participant relationships have been forged.

Relationships, Friendships, and Dependencies

Qualitative researchers create friendships, dependencies, and sometimes hostilities with field participants. Because researchers cannot simply pack up and slip away at midnight, negotiating how to say good-bye, maintain desired relationships, and end those that cannot be maintained are crucial parts of the exit process. Of first concern are key informants and good friends. Strategies for the difficult process of maintaining long-distance relationships must be negotiated. Friends must know if the researcher will return to the field and for what reasons and how often they will write, email, or call—all are problematic once researchers return home to their normal lives.

Other contact may be needed beyond that of maintaining friendships. Researchers or their students and colleagues may want to return to the field site because they need further data collection or need to begin new projects, they discover that they have neglected to collect some critical data, they need to check on the validity of their interpretations of data, or they require additional data to answer questions raised during data analysis that were unanticipated in the field. Preexisting field contacts can facilitate return. If researchers cannot return, clear lines of communication, goodwill, and firm relationships in the field make possible asking key informants to collect information or answer questions that arise during data analysis, checking initial and subsequent formulation of results with participants, or validating interpretations.

Leaving the field can be more problematic with casual field acquaintances researchers develop, given the expectations such individuals develop of researchers. Researchers are linked to a more cosmopolitan and often wealthier community than that of participants, and therefore are sources of information, intellectual stimulation, outside contacts, and resources. Participants whose slight marginalization from the community makes them perfect insider–outsider informants also may have expectations of the researcher as a source of companionship, status, and even financing. Although important to the researcher for data, casual acquaintances may highly value their contact with the researcher for other reasons. The nature and depth of such expectations may be difficult for researchers to

identify. Some participants simply mourn the loss of emotional ties and status.

Others will miss the economic resources researchers provide when they, for example, obtain scarce foreign pharmaceuticals for participants, link local craftspeople to buyers in the United States, buy school supplies for students and teachers in a local school, rent from local property owners, or pay for language classes. Researchers represent career development for local professionals who obtain from them new ideas or techniques that enhance performance and reputations in ways that locals without such access cannot. Since attenuating or ending these benefits can cause loss or hardship, researchers must explain what resources they are able to continue providing or help participants develop alternative sources of supply. Once they have left the field, researchers also must decide how to handle ongoing requests from, or the reality of help needed by, field participants, including for such things as obtaining further education for themselves and their children.

In summary, it is unethical and unwise to burn bridges to field-based colleagues and participants. Although ignoring formalities of farewell for uncooperative or hostile participants is tempting, as is avoiding development of strategies for managing expectations by casual acquaintances, these individuals may be exactly those who, if alienated or insulted, could bar access to needed data or prevent researchers from returning.

Reciprocity, Feedback, and Dissemination

Too often, researchers fail to pay participants back for allowing them to investigate their worksites and lives. Most researchers simply disappear once their research project is finished, leaving participants totally unaware of what has been learned or written about them. Both disappearance and lack of reciprocity are poor research etiquette and are unethical. Since qualitative researchers usually do not provide financial incentives for participation in studies, reciprocity involves exchanges of intangibles—friendship, information, services, and contacts. Much research has procedures for reciprocity built in; participatory or collaborative action research, for example, is designed to provide benefits directly to the community or group under study. However, too often, only the researcher derives benefits from the study in the form of publications and fame. Ill

will be generated when participants believe researchers have become famous at their expense. Often, simple acknowledgment of their contribution in publications is sufficient. Some researchers give participants visibility like that of researchers by inviting participants to co-author articles and papers and join them as conference presenters. Others donate publication royalties to communities they studied. In projects involving successful interventions, researchers should give control or comparison groups the same training and information that the intervention group received after the project is complete so that all participants benefit equally. Applied or action researchers can make themselves available to answer questions, provide ongoing inservice, or give workshops.

Feedback and dissemination procedures are needed both in the field and after the project is completed. Researchers must decide what to tell participants, when, and how often during the course of data collection when they are asked for information during a project or when participants simply want to know what the researcher is finding out. Participants always are entitled to know the results of studies done about them; failure to provide such information at minimum causes hurt feelings and often “poisons the well” for future researchers, inhibiting useful continuing investigations in the same community. However, providing feedback is problematic. Participants may not want to hear what researchers actually found if it contradicts their views, researchers might be reluctant to disclose negative information provided by one group of participants about another, and researchers never present participants or their programs as favorably as participants wish.

Researchers can consult with participant groups to find out exactly what kinds of information they need and give them only that information. However, it usually is both impossible to anticipate future information needs and to withhold negative data. Researchers should make it quite clear from the outset that feedback may be neither positive or in line with participant expectations. Researchers also can embed negative information in context so that participants understand all the factors leading to specific outcomes. For example, although an educational innovation may have produced negative results, data showing that teachers received insufficient training, that the students enrolled differed from the desired target population, or that materials were delivered late, tells the whole story in ways that remove the onus of failure from practitioners.

Once researchers leave the field, dissemination begins. Different participant groups need different kinds of information; researchers should identify the multiple audiences in the field site first, and then negotiate in advance how and what kinds of information will be provided. Researchers can prepare several kinds of reports and use multiple dissemination modalities—oral presentations, written reports of varying lengths and complexity, workshops and inservices, and publications in media ranging from websites, flyers, and the popular press and scholarly publications. For example, teachers in schools will need different kinds of information from those needed by parents, school administrators, and funding agencies. Since much of the world now has access to websites, internet technology may provide more useful, faster, and more reliable means of communication than paper, telephone, and postal services. However, researchers never should rely on online communication alone, even in countries with high levels of access to technology.

Disposition of Data

Participants and other stakeholders have a right to know what will be done with information collected about them once a study is complete. This knowledge ensures that the data will not be used for purposes participants have not approved or by other researchers for purposes not originally intended—unless the data are completely anonymized so that participants cannot be identified.

Researchers protect the privacy of research participants by disposing of data in special ways; this need for privacy is why ethics review boards typically require researchers to describe how data will be disposed of once a study is completed. Disposition procedures (if applicable) should be decided upon and negotiated with stakeholders as part of the informed consent process before the study begins.

Ensuring Program Continuation

Applied, participatory, or action research helps participants develop and set up programs or innovations aimed at solving human problems, usually with the help of funds obtained to establish both the program and the research itself. As the most visible connection to the source of funding, and often as the writers who developed the funded proposal, researchers should help participants figure out how to perpetuate the program, if desired, once the funding ends and the researcher leaves. Researchers can teach participants

how to write proposals and access new sources of funding and help participants institutionalize or naturalize a program so that it is adopted by the organization or community and paid for as regular practice.

Margaret D. LeCompte

See also Ethics; Leaving the Field; Researcher–Participant Relationships

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NEUTRALITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In research, the term *neutrality* implies that an inquiry is free of bias or is separated from the researcher's perspectives, background, position, or conditioning circumstances. When a researcher or the research is said to be neutral, the inquiry is also implied to be trustworthy and legitimate. Although legitimacy and trustworthiness are important values in qualitative research, neutrality is often seen as an impossible goal. This entry explains why neutrality is less useful as a term to judge qualitative inquiry and suggests ways to achieve legitimacy and trustworthiness while acknowledging researcher bias.

Neutrality is a term that is often attached to research to demonstrate that it provides an objective and unbiased view of the object under study. Procedures are developed to ensure data are valid and reliable and imply that the results are trustworthy and important. The objective worldview assumes that reality can be understood, that it never changes, and that the researcher can observe the reality without affecting it. In this way, any other neutral researcher will obtain identical results if replicating the research. This view places the researcher at a distance from the research and assumes there is no investment in or influence on a given outcome.

Worldviews have shifted, especially in the social sciences. In social science research, knowledge is viewed as constructed rather than seen as some unchanging reality. The approach to research has also shifted. Researchers using qualitative approaches in social science inquiries recognize that the objects of their study cannot be fully understood in an objective and unbiased way; they are too complex and changing. Even the term *object* is less useful in qualitative inquiry. No longer is the researcher separated from the research. The relationship between the observers and the observed is a critical part of the research. The relationship affects what is observed, how observations are interpreted, and eventually how interpretations are reported.

The nature of these relationships means that the researcher is part of the inquiry rather than separated from it. The various methods of data collection in qualitative research provide a sense of how close or distant the researcher is from whom or what is being observed. Qualitative data arise from interviews, observations, reflection, dialogue, and interpretation and provide perspective on a research problem in rich, real-world, descriptive terms. Interpretation and understanding of the data will necessarily depend on the patterns of interactions, the kinds of questions asked, and the experiences and perspectives the researcher holds. The researcher approaches the research problem with a background and a set of experiences that cannot be turned off. However, the relationships between researcher and the observed may vary greatly.

Inside the social sciences, there is a range of qualitative research methodologies that stretch from post-positivist inquiry to autoethnography. Postpositivist qualitative approaches might use a consistent set of survey-like questions in interviews; the process varies little with the expectation that the findings will be minimally affected by the researcher's relationship with the informant. However, even postpositivist approaches recognize that contexts affect findings and that complete neutrality is impossible. On the other hand, in autoethnography, the researchers tell their own personal stories and reflections to provide insights on the meaning of an experience so that the reader might understand it in a new way. The storytelling is intended to explain reality from a distinct point of view, as in a woman's view of a workplace promotional experience. Some qualitative approaches, such as action research, are intentionally biased. The researcher is attempting to change the situation under study—hardly a neutral position.

Some outside the social sciences may view the absence of neutrality as a signal that the research is not trustworthy or useful. However, legitimacy and credibility can be strengthened through transparent procedures and clear descriptions of the relationships and perspectives of the researcher both during data collection and in its reporting. Researchers who are honest about the data, clear about how data are obtained, and use the data to some larger ends are more likely to be viewed as trustworthy and legitimate within and outside the social sciences.

Changes in how research is funded have also affected impressions of neutrality or trustworthiness. As businesses and corporations have begun to fund inquiry, the ability of the researcher to appear neutral is diminishing. Findings from the research that are considered important can be construed as beholden to commercial interests. These interests determine what is funded and what is studied and have the potential to determine what is reported. Some claim to achieve neutrality in these circumstances, but achieving neutrality is difficult, if not impossible. Trustworthiness and legitimacy are best achieved through clear descriptions of relationships and underlying assumptions and thoroughly revealing connections to funders.

Although terms like neutrality are less useful to qualitative researchers, some researchers find the term important. Qualitative procedures used during the research process can aim toward neutrality by seeking a balance of perspectives and a fair reflection of the circumstances of the research. For example, the researcher might empathize with informants but avoid taking their side in reporting and take care to gather and report diverse views. Recognizing the potential to be drawn into the world of the observed and maintaining a focus on the research plan may help the researcher maintain a greater degree of neutrality when needed.

Although the methodology has evolved and changed and the academic and financial circumstances of researchers have posed challenges to issues such as neutrality, qualitative inquiry offers significant, legitimate, and trustworthy contributions to social science knowledge. The avenue to legitimacy in qualitative research—as in any research endeavor—is authentic and transparent work that stays true to its original purpose.

Alice E. Diebel

See also Accountability; Bias; Disinterestedness; Observer Bias; Verification

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NEUTRAL QUESTION

A neutral question is a question posed to a participant during data collection and stated by the investigator in a way that does not direct or bias the answer provided by the participant. Writing neutral questions can be challenging, but it is also an important aspect of collecting qualitative data. The general purpose of qualitative research is to learn about the views and experiences of participants from their own perspectives. Well-designed neutral questions allow participants to decide how they will answer a question, helping to ensure that the investigator is learning what the participant thinks instead of learning what the participant thinks the investigator wants to learn. Due to their importance, neutral questions are used in different types of qualitative data collection techniques including focus groups, in-person interviews, and telephone interviews.

Qualitative researchers pose open-ended questions that encourage participants to create and share their own options for how to respond. To encourage participants to express their perspectives freely, these questions should be stated in a neutral way in addition to being stated as open-ended. Nonneutral questions may lead participants to feel that they should answer a certain way regardless of how they really think; therefore, these questions can introduce bias into the study's findings. Questions can be perceived as leading if they indicate preferred responses or limit the range of possible responses.

Consider a qualitative study where researchers want to learn how adolescents describe their experiences with smoking. They might ask, “As you know, smoking is bad for your health. What do you think about trying to quit smoking now?” This question is not neutral because the participant may feel pressured to respond a certain way because the interviewer favors positive responses related to quitting. A more neutral question could be, “Tell me about your current smoking status.” Then, if the participant states that she or he is thinking about quitting, the interviewer could follow up and ask for more information.

Although important, neutral questions are not always easy to develop when planning questions to ask during data collection. Researchers should avoid using words that may be perceived as leading within the study’s context. When possible, questions should be stated using the language of participants and not the technical terms derived from the literature on the topic. Researchers should evaluate whether there are certain responses that they might value more than others and check that this preference is not evident in the question wordings. Even with these aspects in mind, it can still be difficult to design questions that are completely neutral. Researchers should consider writing their main questions to be as broad and as neutral as possible and then follow up the responses to these open-ended questions with probes if there are specific dimensions, viewpoints, or language that need to be explored further. Finally, researchers should pilot their questions with individuals similar to the participants to see if they are perceived as neutral.

Vicki L. Plano Clark

See also Bias; Interview Guide; Interviewing; Open-Ended Question

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NONESSENTIALISM

Nonessentialism is a philosophical doctrine that stands in opposition to the philosophy of essentialism. Briefly, essentialists argue that an object or concept can be defined in terms of certain core or essential

properties that it must possess and that make it what it is. When applied to people, essentialism argues that human thoughts, feelings, and behavior can be understood in terms of a common human nature (a view sometimes referred to as humanism), or in the case of religious essentialism, that people are created with or for a predetermined purpose. Taken at its literal meaning, nonessentialism argues that there is no essence or set of common, predetermined qualities belonging to entities in the world. The philosophy of nonessentialism has been in existence for as long as essentialism, which it attempts to deny (in its weak sense) or refute (in its stronger sense of antiessentialism).

As a modern philosophical movement, however, nonessentialist philosophy is usually applied only to people, and in this form, its roots can be traced back to the existentialists of the first half of the 20th century. Most prominent of these was Jean-Paul Sartre, whose starting point for his nonessentialist philosophy was Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s observation that if God did not exist, everything would be permitted. Since, for Sartre, God does not exist, or at the very least, His existence can no longer be accepted a priori, everything is indeed permitted. Sartre’s project was therefore to outline new criteria for how people should conduct themselves that did not rely on essentialist concepts such as the will of God or human nature. Seen in this way, existentialism is a theory and practice of ethics.

Existentialism and Phenomenology

Simply put, this atheist existentialism can be reduced to the claim that existence precedes essence. Sartre made a distinction between beings-in-themselves (*en-soi*), which encompassed inanimate objects and most animals whose essence precedes or is coincidental with their existence, and beings-for-themselves (*pour-soi*), predominantly people who exist first and only later define themselves, largely through their actions. In the absence of a God to impose a specific purpose or a particular destiny for humankind, people’s existence can be said to precede their essence. For Sartre and the atheist existentialists, people come into the world alone and without purpose, and it is up to each individual to create her or his own unique and individual essential nature.

This nonessentialism is, according to the usual definition, also antihumanist, since it argues against a common or predetermined human nature that can be

invoked to justify the decisions and actions of individuals or groups of people. Sartre refers to such an essentialist recourse to human nature as *mauvaise foi* or bad faith (sometimes translated as self-deception), which is to be avoided if people wish to live authentic lives and be true to their individually chosen paths. However, nonessentialism is not the only ethical response to the nonexistence of God, and Sartre points out that some strands of philosophic atheism, such as those found in the writing of Voltaire and Immanuel Kant, simply replace God with a universal but nonreligious human nature in which each person is a particular example of a universal conception. Confusion arises, however, when Sartre attempts to align this nonessentialist existentialism with the humanist movement, as he does in his published lecture "Existentialism and Humanism." The difficulty lies in the fact that Sartre is using the term *humanism* largely to oppose the religious view, in the sense that human actions and human destiny are determined by individual human beings rather than by a transcendental God. This definition is counter to the more usual definition of the term humanism as referring to the existence of a common (and usually positive or good) human nature shared by all. In this latter and more commonly accepted sense, Sartre's nonessentialism is very much antihumanist.

This antihumanist, nonessentialist view has some important consequences, not only for philosophers, but also for researchers. If, as the existentialists maintain, there is no common human nature, then social research has little or nothing to say about people in general. Each person is genuinely and completely unique and cannot be summed up or defined as part of a greater whole. For this reason, Sartre advocates the novel as the most authentic form of research report, since it provides a deeply subjective account of a particular and unique human experience. Many of his own novels and plays, such as *Nausea* and *Roads to Freedom*, can be regarded as forms of narrative research, albeit with fictional subjects. Arguably, however, in the absence of any universal human tropes and with an almost unlimited number of ways in which to choose to live, the distinction between fictional and real lives becomes blurred.

The epistemological and ontological basis of Sartre's existentialism is founded in the German phenomenological tradition, which argues that the world can be known only through our subjective experiences of it, which arrive through our senses. In its purest form, phenomenology, therefore, entails a suspension

or bracketing of all preconceptions in order to focus on the pure sense-data or phenomena that are present to people's inner, subjective consciousness. Unlike the scientific empiricists, most phenomenologists make no attempt to extrapolate from these internal experiences to a description of what the real outside world might be like, although Edmund Husserl argued that the method of bracketing (*epoché*) might ultimately lead to an understanding of the essential nature of things.

Although Husserl could therefore be described as an essentialist, Sartre was drawn toward the nonessentialist hermeneutic phenomenology of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Hermeneutic phenomenology originated in the attempt to understand ancient texts and argued that they could not be interpreted with reference to universal tropes such as human nature or the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, but only by researchers immersing themselves in the text and attempting to imagine themselves in the position of the original author. This practice is a deeply subjective approach that defies any attempt at generalization in favor of a unique perspective on a unique text written at a specific time by a specific author. Although more traditional researchers might criticize such an approach as biased or prejudiced, Gadamer argues for the idea of prejudice as a positive influence in research, as the valuable pre-understanding that the researcher inevitably brings to the data and that constitutes the personal or subjective aspect of the hermeneutic circle. This, of course, is in contrast to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology of bracketing out or suspending one's preconceptions about the outside world. The focus of nonessentialist research is, therefore, a doubly subjective amalgam of the unique individual case and the individual presuppositions that the unique individual researcher brings to her or his interpretation of the case.

Poststructuralism and Deconstruction

The French literary critic Roland Barthes advocated an alternative nonessentialist position that emphasized (but also challenged) the interpretive aspect of Gadamerian hermeneutics by proclaiming the impossibility of ever being able to decipher the intentions of the original author of a text. For Barthes, the author is dead as the final authority on her or his own writing. Although Barthes was concerned with literary criticism, his views have been extended by poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida to refer to all written texts and indeed,

to all attempts at representation. In fact, Derrida's position is far stronger than that of Barthes and might be more accurately described as antiessentialist. Derrida argues that it is impossible to produce a text (he uses the word text in a very broad sense to encompass all forms of expression) that communicates a pure, unambiguous, essential meaning of a concept. He claims that all texts, however, strongly advocate for a single, essential truth, but contain other, often contradictory points of view. All texts contain the seeds of their own undoing, and if read in a close and attentive way, they will begin to unravel. Derrida refers to this close reading for internal contradictions as deconstruction.

Deconstruction is at work on various levels of the research process. On the one hand, the interview transcripts of individual research subjects can be deconstructed for hidden contradictory meanings by the researcher in order to draw out the inevitable multiplicities of the narrative account. On the other hand, the research report is itself open to deconstruction by its readers. Unlike Barthes, who suggests that the readers bring their own point of view to the research report, Derrida argues that multiple points of view are already written into the text and merely require bringing to the surface.

This poststructuralist account of hermeneutic phenomenology challenges Gadamer's emphasis on the researcher's ability to, as it were, stand in the shoes of the original writer. Barthes not only questions the authority of the researcher's interpretation of the essence of the text, but more radically, takes the view that the original author has no more authority in asserting the meaning or essence of her or his own text than any of her or his readers. Derrida goes even farther by suggesting that, in any case, there can be no single essential meaning and that all texts contain multiple and often contradictory truths.

For poststructuralist researchers, then, the tenets of nonessentialism apply not only to the subject of the research, but also to the researcher's own interpretation of what the subject has to say. First, nonessentialist researchers will be cautious about making generalizations from their findings. Unlike transcendental phenomenologists, they make no attempt to derive common themes and categories from their data since they do not believe in any essential core that is common to all people. Unlike grounded theorists, they are not concerned with generalizable theories since they are reluctant to theorize about the common features of groups of people. Conscious that they have no

greater authority than the subjects of their research, they prefer to give a voice to individual participants—to allow the narrative accounts of the research subjects to stand alone, sometimes without the imposition of analysis or theorizing by the researcher.

We might summarize the nonessentialist researcher's attitude toward the subjects of their research as regarding them as a collection of unique individual persons rather than collectively as people. However, the poststructuralists would wish to go farther, arguing not only against a common human nature, but also against the enduring stability of the individual personality. As well as there being no common core, there is also no individual core that persists over time. The individual self is in constant flux and cannot be appealed to as a driver or justification for an individual's decisions or actions. This position is most succinctly summed up in Michel Foucault's plea: "Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 17).

The narrative accounts provided by individual subjects will therefore vary depending on the time, place, and circumstances in which they were produced, and the nonessentialist researcher, therefore, exercises caution in taking these accounts as definitive statements or indeed, even as *accurate* statements about the subjects' lived experience.

In addition, nonessentialist researchers operating within the poststructuralist tradition are aware that their own interpretations of the data are but single, unique accounts that should not be privileged over and above any others. After Barthes, then, the nonessentialist accepts not only the death of the research subject as the author of a definitive (or even accurate) account of their own reality, but also the death of the researcher's privileged position of analyzing, interpreting, and authoring the subject's account in the form of a research paper. The authority for analysis, theorizing, and general meaning-making, therefore, falls to the many readers of the research report rather than the putative author. As Barthes points out, the death of the writer implies the birth of the reader; the reader of the text becomes an author (either literally or figuratively) in her or his own right.

A Nonessentialist Paradigm of Qualitative Research

Although a coherent nonessentialist research paradigm is possible, it will oppose many of the taken-for-granted

tenets of qualitative research and has some profound implications for the validity, reliability, and generalizability of research findings. We have already touched upon the issue of generalizability, which is in many ways a meaningless concept for the nonessentialist researcher. In a world without universal essences, research subjects will be chosen on the basis of their individual characteristics or situations, and the findings from one or more subjects will not be generalized to a wider population or to a universal theoretical statement. The focus of meaning-making for nonessentialists is therefore on transferability rather than generalizability, and this is largely the responsibility of the reader rather than the writer. The task of the writer of a research report is simply to present individual stories, narratives or cases, and the reader of the report must decide on the extent to which the findings apply to other specific individual cases. That is not to say that people might not share similarities; nonessentialism does not argue that there cannot be any commonality between individuals, but only that there is no necessary or predetermined human nature shared by all, nor even necessarily a constant self experienced by individuals over time.

This idea immediately calls into question the usually held concept of researcher reliability. If reliability is understood to refer to the accuracy or consistency of the findings, then nonessentialist researchers would not expect the outcome of any research encounter with a particular subject to resemble any other encounter, even with the same subject. Clearly, in the absence of a reliable (i.e., constant) core personality or self, people should not expect any reliable or predictable findings, either between different researchers or with the same researcher over time.

Turning to the question of validity, people are faced with the thorny issue of the meaning and identification of truth in a nonessentialist world. Clearly, it would make little or no sense to search for universal social or psychological truths since this implies the existence of an essence or human nature common to all people. As argued above, nonessentialist researchers must resist the impulse to think in terms of people in the collective sense at all and focus instead on individual persons. There are at least two ways of approaching this somewhat problematic notion of truth for nonessentialist researchers.

First, there is the view that the truth of the account given by the individual subject should be heard in as pure and unadulterated a form as possible, a view held, for example, by some feminist narrative researchers

and also by many in the mental health user movement. This approach is often driven by a political agenda that points to the historical suppression of the voices of oppressed underclasses such as women and mental health service users and argues for their right to be heard in a way that is uncontaminated and undistorted by the power politics of the usual researcher–researched relationship. This approach discourages analysis or theorizing by the researcher in favor of a straightforward, subjective narrative account or story by the research subject. The truth, in this case, is more or less whatever the subject says that it is; since it derives directly from his or her subjective experience, it is not open to dispute.

This is a simple and straightforward nonessentialist response to the challenge of validity, which embraces the issue of multiple truths. However, because this approach is often driven by a political agenda, problems sometimes arise when researchers attempt to apply their findings to a wider social arena, such as when mental health policy or practice is based substantially on the subjective views of individual service users, or when feminist writers attempt to derive general principles of gender politics from the experiences of a small number of individual women. In fact, the issue of essentialism has polarized debate in feminist theory and research between those “radical feminists” who argue that women are essentially different from (and perhaps superior to) men and the nonessentialist “new feminists” who argue for equality based on similarity rather than difference.

Second, there is the view of truth as a social construction between the researcher and the research subject. This view is informed in some cases by the constructionist idea that social reality is co-created from moment to moment by the participants in the research project and in other cases, by the dialogic theories that self is constructed through dialogue. In either case, we might expect different research encounters to produce different and perhaps contradictory truths, even if they involve the same participants.

The issues of power and politics are equally relevant here since most qualitative researchers recognize a power differential between researcher and research subject. At one end of the power spectrum, the Foucauldian discourse analyst or the symbolic interactionist might impose her or his own analytic structure on the data. At the other end of the spectrum, the collaborative inquirer might be aiming for a completely democratic or egalitarian relationship that dissolves

the boundaries between researcher and research subject and their roles in the process of data collection and analysis. The logical culmination of this position might be the methodology of autoethnography, which fully and completely merges the roles of researcher and researched in a single person. If the concept of validity is in some way related to the search for truth, then the nonessentialist researcher will regard it as a spurious notion since truth is at best elusive and at worst, illusory.

Gary Rolfe

See also Authority; Bias; Bracketing; Collaborative Research; Constructivism; Deconstruction; Empowerment; Essentialism; Existentialism; Hermeneutics; Interpretive Phenomenology; Literature in Qualitative Research; Narrative Texts; Poststructuralism; Subjectivity

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NONPARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Nonparticipation observation is a relatively unobtrusive qualitative research strategy for gathering primary data about some aspect of the social world without interacting directly with its participants. Nonparticipant observers sometimes are physically copresent with research participants in a naturalistic setting, but other times may not be present in the setting.

Researchers may engage in nonparticipant observation for a number of reasons. First, the researcher may have limited or no access to a particular group and therefore may not have the opportunity to engage in participant observation. For example, a researcher might be interested in studying the social behaviors of

professional athletes on the field or how parents control their children in public settings, yet is neither an athlete nor a parent. In both cases, nonparticipant observers could take a position within the setting and record what they observe without interacting directly with participants.

Second, the research setting might be one in which participant observation would be dangerous or difficult. Doing research on riots or mobs, for example, is difficult because of their spontaneous nature. Researching collective action (e.g., demonstrations, protests) directly may be undesirable. In these settings, researchers may rely on video recorded by news agencies or insiders to observe social behavior. Film and video use also allows for the observation of historical social phenomena.

Third, the researcher may be interested less in the subjectively experienced dimensions of social action and more in reified patterns that emerge from such action. For example, one may derive insight from observing how people utilize public space, such as a national park, an internet café, a mall, or a classroom, without interacting with users. The question of researcher reactivity arises here, that is, questioning the extent to which nonparticipant observation potentially affects the setting.

Nonparticipant observation may be overt or covert, occurring in public or private settings. Unique ethical issues will arise with each combination: the covert observer in a public setting must deal with a different set of ethical considerations than an overt observer in a public setting, and so on. Each combination will also affect how the observer might collect data. Typical strategies include writing fieldnotes or audio- or videorecording social action. Recording behavior overtly might be interpreted by participants as exceptional or intrusive, thus potentially affecting their behavior, while covert observation may break ethics norms.

Digital media such as the internet provide opportunities for new forms of nonparticipant observation. Researchers may have an interest in the interactions among members of an internet community to which they do not belong. Given the open access and anonymity associated with many digital spaces, nonparticipant observers could register with a digital community and “lurk,” reading all the messages posted by community members without ever posting themselves. Researchers may browse web pages, create avatars in digital worlds, or subscribe to email lists—each providing an opportunity for observation with minimal

impact on the setting. Data from digital media are often more easily recorded because the researcher can use screenshots, copy-and-paste functions, and save messages and logs.

J. Patrick Williams

See also Covert Observation; Naturalistic Observation; Observational Research; Observer Bias; Participant Observation

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NONPROBABILITY SAMPLING

Nonprobability sampling is a common technique in qualitative research where researchers use their judgment to select a sample. Unlike probability sampling, where each participant has the same chance of being selected, participants selected using the nonprobability sampling technique are chosen because they meet preestablished criteria.

Some of the more common types of nonprobability sampling techniques are convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling. In convenience sampling, participants are selected because they are accessible and therefore relatively easy for the researcher to recruit. With snowball sampling, new participants to the study are recruited when current participants refer other, potential participants to the researcher (e.g., as they are members of the same group or share similar interests that are relevant to the project at hand). Purposive sampling refers to a process where participants are selected because they meet criteria that have been predetermined by the researcher as relevant to addressing the research question (e.g., people of a particular age or other demographic category). These three techniques each highlight that nonprobability sampling requires the researcher to make the final decision in terms of who does and does not participate in the study. Often, these

techniques are used together to recruit individuals to participate in the study.

This sampling approach, which provides researchers with the capacity to construct their own sample, is considered quite useful in certain circumstances. For instance, there may be certain situations in which nonprobability sampling is the only way to access individuals from certain subcultures. That is, if one were trying to study members of a closed-membership organization (such as organized crime), one might realistically need to recruit participants using a snowball sampling technique, starting with one key informant. Furthermore, nonprobability sampling can also be quite appropriate when researchers are interested in studying the traits of a specific group and are not necessarily concerned with extending the results to the broader population. This need is quite applicable to qualitative research, where the researcher wants to study a particular group in some depth and as a result, may try to select people individually who represent typical traits from within that group. Nonprobability sampling might also be considered quite appropriate for pilot studies, where the researcher is trying to determine whether a problem is viable on a larger scale. In this instance, the researcher may choose to use a convenience sample because the data are less expensive and less time-intensive to collect.

Despite its utility, nonprobability sampling does raise some concerns. First, it may limit the researcher's capacity to point to the transferability of data. That is, for researchers who do wish to extend the interpretation of their findings to other groups, it may be particularly difficult to do so. For example, if one studies the attitudes of only single mothers toward daycare facilities, it would be difficult to transfer these findings to mothers with partners, as their situations and needs are likely quite different. Another common concern relates to bias and the possibility that the researcher may have shown bias in selecting study participants by using these techniques. Issues of bias and transferability must be considered and addressed at the data collection, analysis, and writing stages of the research process. In spite of these concerns, nonprobability sampling provides an appropriate means by which qualitative researchers can study specific groups, recruit elusive populations, and conduct exploratory research.

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Convenience Sample; Purposive Sampling; Sampling; Snowball Sampling

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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication (NVC), or body language, is communication without words. It includes any bodily expression, such as eye or facial movements, posture, and actions to which an observer attributes meaning. The term also includes vocal cues or signals, such as crying, shouting, or silences, although these cues are, strictly speaking, verbal. Although spoken language is very important, NVC and the interpretation of it are also critical in creating meaning between individuals and within groups. For this reason, it is an essential part of all qualitative research and analysis.

NVC often acts at an unconscious level; one may “leak” signals. Body signals can also be learned and consciously used by the sender, for example, maintaining eye contact or smiling to encourage rapport. NVC is regarded as more primitive and powerful than verbal communication, and it acts in different ways. Some messages, for example those containing emotional content, may be better communicated nonverbally; these messages can be more ambiguous and subtle.

NVC has a role in replacing or reinforcing verbal messages. Topics that are rarely discussed tend to have underdeveloped vocabularies, and NVC can fill the gaps. It can also contradict speech so that one receives a mixed message. Most important, NVC enables conversation to flow by offering a common code that all of those involved in a dialogue will understand, for example taking turns to speak or knowing the appropriate level of intimacy.

NVC is relevant in a number of research areas: It is key when establishing rapport with research participants, for example, making eye contact, when researchers introduce themselves. The way the room is laid out, for example, a board room or as a circle, also conveys messages about what is expected of participants.

NVC helps moderators to steer the research situation, for instance, by avoiding eye contact to close off one conversation, looking encouragingly and smiling at nontalkers, turning the body away, using closed or

open-ended questions, leaning forward, and silence. The energy level in a group can also provide important signals about response to material being researched. Researchers are not reading nonverbal behavior just in a simple body-language sense; they are also looking for consonance or dissonance between verbal and nonverbal clues and are attempting to understand why this is happening.

Nonverbal research approaches, such as drawing or role-play, are used to access and interpret different types of data. They shift the researcher-participant interaction away from a question-and-answer session and can offer a broader understanding of the issues. This approach is particularly useful with participants who are less verbal, and it can also enable access to emotional content. There are many enabling and projective techniques available to facilitate nonverbal research approaches.

Nonverbal approaches also present the researcher with a wide range of materials for analysis and interpretation, in addition to verbal content. These can be used to help convey the findings to the client team.

Sheila Keegan

See also Projective Techniques

Further Readings

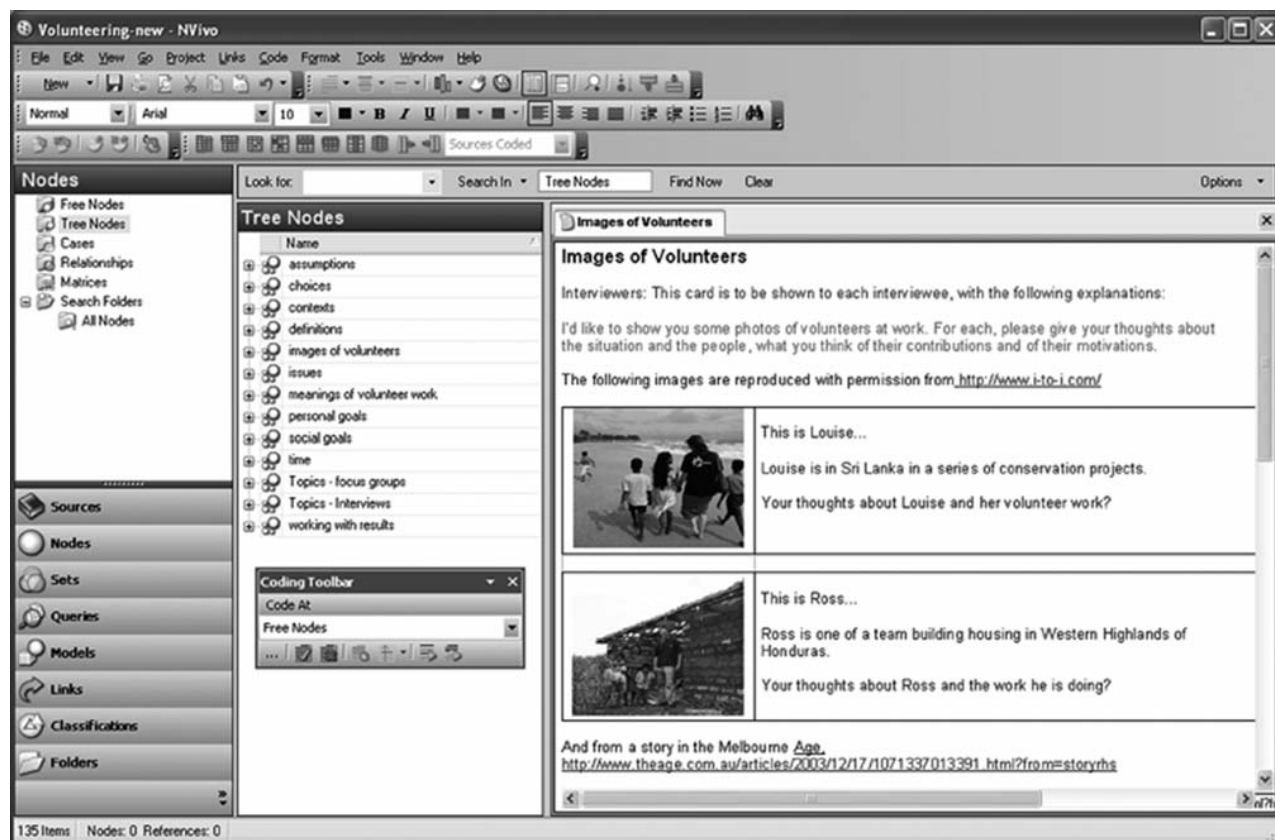
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NUD*IST/N6 (SOFTWARE)

See NVIVO (SOFTWARE)

NVIVO (SOFTWARE)

The trustworthiness of qualitative research depends upon the integrity of data gathering and analysis, the robustness of processes, and the demonstration of thoroughness. One tool that assists a researcher to manage these tasks well is the NVivo data management and searching program, which enables a researcher to demonstrate the integrity, robustness, and therefore, trustworthiness of an investigation.



NVivo Screen View

Source: Used by permission of QSR International.

The benefits of NVivo lie in its user-intuitive interface and its extensive data storage, search, and retrieval capacity. The program uses a coding system that underpins generation of relationships between elements in the data. It is an effective relational database that provides the researcher with the flexibility to

- test tentative theorizing about relationships within the data;
- discover and explore new relationships as data analysis unfolds;
- map relationships;
- track data analysis; and
- log and save search results.

Another essential feature is the ability of NVivo's memos to record the researcher's thoughts and processes alongside, but not within, the data analysis. Creating memos for this purpose provides a rich source of information about research processes, theorizing and

searching implications that are particularly useful when a project is protracted, and involves multiple researchers or is multinational. Because memos are separate from the actual data, the independence and integrity of data are maintained by ensuring against contamination from the researcher's perspective. In this way, trustworthiness are in-built into the data management process, provided the researcher is mindful about using the potential of the software with integrity.

These features make NVivo a sophisticated addition to a qualitative researcher's toolkit, but it remains the researcher's responsibility to ensure the authenticity of the research project and output by aligning methodology, epistemology, and ontology. Because NVivo makes it easier for researchers to demonstrate robustness in their practice by assisting the management of data and by establishing trustworthiness, the research process becomes more transparent and therefore is open to closer scrutiny. As a result, the researcher needs to think carefully through the methodological approach

as well as the process of analysis. The aim is to ensure that the research questions are answered from the relationships emerging out of the data being searched.

NVivo does not analyze data for the researcher. It is a management tool enabling greater depth in analysis and facilitating the searching of large quantities of transcript data so that the researcher can make considered judgments. Although NVivo is able to assist the researcher to manage data efficiently in rapid time frames, it takes time to learn to how utilize NVivo's power so that

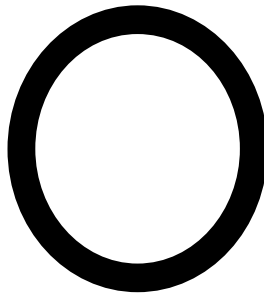
the researcher's first judgment will be to ascertain the efficacy of this tool in each research project.

Robyn Smyth

See also Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Naturalistic Data; Project Management

Websites

NVivo: <http://www.qsrinternational.com>



OBJECTIVISM

This entry describes the central claims of objectivism as it relates to ontology and epistemology and explains how the existence of multiple perspectives is compatible with objectivism.

Definitions

Objectivism is the notion that an objective reality exists and can be increasingly known through the accumulation of more complete information. Objectivism is thus an ontology (the world exists, is real), and an epistemology (knowledge can increasingly approximate the real nature, or quality, of its object—i.e., knowledge can become increasingly objective). Objectivist epistemology presupposes an objectivist ontology—to objectively know the world, there must be a real objective, definite world. (The inverse relation is not necessary—it is theoretically possible that a real world exists but cannot be known objectively because human perception is biased, for example.)

The relation between objectivist ontology and epistemology is best articulated by the philosophy of science known as critical realism. Mario Bunge explained that this perspective keeps the 17th-century distinction between the thing in itself and the thing for us (as known by us). But critical realism removes Immanuel Kant's thesis that the former is unknowable and that the thing for us is identical with the phenomenal object, that is, with appearance. Critical realism maintains that the thing in itself can be known (in a

gradual fashion). Things are too grand and complex to be known through the senses; they can and must be known by conceptual thinking objectified in scientific theories.

The Claims of Objectivism

Objectivism is a perspective adopted by certain practitioners in all the social sciences. In the field of psychology (which is used to illustrate the principles discussed throughout this entry), objectivist ontology means that psychological phenomena—such as emotions, perceptions, reasoning, intelligence, memory, motivation, personality, developmental processes, and mental illness—are real and have definite properties and causes. At a given moment, I have a real anger at my brother because I interpret his action to have been willfully selfish, and I recall that this is a typical behavior of his that I have decided I cannot tolerate any longer. My memory, reasoning, interpretation, decision, and anger are real, and they have definite qualities. A psychologist, a policeman, a judge, or layperson such as my brother who wants to understand my psychology must objectively comprehend the real, objective qualities of my psychological phenomena.

Objectivist ontology and epistemology are reflected in objective descriptions of phenomena. This perspective is known as semantic realism. Whatever the organization of a people's psychology may be (which may be complex and contradictory), this definite, real form must be denoted in a truthful description.

Ontological, epistemological, semantic, and methodological realism require each other. Denying any one of them undermines all the others. For

instance, denying semantic realism—by severing discourse from knowledge about reality and claiming that contradictory statements about psychology are equally true and useful—implies that there is no ontological psychological reality that needs to be reflected in discourse. If ontological reality exists and affects us, then it would be foolhardy and dangerous to ignore it in our discourse.

Ontological, epistemological, and semantic realism-objectivism yield universal theories, thinking, methods, explanations, and descriptions.

Since a psychological phenomenon has a definite reality—which may be complex and contradictory—all descriptions must strive to apprehend it. My anger at my brother incorporates cognition, memory, interpretation, and contradictory feelings of kinship; however, this entire package is one package that must be described and explained in one true and complete account. It cannot be described equally completely and accurately by different accounts. An account that said I truly loved my brother, but was afraid to admit it would be inaccurate. Of course, accounts may describe different aspects of the complex whole, but they must all be consistent with each other to represent the real unity of my psychological package.

A given psychological reality unifies and universalizes the theory, epistemology, mentality, and methodology of all those who would comprehend it.

Pluralism

A plurality of contradictory theories, methodologies, and epistemologies cannot exist for an extended time because they cannot all explain and describe the single reality of the organization of psychology equally well. Freudian notions of the Oedipus complex cannot coexist with behaviorism to explain my anger toward my brother. As Albert Einstein said, at any given time, among competing theories, methodologies, epistemologies, and conclusions that constitute the stock of accumulated knowledge about a particular phenomenon, one is the best (most comprehensive, logical, predictive) way to comprehend its single reality.

Diverse viewpoints are important for generating novel ideas that eventually are sifted out to yield the most comprehensive, logical, coherent, and empirically verifiable one at a particular time. The best one commands general agreement because all observers are striving to comprehend the same, definite object. Diversity and pluralism are stepping stones to general

validity and agreement. They are not goals in themselves, nor do they constitute a state of scientific achievement.

One is not objective simply because one entertains a diversity of perspectives. On the contrary, maintaining a diversity of perspectives precludes discovering the best representation/approximation of the single reality that confronts us. It is objectively the case that automobile manufacturers contribute to global warming by resisting ecologically-friendly improvements in cars (e.g., mileage standards). If someone tries to balance this fact by insisting on a different perspective (say, that automobile manufacturers bear no responsibility for global warming), his or her pluralism and balance have destroyed objectivity.

Of course, diverse viewpoints reappear whenever established theories, methodologies, and conclusions are questioned. But no sooner do they reappear than they are again sifted to yield more valid, agreed-upon constructs.

Objectivism-Realism, Psychological Science, and Communication

Ontological, epistemological, and semantic objectivism-realism are fundamental to all science. There can be a psychological science, for example, only if psychological phenomena are real and can be objectively known (to an increasing degree). To deny objectivist ontology or epistemology is to renounce the possibility of psychological science. If psychological phenomena are not real and have no definite properties, or if humans cannot objectively know these properties, then there can be no scientific study of psychology.

Denying objectivism not only precludes psychological science but also precludes informal understanding and communication about psychology. My brother could not understand the complex phenomenon made up of my anger, reasoning, memory, and interpretation either because it would not be real and definite, or because his epistemology (like that of all humans) would be incapable of knowing my psychology. I might say I felt angry, but if my anger was not real, this statement would just be idle discourse on my part. Or I might really feel angry, but my brother would be under no obligation to understand this anger because epistemology simply cannot comprehend psychological phenomena, even if they are real. Denying objectivist ontology and/or epistemology means that nothing meaningful can be said about

social psychological issues. Comments about them would be nothing more than idle utterances that express nothing real. Also, not everyone agrees that the choice is objectivism or unintelligibility.

Challenges to Objectivism: Realism and Psychological Science

Social constructionists and postmodernists advocate this kind of antirealist, anti-objectivist position. They reject the view that psychology is a science leading to objective truth and claim there are no substantive psychological phenomena. Instead, people construct their psychologies as they discourse with one another. Psychology is nothing more than momentarily created discourse about psychological themes (such as desire, emotion, thinking, motivation, recall). Conversely, discourse about psychological phenomena is nothing more than discourse. It does not refer to real phenomena that can be objectively known.

Social constructionists and postmodernists raise three challenges to objectivism and psychological science.

1. Psychological phenomena are socially constructed and culturally specific; they are not universal. Consequently, different epistemologies are necessary for apprehending different phenomena. To study “saving face” in Taiwan requires a special epistemology that is different from studying romantic love in California. In other words, ontological relativism leads to epistemological relativism. This perspective repudiates universal epistemology on the grounds that it would overlook culturally unique features of psychology. A unique phenomenon is intelligible only to an epistemology and methodology that are specifically honed to its qualities.

Epistemological relativism here means that different epistemologies are necessary in different cultures. Such relativism may be perceived to be not an inclusive welcoming of diverse epistemologies into a culture (to gain varied insights from each), but an exclusionary, divisive relativism that accepts only one epistemology—the Indigenous one—as appropriate in a given culture. Other viewpoints are banished to other cultures.

2. The observer is inextricably formed by his or her distinctive cultural outlook to understand only the culturally relative phenomenon of his or her niche. A person’s formation precludes him or her from understanding the

subtle, complex psychology of people outside his or her niche. Thus, men may be prevented from commenting on “women’s issues” or Whites cannot comment on Blacks because they lack the appropriate cultural epistemology.

The distinctive cultural formation of researchers also precludes them from endorsing a single general theory and methodology that transcend their Indigenous cultures.

3. The ontological relativity of psychological phenomena (emotions, perceptions, mental illness, self-concept, intelligence) means they are unreal, indefinite, ineffable, inexplicable, random, spontaneous, idiosyncratic (i.e., beyond the pale of general cultural psychological principles), and open to numerous, impressionistic, interpretations, descriptions, and explanations from diverse methodologies. This is the argument that ontological (cultural) relativism entails ontological and epistemological nihilism. This argument denies cultural–psychological reality and denies it can be (really) known. Girishwar Misra, an Indian Indigenous psychologist, echoes extreme constructionists such as Kenneth Gergen in claiming there is no objective reality that psychologists have to map and examine the accuracy of that mapping with the objective reality.

Nihilists say that all epistemologies and methodologies are equally acceptable in all situations because there is no objective reality that would make any more useful than any other. Theories and methodologies are purely a matter of personal preference—in other words, “whatever works best for me.”

Objectivist Rebuttals to Constructionism

Objectivists have used these challenges to refine objectivism, not deny it, in the following ways.

1. Ontological relativism does not imply ontological, epistemological, semantic, or methodological nihilism.

With psychology, for example, objectivists argue that the fact that a people’s psychology is culturally constructed and specific does not mean it is unreal, indefinite, ineffable, inexplicable, random, spontaneous, idiosyncratic (i.e., beyond the pale of general psychological principles), and open to numerous,

impressionistic interpretations, descriptions, and explanations. Culturally organized psychology is real and has definite features that are independent of the researcher who studies it—just as the powers accorded to a president, a judge, a policeman, a CEO, or a landlord are real, definite, objective, and powerful although they are humanly constructed and accepted. Ontological relativism (the culturally relative organization of psychology) is compatible with ontological, epistemological, and semantic realism. John Searle aptly said that the denial of external realism, typically in the form of idealism, is the ultimate bad faith of philosophy because it arrogantly arrogates to each individual the power to fashion the world as he or she wishes.

Actually, most relativists are realists, not nihilists. They believe that culturally relative psychology is real and can be objectively known with culturally Indigenous epistemology.

2. Ontological relativism is consistent with epistemological, semantic, and methodological universalism.

Objectivism holds that a culturally specific psychological phenomenon does not require a distinctive epistemology or methodology that is available only inside the culture. The researcher must certainly acquire knowledge about the phenomenon's particular content through understanding the culture. But this is far different from claiming that a culture-bound epistemology and methodology are necessary for comprehending the phenomenon.

This point may be illustrated by a comparative example from biology. An ornithologist who visits a new ecology has to learn about different anatomies of birds that are specific to particular ecologies. But his or her way of comprehending them does not change. The ornithologist uses a general theory about the factors that form bird anatomy, and he or she uses established research procedures and cognitive processes (logic, analysis) to understand the anatomy of these particular birds. In other words, the ornithologist applies general theories and procedures to elucidate the distinctive properties of specific species. The specific content of this species' anatomy does not require a distinctive epistemology and methodology for comprehending it. In fact, any local epistemology and methodology that did not utilize generally accepted principles would fail to explain the local birds' anatomy.

The same is true for psychological phenomena. Their content is culturally specific and variable, but general theoretical, epistemological, and methodological principles are necessary to identify culturally specific content. Without them, Indigenous understandings will be deficient.

Outsiders can understand the subtle, complex cultural-psychological meanings of a foreign people. As Searle observed, one can understand the beliefs people have without sharing them. Anthropologists routinely understand the emotions, thoughts, perceptions, reasoning processes, self-concept, mental illness, and motivation of people very different from themselves. Moreover, they convey their understanding to readers of their works who are even farther removed from the Indigenous culture.

These second- and third-order understandings (removed from the first order of the Indigenous people themselves) are made possible by the human capacity to represent particular events and experiences in general (cultural) symbols that are understandable by other people who have not participated in the event or experience. Symbolic language developed to enable people in different positions to communicate information that was not directly experienced. A hunter in one location could communicate in general symbols (words) to a hunter in another location what he or she had seen (e.g., a band of deer heading toward the second hill) so that the second hunter could gear his action toward this event he did not experience. Robert Merton explained that denying that one person can understand the experience of another is to deny social existence and communication.

3. Culturally embedded scientists can produce and agree to universal science.

Psychologists can objectively comprehend the psychology of diverse people by undergoing scientific training that teaches them general principles and methodologies that are applicable in any setting. Natural scientists undergo similar scientific training. Regardless of their cultural backgrounds and Indigenous beliefs about physical phenomena, they all learn the scientific vocabulary of their discipline (atoms, molecules, genes, germs, cells, gravity, thermodynamics, sound waves) that have proven to more accurately describe and explain their subject matter than their Indigenous beliefs did. Since science is more objective and accurate than Indigenous beliefs, scientists renounce the

latter and adopt the universal conceptual system that best explains their subject matter.

Exactly the same is true for social scientists. All cultural psychologists, for example, can come to agree on scientific cultural psychological concepts that explain the culturally organized psychology of people. Scientific cultural psychology transcends the culture (cultural psychology and relative epistemologies) of its practitioners just as natural science does.

The Indigenous psychology contention that all thought processes are restricted to the conditions of their birth is wrong. As Searle says, the mistake is to suppose that because all facts are stated from within a culture and a point of view that therefore the facts exist only relative to a culture, a point of view, an interpretive community.

Objectivism and Qualitative Methodology

Positivists and many qualitative methodologists alike misconstrue objectivism as antithetical to qualitative methodology. Positivists take this opposition as repudiating any value to qualitative methodology. Many qualitative methodologists applaud the opposition between qualitative methodology and objectivism because they regard objectivism as an impersonal, reified, distorting concept that discounts the subjectivity of subjects and researchers. In this view, validating people's subjectivity requires eschewing objectivism.

These two positions both err in accepting positivistic objectivism as the only true objectivism. In fact, it is possible to investigate social psychological phenomena objectively in a manner that is sensitive to complex, social psychological issues. An objective qualitative methodology dissolves the positivistic objection to qualitative methodology, and it dissolves the postmodern objection to objectivism.

There is a strong objectivist, realist tradition in qualitative methodology. Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, believed that psychological phenomena such as meanings could, and should, be objectively ascertained through a rigorous, scientific procedure of *Verstehen*. *Verstehen* is not an expression of the researcher's spontaneous, personal subjectivity; it is a systematic analysis of other people's meaning. Dilthey emphasized that hermeneutic interpretation of meaning could/should have *Allgemeingultigkeit*, or general validity, because it was objectively apprehended and could be demonstrated to, and accepted by, all interested parties.

Dilthey explained that hermeneutics had this objective from its beginning. It arose in the Greek enlightenment as a method for interpreting and critiquing Homer. Hermeneutics became more sophisticated during the second and third centuries B.C. The literary heritage of Greece was gathered in libraries, and the Alexandrian philologists sought to identify and discard inauthentic texts. They developed strict rules for identifying style, content, inner coherence, and meanings. These rules had to facilitate objective interpretation of the texts to determine which were authentic and which were not. This strict application of hermeneutics led to excising the last books of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* because they could not have been authored by Homer. Dilthey observes that hermeneutical methods were necessitated by a struggle over different interpretations. The struggle made it imperative to develop rigorous rules to justify one's interpretation as more valid than the opposition's.

Hermeneutics took another leap during the 16th and 17th centuries in order to provide an accurate or correct interpretation of classical religious texts and the Bible. Protestant theologians sought to invalidate the Catholic interpretation. To do so, they elaborated essential rules for interpretation. The rules had to culminate in convincing arguments that would validate the Protestant viewpoint and undermine the credibility of Catholicism.

Objectivism in qualitative methodology underlies the development of specific analytical, interpretive procedures such as grounded theory and phenomenology.

Objectivism and Human Fulfillment

Proponents of objectivism hold that it is indispensable for human fulfillment because it reveals the reality and necessity that people have to deal with to fulfill themselves. Objectivism is imperative because the way one understands and deals with the world has life-and-death consequences. Life-and-death consequences follow from whether there really is global warming, whether cholesterol heightens the risk of heart attacks, whether poverty leads to impaired cognitive functioning, whether Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction in 2003, whether psychosis is due to social stress, whether an elderly person is incompetent to make medical and financial decisions about and/or by him- or herself, and whether one is loved by one's spouse. Humanizing life requires being objective about these things. Denying objectivism—which is

fashionable among some who call themselves humanists (e.g., social constructionists, postmodernists, philosophical idealists)—obscures real conditions, factors, principles, processes, and problems that debilitate people and that need to be transformed in specific new directions. Objectivism is humanism, and antiobjectivism and antirealism is antihumanism.

Carl Ratner

See also Postmodernism; Subjectivism

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OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity, a term that is commonly associated with quantitative research, can be broadly described as the extent to which research projects are undistorted by the

biases of researchers. The validity, reliability, and generalizability of most (classically defined) empirical research projects—those that are rooted in the traditional principles of the scientific method—are described as being dependent upon their objectivity (among other factors). Consequently, quantitative researchers actively seek to ensure objectivity through a variety of means, including the standardization of testing procedures and the minimization of flexible data analysis and interpretation. Research projects from this perspective should be untainted by researcher characteristics and therefore repeatable. It is argued that only with such measures can the findings of studies be accurate and dependable. This view of objectivity as a necessary characteristic of research projects is usually associated with work that is rooted in the positivist or postpositivist tradition. This paradigm suggests that there is a single, identifiable truth that can be learned (or at least approached) through rigorous scientific research. To this end, biases and personal viewpoints should be controlled for and as a result, irrelevant to the findings.

From most qualitative researchers' perspectives (which occupy a vast array of paradigmatic affiliations and methodological preferences), objectivity is viewed much differently. Rather than aspiring to conduct research that is objective or neutral, notions of subjectivity are largely acknowledged and embraced. Qualitative researchers are commonly depicted as co-authors and/or co-constructors of reality with their research project participants. Rather than presenting themselves as detached scientific investigators, they are more apt to identify as integral research instruments and/or even passionate advocates for a specific cause. Qualitative work in this regard celebrates the reflexive nature of research. That is, the highly interpretive, diversely conducted nature of qualitative data collection and analysis naturally—indeed, necessarily—are affected by the biases of researchers. Therefore, unlike quantitative researchers, most qualitative researchers do not aspire to conduct studies that are objective.

However, it is necessary to point out that qualitative research in most cases ascribes to a notion of subjectivity that is much different from an unsupported haphazard subjectivity (absolute relativism) that could be situated on the opposite end of the spectrum from scientific objectivity. Subjective qualitative research, marked by researchers' honesty, transparency, and contextualization throughout the research process, is valid in that it offers meaning, lends insight, and in some cases, leads to socially responsible action.

Researchers are often positioned as advocates who are indeed presenting a credible, trustworthy depiction of a people, condition, or phenomenon, but doing it from a real, contextualized, involved position. Data are not, then, presented as subjectively emanating from the researchers' whimsies; rather, they authentically, purposefully, and contextually emerge from the dynamic intersection of researchers' and research participants' unique identities, beliefs, ideas, passions, and actions.

Peter Miller

See also Reflexivity; Reliability; Validity

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OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH

Observation is one of the oldest and most fundamental research method approaches. It involves collecting impressions of the world using all of one's senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and purposeful way to learn about a phenomenon of interest. Although frequently employed on its own, observational research is often used with other methods such as interviewing and document analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative researchers, and those working somewhere along the continuum between these two approaches, use observation. More quantitative observation is often referred to as systematic or structured observation and more qualitative approaches include naturalistic observation, nonstructured observation, and participant observation. This entry focuses on qualitative observational research. It begins by relating some of the characteristics of qualitative observation, goes on to describe the method or doing of observation, explores the issues of the role of the observer and ethical concerns, and closes with overviews of the strengths and weaknesses of this methodological approach.

Characteristics of Qualitative Observational Research

Qualitative observational research attempts to capture life as experienced by the research participants rather

than through categories that have been predetermined by the researcher. Observational research assumes behavior is purposeful, reflecting deeper values and beliefs. Although it may be conducted in a laboratory or another setting chosen by the researcher, it more typically takes place in natural settings to capture behavior as it occurs in the real world. It usually involves direct contact between the researcher and participants though indirect data collection methods such as audio- or video-recording may also be used. Qualitative observational research is exploratory. It seeks to uncover unanticipated phenomena. It uses inductive reasoning with the conceptual constructs used to account for observations being developed during and after data collection from the observed behavior itself. Qualitative observational research uses idiographic rather than nomothetic causal explanation. It is constructivist in approach, emphasizing meanings that the participants attach to activities and events. Qualitative observational research recognizes the subjective role of the researcher. It acknowledges reactivity to be inevitable on the part of both the observed and the observer and seeks to address and understand this through researcher reflexivity.

Qualitative observational research is associated with a number of theoretical traditions and broad research methodologies including ethnomethodology, grounded theory, dramaturgy, institutional ethnography, and participatory action research.

Methods: Doing Observational Research

The Research Process

Observational research, like any research, begins with the selection of a research problem. This problem is often presented as an area of research interest, with more specific research questions being articulated after more is learned through observation in the field. Although some researchers prefer to enter the field and begin observation immediately without the potential blinders of preconceived notions, many conduct a literature search to identify relevant indicators and explanatory concepts that may inform the project. Researchers gather both descriptive and relational data through observing behavior in the setting of interest. Findings are articulated, often with an explanatory model or one or more explanatory theoretical constructs, in reports of the research.

Qualitative observation is characterized by an emergent research design. This design involves a

cyclical process, moving back and forth between inductive and deductive reasoning: Themes are identified through the analysis of observed behavior; these themes suggest areas for focusing subsequent observation; subsequent observations suggest new themes that then initiate more observations. Data collection continues until saturation, the point at which the observer learns nothing new from continued observation.

What Is Observed

Observation is holistic in its approach, with researchers collecting data about many aspects of the research setting and its participants. Researchers pay attention to the actors or participants in a setting, collecting sociodemographic (e.g., age, gender, education, class) and descriptive (e.g., dress and stature) information, trying to determine who the people are. Acts, activities, and events are observed and recorded to discover what people do and with whom, what is happening, and if there are any trends and patterns discernible in these activities. Observers attend to what people say, the words they use, accounts and explanations they give of their behavior, and the personal and social meanings and the attitudes and beliefs that are revealed through their talk. Relationships between people, both individually and within groups and between people and groups of people and organizations, are explored. Characteristics of the physical setting, including the objects found in it, are noted. Where possible and often through the collection and examination of documents, information is gathered about the history of the phenomenon of interest and the research setting. Observers attend to mundane, everyday details, believing that what is actually happening is often evident in what might be seen to be trivial and taken for granted. Through observation practices such as these, researchers strive to identify broad trends and patterns of behavior.

Fieldnotes

Data are most frequently recorded in the form of fieldnotes. From initial jottings made during observation, researchers develop full fieldnotes usually within 24 hours of data collection while memory is still strong. Fieldnotes always include written descriptions of what was observed and may also contain maps, diagrams, and documents or other objects gathered while

observing. While writing up fieldnotes, observers often have insights about what has been observed, and these are recorded as theoretical or analytical fieldnotes. Researchers also keep track of conditions in the setting, their own state of mind, attention span, and other variables that might affect the process of observation. These records are referred to as either method fieldnotes or a reflexive journal. Fieldnotes are the core data log for analysis in observational research.

Researcher Roles in Observation

The role adopted by the researcher is important in that it constrains what can be observed. Several schemes have been developed to describe these roles. Raymond L. Gold's typology, dating from the late 1950s and commonly used, is based on the degree that the researcher participates in the setting, ranging from complete observer (no interaction between the observer and the observed) through observer as participant, participant as observer, and complete participant. More recently, some researchers have asserted that all observers participate in a setting in some way and prefer to use the term *membership*, varying from peripheral through active to full membership to describe researcher roles. The purpose of an observation study, the characteristics of the observer, and the nature of the setting all contribute to the choice of an appropriate research role. For example, in a study of the work of a nursery school teacher conducted on site in an actual nursery school by an adult male researcher, it may be best for the observer to adopt the research role of complete observer or peripheral membership to remain relatively nonobtrusive and to not disrupt the normal flow of activities. In presenting the findings of observation research, it is important that the researcher role and its entailments in the particular research setting be described.

Ethical Issues in Observational Research

A number of ethical issues are associated with observational research. Of major concern is the use of deception by the researcher. Practicing covert observation, assuming a false role, or misleading participants about the research in other ways may (depending on the circumstances) violate the principle of informed consent; due care and attention must be paid to ethical issues in these cases. Researchers must maintain confidentiality, both protecting the identity of participants and

refusing to reveal sensitive information gathered during the research process that could harm the individuals involved. Researchers must be inclusive, realistically representing the voices of all participants in a research setting. Key informants and gatekeepers may block access to the less powerful, and ways to bypass them must be found. Member checking helps to ensure that participant's accounts and meanings are authentic. Observational methods are often used for exploring deviant behavior. Researchers may observe or participate in illegal or deviant behavior as part of the data gathering process. This behavior can result in what is called *guilty knowledge* and presents the ethical dilemma of whether or not this behavior should be reported to police or health or other authorities to protect and help participants and the community.

Strengths of Observational Research

Qualitative observation, with its flexible and emergent research design, is effective for exploring topics about which little is known. It is well suited to the study of social processes over time. The rich descriptions it generates can result in deeper, fuller understanding of phenomena. It is particularly powerful when combined with other methods such as interviewing. Most forms of qualitative observational research are relatively unobtrusive and therefore nonreactive and able to generate highly trustworthy data. Finally, observational research is well suited to both the discovery of new information (theory generation) and the validation of existing knowledge (theory confirmation).

Weaknesses of Observational Research

Observation is not suited to all research inquiries. Not all phenomena, such as cognitive processes, can be directly observed. Infrequently occurring acts are difficult to capture even with prolonged time spent in the field. Observation requires a substantial amount of time and other resources and is usually tied to one specific place, raising issues related to the transferability of findings to other settings. Repeated observations in a number of settings and thick descriptions of what was observed that help readers determine how transferable findings are to other settings help to address this problem.

As observation is very dependent on the ability of the observer (reflected in the idea of researcher-as-instrument), it is subject to observer bias that occurs

when researchers channel both their observation and interpretation of data through what they know. Strategies to reduce observer bias include maintaining reflective journals that actively examine this issue; prolonged engagement in the field that allows for discovery of unanticipated phenomena; triangulation of data sources, researchers and methods; negative case analysis; member checking; peer debriefing; and providing thick descriptions of what was observed. Novice researchers may not have the experience and skill to be effective observers. They need training and especially apprenticeship, as the best way to learn is by actually doing observation.

Recently, researchers working from a postmodernist perspective have questioned the desirability and feasibility of objectivity in observational research and point to a number of factors that inevitably threaten objectivity. They maintain the researcher's situation (e.g., gender, class, and ethnicity) must be fully understood as it acts as a lens through which observation is conducted. They assert there will always be multiple accounts of what is happening depending on who is describing an event and that no single account may be privileged over another. Postmodernist researchers argue for thinking of observation as a context for interaction among those involved in the research, as collaboration between the researcher and the participants.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Naturalistic Observation; Nonparticipant Observation; Participant Observation; Structured Observation; Unstructured Observation

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OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

An observation schedule is a form prepared prior to data collection that delineates the behavior and situational features to be observed and recorded during observation. Observation schedules vary on a quantitative–qualitative continuum. More quantitative observation schedules, sometimes referred to as observation checklists, use carefully and explicitly predefined categories of variables that can be counted and analyzed statistically. More qualitative observation schedules act as flexible guidelines for data collection, listing topics of interest and providing space to record notes about new themes that emerge during observation. Heavily structured observation schedules are best suited to contexts where more is known about the topic of interest; more flexible, less structured observation schedules are more effective in situations where less is known about the research questions.

Usually taking the form of a single sheet of paper, observation schedules are most frequently used with structured observation. Categories included on the data collection form are derived from the purposes of the research project and from what is known about the variables or themes of interest. Observation schedules are typically pretested and modified before implementation.

Observation schedules allow factual information to be recorded immediately. Factual data collected typically include some or all of relevant demographic information (e.g., age, gender), the role of participants in the research setting (e.g., job title), counts of the number of individuals present, and elements of the physical setting. Investigators also document what participants do (acts and activities) either by checking

predetermined categories or by making notes about what is observed. What people say (words and the meanings ascribed to them) and relationships among participants are usually also of interest. In developing observation schedules, researchers attend to ease of use. More quantitative observation schedules will include explicitly defined categories that are exhaustive and mutually exclusive and that, wherever possible, avoid subjective measures requiring judgment or inference. More qualitative observation schedules seek to list as many emerging themes of interest to the project as is possible. Observation schedules are well suited to tracking time and if designed to do so, can capture the frequency, sequence, and duration of events observed. Most researchers recommend leaving space on observation schedules, including the most explicitly quantitative forms, for recording data that do not fit into preselected categories and impressions and other more subjective data that may inform the study.

Observation schedules provide clear guides for focusing observation and recording data. In studies involving more than one observer, they allow for tests of intercoder reliability and serve to enhance consistency among observers. Heavily structured observation schedules are less flexible, restricting attention and limiting the ability of observers to see new things. The use of observation schedules can be intrusive and result in reactivity in research settings. However, it has been found that this is usually ameliorated through habituation.

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See also Checklists; Inter- and Intracoder Reliability; Observational Research; Structured Observation

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OBSERVER BIAS

Errors and biases can occur in all types of social science research, whether it is qualitatively driven or quantitatively led. One type of bias that may occur

during observational methods is *observer bias*. This term refers to the ways in which errors may unconsciously occur when gathering and analyzing observational data. The observer's age, gender, social class, values, schemas, and expectations may lead certain observations to be recorded as significant and others to be ignored if the observer regards them as unimportant. Further, observers may associate meanings to the observed behavior that are different from the meanings associated by the person(s) displaying the behavior.

Psychological studies have shown that bias in human perception and expectation can encourage findings that correspond with those perceptions and expectations. In one study, Miriam Goldstein, J. Roy Hopkins, and Michael J. Strube found that students who were led to believe that an individual's performance would decrease as a result of consuming alcohol reported corresponding observations. The decrease in performance was not evident in the observed behavior as the individual observed—a trained confederate who drank a nonalcoholic drink—maintained consistent performance throughout the observation.

Although the researcher cannot alter some influencing characteristics, such as age, observer bias can be reduced if the researcher adopts specific strategies during the observation, for example, using standardized forms. Standardized forms, as used in structured observations, can help to reduce the impact of selective perception, as the forms direct the observer's attention to those behaviors or activities that are closely related to the central research project. The use of multiple observers can also highlight deviations from the main research topic, misinterpretations, omissions, and overemphasis. Further, triangulation—the use of multiple methods or data sources to study the observational individual(s)—enables findings to be cross-checked and any biases or errors to be highlighted.

Observer bias can also manifest itself in more subtle ways, which are more difficult to eliminate. Those being observed may modify their behavior, disguise their actions, and alter their opinions because they do not wish to share them with the researcher. Behavior may be changed according to how those being observed think they are expected to behave. Such responses are often referred to as the Hawthorne effect, taken from the name of a factory where the effect was first identified—the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne Works in Chicago. As completely neutral observations may be difficult to

achieve, when reporting observational findings researchers should acknowledge and discuss the factors that may have contributed to observer bias and how these factors may have altered the interpretation of the findings. This discussion will enable readers to make an informed judgment when assessing the value of the observational findings.

Sharon Lockyer

See also Bias; Objectivity; Observational Research; Structured Observation

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ONTOLOGY

Ontology derives from the Greek words for *thing* and *rational account*. In classical and speculative philosophy, ontology was the philosophical science of being. Its general aim was to provide reasoned, deductive accounts of the fundamental sorts of things that existed. Ontology was not concerned with the specific nature of empirical entities, but rather with more basic questions of the universal forms of existence. Examples of classical ontological questions are as follows: Are bodies the only things that exist, or are immaterial forms real? Is there a supreme intelligence in the universe, or is all activity reducible to mechanical motion? Are individuals alone real, or are collectivities independently real? Are there real objects of universal terms, or are universals simply names that humans give to mental abstractions? The very generality of these questions means that they will always have some connection to the investigation of natural and social phenomena. In the contemporary era, however, it would be wrong to continue to think of ontology as a fundamental science given that hypothetical-empirical methods of research (at least in the natural sciences) have permanently displaced the deductive-rationalist methods of classical philosophy.

The last systematic attempt at fundamental ontology in the work of Martin Heidegger hoped to displace

the domination of empirical science by demonstrating that its conclusions were relative to unexamined frames of meaning. The answer to the question, "What is being?" differs depending on the frames of meaning within which the question is asked. The scientific answer to this question refuses to admit all nonquantifiable data into an acceptable account of reality. The consequence of this method is that the world is reduced to the sum total of individual things. Since these things are assumed to be meaningless in themselves and anything that might exist beyond individual things but is not quantifiable is ruled irrelevant, the entire world is reduced to mere raw materials for scientific and technological manipulation. The importance of this aspect of Heidegger's work has not impeded the further extension of the hegemony of quantitative methods in both the natural and social sciences. His alternative, to let beings be, has not proven a globally convincing alternative.

Nevertheless, ontological questioning remains an essential moment of any adequate social scientific research. The importance of ontological questioning, however, does not mean that it is reasonable any longer to expect deductive expositions of the essential nature of social reality. It would be anachronistic to pose these questions with the goal of arriving at a totalized system of universal principles in mind. In the contemporary period, ontology, or more particularly, social ontology, remains essential as a critical propaedeutic to empirical research.

Social Ontology

The term *social ontology* derives from the work of Carol C. Gould. In this more restricted sense, ontology aims at providing general accounts of the nature of social reality. Its practice is linked explicitly to the goal of avoiding a naive (unreflective, uncritical) empiricism that would reduce the nature of social reality to that which is disclosed by statistical and empirical methods of research. From an ontological perspective, the problem of statistical-empirical methods is not that they cannot uncover important data about social dynamics or patterns of behavior, but rather that they rest upon an untheorized and undisclosed ontological assumption: Social reality is identical to the conclusions of statistical-empirical research. In other words, the empirical researcher who does not explicitly pose ontological questions fails to ask the most important question of social research:

How did the given social reality come to be constituted as it appears? The social ontologist recognizes that unlike the objects of natural science, which are not produced by human action and thus constitute a reality that truly is given to the mind to investigate, social reality is the result of complex forms of human action and interaction. That fact means that social reality is dynamic in a way that natural reality is not. The fundamental forms of social reality can change precisely because they are determined by forms of action and interaction that create a field of possibilities, but that simultaneously exclude the realization of most of them. Posing critical ontological questions thus opens up the field of social possibilities, whereas proceeding on the assumption that that which is real in society is identical to the conclusions of statistical-empirical research keeps the field of possibilities hidden. An example will clarify this claim.

The newspapers are regularly full of stories about crime. Quite detailed demographic and statistical analyses of the causes and trends of crime are easy to find in the popular press. These analyses are generally accompanied by definite psychological and sociological assumptions that can differ within a narrow range of alternatives (some accounts give relatively more weight to sociological factors such as class and race; others tend toward a more psychologistic approach, linking criminal activity to a specific mindset that increases the propensity for antisocial behavior). What one rarely finds in these accounts, however, is an inquiry into the meaning of crime. That is, these accounts generally assume without argument that crime is some independently real entity and the criminal, thus, an objective variable that can be studied as one would study the behavior of a neutrino or a magnetic field. In other words, empirical research proceeds on the basis of assumptions that the investigator may not even be aware of, but these assumptions predetermined the sorts of questions asked and the range of answers that will prove acceptable. This predetermination of questions and answers at the same time limits the range of policy options that will be defended by the conclusions of the research. If sociological factors are paramount, then various projects of social development (poverty reduction programs, education, etc.) will be favored. If psychologistic assumptions rule, then strategies of deterrence (designed to make a life of crime less appealing) will be favored. The aim of social ontological investigation is not to support one policy option over the other, but rather, to

work beneath the givens of empirical research to disclose the wider field of possibilities for social action and organization closed off to empirical methods because of their unreflective approach. As opposed to the positive nature of empirical research (positive in the sense of being governed by the goal of accumulating data that can support policy), social ontological research is primarily negative. Negative here means aimed at the breaking up of fixed and untested assumptions that illegitimately limit the field of questions and answers that guide empirical inquiry.

Social Ontology and Social Criticism

The negative form of inquiry proceeds by taking the givens of empirical research and making them the target of ontological questioning. That is, it asks whether or not, or under what conditions, the fixed object of empirical research actually exists. Consider the example of crime and the criminal once again. Positive methods assume the objective reality of crime and criminals and seek to draw inductive generalizations about causes, behaviors, and practical remedies. Ontological investigation asks deeper questions: What constitutes criminal behavior? Is being a criminal being something fundamentally distinct from being a not-criminal? What general social conditions must obtain for their being the categories of crime and criminal? Are these conditions universal (transhistorical and cross-cultural), or are they historically specific terms, apart from specific policy options in any given society? Is it possible to conceive on the basis of real social potentialities a different form of social organization in which crime and criminals would no longer exist?

These sorts of focused questions are only the beginning of negative inquiry. As the questioning proceeds, it will lead the questioner into more fundamental questions, questions that establish contact between social ontology and the deeper questions of classical ontology. If the first set of questions reveals that specific factors must be in place for a given social reality to appear in the form that it does (to use the example of crime once again, a civil legal institution separate from religious authority that permits the distinction between crime and sin), then the general conclusion follows that social reality is more fluid than natural reality. From this general conclusion follow more general questions: In what sense can institutions be said to exist independently of the individuals whose behaviors they govern? Does institutional reality depend

upon the beliefs of people, or is it a reified whole that determines people's beliefs and actions? In what sense is society an object of research? Is social reality distinct from the individuals who make it up? The general methodological implication of this form of questioning is to open up a difference between the given appearances of social belief and the action and general underlying processes that produce changes in the institutional configurations in which beliefs and actions develop. In short, social ontology undermines the plausibility of uncritical empiricism that identifies social reality as such with given forms of organization, belief, and action.

Empirical approaches to understanding society that simply assume that what the researcher sees is the truth about society run the risk of not only ignoring the historical development of different social forms (and thus, the possibility of deeper social transformations in the future) but also misunderstanding the nature of individuals whose belief and action purportedly constitute the foundation of social life. Methodological individualism—the claim that only individuals are real and that collective entities such as classes and movements are understandable only if their behavior is reduced to the behavior of the individuals who make them up—is the necessary counterpart to empiricist social research. Since the empiricist necessarily refuses the distinction between apparent forms of reality and essential underlying, constitutive structures and relations, the possibility of collective subjects, is ruled out from the beginning. It does not follow from this argument that there are in fact collective agents; that is a question that can be decided only by fundamental inquiry into the nature of social reality. The point of ontological questioning is to test presupposed assumptions by working beneath the manifest forms of action in given social formations. This deep questioning extends all the way down into those elements of human subjects that appear most natural: sex, skin color as an objective determinant of race, the biological needs that structure the human organism, and so on. There can be no certainty that what appears to be natural (i.e., fixed independently of institutional structure) is in truth natural without ontological investigation.

Contemporary Relevance of Ontology in Social Research

The need for this form of ontological questioning of given social reality follows from the basic structure of

human thought. Although he did not use the term *social ontology*, Theodor Adorno's inquiry into the basic relationship between thinking consciousness (subject) and the object of thought reveals clearly its necessity. Adorno demonstrates in *Negative Dialectics* that human thinking is essentially contradictory. Because thought depends upon universal concepts to organize the raw material of sense data, but the objects of that sense data are material particulars, the very processes by which human beings cognize the world distances the human mind from it. That is, there is always a cognitive deficit between the conceptual forms through which the world is known and the intrinsic (particular) structure of the things of the world itself. The same point holds whether one is referring to natural or social reality. To simply assume that a categorical system corresponds to a nonconceptual reality (as positivism must) is to ignore the essential difference between universal concepts and particular things and the relations between them. Since concepts are necessary for there to be objects of thought at all, there can be no question of abstracting from conceptual structures to get at the things themselves as Edmund Husserl argued. Instead, genuine thinking for Adorno must engage in an ongoing dialectical process of conceptualization and criticism of achieved conceptualization, constantly reopening the conceptual closure the mind must impose upon the world. The point of this constant reopening is not to end up with some definite ontology (general or social), but rather it is to remind subjects that no particular conceptual system is ever fully adequate to the complexity of reality.

In this sense, ontology today is best practiced as a critical discipline rather than a positive philosophical science. Positive knowledge of social, like natural, reality cannot do without empirical and statistical methods. These methods, however, must be located in a more fundamental matrix of critical (ontological) thought. Critical thinking here does not mean what it has come to mean in the social sciences today—problem solving—but rather, it refers to the essentially negative nature of thinking. That is, thinking negates the givenness or independence of the object. Any object of thought must become an object of consciousness before it can be named and classified. All systems of naming and classification follow from the structure of human consciousness itself, which, as noted above, converts material particulars into universal concepts. Critical thinking remains mindful of this

dialectical conversion process and thus, refuses just what the empiricist demands—total closure of the field of thinking by the given forms of reality that constitute the object of its claims. The general ontological conclusion of this approach to the problem is simply that reality is not a fixed object that can be known once for all. What is real is determined by the dynamic processes implicit in both nature and society and the structures of mind upon which active cognition of those processes depends. Without this, awareness of the dynamic and changeable nature of the real empirical knowledge continually compromises its truth value by falsely universalizing conclusions drawn from particular sets of data.

It would appear, then, that the sort of ontological investigation that remains vital today entails both relativistic and idealist conclusions. Such a conclusion, however, is too hasty. Ontology is essentially a form of questioning. Questions open up the field of research; they do not determine answers. Hence, whether relativism or idealism is true cannot be decided simply from a process of critical questioning of apparent natural and social forms. In fact, to assume that some definite systematic conclusion follows from a process of questioning is the result of a demand that questioning cease, whereas the whole point of ontological investigation is to make clear the reasons why questioning cannot terminate in any absolutely final conclusions. Since the real is a dynamic process (or processes) of change and development, there can be no final, one-sided conclusions as to its essential nature. To argue that everything is relative or that the implication of consciousness in the cognitive determination of material reality leads to idealism is to miss the real point of ontological criticism. The real point, once again, is to undermine the positivist drive to reduce reality as such to its apparent forms in any given moment of time. To grasp natural and social reality as processes of change and development is thus to grasp that the opposites that structure classical ontology (ideal–material, relative–absolute) are always both present in the object. One does not exclude the other; each implies the other. That social and natural reality change means that there is always going to be an element of relativity in empirical knowledge; it does not mean that truth is relative. The first formulation is not a general theory of truth; the second is. The second contradicts itself (by absolutizing relativity); the first asserts a particular conclusion of critical investigation.

It is, therefore, as the necessary foundation of critical understanding that ontology remains relevant to social research. Unless fundamental questions are posed, social research runs the risk of being determined by immediate appearances, to the detriment of both understanding and making efficacious contributions to public policy. Policy recommendations that follow from unreflective assumptions about the nature of social institutions and agents necessarily remain hostage to given modes of social action. If those modes of social action are problematic, however, then policies that assume their necessity will serve to exacerbate rather than ameliorate their effects. The various social wars of the last 3 decades, on poverty, on crime, and so on, are cases in point of manifest policy failure owing to the naive assumptions about the nature of the social problem (and thus, about the basic nature of social institutions and agents) that guided them. Thus, although ontology as a fundamental philosophical science may no longer have an important role, the deep questions that motivated it remain an essential element of illuminating social research.

Jeff Noonan

See also Essence; Essentialism; Idealism

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OPEN CODING

Open coding refers to the initial phase of the coding process in the grounded theory approach to qualitative research (generating theory from data) espoused by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin. They call this initial stage of data analysis open coding because they view the process as the “opening up” of the text in order to uncover ideas and meanings it holds.

The process of open coding begins with the collection of raw data (e.g., interviews, fieldnotes, art, reports, diaries). The intent of open coding is to break down the data into segments in order to interpret them. Detailed word-by-word and line-by-line analysis is conducted by researchers asking what is going on. The researcher discovers, names, defines, and develops as many ideas and concepts as possible without concern for how they will ultimately be used. How the issues and themes within the data relate must be systematically assessed, but such relationships can be discovered only once the multitude of ideas and concepts it holds have been uncovered.

Turning data into concepts is the process of taking words or objects and attaching a label to them that represents an interpretation of them. When data collection is ongoing, the concepts identified guide what further data are collected. Such theoretical sampling, sampling based on the concepts uncovered in the data, is contingent upon the open coding process. The topic of study and issues of concern to the researcher play a key role in the ideas and concepts identified; however, the researcher is advised to be vigilant in keeping an open mind when analyzing the data.

Any phenomenon (e.g., event, incident, action, object, process) may be multiply classified. For instance, a statement by the spouse of an incarcerated offender, “I’m worried that my daughter keeps getting into fist fights,” may be coded as *fighting*, as *parental concern* for his or her child, and as actions signifying the need for *assistance or therapy*. The development of such concepts provides the opportunity for researchers to classify similar phenomena together, ordering and reducing the data. Data segments are, therefore, compared so that they may be grouped together as examples of the same concept or differentiated to form new ones. For instance, the concepts of cheating, stealing, and fighting share the property of being deviant and may be grouped together under the more abstract category labeled deviant acts. In the process of open coding, researchers also search for the dimensions of categories, such as frequency (how often) and intensity (how severe).

In the coding process advocated by Strauss and Corbin, open coding precedes axial coding, the refinement and development of specific categories, and selective coding, where categories are related around a core or central theme in an attempt to explain a phenomenon.

Some critics have expressed concern that the advantages of this style of microanalysis may be

outweighed by the drawbacks of stripping away context and thereby obscuring larger storylines.

Open coding may be recorded in a variety of ways, for example, through marginal notes, the use of word processing programs, or specialized software programs designed for qualitative research where code labels are attached to data segments for easy retrieval.

Lucia Benaquisto

See also Axial Coding; Codes and Coding; Grounded Theory; Selective Coding

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OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

An open-ended question is a type of question that researchers pose to research participants that allows them to select how they orient to the research topic. Also referred to as nondirective questions, open-ended questions provide participants of research interviews or written surveys with the opportunity to choose the terms with which to construct their descriptions and highlight the topics that are meaningful to them. The freedom on the part of research participants to elaborate on self-selected aspects related to the researcher's topic of examination in response to open-ended questions contrasts with the kind of responses called for by closed questions, which provide possible answers in the question and structure the format in which interviewees should respond. Open-ended questions make no presumptions about the kinds of answers participants might provide and are sometimes used as a way to develop the response options used in standardized survey formats.

The "grand tour" and "mini tour" questions outlined by the ethnographer James Spradley are good examples of open-ended questions, for example:

- Describe a typical day at work.
- Describe what you usually do when you encounter *x* at work.

One guideline for using open-ended interview questions is to begin with general questions and to request more detail from participants with probes. For example, a general question such as, "Tell me how you came to be doing *y*," might be followed up with the probe, "You mentioned *z*; give me an example of that." Participants' descriptions of their subjective states may also be elicited via probes: "You mentioned *y*; tell me what that was like for you." A useful closing question in any qualitative interview is the open-ended question, "Is there anything we have not talked about that you would like to add?"

Although Spradley's use of open-ended questions is in the context of ethnographic interviews that examine questions about culture, open-ended questions may be used in a range of qualitative interview formats, including open-ended or in-depth individual interviews, group conversations and focus groups, and in (quantitative) questionnaires to elicit written data.

Interviewers must take care to pose open-ended questions purposefully, for if questions are too broad and the researcher has provided insufficient context for the research purpose, participants may not know how to respond, and lengthy clarification sequences may ensue. Another challenge faced by qualitative researchers lies in the analysis of data generated from open-ended questions. Since participants are free to respond to open-ended questions in whatever way they choose, data generated are likely to be wide-ranging in topic, complexity, and length.

Kathryn J. Roulston

See also Closed Question; In-Depth Interview; Interview Guide; Probes and Probing; Semi-Structured Interview; Unstructured Interview

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ORAL HISTORY

Oral history is one of the oldest, best known, and most often used methods in qualitative research. Oral historians ask people to talk about their overall life experiences or to discuss specific experiences and events in a narrative form, recording this information with either audio or video equipment. The aim of oral history is to gain first-hand knowledge from people who have lived through different social–historical–political periods and events. This methodology allows the researcher to document what the person has lived through and to analyze this information for underlying meanings and significance that such an event or a time period has for the informant. Oral history provides information that cannot be gleaned from any other sources, and it gives voice to ordinary and often marginalized peoples whose stories might never have been documented otherwise.

Oral history is of importance for qualitative research since it forms the basis for many studies. As one of the foremost open-ended techniques for gathering information about people, it has had a major impact on other types of qualitative interviews. That is, interviewing modes such as open-ended interviews, life story interviews, and semi-structured interviews often draw upon the oral history tradition. Oral history has not only influenced interviewing techniques, but also opened up ways of thinking about data collection in general and about the value of combining oral history with different modes of learning about others—such as the analysis of written formal documents and observations. Finally, oral history cuts across disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences, making it a research method that is used by scholars, students, educators, writers, and folklorists working from diverse backgrounds and interests.

This entry presents an overview of oral history, its scope and major contributors, and then briefly describes its basic techniques. It ends with examples of major oral history projects that have been undertaken around the world in recent years and information on resources of interest for beginning and experienced oral historians.

An Overview of Oral History

Oral history has been used as a way of passing down memories of the past for centuries and of sharing memories across cultures, predating written history.

There has not always been consensus among social science researchers concerning the reliability of oral history as a data collection method or concerning its ability to serve as a rigorous research method. However, in spite of these periodic reservations, oral histories have been systematically collected and analyzed for the last 2 centuries. This informal method of preserving information about past events emerged as an important methodological tool of social science and historical research during the decade of the 1940s with the advent of the tape recorder. For over 60 years, therefore, oral history has enjoyed a renaissance.

Paul Thompson, a British scholar and one of the world's foremost oral historians working within sociology and social history, has carried out hundreds of oral histories and historical studies of its uses by looking at over hundreds of years of work. As Thompson notes, oral history gained in popularity in the United States and Europe during the 19th century. For example, collections of oral histories of influential Americans began as early as the 1860s, and the interest in the field led to the establishment of the American Folklore Society in 1890. The Chicago School of Sociology, based in the University of Chicago, which became one of the premier social science departments in the country and in the world, adopted oral histories as their major method of documentation and analysis of urban social life in the 1920s. Perhaps this work is best epitomized by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's monumental sociological research on Polish immigration to other countries in Europe and to the United States.

Oral histories have been used extensively throughout Western Europe and Scandinavia, in Latin and South America, in Africa, and in Asia. A nonexhaustive list of the diverse topics studied include urban issues, especially long-term poverty, slum and inner-city life, and the social consequences of this poverty, such as delinquency and homelessness; immigration, focusing on issues of socialization, education, and assimilation; labor issues, such as experiences in industries such as fisheries, education, and cotton mills and labor union development; the arts, looking at the life stories of musicians and artists; military and war issues that center on battle experiences of former soldiers, conscientious objectors, and antifascist wartime partisans; health issues and wellness, including research on former psychiatric patients, caregivers, and people suffering from terminal diseases; and research on diverse populations and cultures such as Native Americans,

Indigenous Aborigines in Australia, former Black slaves in the United States, migrant workers, homesteaders, lesbians and gays, and survivors of the Holocaust and of state terror and torture, to mention just a few. A short list of scholars and folklorists who are well known for their innovative work in oral history include Studs Terkel, who collected hundreds of narratives from working people throughout the United States; anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who documented stories of Mexican families; Neil Rafeek of Scotland, who focused on issues of social justice; Wilma Klug Baum, who directed the Bancroft Library's Oral History Project at the University of California at Berkeley for over 40 years; Luisa Passerini, an Italian professor of history who has studied fascism, student radicals, and the feminist movement; and Alessandro Portelli, a professor of American literature in Italy, who has recorded stories from people living in Rome's slums, Kentucky coal miners, veterans of World War II and the Vietnam War, and student activists from around the world. Portelli's contributions also extend to the theory and practice of oral history by drawing connections between personal memories and history and by looking at how dialogue, representation, narrative, and genre link historical analysis together with literary theory, linguistic theory, and anthropology.

As can be seen, oral history is not monopolized by any one discipline; research using this methodology can be found in the fields of history, art, literature, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, feminist studies, social work, education, and psychology. Furthermore, oral historians working in these different disciplines often borrow from one another, thus adding an interdisciplinary aspect to their studies.

The Method: Eliciting Oral Histories

The techniques used in eliciting oral histories share the following commonalities: questions are open-ended and person and experience centered, and the questions aim to elicit rich detail on the topic being studied and involve active listening. Opening questions can be extremely general and open-ended, leaving it to the interviewee to direct the interview. For example, one might say, "Please tell me your life story, talking about whatever you wish." Alternatively, the question can be much more focused, centering on a particular event or historical period. Here, the researcher might ask, "Please tell me what happened on the day the Nazis marched into your town." Oftentimes, oral historians

begin with a broad question and then move on to more specific questions where they ask the participants to recount specific details connected to the topic of the study. As a rule, as the interviewee proceeds with the story, the interviewer attempts to elicit more and more detail about personal memories and experiences without disrupting the narrative flow. Therefore, a successful oral historian must develop excellent listening and nonverbal behavioral skills that encourage the biographer to continue with the testimony. In addition, to collect rich material, oral historians must demonstrate interpersonal and cultural sensitivity and refrain from asking judgmental questions that can make the interviewee feel uncomfortable. Oral histories range in time; they can take from one hour to several hours. Some interviews last only one session while others take place over days and perhaps even weeks or months. In addition to the interview, oral historians often also ask their participants to provide artifacts or documents, such as letters and diaries from different historical periods that add another dimension to their stories.

Oral History Projects and Resources

Over the last 20 years, oral histories have been used in many different frameworks and institutions. Two examples of projects that have made important contributions to social science and history include the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation that was established in 1994 by director Steven Spielberg. The foundation videorecorded testimonies of Holocaust survivors and witnesses, recently making these interviews available for educational and research purposes. There are nearly 52,000 testimonies in the database that were collected in 32 languages and 56 countries. To date, this massive global undertaking has produced two CD-ROMs and eight documentary films. A second important oral history project is the Veterans History Project that was established by the U.S. Congress in 2000. This project aims to gather first-hand accounts of American veterans from all of the wars from the 20th century onward through audio and visual recordings or through written memoirs. The endeavor also interviews individuals who, as civilians, actively supported war efforts, such as war industry workers, USO (i.e., United Service Organizations) workers, and medical staff.

People interested in oral history can find a number of resources on the internet. The Oral History

Association, which was established in the United States in 1966, has an international membership from many fields. This organization has established guidelines and evaluation standards for oral history interviews. Furthermore, the association gives awards for excellent achievements in the categories of publications, media productions, teaching, and oral history projects. A second internet resource is the Oral History Society (OHS), which was founded in Great Britain. The OHS offers conferences, practical training, national and international networking, funding and employment opportunities, and a journal on oral history. These resources, along with many others, have moved oral history research from the periphery into mainstream research.

Julia Chaitin

See also Audiorecording; Biography; Historical Context; Life Stories; Lived Experience; Marginalized Populations; *Oral History Review* (Journal); Storytelling; Videorecording; Voice

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ORAL HISTORY REVIEW (JOURNAL)

The *Oral History Review* is the official publication of the Oral History Association. The Oral History Association (OHA) commenced activities in 1966, but it did not establish its journal until 1973. Prior to establishing the *Oral History Review*, the association published proceedings of its first seven meetings.

With the growing determination for scholars to work from the ground up perpetuated by the Annales

School of inquiry and accordingly eschewing traditional documentary history, the OHA widened its scope. In the process, it welcomed not only academics to the fold, but also archivists, librarians, students, journalists, teachers, and personal historians not only to the OHA, but also to the *Oral History Review*, a benefit of membership. Academic subscribers are by no means exclusively historians; anthropologists, folklorists, communication specialists, political scientists, sociologists, and many other fields benefit from membership and find publishing opportunities.

The *Oral History Review* explores a multiplicity of issues. Although many articles discuss scholars' ongoing projects interviewing eyewitnesses to or participants in past events, other articles have dealt with theories of oral history, memory, and methodologies. Still other articles have discussed the recording process, transcription, authorization, and authority as related to the human memory.

In addition to articles, not only by professional academics, but also by students and personal historians, the *Oral History Review* includes book reviews and media reviews. The intent is to provide the widest forum possible for exploring issues, providing guidance, and sharing experiences. The *Oral History Review* intends to be the journal of record not only for the OHA, but also for the discipline of oral history within the United States and, accordingly, seeks to present the finest work being done in the field. Its issues help to shape and to direct the scholarship and lead the discussion of the oral history community not only in the United States, but also throughout the English-speaking world.

Initially self-published, the journal has in recent years been professionally produced by university presses. Its biannual issues (March and September) generally include three or four peer-reviewed, double-blinded articles, as well as a selection of book and media reviews. Its subscription list is an international one as are its articles and reviews. Currently, approximately half of its subscribers are institutional.

Kimberly K. Porter

See also Audiorecording; Oral History; Peer Review; Transcription

Websites

Oral History Association:
http://alpha.dickinson.edu/oha/pub_ohr.html

ORIENTATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

One commonly asserted strength of qualitative inquiry is the inductive, naturalistic strategy of approaching a setting without predetermined hypotheses. Understanding and theory emerge from fieldwork experiences and are grounded in the data. An orientational perspective, in contrast, eschews any pretense of open-mindedness in the search for grounded or emergent theory. Orientational qualitative inquiry begins with an explicit theoretical or ideological perspective that determines what conceptual framework will direct fieldwork and the interpretation of findings. For example, one can undertake a study from a feminist perspective, a Marxist perspective, a capitalist perspective, or a Freudian perspective, among others. In these instances, the ideological orientation or perspective of the researcher determines the focus of inquiry. This entry describes several examples of an orientational perspective and how such frameworks operate in qualitative research.

Examples of Orientational Perspectives

The concepts and conceptual frameworks one uses, whether unconsciously as a matter of tradition and training or intentionally as a matter of choice, carry embedded messages about what and who is important. A feminist perspective, for example, presumes the importance of gender in human relationships and societal processes and orients the study in that direction. The orientation of feminist inquiry can include working toward a sense of connectedness and equality between researcher and researched—explicitly acknowledging and valuing women's ways of knowing so as to integrate reason, emotion, intuition, experience, and analytic thought—and using qualitative inquiry to support change, especially generating findings about women that will contribute to their liberation and empowerment. In essence, a feminist orientation uses the lens of gender inequality to shape the inquiry.

Feminist inquiry challenges the phenomenological notion that one can cleanse oneself of such fundamental language-based conceptions when doing fieldwork and data analysis. Moreover, feminist inquiry provides not only conceptual and analytical direction, but also methodological orientation in emphasizing participatory, collaborative, change-oriented, and empowering forms of inquiry.

A quite different theoretical framing for inquiry would be a Freudian orientation, which assumes that

individual behavior must be understood as a manifestation of the struggle between id, ego, and superego as influenced by very early childhood relationships and sexual experiences that have left their mark on the unconscious.

Racism can be another defining lens—or orientation—for qualitative inquiry in research and evaluation; from this perspective, racial issues are a defining characteristic of societal interactions and an essential framework for making sense of human interactions and patterns that differentiate important aspects of the lives of people with different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Queer theory, an orientational perspective focused on sexual orientation, combines social constructionist insights with a critique of cultural inhibitions about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender experiences. Empowerment evaluation uses the inquiry to build the capacity of those studied to tell and to conduct their own stories; the inquiry is oriented toward empowerment of those involved.

In each of these distinct and different orientational examples—feminism, racism, queer theory, and empowerment evaluation—the qualitative researcher begins with presumptions about what the important factors are in the setting to be studied. The question is not whether gender, race, sexual orientation, or disempowerment is an issue or factor; that is presumed. The question is how issues of gender, race, sexual orientation, or disempowerment are manifest in the setting under study—and the implications of those manifestations for the lives of those who are the focus of the inquiry. Orientations can be combined, as in a feminist psychoanalytical framework.

One of the most influential orientational frameworks is critical theory, with its attention to how injustice and oppression shape people's perceptions and experiences. Critical theory is oriented to issues of power and social justice, including economic, racial, gender, and social inequalities. In a qualitative inquiry oriented by critical theory concerns, whether the focus of the study be on culture, education, religion, politics, family, or whatever, the inquiry will address injustice at some level and in some way. Thus, what gives critical theory its name—what makes it critical—is that it seeks not just to study and understand society, but rather to critique and change society. Influenced by Marxism, informed by the presumption of the centrality of class conflict in understanding community and societal structures, and updated in the radical struggles of the 1960s, critical theory provides a framework—both philosophy and methods—for approaching research and evaluation as

fundamentally and explicitly political and as change-oriented forms of engagement.

Definition and Purpose of Orientational Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative research can be conducted within any of these theoretical or ideological orientations, but the focus of inquiry is determined by the framework the researcher chooses to use. Research findings are interpreted and given meaning from the perspective of that theory. Such qualitative inquiry, therefore, aims to describe and explain specific manifestations of general patterns that are assumed. Thus, the goal is confirmation and elucidation of factors (such as race, gender, inequality, power) that have already been identified as central, rather than discovery of new key factors. The term *orientational* is used to describe such studies because they are oriented in a particular direction or framed from a specific perspective. Orientational is a more neutral and descriptive term than *ideologically based* inquiry.

The extent to which any particular study is orientational is a matter of degree. Ethnographic studies can be viewed as orientational to the extent that they presume the centrality of culture in explaining human experience. Critical ethnography combines a focus on culture with commitment to use findings for change. Symbolic interactionism is orientational in that it focuses on the importance of the meanings that emerge as people define situations through interpersonal interactions. Orientational qualitative inquiry is a legitimate and an important approach to theoretical or ideological elaboration, confirmation, and elucidation. In doing such work, researchers must be very clear about the theoretical framework being used and the implications of that perspective on study focus, data collection, fieldwork, and analysis.

Michael Quinn Patton

See also Advocacy Research; Critical Race Theory; Critical Theory; Empowerment Evaluation; Feminist Epistemology; Reflexivity

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OTHERNESS

Otherness is the condition or quality of being different or "other," particularly if the differences in question are strange, bizarre, or exotic. Otherness has emerged as a widely discussed mental construct of pragmatic significance in the humanities and social sciences over the last 3 decades. Dialogues on rethinking sociality, for example, have seriously considered otherness and related concepts such as intersubjectivity and recognition in the contexts of social relations, social problems, and social organizations. Definitions of otherness and its functions, utility, and sociopolitical impact have been explored rather widely; robust and quickly growing bodies of literature on otherness are situated in philosophy, psychoanalysis, Jewish and African American studies, and psychology, as well as in sociology and anthropology where the concept is more established.

Functionalist, phenomenological, conflict, and interactionist theoretical orientations have been employed in symmetry with an equally diverse range of quantitative and qualitative research strategies in the study of the topic. Otherness-oriented research foci include the cultural context of identity, social stratification, and moral order development and maintenance. Specific examples include ethnic reflexivity in cultural definition (i.e., the role of other as a reference and contrast point relative to sameness), cultural system artifacts (e.g., beliefs, art, morals, law, behaviors, and customs), race and ethnic relations, and a plethora of social justice issues (e.g., racial profiling, same-sex marriage, homelessness, polygamy, and especially immigration policy).

Whereas the bulk of the extant literature on otherness originates from European philosophy that focuses on abstract topics such as the dimensions of otherness and the search for a phenomenology of othering, the concept has been particularly consequential to the development of (a) cultural studies in both anthropology and sociology; (b) the evolution of subjective philosophies of science and qualitative inquiry, generally, and ethnography, specifically; and (c) deviance and social control (i.e., criminology and criminal justice).

Key works in cultural and social anthropology, such as *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922/2002) by Bronislaw Malinowski and *Coming of Age in Samoa: Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation* (1928/2001) by Margaret Mead, shaped and solidified the scientific utility of other in contextualizing group awareness and sense of belonging.

These confessional and reflexive ethnographies translated cultural differences by contrasting the cultural indicators of otherness (e.g., language, gender, familial and social relations, religious beliefs, and designations of taboo and deviance) with ideations of sameness—a benchmark set by the researchers' own cultural backgrounds and realities.

Urban sociology and the Chicago School also embraced an ethnographic fieldwork orientation to otherness. From constructivist and relativist paradigms, the highly stratified nature of American society and its innate disenfranchised segment served as a ready venue for descriptive portrayals of the other in famous works such as Gary Alan Fine's *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds*.

Although early ethnographies explored and detailed the historical and regionally specific context of cultural identity, otherness has been instrumental in contemporary works on ethnic communities as transforming cultural products, as opposed to the natural and primordial characterizations described in early anthropological portrayals of, often tribal, underdeveloped, and remote, societies. The age of political correctness has ushered in a collective consciousness, a part of which involves placing a premium on respect for diversity. Accordingly, many works have appeared that center on affirmation of group identity in advocacy of maintaining otherness. The processes of shaping, masking, and unmasking stigmatized identity, via a constructionist or deconstructionist approach and using case study or participant observation symmetries, have resulted in various topics being explored; topics range from Japan-residing Koreans to the devaluation of farmers in the United States.

Although otherness has certainly affected multiple academic disciplines, it is perhaps in the once sociological subfield of criminology (emergent recently as an independent field of study) that the concept is most central to mainstream theory and related social policy and practitioner outcomes. Rational choice and deterrence theories, for example, are directly traceable to the social thought of Émile Durkheim on social order that was predicated on the seemingly illogical notion that crime is not only beneficial to society, but necessary. Through identification of deviance (and crime as extreme deviance) as a reference point for socially detrimental and undesirable behavior, Durkheim used such otherness to illustrate how the majority was dependent on labeling negative others so as to establish moral order and stave off chaos. Today, the criminal law utilizes the other toward affirmation of moral boundaries and the

criminal justice system serves the function of moral boundary maintenance.

Whereas rational choice theories of crime (i.e., classical criminology) have relied on an otherness–sameness continuum to invoke normative consensus as a theoretical reference point of departure, otherness has been most pronounced in conflict criminology. The conflict perspective (also known as critical or Marxist criminology) is traceable to the works of Frank Tannenbaum (1938), Edwin Lemert (1951), and Howard Becker (1963) who first proposed that criminal behavior was attributable to the process of labeling. Labeling contends that the very act of criminalization is itself an arbitrary label given to certain types of behavior (e.g., vagrancy, lewdness). The upheaval during the civil rights and Vietnam War era in the United States and disenchantment with society's traditions and customs revolved around challenges to formal authority and sameness. Social justice-oriented works of the day took issue with formal mechanisms rooted in the other. William Chambliss's famous "The Saints and the Roughnecks" illustrated the dissimilar treatment of affluent and working-class youth groups by police and school officials.

Otherness has been equally consequential to social learning and cultural transmission theories of crime. Subcultures, countercultures, and contracultures are defined in terms of variance from sameness, and numerous theories contending their criminogenic nature have been concerned with depicting elements and properties of the collective other. In *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (1955), Albert K. Cohen popularized the term *middle-class measuring rod*—a reference point of acceptable academic and social performance by which others in lower social classes might be compared and discussed. More pointedly, Walter B. Miller (1958) introduced *focal concerns*—a simplistic and primal set of values held by the lower class (e.g., trouble, toughness, excitement, and fate) that lead to crime and other social problems as compared to middle- and upperclass values leading to conventional behavior and upward mobility.

Beyond criminology, it remains unseen how otherness and its ramifications will be affected by modern technology and the quickly changing nature of contemporary society. Conventional views generally express a breakdown of the other attributable to virtual and electronic communication that serves to break down stereotypes based on regional, religious, and ethnic differences previously upheld by distance, isolation and homogeneity. Alternatively, social

forces, while certain to modify social relations toward more holistic and broader networks, may act to maintain otherness through a reaffirming solidification of the core (i.e., a reinvestment of sameness).

J. Mitchell Miller

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Ethnography; Identity; Social Context

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OVER-RAPPORT

Over-rapport refers to the potential of the researcher to become over-engaged and too familiar with research participants. This situation can lead to a loss of distance and perspective that may impact detrimentally on the process of research. The term *over-rapport* is particularly associated with ethnography in which participant observation is usually employed as a research method in order to study groups and cultures. Over-rapport frequently involves the enculturation of the researcher within a social group that is the object of her or his study and thus loss of her or his capacity to see and note the social processes and interactions with the fresh eyes of an outsider.

Over-rapport is a particular problem within ethnography, where researchers may spend long periods in close contact with the groups that are the focus of fieldwork, perhaps living and working within the group. The

prolonged immersion within the social context being studied in order to explore behaviors and meanings, may lead to a loss of objectivity, sometimes referred to as “going native,” involving the adoption of the values, customs, and practices of the group. An example of the way in which over-rapport might be demonstrated includes identification with participants and the introduction of value judgments about their behavior, perhaps uncritically praising their achievements in the report of the research. Another example might be the over-representation of one subgroup to the detriment or absence of another, where the researcher has become over-familiar with just a few of the participants within the field. More extreme examples include the conduct of a romantic or sexual relationship with one or more research participants, or even marriage between the primary investigator and a research participant.

More recently, with a postmodern take on ethnography, the notions of objectivity and distance from what one is studying have been challenged, with the consequence that a concept such as over-rapport becomes problematic, suggesting as it does that there is an ideal relationship or distance that as an investigator one should maintain with one's research participants. The introduction of postmodern perspectives results in interest in the cultural practices through which the product of the research process is rendered as an ethnographic text. Thus, the form as well as the content of ethnographic writing is open to interrogation and scrutiny. One way in which this challenge has been addressed is to reflexively write oneself into the research, acknowledging one's subjectivity, and the relationships and power dynamics existing between the researcher and those being researched.

Claire Ballinger

See also Critical Ethnography; Ethnography; Participant Observation; Rapport; Reflexivity;

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PARADIGM

A paradigm 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.

The paradigm construct was initially developed to make sense of phenomena in the physical sciences. During the last quarter of the 20th century, however, social scientists appropriated the construct to account for the growing interest in and acceptance of qualitative research methods in a number of social science fields that previously had defined research in quantitative (and often in experimental-design) terms. More recently the meaning of the term has expanded, and the term has become part of popular culture. This entry reviews the history and evolution of the paradigm construct and concludes with a look at the concept of research purposes as an alternative.

Paradigms in the Physical Sciences

The paradigm construct was initially developed and popularized by physical science historian Thomas Kuhn in his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn employed the construct to make sense of a phenomenon that he and other historians had noticed when they studied the process of conceptual change within the physical sciences: Fundamental changes in thinking within a scientific discipline—the shift from Newton's to Einstein's version of

physics, for instance—did not occur incrementally and were not merely modifications that resulted from what Kuhn called *normal science*, that is, day-to-day scientific experimentation and other procedures associated with what traditionally has been called *the scientific method*. Rather, they reflected radical shifts in perspective—or, in Kuhn's words, *paradigm revolutions*—that were triggered by problems that could not be resolved either by the field's standard operating research procedures or by its established ways of thinking.

Kuhn compared paradigm revolutions to the holistic shifts in perspective demonstrated by gestalt psychologists when they used pictures that people could see in two quite different ways, for example, as a bird and an antelope. Kuhn quickly added a caveat to this comparison, however: Although most people can learn to shift their points of view and see the gestalt psychologists' picture in one way at one moment and in the next moment, as something quite different (they can learn to see both a bird and an antelope in the picture alluded to above, for example, though of course not simultaneously), scientists who have been socialized to accept a particular paradigmatic perspective assume that what they see is reality rather than merely a perspective of reality. Consequently, according to Kuhn, when a new paradigm becomes accepted by members of a scientific community, that community will have rejected older ways of thinking and doing research and embraced new research methods, fundamentally different perceptions of the physical phenomena that members of the field studied, and radically different views of the field itself.

Kuhn's Construct in the Social Sciences

In the 1970s, qualitative research methods began gaining a foothold in certain social science fields that previously had defined research almost exclusively in quantitative terms. For some 20th-century qualitative researchers such as Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, the growing acceptance of qualitative methods represented nothing more than the addition of new and somewhat unique research techniques to social scientists' methodological arsenal. For others such as Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln, however, the growing acceptance of qualitative procedures signaled a revolution that was more-or-less equivalent to the paradigm revolutions Kuhn had discussed in a physical science context.

Indeed, for Lincoln and Guba—and others who followed their intellectual lead including, but certainly not limited to, Guba's students Patti Lather and Thomas Schwandt and Lincoln's later collaborator Norman Denzin—the growing acceptance of qualitative methods in some social science fields signaled that at least some people within the social sciences were embracing a radically different view of knowledge and knowing (i.e., a different epistemology), as well as a new and different view of reality (i.e., a new ontology). (Lincoln and Guba also talked about a new view of ethics—i.e., a new axiology—but the axiology notion was never as extensively developed or as widely embraced as the epistemological and ontological notions.)

According to the new perspective touted by Lincoln and Guba and others (including qualitative research methods textbook authors such as Michael Quinn Patton), knowledge is constructed, not discovered. Furthermore, because people live and work in different places and consequently construct reality in very different ways, the world consists of multiple realities rather than a single, unitary reality.

It follows, then, that social scientists' task is not to discover what is true—for from this new perspective, there is no single, absolute truth to discover—but to describe, as accurately as possible, how different people in different contexts have constructed reality and what these people take to be true. This means that case study design and qualitative methods are the procedures of choice if one wants to do research that is consistent with the new view of knowledge and reality Lincoln and Guba articulated.

Initially, Lincoln and Guba called their new view of knowledge, reality, and research the *naturalistic*

paradigm; later, they renamed it the *constructivist paradigm*. The older, more traditional view was dubbed the *positivist paradigm*.

In time, Lincoln and Guba also added a third paradigm to the list of perspectives that they saw as operative within social science fields. They labeled this third perspective the *critical theory paradigm*. The critical theory paradigm, as Lincoln and Guba portrayed it, at least, actually was a kind of metaparadigm because it encompassed a number of other paradigms including (but not limited to) the neo-Marxist, feminist, participatory, poststructuralist, and postmodern paradigms.

Incommensurability and the Paradigm Wars

Like Kuhn, Lincoln and Guba assumed that paradigms were incommensurable. One cannot embrace both the positivist and the naturalistic-constructivist paradigm, Lincoln and Guba argued; rather, one must choose sides and embrace only one paradigmatic perspective.

Not surprisingly, the emphasis on choosing sides had a significant impact on the nature of discourse within a number of social science fields, including the field of educational research where Lincoln and Guba's paradigm talk was especially influential. One prominent member of the educational research field, N. L. Gage, coined the term *paradigm wars* to characterize the adversarial character of the methodological debates that were occurring within the field during the final quarter of the 20th century.

In time, open warfare gave way to what Robert Donmoyer has referred to as an era of *big-tent politics*. During this era, a place was made at the research community's table for people with a variety of paradigmatic proclivities and methodological preferences. This acceptance was shown in a number of ways. New journals were established, for instance, and new formats that were compatible with a constructivist view of knowledge were added to the list of possible session formats at research conferences.

The big-tent strategy minimized conflict within the field, but it also promoted balkanization: Like-minded people tended to read each other's work, but they almost never read or conversed with those who saw research—and the world in general—differently than they did.

One unfortunate consequence of this balkanization became evident within the educational research field in recent years when traditionalists finally began to

challenge much of the more radical thinking and research procedures associated with the qualitative revolution that had occurred during the final quarter of the 20th century. A committee of traditional researchers set up by the National Research Council (the research arm of the National Academies of Science in the United States) to define what constituted *scientific* (and by implication, fundable) research in education, for instance, either dismissed, misinterpreted, or—as was mostly the case—simply ignored the thinking of all but the most traditional qualitative researchers. Indeed, arguably the most noteworthy part of the bibliography of the committee's report, *Scientific Research in Education*, was what was not included in it. The lack of representation of key bodies of seemingly relevant literature is a testament to the impact of big-tent politics and the balkanization this strategy produced.

Ironically, Kuhn, himself, signaled unequivocally in the second edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* that he never meant to imply that incommensurability was synonymous with logical incompatibility. It is impossible to view the world from incommensurable perspectives at any given moment, of course, just as it is impossible to see an antelope while one is seeing a bird in one of the gestalt psychologists' purposely ambiguous pictures. But one can shift one's point of view and view the world—and the process of research—from a variety of paradigmatic points of view.

To be sure, Kuhn did indicate that physical scientists who have been socialized to accept a particular paradigm are not inclined to employ different paradigmatic perspectives to view either the physical world or their work. In the second edition of his book, however, Kuhn clarified that this description of what normally happens (and what may be highly functional) in physical science disciplines is not inevitable. It certainly is not a prescription for what ought to happen in all fields.

The Paradigm Concept Redefined

A number of scholars, in fact, have argued that certain social science fields actually require that multiple paradigms be operative in the field at any given time (though not, necessarily, in a single study). Their argument is that the problems and phenomena focused on in certain fields are so complex that they can be addressed adequately only if they are viewed and researched from a variety of paradigmatic perspectives.

Gage (who developed the paradigm-wars notion mentioned above) and Lee Shulman, for instance, both have articulated variations of the above argument in discussing what is required to study and ultimately understand the phenomenon of teaching. Of course, both scholars also redefined the paradigm concept in the process of articulating their positions. Gage, for instance, suggested that the term *paradigm* is nothing more than a synonym for models, patterns, and schemata, while Shulman viewed different paradigms simply as the different programs of research in which different researchers are engaged. Shulman, in fact, explicitly acknowledged that he was using a “weaker” meaning of paradigm than Kuhn (and, of course, also Lincoln and Guba) employed.

There is at least one other significant difference between Shulman and Gage's weaker definition of *paradigm*, on the one hand, and Kuhn's definition, on the other: Although Kuhn seems to suggest that different paradigms are likely to conflict, Shulman and Gage's weaker conception assumes that different paradigms will be complementary. Shulman, for instance, compared the findings emerging from studies generated from different research paradigms to different pieces of a puzzle; the assumption is that the pieces provided by different paradigms will easily fit together and that, once this is done, a coherent picture of the phenomenon will emerge.

Assuming a priori that different paradigms will produce complementary findings ultimately is rooted in a naïve faith in the power of empirical data. This faith in empiricism ignores the facts (a) that the meaning of empirical data is shaped by the a priori language that researchers employ to frame their research questions and studies, (b) that different researchers often frame their work in radically different ways, and (c) that these different frames can reflect quite different and even at times contradictory purposes.

One consequence of assuming that researchers' findings will always be complementary is that researchers who make this assumption can easily overlook honest to goodness incommensurability. Gage, for instance, argued that there is no conflict between the quantitative, experimental paradigm he embraced and the paradigm that qualitative researchers adhere to because qualitative research can be employed to identify intervening variables in the cause-and-effect generalizations that he and his colleagues were attempting to generate. Although it is certainly the case that qualitative procedures can play this role, Gage's belief in

the complementary nature of paradigms led him to overlook—or at least cavalierly discount—the fact that many qualitative researchers disavowed the search for cause–effect generalizations and in some cases the entire notion of causation in the social world.

Thus, those who employ the weaker definition of paradigm exhibit a problem that is, in essence, the opposite of the problem exhibited by those who assume that incommensurability is a synonym for logical incompatibility. Although the latter group of scholars tends to overestimate the significance and implications of paradigm differences (and as a consequence encourages balkanization within research communities), those who assume a priori that the knowledge generated from different paradigms will be complementary ignore—or at least obscure—the fact that there may, indeed, be fundamental differences within research communities.

Paradigm Proliferation

In recent years, at least two noteworthy movements have occurred with respect to the paradigm construct. The first movement involved the proliferation of paradigms within the social sciences. As noted, Lincoln and Guba initially identified two paradigms and later added a third. The third paradigm, however, was actually a metaparadigm that supposedly encompassed a variety of different paradigms.

This proliferation of paradigms expanded even further when a number of scholars began equating the paradigm notion with ethnicity and the life experiences of different social groups. Certain African American scholars such as John Stanfield and Cynthia Dillard, for example, began to write about a unique Afro-centric epistemology that was a product of the unique African–American experience.

Of course, not all members of a particular ethnic group have the same sets of experiences. Gender, for example, undoubtedly influences life experience at least as much as ethnicity, so consequently, once researchers equate the notion of paradigm with the notion of life experience, it would seem as if researchers cannot merely talk about, say, a Latino paradigm; they must also talk about a Latina paradigm. But all Latinas are not the same. There are rich Latinas, middle-class Latinas, and poor Latinas. And of course, there are gay Latinos, lesbian Latinas, and undoubtedly, even transgender Latinos. All of these factors contribute to a person's life experiences and consequently

all have been associated with unique ways of knowing and, by implication, distinct paradigms.

Indeed, since all individuals' life experiences are at least to some degree idiosyncratic, the logical end point of equating the paradigm notion with life experience would seem to be that people will all, sooner or later, be seen as operating out of their own unique paradigms. And to the extent that assumptions about incommensurability and logical incompatibility are still operative when this happens, people will, in effect, have embraced a radical form of solipsism and have created a much more extreme version of balkanization than was ever operative in the past.

The Paradigm Construct in Popular Culture

Although the proliferation of paradigms was occurring in the academy, a somewhat related movement was playing itself out beyond the academy's doors: Popular culture began appropriating the paradigm notion.

The business world, for instance, discovered the construct. In an April 1999 article by Hal Espen in *The New York Times*, for example, a Levi Strauss executive is quoted as saying that the public's growing preference for loose rather than tight-fitting blue jeans was not a fad; rather it was, in his words, a paradigm shift. In an October 2007 article in the same newspaper, Mark Bittman talked about the old paradigm of macaroni and spaghetti being replaced by a new pasta paradigm.

Politicians, too, have begun to talk about the need for a new paradigm. One U.S. Senator, for example, talked in a public television documentary about the need for a paradigm shift in the way the country thought of workforce development. The senator suggested that, in the past, workforce development was seen as the responsibility of one level of government; with the new perspective—or, to use the senator's language, the new paradigm—workforce development would be a shared responsibility of a federal, state, and local partnership.

In the process of employing the paradigm notion, popular culture has put its own spin on Kuhn's construct. When used in politics and business, for instance, the term tends to serve a marketing or public relations function: The term can add heft and gravity to the most mundane matters, for a new paradigm does, indeed, seem to have far more significance than a new perspective. Furthermore, in a modernist culture that uncritically assumes that progress is good, talk of a new paradigm can suggest—in lieu of thoughtful

arguments and convincing evidence—that new ideas and/or new ways of doing business are not only radically different from older ideas and procedures, but also that they are significantly better.

Given the term's public relations cachet, it is hardly surprising that popular culture has embraced the paradigm notion. It seems likely that this cachet also is behind at least some of the paradigm proliferation that has occurred within the academy in recent years.

An Emerging Alternative to Paradigm Talk

In part because of the proliferation of paradigms, both within the academy and in popular culture, some scholars have suggested that the paradigm construct has lost its meaning and is no longer useful for making sense of social scientists' different research orientations. One alternative that has been proposed was inspired by Jurgen Habermas's writings about the role of interest and purpose in human understanding.

The author of a classification scheme of qualitative research approaches that is based on researchers' differing, overarching purposes argues that purpose-talk has a number of advantages over the paradigm-talk that has been employed in the past. He argues, for example, that talk of differing purposes does not assume a priori that different research orientations are so incommensurable that researchers guided by one purpose cannot understand and learn from the work of those guided by a radically different purpose. He also notes that purpose talk opens the door for mixing orientations when appropriate. After all, in some situations, a person can legitimately attempt to accomplish a number of quite different purposes. Policymaking (and, consequently, policy research) for example, often requires finding ways to accommodate and balance even antithetical points of view.

It is not clear, at this point, whether purpose-talk will replace talk of different, incommensurable paradigms. What is clear, however, is that a number of quite different meanings have become associated with the paradigm construct, so those who read or hear the term need to attend to the particular way a particular author or speaker is using Kuhn's construct.

Robert Donmoyer

See also Axiology; Constructivism; Critical Theory; Epistemology; Naturalistic Inquiry; Ontology; Positivism

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PARA-ETHNOGRAPHY

The concept of *para-ethnography* was formulated to address the challenges of pursuing anthropological ethnography within new contexts of fieldwork, notably, though not exclusively, in settings dominated by scientific knowledge and/or a technocratic ethos. The concept refers to wide-ranging experiments in ethnographic method currently underway in the early 21st century in the domains of science, engineering, finance, law, medicine, politics, government, design, art, and architecture. These experiments speak to a particular problem: How do we pursue our inquiry when our subjects are themselves engaged in intellectual labors that resemble approximately or are entirely indistinguishable from our own methodological practices? Para-ethnography answers this question by proposing an analytical relationship in which we and our subjects—keenly reflexive subjects—can experiment collaboratively with the conventions of ethnographic inquiry. This methodological stance demands that we treat our subjects as epistemic partners who are not merely informing our research but who participate in shaping its theoretical agendas and its methodological exigencies. By treating our subjects as collaborators, as epistemic partners, our analytical interests and theirs can be pursued simultaneously, and we can share insights and thus develop a common analytical exchange. Crucially, we can pursue

this kind of collaboration even if the ultimate aims of our analyses are different, if not radically opposed.

Para-ethnography is, on the one hand, premised on the central intellectual imperative of classical anthropological ethnography, notably as espoused by Bronisław Malinowski, to evoke and to reproduce the native point of view. On the other hand, it is predicated on relationships of complicity with our subjects—a state of ambiguity and improper seeming alliance—that now pervade ethnographic encounters establishing new possibilities for creating anthropological knowledge.

Para-ethnography is a concept that is very much in the making, yet it has already yielded a series of important insights on the changing nature and shifting contingencies of anthropological fieldwork. Five of these orienting insights are noted very briefly below.

1. The para-ethnographic is a self-conscious critical faculty operating in diverse domains as a way of dealing with contradictions, exceptions, and facts that are fugitive, suggesting a social realm and social processes not in alignment with conventional representations and reigning modes of knowledge and analysis. The para-ethnographic operates as a kind of social thought—expressed in genres such as the anecdotal, hype, and intuition—within institutions dominated by a technocratic ethos, an ethos that, under changed contemporary circumstances, simply does not discipline thought and action as efficiently as it once did. Making ethnography from these found para-ethnographic narratives redefines the status of the subject or informant and asks what different accounts one wants from such key figures in the fieldwork process.

2. If the opening gambit of the ethnography is an orienting foray into a strategically selected culture of expertise, then that milieu of fieldwork cannot be treated conventionally or traditionally. Experts are to be treated not as colleagues helping to inform fieldwork to occur elsewhere but instead as subjects fully within our own analytical ambit whose cognitive purview and social action range potentially over multiple, if not countless, sites and locales. Nor can they be treated as conventional natives or tokens of their cultures to be systematically understood; instead, they must be treated as agents who actively participate in shaping emergent social realms. These subjects must be treated like partners in research, a fiction to be sustained more or less strongly around the key concept of para-ethnography. This concept is distinctly not about an ethnography of elite cultures; rather, it is about

access to an imaginary for fieldwork that can be shaped only by alliances with makers of visionary knowledge who are already in the scene of fieldwork. The imaginaries of these knowledge makers who have preceded the ethnographer are what the dreams of contemporary fieldwork are made of.

3. The para-ethnographer is typically an expert subject, for example, a scientist, who is perplexed by the significance of his or her own professional practices and who, in the shadow of his or her formal knowledge work, creates intricate cultural narratives that might never be fully voiced but nonetheless mimic the form and the content of an ethnographic engagement with the world. Various fragmentary discourses are continuously spun off from this kind of knowledge work that connects formal scientific inquiry to the existential condition of the scientist cum para-ethnographer. Ethical and moral apprehensions as well as political and commercial preoccupations, although typically not fully articulated, nonetheless circulate in complex relationship to formal scientific practices, thereby constituting the ecologies of discourse that create the field or ground in which strategies and designs of anthropological research take form. In effect, every project of ethnography enters sites of fieldwork through a zone of collateral counterpart knowledge that it cannot ignore in finding its way to the preferred scenes of ordinary everyday life with which it is traditionally comfortable. The fundamental problem here is in confronting the politics of knowledge that any project of fieldwork involves and the ethnographer's efforts to make this politics of knowledge itself part of the design of investigation.

4. The questions, motives, and purposes that project anthropologists into fieldwork are thus not simply those raised within the discipline of anthropology or posed by the contextualizing social theories or historical narratives of contiguous academic specializations; rather, they arise from orienting engagements with counterparts and actors already defined within the field of ethnographic inquiry.

5. Under the conditions we are stipulating, where meaning is fugitive and social facts are elusive, distinct dilemmas are created for the individual. Cultural innovations continually destabilize social consensus, posing acute struggles for the perplexed subject—struggles that gain expression through various manifestations of the para-ethnographic. We are interested in how these narratives become linked together—through networks

of interlocutors—conferring a distinctive social character on, for the most part, technical knowledge allowing expertise to be juxtaposed in ways that render them acutely relevant to a broad range of anthropological questions.

For example, biotech startup companies are infused with shifting stories in which science is relentlessly narrated in relationship to the requirements of finance and a future in which scientists and financial backers have a stake. The optimism of science is continually mediated by the anxieties associated with commercial risk. For the scientists, who themselves are also typically investors in these startups, these risks often have a deeply personal character. Their stories—their para-ethnographic narratives—are not merely about professional reputation, career possibilities, or shareholder equity, but also about the fate of their children's education, their retirement savings, their mortgages, and their marriages. And of course, these stories premised on yet unpatented or fully tested drugs or other devices to relieve human afflictions and prolong life are addressed to a particular community of sufferers—the market—and to the public at large. Again, these discourses continually move among personal, professional, commercial, financial, scientific, ethical, and political domains of meaning and significance framing consciousness and sub-consciousness of our time.

Para-ethnography is thus not merely a matter of identifying a new ethnographic subject—an accomplished autodidact; rather, it opens far deeper questions of how culture is manifest in the contemporary. What is at stake in the para-ethnography are analytical engagements with formations of culture that are not fully contingent on convention, tradition, and the past, but rather, constitute future-oriented cognitive practices that can generate novel configurations of meaning and action. Indeed, this ability gives rise to a radical assertion—spontaneously generated para-ethnographies are built into the structure of the contemporary; they mediate intellectually the shifting form and content of a continuously unfolding skein of experience.

Para-ethnography allows anthropologists, sociologists and others who employ various ethnographic and qualitative approaches to examine the shifting conditions of their intellectual practices. Like ethnography in general, para-ethnography provides little in the way of practical knowledge of how, for example, to deal

with ethics review committees, funding agencies, or journal editors. Rather it provides a framework for experiment at a time when social and cultural phenomena are unstable and conventional analytical tools are of limited, if any, value. It speaks to the novice ethnographer who discovers that the conditions of fieldwork are rich with new possibilities, but finds little in the way of guidance from either classical or critical ethnographic traditions.

Douglas R. Holmes and George E. Marcus

See also Critical Ethnography; Ethnography; Performance Ethnography; Symbolic Interactionism

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PARTICIPANT

Advancing the understanding of human behavior depends heavily on the contributions of research participants. Participants are also referred to as subjects,

respondents, interviewees, focus group members, informants, and so on. Participants contribute data to research in a number of ways, such as through questionnaires, interviews, experiments, personal health records, narratives, focus groups, and direct observation.

Participants are usually considered to be individuals or groups who agree to take part in a research process. The agreement to participate in research bestows obligations on researchers to ensure that participants are treated in a manner that conforms to accepted ethical standards. In other words, participants should receive sufficient information to give free and informed consent prior to taking part in research. This includes information that describes the individual or group invited to participate, who is doing the research (e.g., researcher's name and affiliation), the nature and duration of participation required (e.g., interview, task performance), confidentiality safeguards, and any expected harms (e.g., distress or pain) or benefits (e.g., payment, new knowledge). Additionally, informed consent generally includes a statement that research participants may decline their participation or withdraw participation at any time, without penalty.

Some research participants (e.g., some children and mentally incompetent persons) lack the legal or mental capacity to give informed consent. In such circumstances, an authorized third party such as a parent or guardian should be involved in the informed consent process.

Creating opportunities for informed consent is not always possible or desirable, and this desire is often the case in naturalistic observation. When people know they are being observed, they may alter their behavior as a consequence of awareness that they are being observed, a concept known as reactivity. To avoid reactivity, participants in naturalistic research settings are usually unaware that they are being observed and therefore do not engage in an informed consent process. In these situations, it is incumbent on the researcher to be respectful of their privacy and dignity. For example, a researcher may decide to observe the interactions of consenting adults in a sex club, but it would violate participants' dignity if these adults were to be identified as a result.

Some research methodologies fundamentally transform the traditional relationship of researcher-as-observer and participant-as-observed. For example, in action research the researcher often becomes a resource to the participants who are being studied. It is

the participants (often disadvantaged groups) who will assume significant control over the research process, including the defining of research questions and research designs, in order to achieve their goals. Given the reduced inequality in power relationships between research and participants in action research, the ethical obligations and requirements of informed consent for participants are also much more negotiable and often less clearly defined than in other types of research.

Russel Ogden

See also Action Research; Informed Consent; Naturalistic Observation

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PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation is a method of data collection in which the researcher takes part in everyday activities related to an area of social life in order to study an aspect of that life through the observation of events in their natural contexts. The purpose of participant observation is to gain a deep understanding of a particular topic or situation through the meanings ascribed to it by the individuals who live and experience it. The term was first used by social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s, and the approach was further developed by the Chicago School under the leadership of Robert Park and Howard Becker. Participant observation is regarded as being especially appropriate for studying social phenomena about which little is known and where the behavior of interest is not readily available to public view. Through its emphasis on firsthand access to the real world and its meanings it is effective in allowing understanding of the way of life of others.

Participant observation is characterized by emergent design involving a variety of methods including direct observation of human behavior and the physical features of settings, informal interviewing, and document analysis. Researchers adopt roles that have been described by Raymond Gold as varying along a continuum of participation ranging from complete observer

(no participation), through participant-as-observer (more observer than participant) and observer-as-participant (more participant than observer) to complete participant. Data are typically recorded in the form of fieldnotes that, in order for the investigator to remain as unobtrusive as possible, are written up from memory either in secluded areas such as washrooms or at the end of the day. Participant observation usually entails prolonged engagement in the field that allows for gathering more detailed and accurate information. For example, a researcher who observes a setting for several months can identify discrepancies between what people say and what they actually do.

Several methodological problems are associated with participant observation. It is not well suited to the study of large groups or populations. Gaining access to social contexts of interest—in other words, obtaining permission to collect data, establishing credibility, and earning the trust of those being observed—can be very challenging. Personal characteristics such as gender, age, and ethnicity of the investigator can interfere with access. A variety of strategies are used by researchers to overcome access problems, such as choosing a setting to which one already has some relationship through work or personal life, taking on a small task that benefits the group to be observed, and staying in the field long enough for habituation to occur. Finally, it is well known that the presence of an observer will change to at least some extent the context being studied that may threaten the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Access; Nonparticipant Observation; Observational Research; Participant; Prolonged Engagement

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PARTICIPANTS AS CO-RESEARCHERS

Participants as co-researchers refers to a participatory method of research that situates participants as joint

contributors and investigators to the findings of a research project. This qualitative research approach validates and privileges the experiences of participants, making them experts and therefore co-researchers and collaborators in the process of gathering and interpreting data. In traditional research, the researcher is assumed to be the authority figure who will collect, interpret, and situate the findings while the participant (or “researched”) merely represents the community being investigated. In these situations, the researcher and participant (or organization) have a time-limited relationship that expires when the research project is complete.

This method is an interdisciplinary approach often used in the social sciences, including but not limited to feminist or women’s studies, health communication, sociology, and anthropology. Participant involvement in the research process varies and can be seen as beneficial or problematic.

Benefits of Utilizing Participants as Co-Researchers

Participants as co-researchers is an approach that promotes participant involvement in the research process. Participants have the opportunity to tell their own stories and give an insider perspective to the process of being the object or subject of research. Participants are also able to offer their own interpretation of the researcher’s findings, voicing their opinion in response to the researcher, thereby giving voice to the community or group that is being researched. Together, the researcher and participant work to come to conclusions, engaging in dialogue and offering each other feedback.

Additionally, utilizing participants as co-researchers gives researchers the opportunity to use the experiences and knowledge of participants to learn about and discuss the research. Co-researchers contribute to the research by offering credibility to the findings and credibility to the researcher (within the community or organization). The involvement of an active participant encourages other participants to join the conversation and respond with their own interpretations. This encouragement allows the researcher to take on the role of student, allowing the research process to be a learning event.

The insider status of participants in research projects contributes to the benefit of “insider” status and, more generally, to the information gathered in the study. When

Black Southern Women: Their Lived Realities

In the author's dissertation work, tentatively titled *Black Southern Women: Their Lived Realities*, the participants were invited to share the stories and experiences of their lives growing up and raising families in the rural South. As a former member of the community, the author collaborated with approximately 10 participants, allowing them to be equally invested and equally involved in the process of collecting, writing, interpreting, and editing the stories they wrote. Their involvement began during the early stages of recommending other participants and retelling stories in individual and group settings to ensure adequate information was available. As co-investigators their stories were instrumental in establishing and representing a corporate set of themes and experiences. The author shared her experiences with the participants, and together, they were able to compare and contrast their ideas about the topics of research. Though the co-researchers in this project were not involved in the writing stages, they did have the opportunity to respond to the stories the author wrote, offering their unique perspectives and feedback as participants in the research and characters in the stories.

The resulting research project is a collaboration between the researcher and the researched, including participants as co-researchers.

participants are co-researchers, they share knowledge, access, and responsibility, which offers a perspective that would usually be unavailable to an outside researcher. Additionally, when participants take on a valid role in the research, they are further motivated to cooperate; that prompts others to become active participants as well. When participants are invited to be co-researchers in the process, they become equally invested in the success of the project. Participants become involved in the process of research from the initial inquiries of the investigation to findings and conclusions. Their feedback offers an opportunity to consider the perspective of the people being represented in the research. This method merges the experience of the participants with the research skills of the researcher. Participants as co-researchers transition from a role of being asked questions and being observed, to asking questions and observing. Co-researchers, however, are not necessarily credited as co-authors but rather as collaborators in the writing process.

The original researcher remains individually responsible and accountable for the technical responsibilities

of the research because participants turned co-researchers often are not familiar or comfortable with the concept of fieldnotes, formal interviewing, transcribing, or writing, but they can offer their opinions, observations, and expertise, being involved in varying degrees over the course of the project. The theory development remains the responsibility of the first researcher, who is more familiar with the process of research; co-researchers contribute alternatives to the theory and responses and interpretations of events in their own words.

Challenges of Utilizing Participants as Co-Researchers

In addition to the benefits of utilizing participants as co-researchers, there are also some disadvantages. Although inviting participants as co-researchers allows the researcher the benefit of access and credibility, there is still a risk of misrepresentation. Researchers are likely able to invite only one person or a small group of participants to be co-researchers, a restriction that means that only a limited perspective is being represented or considered in the research while many others remain marginalized. A wider range of co-researchers would offer a wider perspective; however, a large group of co-researchers would make the research itself particularly problematic in that the researcher would then be responsible for equipping a large group of representatives for a research project, a responsibility that would require time and resources that are usually lacking.

Co-researchers as participants as a method of participatory research offers the opportunity for otherwise unidentifiable or unavailable themes and conclusions to be drawn; however, there is also the chance that more observable conclusions will be overlooked. The view of participants as co-researchers is limited to their perspective as insiders, a limitation that means that they may ignore important data that they have grown accustomed to as participants. There are benefits to entering a new environment for the first time, so the researcher must negotiate his or her role as a new participant, a teacher, a learner, and a co-researcher simultaneously.

Robin M. Boylorn

See also Co-Constructed Narrative; Insider/Outsider Status; Interactive Interview; Researcher-Participant Relationships; Researcher Roles

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PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

Participatory action research (PAR) has its origins in the second half of the 20th century. Traditionally, its genesis has been traced back to work conducted by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly in his development of action research. However, although Lewin's work has been influential, contemporary approaches to PAR have increasingly been shaped by several other intellectual traditions, including Marxism, feminism, post-positivism, and Paulo Freire's approach to principles of adult education. Thus, while action research introduced the notion that academic and professional researchers could legitimately collaborate with individuals and groups while maintaining their integrity as experts, PAR has continuously sought to critique and challenge the researcher–researched relation through its emphasis on the politics of participation in the research process. It is perhaps this single issue that has made PAR one of the most contentious methodologies in social research today and therefore of significant relevance to this encyclopedia. This entry on PAR is organized into three sections: history, themes, and issues in PAR; methodological considerations; and contemporary trajectories and critique.

As discussed above, it is important to note that PAR and other forms of participatory research have been and remain contested terrain. One effect of this

contention is that PAR is used interchangeably, and often loosely, by researchers to denote any one of a range of research methodologies that have participation of subjects as their focus. This practice is reflected in the literature where, for example, there is a significant degree of conceptual slippage over terminology. Thus, it is not unusual to read accounts of action research that are actually discussing PAR; likewise, it is also possible to come across accounts of PAR where participation of individuals or groups in a study is questionable. As such, therefore, there is no definitive or pure model of PAR. Rather, there are versions of PAR across a broad spectrum that emphasize participation in the research process. In this sense, PAR can be thought of as lying at one end of a continuum of participation where individuals or groups have maximum control over all aspects of the research, from conception, design, implementation, data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings to a situation where the subjects of a study are systematically excluded from any involvement or control over the research process.

History, Themes, and Issues

The origins and development of PAR are both complex and difficult to map with any precision. As already noted, this difficulty is not only because the term is used loosely and often interchangeably with concepts such as action research, but also because PAR is itself a blend of a broad range of research approaches and epistemologies that includes participatory research, action research, feminist praxis, critical ethnography, Aboriginal research methodologies, transformative education, critical and eco-pedagogies, and popular education. Despite this blend of traditions, it is possible to outline some general contours and key features that have marked PAR's historical development over the last 50 years.

First, it is clear that the impetus for exploring forms of participatory research—though they were not necessarily named as such—came from the third world in the early 1960s. Inspired by political events such as anticolonial struggles, scholars such as Freire and Orlando Fals-Borda began to focus their attention on how social science research could be used to relocate the everyday experiences and struggles of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized from the periphery to the center of social inquiry. Within this scenario, social research was to be transformed from an

abstract, detached, disinterested, and objective science conducted by outside experts into an emancipatory process centered on what Freire called *conscientization*, where the poor were to become agents of social and political transformation aimed at creating just, peaceful, and democratic societies.

Second, independence from colonial powers invariably led to the emergence of forms of popular education through national literacy campaigns, such as those led by Fidel Castro in Cuba and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The aim of these literacy campaigns was not merely to inculcate functional literacy in the populations of the global south, but to foster forms of popular consciousness that were critical, emancipatory, and democratic. The general thrust of these movements, it should be emphasized, was not only radical but revolutionary (i.e., these movements had as their focus societal transformation). These developments have had their counterpart in the countries of the global north. Although not driven by the anticolonial and revolutionary contexts of the south, forms of adult and community education, labor and union programs, transformative education, green and ecology movements, and more recently the emergence of an international network of Indigenous and antiglobalization groups have informed the politics of PAR through their commitment to a communitarian ethics of organization and practice.

A third strand in the development of PAR relates to its action component. As discussed, while the history of action research is connected with the development of PAR, it nevertheless can be distinguished from it in three important ways. First, action research has primarily European and North American origins. Second, it has been principally developed by academic researchers working from universities within the advanced capitalist world of the global north. Third, its ideological orientation has tended to be liberal, focusing on the improvement of professional practices—this is why it has proven to be so popular among researchers working with teachers and other professional groups. However, in recent years, action researchers have also become concerned with issues of social justice that have shaped PAR. Although much action research continues to express its traditionally liberal–professional focus, there are a significant number of action researchers who have attempted to incorporate the radical lessons of both participatory research and popular education within their practice.

Methodological Considerations

Over its relatively short history, PAR has drawn on a wide array of theoretical traditions within the social sciences including sociology, social psychology, neo-Marxism, critical theory, feminist theory, and more recently, postmodernism. Although these theoretical traditions have been important, the emergence and development of PAR has also continued to be informed and shaped by practice in the field. As noted above, such practice has been generated by anticolonial movements, popular and community struggles, transformative adult education initiatives, and more recently, new social movements (e.g., environmentalism, gay and lesbian groups, antiglobalization). One of the defining characteristics of PAR from its beginnings, therefore, has been the centrality of the dialogical relationship between theory and practice. Indeed, the history of PAR is marked by a reliance on forms of knowledge, experience, and understanding generated within the everyday world that have all too often been dismissed as common sense by mainstream social sciences. Three key themes have emerged from this nexus that have defined PAR methodology.

First, PAR has tended to align itself with a nonpositivist approach to social inquiry. This methodological stance has its origins in a critique and rejection of conventional social science research as a form of cultural imperialism. The essence of this critique is that traditional forms of social science research, particularly quantitative methodologies, systematically reproduce power relations that contribute to the domination of subordinate groups within capitalism. In particular, the hierarchical organization of the social sciences, their procedures for data collection and analysis, and rigid adherence to the separation of researcher and subjects in the pursuit of objectivity are seen to produce forms of knowledge that are imbued with relations of exploitation, power, and control. The effect of this critique within PAR has been a tendency to adopt methodologies that favor qualitative or interpretive forms of inquiry that are accessible, comprehensible, and immediately responsive to the needs of groups that use them. Qualitative approaches are also favored on both technical and ideological grounds for the following reasons:

- They provide a more rounded and holistic perspective that produces thick description of complex social processes.
- They are better suited to small-scale, local studies (in this respect they are less susceptible to colonization by outside experts).

- They hold the potential for marginalized groups to have greater access to—and thereby have more of a say over—the research process than do quantitative methodologies.
- Last, used as part of a participatory process, qualitative methodologies also encourage engagement in nascent forms of reflexivity that stimulate local discursive practices and group activities that constitute PAR.

A second theme that has defined PAR is its embracing of the broad spectrum of theoretical frameworks that now go under the label of critical theory. Some of these theoretical frameworks have been alluded to above; they include versions of Marxism and neo-Marxism, feminism, Freirian pedagogy, postcolonial critiques, postmodernism, cultural studies, and critical ethnography. Critical theory has yielded some of PAR's key conceptual practices. For example, Freire's concept of conscientization, Gramsci's notion of hegemony, or the feminist analysis of patriarchy have shaped the character and organization of the PAR process itself.

Third, PAR is committed to a politics of equity and social transformation that many other research traditions would dismiss as ideological. This commitment is evident in several ways. PAR is political in the sense that its core values and practices have emerged from a critique of Western social science methodologies that it views as deeply implicated in the maintenance of social and political order within capitalism. Alternatively, this theme is expressed through its commitment to work with (as opposed to on) subordinate, marginalized, and oppressed groups to improve and empower their position within society. This commitment stems from the recognition that the social is constituted by asymmetrical power relations in the workplace, the family, education, and more broadly, within politics and civil society that systematically generate inequalities between individuals and groups. The recognition that these inequalities are endemic to capitalist societies—particularly in the contemporary neoliberal era—has produced a strong ethical stance that research should focus on issues of social justice. Arising from this ethical stance, PAR has also been equally committed to democratic engagement, transparency and openness, a strong cooperative and communitarian ethos, inclusion, and a steadfast conviction to issues concerned with equity, social justice, and sustainability. These core values have made PAR a particularly flexible methodology, adaptable across a broad range of issues and contexts.

Contemporary Trajectories and Critique

Despite its history of marginalization within the Western social sciences, PAR and other forms of participatory research (e.g., community action research), have in recent years become the focus of increased attention from a wide range of government bodies, international development agencies, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and private management consultants. However, it is important to understand that the adoption of the concept and practice of participation has been radically recontextualized within the discourses employed by these organizations. For example, one needs only to consult the World Bank's website (www.worldbank.org) to understand how the discursive practices of participation are now being used to exert forms of neoliberal governmentality through quasimethodologies that resemble PAR. It is in this respect that PAR, and other forms of research that employ a participatory process (e.g., management techniques involving a team concept), has been co-opted and reconstituted so that they are distinctly at odds with the emancipatory, indeed revolutionary, principles on which PAR was originally founded. In this context, it is also important to remember the critique that both institutional and critical ethnographers have made of PAR—that power relations between professional researchers and participants are not necessarily equalized or erased through the mere act of participation. Thus, qualitative researchers need to approach studies that claim a participatory methodology cautiously. As noted above, although the fact of participation in a research project may be compatible with Western values of empowerment, liberation, and democracy, it may also be equally bound to technologies of normalization, focused on subjugation, control, and exploitation.

Steve Jordan

See also Action Research; Community-Based Research; Critical Action Research; Critical Ethnography; Institutional Ethnography

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PEER DEBRIEFING

Peer debriefing, also called analytic triangulation, is the process whereby a researcher calls upon a disinterested peer—a peer who is not involved in the research project—to aid in probing the researcher's thinking around all or parts of the research process. This probing includes, but is not limited to, methodology, interpretation, and analysis of data. As such, it is regarded as one of a complement of techniques used to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research through the use of external peers. It is often compared to or paralleled with internal validity in quantitative research. Although there is no prescribed set of procedures in peer debriefing, a primary aim is a more complete exploration and explication by the researcher of his or her values and interests and how these might come to bear on the conduct, interpretation, and analysis of the research project.

Of primary importance to peer debriefing is the selection of a peer debriefer(s) who is able to meaningfully interrogate the research both substantively and methodologically. For example, it is imperative that a qualitative researcher skillfully negotiate political and ethical concerns that may arise as he or she conducts research. This skill is especially critical to studies that are dependent upon rapport and relationships established with participants in the field. A peer debriefer may help the researcher in considering and weighing alternative responses to sensitive situations and thus potentially refiguring subsequent steps in the emergent methodological design. Alternatively, researchers may find themselves confronted with issues of substance—in defining and considering what is of importance to the study, for example. In such cases, peer debriefers familiar with the area of study may probe the researcher's thought around what is relevant to the study, why it is relevant, and suggest alternatives that might precipitate new insights.

Accordingly, it is important that a peer debriefer has knowledge of the phenomenon under study as well as knowledge of qualitative methodology.

Other important considerations in the selection of a peer debriefer are the degree of trust between researcher and peer debriefer, relations of authority, and concerns related to confidentiality and responsibility regarding protection of research participants. Each consideration influences how much a researcher may be willing or able to reveal and how deeply a peer debriefer is willing to probe.

Peer debriefing may also serve as a process whereby researchers and peer debriefers critically interrogate emerging theories. As researchers begin to make sense of data, peer debriefers may help to clarify interpretations and challenge researcher assumptions contributing to the credibility of the findings, analyses, and conclusions drawn. Further, peer debriefing may serve a therapeutic function. The conduct of research, especially prolonged research, often becomes challenging psychologically and emotionally. Peer debriefers who are able to listen sympathetically may provide an additional measure of soundness to the research.

Thu Sương Thị Nguyễn

See also Audit Trail; Credibility; Interpretation; Naturalistic Inquiry; Reflexivity; Trustworthiness

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PEER REVIEW

Peer review, also known as expert review, independent scientific review, or auditing, is a method used by administrators, funding officials, journal editors, and researchers to inform decision making and to improve the research process and outcomes by engaging independent and qualified experts to provide critical and consultative evaluation of the merits of a research project or product, proposal. Depending on its environment, peer reviewing can differ as to its purposes, participants, process, and product. In qualitative

research, peer review may also be used to improve a research proposal or project's trustworthiness.

Higher Education Institutions and Research Organizations

In colleges, universities, and independent research institutions, peer review is often a required internal gatekeeping process through which research proposals must successfully pass before investigators submit proposed research projects to ethics review boards or external funding sources. Points of focus in this internal review include the project's significance and methodological integrity (i.e., does the project have the potential to contribute to the identified body of knowledge or applied or clinical area, is the research question clearly articulated, is the research design appropriate to the question being investigated, are the participants clearly identified, are the methods adequately described and logically cohere, and are ethical concerns identified and addressed?). These internal peer reviews are conducted by faculty members, researchers, and others with the expertise and knowledge to render decisions of quality and to offer improvements. Outcomes include approval for external submission, guidance for a revision and resubmission, or the project's dismissal.

Grant and Trust Funding

Peer review is often the preferred method for judging a proposal's merits and rigor for research funding and for deciding how best to allocate scarce public or private resources. Whether conducted by an individual or by groups sometimes called panel reviews or review committees, peer review for governmental and private foundation and trust funding focuses on the proposed project's significance and methodological integrity. In addition, a peer reviewer is required to give special attention to assessing a researcher's potential to complete the proposed project (e.g., past performance with funded projects, availability of critical resources, and institutional support) and whether or not funds should be allocated to underwrite the proposed activities. Individuals conducting these peer reviews may be selected based upon their published body of work, including a record of successfully securing their own research funding or some other set of criteria demonstrating their expertise in judging the quality of and potential for investigators' success in completing their proposed research projects. Outcomes include the

awarding of funding, a revise and resubmit scenario, or rejection.

Scholarly Publications

Peer review is considered the highest and most rigorous form of editorial review in determining the publication merits of papers, chapters, and books. With scholarly or academic journals, editors and their boards of reviewers (referees) serve as the major gatekeepers for judging what texts are deemed to be of the highest quality and significance and therefore worthy of publication. To ensure the greater independence of the peer reviewing process, some editors also combine peer review with what is called blind review, in which the referees do not know the identities of the authors and the other reviewers and the authors do not know the identities of the reviewers. Journal referees are selected based upon their scholarly record and their content and/or methodological knowledge of the paper or work to be reviewed. Another important function of editorial peer review is the mentoring process through which editors help authors learn how to improve their papers. Outcomes include acceptance of the submission, revisions and resubmissions, or declination of the paper.

Qualitative Research Projects

In qualitative projects, researchers may call upon peers with relevant methodological and content area expertise and experience to scrutinize and critique a study's procedures and outcomes. This type of peer review, sometimes called investigator triangulation, provides researchers with an objective source familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored to review the study's methodology, to analyze portions of data, and to critique findings. This peer reviewer can provide support and guidance, challenge researchers' assumptions and findings, and help improve the study's rigor or trustworthiness. Some experts advise that this peer reviewing process be used throughout a study's duration. This support can be provided via formal, written reports or through informal conversations and emails.

Qualitative researchers can also use peer reviewers to improve data analysis and interpretation credibility by seeking the assistance of peer debriefers and using the feedback to reach consensus on the findings' coherence and agreement as to the findings' credibility or to generate additional reflections. Peer debriefing in

qualitative research can also help prevent researchers from becoming overly intrusive in their research participants' lives, from going "native," or becoming overly connected with the research site and its inhabitants. The goal is to help researchers become more aware of their work's impact on themselves and other study participants.

Concerns About Peer Review

Although peer review is commonly practiced, it is not without controversy. Concerns include questions about what constitutes high quality and what individuals or organizations gain authority to set peer review quality standards. The definition of peer and what constitutes independent are additional concerns. In defining peer, disagreements arise over what constitutes relevant methodological and content area expertise and experience for a particular project. There can also be concerns regarding a peer review panel or editorial board's diversity (i.e., backgrounds, expertise, cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender) and the reviewed projects. The issue of a conflict of interest between the independent peer reviewer and a research proposal or paper's author can raise serious credibility issues as to the integrity of peer review system to identify and support high quality scientific research and to promote the professional development of the field in question.

In qualitative research, additional concerns include if quality standards not seen as being sensitive to the particularities of qualitative research are arbitrarily applied to determine a qualitative work product's merits. A related concern is the use of standardized checklists and templates for determining research projects' quality that have potential for restricting novel, creative, artistic, or critical approaches to research.

Ron Chenail

See also Audit Trail; Peer Debriefing; Research Diaries and Journals; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Triangulation; Trustworthiness

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PERCEPTION

Perception is a mode of apprehending reality and experience through the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action. Individual perception influences opinion, judgment, understanding of a situation or person, meaning of an experience, and how one responds to a situation. A common way of defining perception is "how we see things." However, perception is a process involving not only the senses but also complex underlying mechanisms.

Perception, which is mediated through the interconnectedness of mind and body, is an individual's access to experience and interpretation in the world. Perception of varying objects depends on the context in which they are experienced for interpretation and meaning. Perception is like a set of lenses through which an individual views reality. These lenses evolve from perspectives of location, subjectivity, particularity, history, embodiment, contradiction, and the web of teachings imparted to the individual.

Qualitative researchers are most interested in individual perception to gain access to understanding the meaning of experience for an individual, a culture, and or social groups.

Individuals give voice to their perceptions through narratives, storytelling, behavior, and reactions to individuals or groups. Researchers are able to understand multiple realities that are socially constructed based on these perceptions. Perceptions are interpretations, and for most individuals, interpretations become their truth. Thus perceptions are extremely powerful and influential in human thought and behavior.

Characteristic of a multistoried world are innumerable perceptions of the same experience, culture, or entity. Perceptions are influenced by the embeddedness of the context in which they reside. Contingency, including the temporal, history, customs, traditions, belief systems, and language, all contribute to a multifaceted layer for interpretation of the origin of perceptions, of how individuals "see" and interpret their immediate reality and experience.

Perceptions are subjective, and when in interaction, individuals or groups engage in an intersubjective

dialogue or dialect where the potential for different interpretations exist. Individuals and groups often “see” entities quite differently based on different life contexts and contingencies. This “perceptual disparity,” where two different subjective perceptions of the same event or experience are contradictory, occurs in the intersubjective space between two people or groups and can be the source of misunderstanding, injustice, and human conflict.

Qualitative researchers understand the importance of individual and/or group perceptions to the interpretation of human experience. Perception also includes the researcher. It is imperative that qualitative researchers have thoroughly examined and come to an understanding of their own original perceptions of what is at hand in a research study, so as to suspend these perceptions to the extent possible, to prevent “contamination” and to enable accurate study and understanding of another way of viewing experience, sometimes completely contradictory to one’s own.

If the goal of the qualitative researcher is understanding, the perceptions of others are critical in interpreting data in a study. The potential for perceptions to be detrimental to an individual or a cultural group makes such study even more critical. Biases, prejudice, unsubstantiated judgments, or false assumptions are powerful perceptions with the potential of misunderstanding, punishment, banishment or oppression.

Patricia L. Munhall

See also Bias; Bracketing; Critical Action Research; Deconstruction; Interpretation; Intersubjectivity; Observer Bias; Reality and Multiple Realities; Social Justice; Subjectivity; Understanding

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PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY

Performance ethnography describes a set of interrelated and still emerging qualitative approaches that bring

together ethnographic methods and theoretical concepts from performance studies. As a field of inquiry that bridges communications studies and drama and theater, performance studies considers *performance* broadly. Performance includes cultural activities deemed theatrical or self-consciously constructed performative works of art such as play productions, performance art, or educational drama inclusive of any performative or dramatic form—storytelling, dance, music, street theater, video, and so on. Performance studies provides insights into the nature of social relations by examining performances in real life, such as public gatherings, rituals, games, or sporting events that are seen as performative. Performance ethnography also investigates social dramas or dramatic moments in everyday life, such as moments of conflict, and inquires into everyday interactions, which include culturally conditioned behavior of the performance of social roles—roles as father, daughter, employee, and so on, as well as roles associated with gender as discussed by Judith Butler or roles with race, status, age, and so on—and communicative or speech acts that are performative—as J. L. Austin suggested, words that do something or have an impact in the world. The notion of performativity, associated with performance studies, is a way of conceiving of an activity or action as similar to a theatrical event in form and/or effect and to describe the potential of language to be performative. Performance studies is a broad area of inquiry that draws on theory from various fields including anthropology, sociology, psychology (psychoanalysis, psychodrama), literary theory, linguistics, postcritical and poststructuralist philosophy, and theater studies.

As a research approach, performance ethnography grew out of the so-called crisis of representation. Critiques of meta-narratives, truth claims, and the production of knowledge legitimized other ways of knowing, alternative approaches to doing research, and new forms of representing research. New paradigm researchers acknowledged the fallacy of objectivity, the oppressive dominance of the written word, and the colonizing effect this had for the “other” as the object of investigation. In the fields of anthropology and communication studies, performance became regarded as a legitimate and an ethical way of representing ethnographic understanding. For Dwight Conquergood, performance was an ethical act; it addressed the crisis of representation by offering an embodied, empathic way of knowing and of deeply sensing the other. As such, performance ethnography developed alongside other

Popular Theatre With Young Offenders

Popular theatre is a process of theatre that involves participants in creating theatre to identify issues of concern to them, to analyze the conditions and causes of situations, and to search for possibilities for change. The following excerpt is from an ethnographic performance text detailing a popular theatre project with a group of incarcerated males at a Canadian young offender center. The study asked how popular theatre could help us to better understand the experiences of the youth toward finding appropriate approaches to meeting their needs and explored how facilitating a popular theatre project, in a context such as this, could help bring about individual and social change.

In performing the piece, two researchers, Diane Conrad and Gail Campbell, took on various roles and acted out situations depicting the popular theatre work with the youth. The performance focused on the researchers' experiences of facilitating the project and on the themes and issues raised by the youth. The text examines the perceptions of the young offenders in relation to the institutional context and the perspectives of the researchers, raising questions about the popular theatre process.

Titles and images were projected throughout the performance.

ON THE INSIDE

Images of a young offender bullying another young offender on screen.

A series of mini scenes follow with performers playing various young offenders . . .

In the gym

George is shooting baskets.

Stanley walks past George.

Stanley: I'm going to get you.

George: Fuck you.

Stanley: Don't turn your back in the shower, bitch.

RECTI"FUCK"ATION

Various images of graffiti text and drawings on screen. Both Researchers move into research space.

Researcher 1: Have you noticed all these . . . are they homo-erotic images and stories that keep coming up?

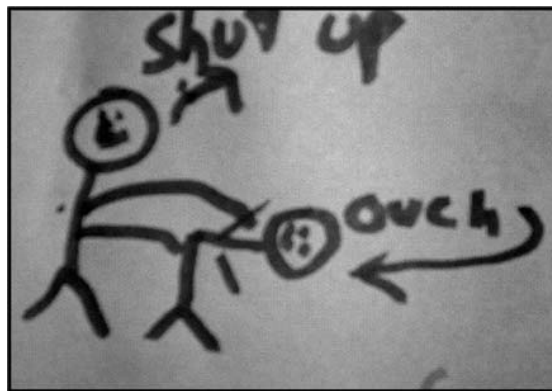
Researcher 2: Yes. They're hard to miss . . . the gay characters, the pick-up lines, male prostitutes, bum fucking jokes all mixed up together with talk of hiding things up there—"hooping it," strip search and references to rape.

Researcher 1: I wonder if this kind of stuff actually goes on in here. Janice?

Researcher 2 takes on the role of Janice.

Janice: I'm surprised at all the sexual references too. They keep coming back to it. But you know, there's never been a case of sexual abuse or rape reported in here . . .

Although of course they are subject to a strip search at any given moment. If there's even a suspicion of anything gone missing, like a nail from the shop or something, the whole unit is strip-searched. Or if they've had a visitor that is suspicious . . .



Recti"fuck"ation. This image was created by the boys as part of a graffiti writing and drawing activity.

Source: Photo by Diane Conrad. Used by permission.

(Continued)

(Continued)

SEX & POWER

Image of a graffiti drawing showing stick figures in postures on screen. and dialogue representing anal sex/rape/strip search.

Researcher 1: We read that rape is a real threat in adult prisons. With all the jokes and rumours that the boys hear, we wondered if it was the boys' fears that something like this could happen to them made them bring up all these images.

Researcher 2: We imagined how we would feel if we knew we could be strip searched at any moment, even if we hadn't done anything wrong.

Researcher 1: In adult prison it's not even so much about sex, as it is about power.

Performers move into prison space representing a holding cell. Researcher 1 becomes Neil, a new young offender, pacing. Fred is in the cell with him.

Fred: So has anyone hit on you yet?

Neil: What do you mean?

Fred: You're lucky, man. After my first week, I had to get twelve stitches in my ring.

(Makes a gesture to indicate his behind.)

Neil: Really? (Looking frightened.)

Fred winks at audience with a knowing smile.

Fred: *(Putting his arm around Neil.)* That's okay, stick with me. I'll look out for you.

Source: Conrad, D., & Campbell, G. (2006). Arresting change: Popular theatre with young offenders. In L. McCammon & D. McLauchlan (Eds.), *The universal mosaic of drama and theatre: The International Drama/Theatre Education Association 2004 Dialogues* (pp. 375–391). Welland, Canada: IDEA Publications/Soleil.

alternative qualitative or new paradigm methods, such as Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly's narrative inquiry, Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner's autoethnography, and Elliot Eisner, Tom Barone, and others' arts-based ways of knowing and representing research.

An exploration of performance in qualitative research indicates that performance ethnography has emerged as a collection of interrelated methods that can be employed at any or all stages of the research process—for generating or gathering research material, for interpreting or analyzing material, and for representing research.

Performance ethnography as a method for generating research material—for gathering participant responses—may take various forms. The primary methods in ethnography are observation or participant observation, along with interviews, focus groups, fieldnotes, and the like. Correspondingly, performance ethnography employs ethnographic methods in the observation of and/or participation in performance as understood from a performance studies perspective. Performance ethnographers find or create opportunities to observe and/or participate in performances in the broadest sense. As such, performance ethnography involves inquiry into performance in any or all of its

cultural or social contexts—in theatrical performances and/or in everyday life performances.

Performance ethnography may include the investigation of the processes and/or products of intentionally created theatrical type performances with participants and/or responses to such performances by audiences of play productions, of popular theater approaches or playbuilding methods as described by Joe Norris. Theatrical creation with participants as a research method offers an alternative way of drawing out participants' understandings. It offers an alternative performative way of knowing—a unique and powerful way of accessing knowledge, drawing out responses that are spontaneous, intuitive, tacit, experiential, embodied and affective, rather than simply cognitive. In my research experience, reenacting moments like those from real life is a particularly appropriate way of collectively studying lived experience. It engages participants in a process of knowledge production—of expressing, interpreting, and re-presenting their ideas.

Performative ethnographic inquiry in the context of dramatic or theatrical creation may also include investigation of real-life performances that occur in the process of creation, but outside of the theatrical

performances themselves, in conversations arising from the performance or in preparation for performance—in other words, in participant observation of those conversations and preparations.

In the analysis or interpretation of research, performance ethnography also has applications. In fact, as implied above, analysis and interpretation are inherent in the process of dramatic or theatrical creation. “Acting out” involves a process that is critical and analytic. As performance theorists such as Richard Schechner and Richard Courtney describe, by taking on a role, the “player” exists simultaneously in two worlds: as a character in the experience of the “as if” world and as an actor evaluating the situation from the outside, within the real world. The player is both involved in and detached from both realities, alternating from one to the other, observing the self in action, comparing the two worlds to arrive at some new understanding or meaning. Schechner claims that fundamental to all performance is this characteristic of restored behavior or twice-behaved behavior, which is symbolic, reflexive, and loaded with significance. The play frame opens a liminal space where the “not me” can encounter the “not not me.” As such, performance is a process both for generating and for interpretation or analysis of research material.

Furthermore, I describe the interpretive process in which I engage when thinking and writing about performative moments in my work with participants as a kind of performance analysis—an approach similar to Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis, drawing on theoretical concepts from performance studies to analyze or interpret instances of performance. In doing so, I have scripted performative moments from both inside and out of the theatrical performances of participants. These are ethnodramatic vignettes of performative moments recreated in order to discuss them. The scripting process, itself an interpretive one, is followed by analyses of the moments in question drawing on relevant theoretical perspectives with the aim of making meaning of and from the performative interactions.

As a method for representing research, performed ethnography or ethnodrama is perhaps the most widely employed application of performance ethnography. Performed ethnography or ethnodrama has gained acceptance as a powerful medium for disseminating research results with the potential to engage diverse audiences with the research in ways that are empathic, emotional, and embodied as well as intellectual.

To this end, researchers in anthropology, communications or performance studies, various health care fields, education, arts and drama education, and drama and theater have written ethnodramas and/or performed their research. Norman K. Denzin calls ethnodrama a powerful way for ethnography to recover and interrogate the meanings of lived experience. Johnny Saldaña makes a distinction between ethnotheater as a live research performance event and ethnodrama as the written script.

As well as the specific methods mentioned above, the notion of performance has been embraced in qualitative research for its productive possibilities in the broadest sense. Performance or performativity have been taken up as critical pedagogy and in critical arts education. Charles Garoian suggests that performance opens a liminal pedagogical space that allows for a reflexive learning process that recognizes the experiences, memories, and multiple perspectives of participants and encourages discussion of complex and contradictory issues. The notion of performance has also been taken up in doing arts-based inquiry and writing various kinds of performative texts. According to Denzin, texts that are performative are creative, passionate, visceral, and kinetic; focus on process over product; are critically reflexive on the part of the researcher; and experiment with form including popular arts forms—they are open texts with multiple meanings and multiple ways of relating to the work, allowing dialogue with research participants, appealing to diverse audiences, and raising questions rather than formulating conclusions. For Denzin, performance ethnography as praxis is a way of acting on the world in order to change it. Performance creates an open, dialogic space for inquiry and expression through an interpretation of events and their contexts. Performance creates opportunities for communion among participants, researchers, and research audiences.

In performance ethnography, participants’ performances, both staged and in real life, provide insight into their lived experiences and their cultural worlds. Moreover, as anthropologist Johannes Fabian claims, some types of cultural knowledge cannot simply be called up and expressed in discursive statements by informants but can be represented only through enactment or performance. He claims that knowledge about culture or social life is performative rather than informative. In this way, Fabian pushes insight about

performance toward its methodological imperative, as a method as well as the subject of ethnographic research.

Diane H. Conrad

See also Ethnodrama; Playbuilding

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PHENOMENOGRAPHY

Phenomenography is a research approach aimed at the study of variation of human experiences of phenomena in the world. Etymologically, the word *phenomenography* is derived from the Greek words *phainomenon* (phenomenon, appearance) and *graphein* (write, describe). Phenomenography is thus about the description of things as they appear to us. Emerging as a methodology in the 1970s, phenomenography has gradually developed in different strands—as an empirical research approach and in a

theoretical direction as variation theory. Focusing mainly on the empirical, methodological approach, this entry describes the goals of phenomenography, the processes used to collect and analyze data, and the strengths and limitations of such research.

Phenomenographic Research Approach

The object of phenomenography is the variation of human experience of the world. It is grounded in empirical research in education on variation in undergraduate students' learning outcomes and was initially developed during the 1970s by a group of researchers led by Ference Marton at Göteborg University in Sweden. The initial studies tried to answer the question, "Why do students learn different things from reading the same text?" The findings from these studies identified and described a limited number of different ways of understanding the text. They also found a clear relationship between students' ways of understanding the text and their approach to the task of reading the text. The qualitatively different ways of understanding the text were closely linked to the variation in approach to learning (deep vs. surface approach) adopted by the learners. This relationship between understanding and approach implies a principle of intentionality in approaching learning tasks, or broader, as ways of experiencing a particular problem or situation. Since these first studies hundreds of empirical studies have been conducted, mainly in research on learning, but phenomenography has also been used in other areas such as business administration, information literacy, and information behavior research. Geographically, phenomenography has spread from Sweden to Australia and to South East Asia. Currently, a network of phenomenographic researchers have clusters in Göteborg, Sweden; Hong Kong; and Australia.

Variation and Experience

The study of variation implies an interest in capturing various dimensions or facets of a phenomenon as it appears to a number of people. *A way of experiencing something* constitutes the research unit in phenomenography, which means that the research takes its point of departure in human individuals. A way of

experiencing is a particular way of being aware of something and is seen as a relation between a person and the specific phenomenon under study. The concept of a way of experiencing has gradually replaced earlier terms like *conception*, *way of understanding*, and *way of seeing*. In many texts, these terms are used interchangeably to denote this central phenomenographic concept. The study of experience is not exclusive to phenomenography. Phenomenology likewise has human experience as its research object, but although phenomenography is directed at studying and mapping variation in experiences of a phenomenon, phenomenology is concerned with capturing the essence of a phenomenon.

During the last decades, phenomenographers have addressed the question, “What is a way of experiencing a phenomenon?” explored within a framework of the anatomy of awareness. This question implies a shift from empirical toward more theoretical research interests. (This strand of phenomenography has developed into variation theory.) The theoretical and empirical research strands are closely interrelated. One empirically grounded, basic assumption that has an important theoretical implication is that a particular way of experiencing a problem or a situation and a way of acting in relation to that same problem or situation reflect each other. One does not cause the other because experiencing and acting are inseparably intertwined. This intertwining implies that phenomenography does not take a dualistic stance related to differences between word and deed, meaning that ways of experiencing are considered as integrating thought, action, and feeling. Another theoretical feature is the relationship between the ways of experiencing a phenomenon and the categories created to describe them. The former constitutes the research unit, while the categories of description form the outcome of phenomenographic research. Although ways of experiencing derive from individuals, categories of description refer to the collective level—the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon may appear to people.

Collecting Data

In most phenomenographic research, data have been collected through interviews, although there are examples of videorecording as well as document analysis. The selection of interviewees is guided by the interest to collect rich material about the phenomenon

of study and with the object of identifying and describing variation in experiences of this particular phenomenon. Generally, the number of participants has been 15 to 30 people, but there are examples of both smaller and larger numbers.

The focus on experience implies that it is not the world as such that is being explored but the world as experienced by human beings, or expressed somewhat differently, the phenomenon as it appears to a number of people. In much phenomenographic writing this characteristic is labeled a *second-order perspective*. This second-order perspective is usually manifest in research questions, which are formulated in terms such as, “What are higher educators’ views of information literacy” or “How do high school students experience information seeking related to a learning assignment?”

Interviews are guided by the research question and are semi-structured. Before preparing interview questions, the researcher should thoroughly delineate and penetrate the phenomenon under study in order to discern its outer and inner structure, the various possible meanings of the phenomenon, and various characteristics that may be linked to the phenomenon in different contexts or situations. One way to do this is to study and consider previous research on the phenomenon within different research traditions. The intention behind this understanding is not to impose a particular view on the research participants—on the contrary, the idea is for the researcher to be as open as possible to the varying experiences that may be encountered during interviews.

Interview questions are formulated in ways that allow interviewees to express their own views on the phenomenon under study. For instance, as in a study on educators’ views of information literacy education, researchers used such questions as, “What does teaching information literacy mean to you?” “What does students’ learning about information literacy mean to you?” or “Tell a story of a time when you experienced that teaching and learning information literacy worked really well.” These major questions are followed by probing questions to facilitate the development of rich material on as concrete a level as possible, for example, “What do you mean when you say . . . ?” or “Please give me an example of what you said in order to help me understand better.” An alternative to such open-ended questions might be to give participants a concrete assignment of an information seeking character and then to observe and interview them about their ways of managing and thinking about the

task. This approach implies that the researcher should assume the role of an attentive listener, attempting to see the internal logic manifest and latent in what is expressed in the interview.

Phenomenographic interviews are not intended to bring out attitudes or ready answers held by interviewees. Instead, the interview is seen as a means for the interviewee to think about, reflect on, and formulate ways of experiencing a particular phenomenon. In this way, the various experiences sought in the study are being shaped through the interview for further analysis by the researcher. Interviews are audiorecorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

The objective of phenomenographic analysis is to identify and describe variation in ways of experiencing the phenomenon, a goal that is the object of research. The outcome of analysis, that is, the research findings, is presented in a limited number of categories of description that illustrate the variation of experiences of the phenomenon.

Analysis is conducted in several steps through reading and rereading interview protocols, with somewhat differing foci linked to the various phases of analysis. Preliminary analysis is accomplished already during data collection and continues during the transcription of the recorded interviews as the researcher becomes familiarized with the material and identifies themes emerging from the material. These themes may form various aspects or facets of the phenomenon under study, some of which may be foreseen by the researcher's previous understanding of the phenomenon and others appearing in the interview material. This process implies an abductive type of analysis, moving between empirical data and theoretical concepts to let one illuminate and contribute to the other. The purpose of analysis is to identify new facets and nuances with regard to meaning and structure in the various ways of experiencing the phenomenon. These aspects are further analyzed through comparative analysis with the aim of identifying differences and similarities linked to each aspect. Such comparisons are conducted in two contexts: one in the context of other extracts drawn from all interviews that touch upon the same theme; the other in the context of the individual interview.

Categories of description are the result of the researcher's work on identifying, formulating, and

describing the critical features of the meaning and structure of the ways of experiencing as well as of the relationship between the categories, which together form an outcome space. Validity is achieved in relation to the data available and the transparency in the researcher's path through data analysis. Quotations from interviews are used in two ways: (1) to illustrate a critical feature of a category and (2) to clarify the difference between one category and another. Often, not least in learning research, there is a hierarchical structure between the categories, defined through an increasing complexity of ways of experiencing the phenomenon. More complex ways of experiencing means that the categories comprise more dimensions and a simultaneous awareness of these dimensions.

Strengths and Limitations

With its origins in empirical research, phenomenography continues to prove fruitful for empirical research in various fields inside and outside pedagogy. A large amount of phenomenographic studies have been related to varying ways of experiencing concepts like photosynthesis, matter, or information literacy. The concept of learning has been the object of several studies. In Library and Information Science, the study of concepts such as relevance, enough, and the use of information for managers' decision making have followed in this tradition. Phenomenographic findings have allowed new features of phenomena to appear, carrying new facets and nuances compared to more general models of, for instance, information seeking or information literacy. At the same time, the more elaborate insights into phenomena offered through the description of variation implies a holistic view of the studied phenomena.

Phenomenography has been criticized for not taking context into account, voicing the risk that interviewer and interviewees may not refer to the same phenomenon in interviews about concepts separated from a particular situation or context. This concern is an observation worth serious consideration and concerns the validity of research findings. One way of dealing with this problem is found in examples of phenomenographic studies conducted in relation to actual processes or situations in which interviewees have been involved during the study. Another way of dealing with this issue is to ensure that interviews are carried out in ways that inscribe the phenomenon

under study in situations or contexts that are familiar to interviewees and where there is a basis for mutual understanding in the researcher–participant relationship. When ways of experiencing are separated from the individuals through the categories of description, the variation described may be compared with findings from other contexts, for instance, across contexts of learning in formal education and work–life learning.

Phenomenographic research findings hold strong potential relevance for various professional practices. Knowledge about differences between various ways of experiencing particular phenomena and of the potential for change from less to more complex understandings are important in a number of fields such as teaching and learning, as well as for developing services and tools within different institutional practices.

Louise B. Limberg

See also Comparative Analysis; Interviewing; Phenomenology; Researcher–Participant Relationships; Semi-Structured Interview

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PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is the reflective study of prereflective or lived experience. To say it somewhat differently, a main characteristic of the phenomenological tradition is that it is the study of the lifeworld as we immediately experience it, prereflectively, rather than as we conceptualize, theorize, categorize, or reflect on it. Phenomenology is now commonly considered to be one of the alternative qualitative research methodologies to which researchers can turn. But phenomenology is also a term that can carry quite different meanings depending on theoretical and practical contexts.

Originally, phenomenology was the name for the major movement in philosophy and the humanities in continental Europe in the 20th century. More recently, the term has acquired a broader meaning as phenomenology has been developed as a human science that is employed in professional disciplines such as education, health science, clinical psychology, and law. Phenomenological research is the study of lived or experiential meaning and attempts to describe and interpret these meanings in the ways that they emerge and are shaped by consciousness, language, our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities, and by our pre-understandings and presuppositions. Phenomenology may explore the unique meanings of any human experience or phenomenon. For example, it may study what it is like to have a conversation, how students experience difficulty in learning something, how pain is experienced in childbirth, what it is like to experience obsessive compulsions, how young people begin to experience secrecy and inwardness, and so forth.

This entry describes the emergence of traditions and contexts, some key concepts of phenomenology, and methods of phenomenology as a human science.

The Emergence of Traditions and Their Contexts

Within the large sweep of phenomenological philosophy, a variety of phenomenological schools and traditions may be distinguished, such as transcendental, existential, hermeneutic, linguistic, and ethical phenomenology. Often these traditions are strongly associated with renowned phenomenological scholars.

Transcendental phenomenology may be identified with the pathbreaking work of Edmund Husserl and his interpreters. Some basic terms of transcendental phenomenology are *intentionality*, *eidetic reduction*, and *constitution of meaning*. For Husserl, phenomenology is the rigorous, human science of all conceivable transcendental phenomena. It describes the way that knowledge comes into being in consciousness and clarifies the assumptions upon which all human understandings are grounded.

Existential phenomenology is often associated with Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. Some basic terms of existential phenomenology are *modes of being*, *ontology*, and *lifeworld*. In his last work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl had already turned phenomenological analysis from the transcendental ego and consciousness to the prereflective lifeworld of everyday experience. Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty radicalized this turn toward the existential world as we live and experience it. With Heidegger, this turn became an ontological rather than an epistemological project. Instead of asking how the being of things are constituted as intentional objects in consciousness, Heidegger asked how the being of beings shows itself as a revealing of being itself.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is linked especially with Hans-Georg Gadamer and with Paul Ricoeur. Some basic terms of hermeneutic phenomenology are *interpretation*, *textual meaning*, *dialogue*, *preunderstanding*, and *tradition*. Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretive (rather than purely descriptive as in transcendental phenomenology). But the contrast between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology is sometimes oversimplified by researchers in the professional disciplines. Heidegger argued that all description is always already interpretation. Every form of human understanding is interpretive.

Linguistic phenomenology includes the French poststructuralist work of Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, even though the latter denied that he was a phenomenologist. Basic terms of linguistic phenomenology are *textual autonomy*, *signification*, *intertextuality*, *deconstruction*, *the outside*, *discourse*, and *space of the text*. The work of Foucault on the nature of language and discourse contributes to certain explorations of the relation between understanding, culture, historicity, identity, and human life. But it is especially in the work of Derrida and

colleagues such as Hélène Cixous, where we can speak of a radical linguistic phenomenology.

Ethical phenomenology is exemplified in the work of Max Scheler, but later with the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas and his translator Alphonso Lingis. Basic terms of ethical phenomenology are *otherness*, *responsibility*, *I-Thou*, *the face*, and *(non)relationality*. Ethical phenomenology received its first impetus especially by Max Scheler in his study *The Nature of Sympathy*. For Levinas, the Husserlian focus on the essence of things and Heidegger's preoccupation with the modalities of being in the world all are manifestations of the primacy of being, self, or mineness in traditional philosophical phenomenology. For a truly profound understanding of human reality one must not only ask for the meaning of being or presence, but also for the meaning of what is otherwise than being: alterity or the infinite. Levinas finds the phenomenological power of this question in the encounter with the face of the other.

Phenomenology of Practice

Since the mid-1990s, phenomenology has been widely imported into the practical, applied, or professional disciplines such as the health sciences, education, clinical psychology, and pedagogical disciplines. Within these professional fields, phenomenology has a somewhat different history than most other qualitative research approaches. For example, action research developed from within the field of sociology and had a distinct and critical-political social agenda; ethnography emerged as a distinct anthropological field research method. In North America, phenomenology seeped into the professional fields in part via ethnomethodology, ethnography, interpretive sociology, and other such social science streams and in part through pockets of interest such as humanistic psychology, the work of existential psychology, and educational studies and pedagogy. Phenomenological inquiries have become attractive because they offer an alternative to managerial, instrumental, and technological ways of understanding knowledge, and they lead to more ethically and experientially sensitive epistemologies and ontologies of practice.

Before there was any significant interest in phenomenology in North America, a unique experiment had taken place in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and France. For example, the University of Utrecht School can be considered a

genuinely original contribution to the international discussion about phenomenology in the professions. It consisted of an assortment of phenomenologically oriented psychologists, educators, pedagogues, pediatricians, sociologists, criminologists, jurists, psychiatrists, and other medical doctors who formed a more or less close association of like-minded academic and professional practitioners. Scholars such as the psychiatrist J. H. van den Berg wrote among other things about the changing nature of childhood; the pedagogue-philosopher O. F. F. Bollnow wrote on the pedagogical atmosphere; M. J. Langeveld established the field of phenomenological pedagogy; the medical doctor F. J. J. Buytendijk produced numerous studies on topics such as pain, human movement, touch, and obsessive compulsiveness.

The practical phenomenological psychology of Amadeo Georgi and Clark E. Moustakas was inspired by the Dutch school. In education, phenomenology was introduced through the writings of Maxine Greene and Max van Manen and in the health sciences through the works of Patricia Benner and Kay Toombs, and so on.

In recent years, further developments in phenomenological methodology, as originally inspired by continental scholars, are found in all the major professional disciplines. These phenomenological methods share a concern with the concrete particulars of everyday life, but they are now more sensitive to subjective and intersubjective roots of meaning, to the complexity of relations between language and experience, to the cultural and gendered contexts of interpretive meaning, and to the textual dimensions of phenomenological writing and reflection. The growing interest in the relevance of such phenomenological methodologies for research and the knowledge base of professional practices attests to the vitality of concerns with reflective interpretation and experiencing sensitive understanding.

Concepts of Phenomenology

It has been said that a proper understanding of phenomenology can be gained only through doing it. Phenomenological understanding needs to be practiced as method, and identified as a style of thinking—a manner of orienting to experience as we live through it.

Within the discipline of philosophy, phenomenology is practiced through the methods of the reduction.

And as a human science, phenomenology has imported an additional variety of empirical data gathering techniques and reflective methods. It explores ways of doing research that remain focused on and sensitive to the concrete, subjective, and prereflective dimensions of the lifeworld.

Different phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida agree that phenomenological understanding is achieved through language. A good phenomenological text can make us suddenly “see” something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience and may transform our practices. But phenomenological reflection also runs up against the limits of language. The production of insight must proceed through the creation of a research text that speaks to our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities. Thus, phenomenological understanding is distinctly existential, emotive, enactive, embodied, situational, and nontheoretic. A powerful phenomenological text thrives on a certain irrevocable tension between what is unique and what is shared, between particular and transcendent meaning, between what can be thought and what remains unthought, and between the reflective and the prereflective spheres of the lifeworld.

Lived Experience

The term *lived experience* derives from the German *erlebnis*—experience as we live through it and recognize it as a particular type of experience. It could be argued that human experience is the main epistemological basis for many other qualitative research traditions, but the concept of lived experience possesses special methodological significance for phenomenology. The notion of lived experience, as used in the works of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and like-minded phenomenologists, announces the intent to explore directly the original or prereflective dimensions of human existence.

Our language can be seen as an immense linguistic map that names the possibilities of human lived experiences. The value of phenomenology is that it prioritizes and investigates how the human being experiences the world: how the patient experiences illness, how the teacher experiences the pedagogical encounter, how the student experiences a moment of success or failure, and how we experience novel ways of interacting with others and the world through computer mediated devices, social network technologies,

new media, and so forth. Every lived experience (phenomenon) can become a topic for phenomenological inquiry. The phenomenological attitude keeps us reflectively attentive to the ways human beings live through experiences in the immediacy of the present that is only recoverable as an elusive past.

Phenomenology is interested in recovering the living moment of the now—even before we put language to it or describe it in words. Or to say this differently, phenomenology tries to show how our words, concepts, and theories always shape (distort) and give structure to our experiences as we live them. But the living moment of the present is always already absent in our effort to return to it. For example, it is one thing to get lost in a novel, but it is another to retrospectively capture what happened to us, just now, as we slipped into this textual space and began to dwell in the story. Similarly, we may identify and rate with empirical descriptors the nature and intensity of various forms of pain, but the actual moment of being struck by pain or the lingering discomfort of suffering pain somehow seem to be beyond words as we try to retrospectively appropriate the experience. These experiences can be described, but ultimately the meaning of the primal experience is beyond propositional discourse.

Lifeworld

The lifeworld is the pregiven world, the existent world as we find ourselves in it. Husserl described the lifeworld as the “world of immediate experience,” the world as “already there,” the world as experienced in the “natural, primordial attitude.” He distinguished between our theoretical attitude to life, as borrowed from the Greeks, and our natural pretheoretical attitude to life on which all science and theorizing is based and from which all theorizing is ultimately derived. Husserl employs the term *natural* for what is original and naive, prior to critical or theoretical reflection.

Each lifeworld shows certain pervading structures or styles that can be explored phenomenologically. Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann elaborated this notion in a sociological direction in their book *Structures of the Life-world*. We could examine how the lifeworld of the child has different experiential qualities from the lifeworld of the adult. Each of us may be seen to inhabit different lifeworlds at different times of the day, such as the lived world of work and

the lived world of home. Moreover, lifeworlds intersect and are partly nested within each other. Heidegger gave to the idea of lifeworld an even more worldly, existential thrust by speaking of phenomenology as the study of being, the study of our modes-of-being or ways-of-being-in-the-world. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s notion of “form of life” and “language games” can be understood as a more linguistic approach to the idea of lifeworld.

The Reduction

It is impossible to understand transcendental phenomenological method without understanding the meaning and significance of the reduction. *Reduction* is the technical term that describes the phenomenological device of bracketing (*epoché*) that permits us to discover the experiential surge of the lifeworld. The aim of the reduction is to achieve a direct and primal contact with the world as we experience it rather than as we conceptualize it. But the discovery of the prereflective lifeworld through the technique of the reduction always transcends the lifeworld—when we bracket lived experience, we experience meaning. The reduction is meant to bring the aspects of meaning that belong to the phenomena of our lifeworld into nearness. In particular it aims to bring into focus the uniqueness of the phenomenon to which we are oriented.

The method of human science is never simply a matter of procedure, whether simple procedures or advanced procedures. Rather the reduction refers to a certain thoughtfulness. To come to an understanding of the unique meaning and significance of something we need to reflect on it by practicing a careful attentiveness. The term *reduction* is somewhat misleading since reduction—the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness—is ironically a protest against reductionism. So how then is reflection supposed to emulate lived experience? Of course, the emulator is language, and the process of emulating is performed through writing, and the intent of writing is to produce textual portrayals that resonate the kinds of meanings that we seem to recognize in prereflective experience.

There exist many philosophical investigations and explications of the reduction that can make this topic complex and confusing. That is not surprising in view of the fact that the project of phenomenology can be understood in a variety of ways. Here several levels of

reduction may be distinguished for their methodological usefulness: wonder or heuristic reduction, openness or hermeneutic reduction, concreteness or phenomenological reduction, universality in contingency or eidetic reduction, and flexible rationality or methodological reduction. Each of these dimensions of the reduction needs to be practiced as if in concert.

Human Science Methods

The reduction is the method central to the phenomenological study of the lifeworld; however, in the work of more ontologically oriented phenomenologists, the reduction does not bracket the phenomenon away from the world, but rather it restores the contextual and always already existing meaningfulness of the world.

As phenomenology was adopted by various disciplines associated with professional practices, empirical and reflective methods were imported that are derived from the humanities and the social sciences. Empirical methods such as interviewing, observation, eliciting written descriptions, and borrowing from literary and artistic sources are now used to gather experiential material. These data are best collected in the form of descriptions of lived-through moments, experiential anecdotal accounts, remembered stories of particular experiences, narrative fragments, and fictional experiences. Thus, phenomenological experiential accounts should not be confused with opinions, interpretations, views, or explanations of certain phenomena.

Phenomenological inquiry cannot be formalized into a series of technical procedures. However, a variety of data gathering activities may be identified that can help in doing phenomenological inquiry. These activities fall into two types: empirical and reflective methods.

Empirical Methods

Our personal life experiences are immediately accessible to us in a way that no one else's are. However, the phenomenologist does not want to trouble the reader with purely private, autobiographical facticities of his or her life. In drawing up personal descriptions of lived experiences, the phenomenologist knows that the patterns of meaning of one's own experiences are also the possible experiences of others and therefore may be recognizable by others. By

conducting a personal description of a lived experience, the researcher aims to describe a phenomenon as much as possible in concrete and lived-through terms. In other words, the focus is on the direct description of a particular situation or event as it is lived through without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations.

In the various strands and disciplines in the social and human sciences, the interview serves differing purposes. For example, ethnographic interviews study cultural practices and meanings. Survey or opinion interviews study the ways people perceive or feel about certain issues, their beliefs, views, and so forth. In the context of phenomenological research there are, broadly speaking, two types of interview: The phenomenological interview is used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential material. The hermeneutic interview is used to explore interpretive meaning aspects of lived experience material.

Sometimes, the best way to enter a person's lifeworld is to participate in it. For example, to gain access to the experience of young children, it may be important to play with them and follow them into their play spaces. Participatory and close observation generates different forms of experiential material than is obtained through written or interview approaches. Observational method may require that one be a participant and an observer at the same time, maintaining an orientation of reflectivity while guarding against the more manipulative and artificial attitude that a reflective attitude tends to insert in a social situation and relation.

Fictional literature, such as novels and short stories, is sometimes an excellent source for experiential material. The phenomenological value of a novel, for example, is determined by what may be called the perceptiveness and the intuitive sensitivity of the author. Phenomena such as love, grief, illness, faith, success, fear, death, hope, struggle, or loss are the stuff of which novels are made. Through an experientially powerful novel, then, one is given the chance of living through an experience that provides the opportunity of gaining insight into certain aspects of the human condition.

Reflective Methods

Whereas empirical methods aim to explore the range and varieties of prereflective experiential material that is appropriate for the phenomenon under

study, reflective methods aim to interpret the aspects of meaning or meaningfulness that are associated with this phenomenon and that assist with the reduction.

Phenomenological reflection aims to perceive the meanings of human experiences; and in a sense, it is something everyone does constantly in everyday life. For example, when we meet a friend, we do not just perceive a man or a woman. We see a person who differs from other men and women precisely in that respect that makes us relate and talk to this person as a friend.

But what is much more difficult is to come to a reflective determination and explication of what a friend is. This determination and explication of meaning then is the more difficult task of phenomenological reflection. A perhaps more notorious illustration of this difficulty concerns the experience of time. What could be more easily grasped than time? We regulate our lives by time. We carry the time around on our wrist. We divide the day into morning, afternoon, evening, and nighttime. We reflect on past time and anticipate the time to come. We even talk about the time going by, sometimes quickly and at other times more slowly. And yet when someone asks us, "What is time anyway?" we are quickly at our wit's end to describe it. What is it that goes by fast or slowly when we say that the time is elapsing? How does our sense of time change as we become more continuously and immediately accessible to each other through mobile devices and the internet? So there is a difference between our prereflective lived understanding of the meaning of time and a self-reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the lived meaning of time. To get at the latter is a reflective and often laborious task, involving a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit thematic aspects of meaning of the lived experience.

Our lived experiences and the structures of meanings (themes) in terms of which these lived experiences can be described and interpreted constitute the immense complexity of the lifeworld. Existential themes that may prove especially helpful as guides for reflection in the research process include lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality). We can always ask about any experience the fundamental questions that correspond to such lifeworld existentials. Therefore, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, relationality, and alterity are

productive categories for the process of phenomenological questioning, reflecting, and writing.

Catherine Adams and Max van Manen

See also Hermeneutics; Lived Experience

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PHOTOGRAPHS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Photographs, along with other visual representations such as drawings, cartoons, videos, and even color swatches, play a variety of roles in qualitative research because they offer a visual medium in addition to the more common verbal medium. They complement the spoken word and often enable a richer, more holistic understanding of research participants' worlds as well as often act as stimuli, for example, in the development of advertising, packaging, brand development, and corporate imagery.

Broadly, photographs can have a role in two aspects of research. They can be a form of data gathered from research participants and initiated either by the researcher or by the research participants. Alternatively, they can be used as a stimulus that is provided by the researcher to act as a prompt or as a focus of discussion. However, these two aspects are not discrete and often overlap. For example, material provided by the researcher can be elaborated and

modified by research participants as part of a task carried out in group sessions.

Photographs as Research Data

Research Participants as Photographers

Photographs have an important role in broadening the researcher's understanding of research participants' lives outside the research context. Many research situations, for example, focus groups and in-depth interviews, while invaluable forums for gathering research data are necessarily artificial because researchers are taking people out of their normal context. It is therefore, useful to develop means of capturing data in a real-life situation and to supplement data gathered from structured research. Asking participants to carry out a specified task before the research session, for instance, serves two purposes. It sensitizes them to the topic to be discussed and it enables them to capture some aspects of their worlds that they can bring into the research situation to be examined and that the researcher can retain and incorporate into the analysis and research findings.

Photographs are often ideal as a preinterview (or postinterview) task. Participants can be given disposable or digital cameras and instructed to take photographs that are relevant to the project. Instructions can be as broad as, "Please take photographs of anything that is important in your life" or they can be quite specific, for example, "Please take photographs of all the pairs of shoes that you own, photographing each pair separately" or "Take pictures of store fascias that you find particularly attractive or unattractive." Participants are asked—and paid—to have the photographs developed or to download or print them so that they are available in the follow-up research session. Participants then talk through the photos—this talk may trigger conversation involving other participants—explaining why they are relevant, what their importance is, and how they link to the topic that is being researched.

This discussion with the researcher or with the whole group is an essential part of the research process because it enables the participant to explain the context of the photos and to give his or her personal interpretation of their importance. There is a danger with photographs, as with all visual data, that

they can be seen as self-explanatory, especially as they are often visually very powerful. However, photographs are a primary source of data that offers the potential to gain insights that are not accessible through interview methods, and they need analysis and interpretation as researchers would do with verbal data. This is not to say that photographs cannot have a secondary role of "bringing the consumer to life" in a subsequent client presentation, but treating this function as their primary role undersells the potential of these data.

Researcher as Photographer

The researcher can also act as photographer, using the photographs as a complementary form of data to the interviewing itself. This task may involve taking photographs of participants (with their permission and having explained exactly how the photos will be used), photographing their home or work environments, their possessions, their family, and so on, depending on the nature of the project. These photos may be shown to the research participant in a research situation and the meaning of the content explored, and/or they may be used by the researcher to examine differences between participants so that generalized themes may be drawn out. In addition, they can be very useful in helping clients understand the lives and priorities of their target audiences.

Increasingly, videos are used in these situations instead of still photographs, although physically holding a photograph, which represents a frozen moment in time, can be very effective in allowing participants or the researcher to reflect on the meaning of the action or setting without the pressure to move on to the next scene.

Photographs as Stimuli

The familiar phrase, "A picture speaks a thousand words" is very apt when applied to certain areas that need to be explored qualitatively, such as imagery, emotional meaning, and brand identity that, to a large extent, depend on visual understanding. Photographs and other pictorial stimuli operate at a visual level—a level that is very important for emotional content—and the form in which, consciously or unconsciously, such content is often stored. Photographs work because they are in some ways closer than words to the language of emotions.

Using Photographs to Explore an Organization's Purpose

In a study by Campbell Keegan Ltd., we (Sheila Keegan and Rosie Campbell) were commissioned by a government funding body for arts within the United Kingdom. The organization was undergoing a review of its role and its responsibilities to the general public, particular arts groups, and to art in general. Our role was to explore, with employees at all levels within the organization, their views on the role of the arts in society and, specifically, what they felt the arts body should be doing to promote arts within the wider community.

We conducted a number of 3-hour discussion groups with a mix of employees who worked in different job functions. One of the tasks we asked research participants to carry out, as part of this discussion, was to tear out photographs from magazines that reflected their feelings about the organization they worked for. The purpose of this exercise was to move people away from verbal descriptions. Participants were very familiar with discussing the organization in words and in conceptual terms, and it was clear that verbal descriptions had become rather repetitive and stale. We wanted to create a shift in their thinking by forcing them to express themselves visually, which we hoped would bring out different perceptions of the organization. We encouraged them to choose a photo quickly, without too much consideration, and then asked them to tear it out of the magazine. We then went around the group and asked participants to explain why they had chosen that particular picture. Often they were unclear initially why they had chosen it—it was



Collage Representing the Image of an Organization Produced by a Group.

Source: Photo by Sheila Keegan; used by permission.

often a partially unconscious choice. However, as they linked the visual with their experiences, perceptions, emotions, and expectations related to the organization, many unexpressed thoughts and feelings emerged. These were shared and then discussed by the whole group, who added their own input. This process provided a much fuller and more holistic understanding of the organization than words alone could have provided.

Just as photographs acting as data can be produced by either the researcher or the research participants, so photographs acting as stimuli can be preprepared and introduced by the researcher into the research situation; in addition, photographs can be used by participants to express emotions and to develop concepts or directions related to the specific project.

Researcher-Introduced Photographic Material

Often, it is too costly, time consuming, impractical, or inappropriate to introduce finished products, concepts, or even embryonic ideas into qualitative research. In fact, much creative qualitative research is carried out to actually generate these ideas and to develop them in the research process. Nonetheless, it is important to be able to introduce stimuli that will

help participants discuss an area and that will facilitate the development of embryonic ideas. Photographic material can be very helpful in this role, and it can be used in a variety of ways.

Sometimes it can be as simple as introducing photographs as visual prompts, for example, a range of shampoo brands, visuals of a store layout, or pictures of a hospital reception area in order to explore patient experiences. The photographs focus participants on the topic and aid recall of detail.

Photographs can also be used to help set the mood or explore preferences and experiences. For example, when trying to evaluate a proposed out-of-town shopping center, photographs of existing shopping centers might be shown to enable discussion of what works and what does not work.

Mood boards are commonly used as a way of exploring feeling or imagery. These are a set of

boards displaying a range and variety of visual images, with each board attempting to capture a different theme or mood, for example, happiness, success, or energy. The boards are preprepared and can be used in a variety of ways to explore participants' thoughts and feelings about brands, companies, service experiences, and in particular, participants' relationships with them.

Another use of photos as preprepared material is in the form of *photomatics*—series of photographed scenes depicting a storyline related to an advertisement, a proposed development, or some other future event. This method allows participants to engage more easily with the concept and helps them visualize the effect.

Photographs as Participant Representations

Photographs are extremely versatile tools that research participants can use in a variety of ways to express their feelings, images, or hopes to help develop concepts or future scenarios. Some examples of how they may be used are the following:

Picture sorts. Participants are given a preselected set of visual images, approximately 50–150, and asked to use them to explore perceptions and imagery of a brand or institution. For example, “Does this reflect how you feel about *x* or not? Why/why not? What does it say about *x*? How could you change this?” And so on.

Collage. Participants work either individually or in groups. They are given scissors, glue, and sheets of paper and asked to cut and paste pictures to create a collage representing their thoughts, imagery, and feelings about a product or brand, an organization, or an experience. As there is a visual focus, nonrationalized responses are encouraged. The potential applications of this technique are broad, ranging from depicting current brand identities, moods, feelings, and participants' desires in a marketplace to exploring possible futures.

Storyboards. These can be produced by participants in order to depict a sequential process, using photographs as above, but portraying change over time.

All of these approaches require discussion and interpretation by research participants before analysis and integration into the overall research findings.

Sheila Keegan

See also Projective Techniques; Videorecording; Visual Data

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Websites

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PHOTONOVELLA AND PHOTOVOICE

Photonovella and photovoice are related approaches to participant-driven, photo-based research. Advocates of each form of research are clear about the rich ambiguities and constructedness of the interpretations that their methods evoke. Photonovella is historically most closely connected with popular literature, the arts, and those health and educational researchers interested in working with research participants linked with institutions such as schools or clinics in the development of representational or informational narratives built around sequential images. Photovoice is more closely linked to photo-documentary, engaged journalism, and in some cases, a feminist revisioning of participatory and action research approaches used in visual sociology or visual anthropology. Photovoice has often been used by research participants in community self-study or in needs and asset assessment and can lead to the creation and discussion of photo essays or exhibits that serve as a vehicle for engaging institutions about policy around community concerns. Both approaches highlight the importance of the camera as a tool for supporting the independent inquiry of research participants less constrained by intended or unintended researcher controls, access, and literacy.

Photonovella

Photonovella as a research method is linked to photo-based forms of popular literature called *fotonovela* in

Mexico, *photoroman* in France and Quebec, and *fotoromanzi* in Italy. Aimed at an adult audience, these magazines featured original tableau photographs or still images from films combined with text balloon dialogue. Like romance novels, radio soap operas, or film melodramas, photonovella typically featured archetypal male and female characters caught in intense relationship crises. As with many popular media, some more recent photonovella have moved to more graphic stories and images. Though photonovella have been commonly available since the 1950s, they were largely ignored or criticized as a low art form in academic circles until fairly recently. In the 1990s, activist Hispanic artists found in the form that was largely unknown to English-speaking cultures a vehicle for exploration and representation. Institutionally, there is evidence back to the 1970s of organizations such as the Peace Corps. in the United States and more recently, health and education agencies such as UNICEF using the photonovella as a means of getting information to communities globally.

The method typically involves participants and researchers in identifying both a story important to the group and an audience for whom the creation and distribution of that story is deemed important. This opening inquiry can take many forms, but ideally should involve visual and performative elements, in anticipation of the tableau process to follow. When the group focuses on creating a story, a collective-creative process of performance tableau and photography results in iconic images that are then assembled in a comic book-style sequence. Just as the details of pose and point of view are part of the visual negotiation, the sequencing of the images and the addition of dialogue each represents significant data analysis and manipulation.

As visual-literary forms, *fotonovela*, *photoroman*, or *fotoromanzi* (now commonly, and perhaps problematically, anglicized as photonovella in the academic literature) have a number of unique advantages that have proven very useful for researchers interested in gathering, analyzing, and dispersing complex narrative data in collaboration with diverse communities of participants. Participant-driven, image-based research has demonstrated the power of the camera as a tool for gathering and representing the complexity of research participants' visual culture.

Arts-based research involving both individual and collective visual and performance-oriented creation are demonstrating the power of expressive media in



Excerpt from Mahamad's First Day in a Canadian School. This frame is selected from a 3-frame story created by immigrant and refugee children in which they combined performance, tableaux photography, digital manipulations and narrative text in cartoon balloons, to represent their memories of their first day in a North American school.

Source: Copyright Michael J. Emme; used by permission.

supporting research participants in getting at and sharing important stories in a research context. The burgeoning access to more localized publication and distribution of findings is revolutionizing research both in terms of the input that research participants can have in that important final stage of the process, and also in terms of complex reconceptualizations of what counts as the significance and impact of an academic's work. Particularly when all of the digital technologies for gathering, creatively manipulating, and publishing and distributing of data are involved, the photonovella and photovoice forms represent a significant converging of contemporary methodological research opportunities.

Photovoice

The term *photovoice* was coined in the mid 1990s and institutionalized more or less simultaneously by several individuals who have each developed support

organizations in the past 10 years. It has links to a tradition of engaged journalism and social action that can be traced back to the beginnings of photography. Documentary and poster work on child labor from the 1880s are early examples of this sort of documentary with social purpose. Technological advances that simplified both photography and the mass publication of images have led to expanded use of photographs in both journalism and social science research since the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1960s, these approaches had evolved and converged to the point that visual anthropology and visual sociology were each recognized (if somewhat marginalized) members of the academic community.

PhotoVoice (PV) as an organization based in England is specifically a blending of ethnographic method and journalism aimed at supporting the active pursuit of social justice through the support of individuals and institutional projects incorporating participant-generated photographs. These projects can result in richly visual documentation and journalism. The approach can result in exhibitions with socially engaged themes. It also provides visual resources to the participants for use in their own protest or policy-making. Additionally, this approach generates funds that support the individual photographers as well as the PV organization by combining a structure that is part photographer's cooperative image-marketing agency and part social justice NGO (nongovernmental organization).

PV as an organization based in the United States is strongly identified with public health research and community-level inquiry. In this context, photovoice is presented explicitly as a research method with strong ties to action research informed by feminist concerns about representation and process. Although the U.S. organization also emphasizes the active involvement of the participants because its secondary attention is to institutions and an academic audience, there is much more focus on human subjects research methodology. The method articulates approaches to research question development, refinement, and data analysis that is based in participant developed visual data and research process. Both organizations are actively involved in exhibition as a significant form of dissemination, but the U.S. approach to photovoice directs its resources toward scholarly publication and the not-for-profit academic press while the British organization is linked to news agencies, mass media,

and more of an ethical commerce or fair trade model of exchange.

Michael J. Emme

See also Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Visual Narrative Inquiry; Visual Research

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PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is a small-scale implementation of a larger study or of part of a larger study. Pilot studies last for shorter amounts of time and usually involve a smaller number of participants, sites, or organizations. Though traditionally associated with quantitative experimental design, pilot studies can be used in any methodological setting, especially when attempting to collect data in a new format or location or to simply examine potential roadblocks before full implementation.

A pilot study may also be viewed as a feasibility study. A feasibility study is completed to determine if the full study can be accomplished. Feasibility studies are practical when there is concern that a full-scale study may not be possible due to concerns about cost, procedures, personnel, and other issues.

Pilot studies are not simply exploratory in nature. They are designed with a clear purpose of developing some conclusions and pushing an area of research or foreshadowed problem where reformulation or the generation of other researchable questions can occur. Therefore, pilot studies should have a sound methodology before initiation.

Certain quantitative and qualitative studies have similar concerns related to sample, data collection procedures, instruments and artifacts, and data storage. The pilot study may assist in determining which type of site or sites to investigate. It answers the basic question, "Which sites are available, appropriate, and useful?" A researcher can examine and test a given type of site for inclusion in the larger study. In educational research, an example is determining which elementary school classrooms appear appropriate for examining interactive video conferencing.

The sample of interviewees or participants of interest can also be examined. The pilot study allows the researcher to practice mapping the field to locate types of individuals of interest for the later study. It helps to answer the question, "Who should I talk to or observe to get the information I desire?" In reference to the videoconference example, as the pilot study occurs, the researcher decides to interview children based on their level of engagement in the conference and employ a maximum variation sample.

Sample studies also have the added benefit of allowing the researcher to practice face-to-face interactions with the participants in order to develop interview skills and determine potential problems, such as a high mobility rate among the participants, which would decrease the possibility of a prolonged interview window. Sample studies allow the researcher to develop clear procedures for determining which individuals should be included in the study and which should not. This ability is important because the cost and time involved in determining and collecting a sample of participants can be prohibitive.

Data collection involves the actual procedures for data collection, instrument use, or equipment use, to name a few. Procedurally, a pilot study can help answer questions such as (1) how many times will interaction or contact with the participants be needed; (2) how long will these interactions take if it runs smoothly or if it does not; (3) how many interviews or observations appear to be realistic; (4) what are issues regarding ethics, anonymity, and so on of these interactions; and (5) are multiple data collectors needed and will they all need to be trained and then examined to see if they can collect the data properly? As the amount of data desired, length of the study, and type of sample increase, the need to examine and test data collection procedures becomes paramount. For example, after running a pilot study in two video conferencing

classrooms and collecting fieldnotes on interactions and behaviors, the researcher realizes that a yearlong data collection model is too enormous, the data are overwhelming, and a second researcher is required.

The instruments or artifacts for the study may be surveys, interview protocols, interview notes, fieldnotes, audio- and videorecordings, historical or other documents, and so on. Each type of instrument, document, or artifact has unique characteristics related to data collection; therefore the need to refine the data collection with reference to the types of data is important.

Pilot studies provide the opportunity to examine adjustments or alternatives. For example, some open-ended questions in a survey may be reformatted to a yes or no response. A pilot study can also help determine the types of wording or questioning techniques that will provide rich responses and those that do not. It can also help determine easier techniques for collecting field observation notes. The number of documents needed from an organization could be reduced because the problem area or research question was refined during the pilot study.

The data collected can be extensive and difficult to incorporate and store into useable formats for later description, analysis, and interpretation. If the collected data is to be input into a database system such as Excel, NVivo, or Altria, it will have to be coded by hand or electronically and then checked for accuracy. Data completed on bubble sheets are notoriously read into databases incorrectly. A pilot study will allow the examination of the types of problems, costs, and time needed to properly manage and organize, describe, analyze, and interpret the collected data. In addition, the examination of the data from the pilot study can help determine if other interviews, documents, or artifacts must be collected in the full study.

Design-based research or design experiment studies may be a bridge between pilot studies and full-scale studies and are more closely aligned with qualitative research than the name appears. The focus is the understanding of complexity in educational settings, that is, messy environments, yet allowing flexible design revisions during the study. In essence, this type of design allows for the examination of many of the key components for which a pilot study has traditionally been used.

James B. Schreiber

See also Data Collection; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Sample

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PLACE/SPACE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Although philosophers and scientists have long offered explanations and theories as to the nature of space and place, it is in the social sciences where particular ways of understanding and interpreting space and place have been centrally and practically implicated in empirical research, and hence, used to understand the multiple ways of viewing and explaining the social world. All social science disciplines engage to some extent with space and place, even if not always explicitly. Indeed, most empirical research into human life is based somewhere and at some scale, and these spatial contexts have varying degrees of importance and are accorded varying degrees of priority. Frequently, in sociological, anthropological, economic, or psychological studies, for example, a country, region, city, town, neighborhood, or settings for working and living in will be an important part of the overall inquiry and questions asked. Studies might refer to space and place as broad-brush macroscale classifications such as developing world, coastal, rural or urban, South East, Deep South, or forested, or studies might use microscale classifications such as clinical environments, schools, factories, or homes that equally imply some sort of spatial parameters. Studies might simply describe these physical borders of the research, or they might go farther and develop and convey a feel for a location and its layout, for example, in describing a town or workplace, and analyze the human activity therein.

Certain academic disciplines have strong connections to and traditional uses of space and place, including environmental psychology, architecture, and urban planning. It is, however, in the discipline of human geography where space and place have perhaps been brought most significantly to the forefront, the discipline by definition being concerned with the spatial organization and character of human life. In this sense, space and place have been elevated to a central position in geographical analysis and explanation, and the theoretical wing of human geography has debated very directly and identified over time what space and place are. Beginning in the late 1950s, the quantitative revolution in human geography focused geographical analysis at the macroscale, often at the regional or national level. The era of spatial science reduced space to little more than a featureless, characterless void on which the geometry of aggregate human activity was mathematically mapped, modeled, and predicted. The aim was ultimately to look for order in the social world—locational models of industry and concentric ring models of urban land use being popular recognizable examples. In these research endeavors, places were represented as little more than locations or points between which distances (spaces) were calculated. Fueled by emerging computer technology, this remained the dominant mode of inquiry in human geography until the 1970s, when humanistic and Marxist geographers began to present a wide-ranging critique that include the following observations: (a) In looking collectively at populations for sameness, spatial science was blind to human diversity and character. (b) People do not conform to rational predictive models that disguise human individuality and unpredictability. (c) Spatial science had become an exercise in mapping for mapping's sake. In other words, a spatial fetishism had led to space being privileged above all other relational features of social and economic life and being given a distinct reality in its own right. (d) Little or no attention was given in spatial science to explaining social processes, such as those relating to gender and class, beyond their abstract spatial patterning.

Emerging from these critiques, deeper understandings of societal behavior and processes were sought by humanists and Marxists. The investigation of space, hence, changed from its mathematical properties (and how they might be influential or overcome) to how different human practices create space and place. Developing these ideas, the rapid emergence of qualitative methods in human geography introduced

new ways of understanding and investigating space and place, ways that recognize them as having social and cultural character far beyond any physical attributes. These understandings have been adopted by qualitative researchers from other social science disciplines. Although space and place are inextricably linked, below they are considered individually.

Place

In contemporary qualitative research, place is thought of as a bounded phenomenon—ranging from the scale of regions to buildings—but within which and with which social and psychological relations are formed. Leading the debate in the 1970s, leading humanists Ted Relph and Yi Fu Tuan drew from phenomenology and introduced the idea of sense of place, referring to attachments to and the symbolic qualities of places. Indeed, a sense of place is thought to be an outcome of psychological, social processes that create individual and collective relations with physical locales. These processes may involve interaction through physical copresence or occupation (either short or long term), or indirectly through access to various forms of representation (such as in popular media).

The result of these processes is that places can have many qualities for humans and evoke a range of emotions from the personally very positive (happiness, healing, therapeutic, nostalgic) to the personally very negative (fear, anxiety, sadness, grief). Places can be sites of struggle or unity as people regard or use places similarly or differently or use them to support and play out their agenda. Such battle lines, hence, could be ideological (left wing vs. right wing political orientation), social and cultural (gay vs. homophobic, male vs. female) demographic (old vs. young), economic (corporate vs. public), or professional (nurses vs. doctors), and dominant groups might exclude or disadvantage other groups (insiders vs. outsiders). In the latter case, knowing one's place becomes an important issue as minority transgressors of prosocial norms (e.g., homeless, travelers, protesters) hold alternative ideas about and alternative uses of places. Conversely, placelessness is an important concept for describing particular social phenomenon. Referring to a lack of traditional attachments and identities to one or any place, it particularly helps explain human relations with and within the growing number of transient and in-between places in society, such as highway or motorway service stations, hotels, and airports.

Since the late 1980s, the cultural turn in social science—and in particular human geography—has impacted significantly on understandings of place. Research has become increasingly concerned with how places are constructed by culture (how dominant cultural activities and identities lead to different place experiences and identity) and how cultures are constructed by places (how places are venues for cultural expression, effectively representing culture). Developing humanistic ideas, three theoretical and philosophical traditions have been drawn on to articulate how this construction occurs. First, as the cultural geographer Mike Crang has outlined, Edmund Husserl's ideas on intentionality emphasize an object's intended use as being part of its overall meaning (objects are thus about things). By extension, places are thought to similarly involve human intention and to be about things. Second, philosophical debates suggest that essences are the many characteristics that define objects and by extension, places. Finally, Martin Heidegger's idea of imbedded knowledge suggested that consciousness is always being consciousness of something else in the world and all knowledge then is necessarily place related. Based on these ideas, the list of cultures and places currently considered by geographers and others is considerable, including art, music and film, history and landscape, consumer trends, workplaces, ethnicity, and empire. Indeed, inquiry spans almost the full range of social life.

Space

Contemporary ideas on space draw equally from the same disciplinary, theoretical, and philosophical ideas as those on place. Practically, in qualitative research, space is not regarded as absolute and a void or distance to be measured or crossed, but is understood as relative, coming into existence because of social processes and phenomena. Hence, in qualitative research, questions on space are becoming centered around how space is produced and navigated differently by different people (men, women, older people). Although spaces exist at multiple scales, when talking about spaces, social scientists are typically referring to the social spaces within and that make up places, for example, spaces within a city, town, or building. These kinds of propositions have often drawn on social theory to inform them, Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre being major sources of inspiration for geographers and sociologists alike. Foucault's work in particular has helped shed light on the institutional production of space—how

space, through its surveillance and other regulation, is an essential ingredient in both the institutional exercising of power and how it is navigated by various forms of resistance. Although the negotiation of space, and spaces in conflict, has long been a priority for qualitative researchers (e.g., in researching experiences of ageing, disability), most recently spaces in everyday life have become a focus of attention. These are not just special, problematic, or rare negotiations, but are typical. Here then lies an attention in qualitative research to the rhythm of everyday life and spatial and cultural practices such as shopping and socializing that are important in people's lives.

A Changing World to Study

Radical developments and changes in society have forced serious reconsideration of both space and place in research, both in terms of what they are and what significance they have for research. Cyberspace, for example, is considered by some to be structured by its own spaces and places, which impact on traditional physical spaces and places. Scholars observe that people increasingly immerse themselves in cyberspace as they surf and navigate the web, visit websites, and spend time communicating and interacting. Another contemporary challenge has been globalization. The world is increasingly linked and seemingly place uniqueness disappears; for example, McDonald's is found everywhere, shopping malls all look the same, people do the same types of things the world over. Moreover, society is increasingly interdependent—socially, culturally, and economically—and interresponsible. These are, of course, sociological and economic questions, though they are highly spatial. Commentators realize that globalization and the internet do not mean the death of distance or the end of geography, but opportunities to explore new places and spatial relationships. More generally, the postmodern condition has changed the nature of social and economic life—its space and places—and the way in which researchers have sought to understand it. Here then lies an attention in spatial research to the local, specific, unique, while researchers have been less willing to look for grand theories and seek universal meta-narratives and explanations for life.

Disciplines

In terms of disciplines, the cultural turn in human geography has infused a cultural sensitivity across many of its subdisciplines, whether they be empirically

based around human activity (health geography, transport geography), geographically distinct (urban geography, rural geography), or based around societal relations (feminist geography, economic geography). However, beyond human geography, a spatial turn and a cultural turn in other social sciences have been closely linked. The emerging sociology of place, for example, emphasizes the role of space and place in key sociological debates on inequality, difference, power, policy, community, organizations, movements, identity, and memory. Sociology's many subdisciplines have also been affected. As one possible example among many, the spatial turn in sports sociology can be traced back to the early 1990s. In this specialist field of research, greater attention is being paid to the social production of sports spaces and places and the social relations within sports places and places in terms of struggle and identity. Indeed, rather than defining the body through sports spaces, attention is being paid to how different bodies create or produce sports spaces. Meanwhile, in the health sciences, a spatial turn in qualitative nursing research can be traced back almost 10 years and helps these professional researchers understand the persistent structural and financial reform of traditional institutional sites and settings such as hospitals (changes in places); the increasing diversity in the distribution and type of service provision, including community-based settings (changes between places); and emerging physical and narrative remoteness between nurses and patients (changes within places). New geographies of nursing have provided a clear understanding of how the job category of nurse and the numerous activities involved in nursing relate dynamically to places, including how the social dynamics of places impact working experiences and activities, how places characterize particular professional specialties, and how places provide attachments, symbolism, and identity that are embedded in their everyday clinical activities. Obviously, sports sociology and nursing research are two very specialized examples, and many other spatial turns have affected many other fields of inquiry.

Methods

In terms of methods used in unpacking space and place, the range used does not vary significantly from that used throughout the social sciences. Observational methods of various types, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis are all viable approaches to unpacking space and place, used independently or in

combination. The difference, however, from nonspatial research is subtle in the things that these methods seek to find and record. These differences might include attention to investigating spatial movement and inter-relation movement between people and objects—for example, investigation of attachment and identity to place, investigation of cultural artifacts or historical or policy documentation pertaining to past places.

One example of a method tailor made to unpack space and place is that developed by Lisa Given and Gloria Leckie in their recent study of social activity and public libraries. The authors developed an observational method for assessing how individuals use and think about the academic library and other campus spaces. This method was combined with qualitative interviews and digital photos to assess the effect of space on students' academic lives. The findings indicate design and planning changes to enhance libraries as vibrant public spaces.

Academics and Their Research

Given the many thousands of professional human geographers employed in universities throughout the world, together with the large numbers of other social scientists and theorists whose work engages with space and place, any overview of researchers and their projects or interests will be incomplete. Nevertheless, to illuminate the character of this research, it is possible to provide three names, their disciplinary backgrounds, and an example of their research interests.

The British cultural geographer Phil Crang published a paper in the mid 1990s titled "It's Showtime" that is now somewhat of a modern disciplinary classic in his discipline. Demonstrating that economic geography does not have to be undertaken at the scale of regions, industries, and workforces, Crang's study mapped the sociospatial features of a workplace through an ethnographic (participant observation) study of waiting work in a restaurant based in South East England. The workers in Crang's study performed in front-public spaces, ultimately for their own financial gain (i.e., through short-term tips and long-term promotion). At times, however, the workers hid in private back spaces or even masqueraded (appearing to be doing something work orientated while not) in order to avoid work. The popularity and wider relevancy of Crang's study is its articulation of everyday geographies of work at the scale of rooms, scales many would recognize to be as part of their own working lives. On a theoretical level, the study demonstrated that, despite

considerable workplace regulation and surveillance, workers are not passive, powerless, and disenfranchised in the face of corporate power.

In 2000, two health geographers in New Zealand, Robin Kearns and Ross Barnett, published a groundbreaking paper titled "Happy Meals in the Starship Enterprise." Starship is a children's hospital located in Auckland (already with an obvious iconographic and commercial name) that was the site of controversy when a proposal was unveiled to open a McDonald's restaurant within its atrium. Through interviews with hospital management and data collected from media coverage and advertising, the authors analyzed the competing views and interests. These were broadly along the lines of those who believed that the hospital should provide a slice of real life for children and also facilitate commercial enterprise and those who believed that it is wrong to feed "bad" food to sick kids. The study demonstrated how hospital spaces are becoming economically and morally contested and also, in terms of globalization, Americanized.

Canada-based British health geographer Gavin J. Andrews and British sports sociologists Mark Sudwell and Andrew Sparkes published a novel paper in 2005 titled "The Gym in British Bodybuilding Culture." Through an ethnographic study of a gym (including participant observations and interviews conducted by Sudwell), the authors investigated how bodybuilding culture and place are coproduced. The participants in their study used the gym as a narrative resource to learn and advance, while it also acted as a crucial setting for identity, community, and hierarchies. Importantly, the gym also included its own internal spaces and spatial routines connected with rules and rituals that reinforced and reproduced bodybuilding culture. Meanwhile, the authors also studied perceptions and use of public space outside the gym by those with bodybuilding bodies and attitudes. From a disciplinary standpoint, the authors used the example to argue that geographers should study fitness and fitness places.

Gavin J. Andrews

See also Cultural Context; Qualitative Research, History of; Situatedness

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PLASTIC ARTS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

See ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

PLAYBUILDING

Playbuilding is a process in which a group of researchers or actors uses dramatic techniques in all stages of the research process. It has a unique method of performance generation and style of production that differs from a variety of existing theatrical research presentations including readers theater and ethnodrama. Robert Donmoyer and June Yennie-Donmoyer translate traditionally collected data into a readers theater format that is usually performed live. In this theatrical genre, a narrator reads descriptions with analysis and a number of others read edited verbatim transcriptions from research participants.

Ethnodrama employs more theatrical techniques than readers theater. Matt Myer uses staged readings with minimalist sets to present research findings. Jim Mienczakowski and Johnny Saldaña's productions contain more elaborate dramatic action with the presenters or actors having their lines memorized. All four researchers have strong dramatic backgrounds, and in every case, they adapt traditional qualitative data into theatrical forms of dissemination.

Joe Norris, who also had roots in both theatre and qualitative research, takes a different approach. Using a Canadian theatrical genre called collective creation, more widely known as playbuilding, he integrates theatrical techniques throughout the entire research process of generating, interpreting, and presenting the data. The performed scenes are not adapted from other texts; rather, they are the texts themselves. Norris along with Donmoyer considers scene (readers theater) construction as a simultaneous means of data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

History

Although the origin of the collective creation genre is obscure, perhaps having its roots in the agit-prop theater of the 1920s, Theater Passé Muraille is credited with generating the first major Canadian production. A troupe of actors descended on the small farming community of Clinton, Ontario, interviewed its town folk, and constructed a play about their lives. Although not considered qualitative research at the time, the actors conducted a quasiform of participant observation and interview process with the intent of telling these peoples stories on stage. Alan Filewod has documented theater companies that have followed Theater Passé Muraille's lead.

Those in educational settings, Glenys Berry and Joanne Reinbold, for example, used collective creation as a means of teaching improvisational skills, a variety of dramatic forms, and giving students a voice in their learning. Their productions were often written by the actors or participants about issues that were important to them. Like a focus group, they assembled to examine a specific issue, topic, or theme. Unlike a typical focus group, they used theater as the medium of articulating their own thoughts and meanings as they researched their own lives. The performances were not always structured in a narrative form; rather, they were a series of vignettes presented as variations on the theme. Growing up, substance use, sexuality, suicide, prejudice, and bullying were often topics that were chosen.

Methodology

Norris saw the potential of this approach as a qualitative research methodology and along with his graduate and undergraduate students, formed Mirror Theater, a social issues theater company. A topic was chosen, and the research rehearsals began with the implied question, "What are our lived experiences with this theme, either as participants and/or witnesses?" Gathered in a circle, the actors would begin with personal stories as a means of exploring the range of issues within the topic, getting to know one another, and establishing trust. In addition to the above topics, the politics of student teaching, equality and respect on campus, school life, and the nature of qualitative research were studied. Diane Conrad used a similar methodology to assist at-risk youth in articulating and communicating their stories.

The rehearsal process is an emergent integrated spiral of storytelling, scene construction, scene analysis, discussion, and recording. At the beginning of each rehearsal, actors are provided with blank file cards and markers; during rehearsals and throughout the circle-discussions they would record their thoughts and stories on these cards, articulate them to the group, and place them in the center of the circle. These could be scene ideas, emergent themes, catch phrases, or metaphors. At the end of the rehearsal, the cards are placed in a file folder labeled "To Be Filed." At every third or fourth rehearsal, these cards would be collectively sorted and placed into file folders labeled "Themes/Issues," "Metaphors," "Scene Ideas," "Rehearsed Scenes," "Quick Scenes," "Research," and "Technical Information." The act of sorting enables a review of previously discussed material.

When rehearsal discussions reach a saturation point, potential scenes are identified and the cast members self-select scenes that they would like to work on. The scene construction process can take anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes, after which each group presents their scenes to the entire cast. The scenes are discussed, and other emergent themes and ideas are written on the file cards. At times, these scenes act as evokers, eliciting forgotten stories from the cast members' memories. These are also recorded. A short outline of the scene and who were in it is written out on a sheet of paper and filed as "Rehearsed Scenes."

These scene constructions have two important elements. First, the scenes are constructed so that they portray the problems and the complexities of the idea. Later, when performed, the audience will be asked to

analyze the scene and make suggestions to improve the presented situations and characters' lives. This process ensures the pedagogic approach that Norman Denzin encourages. In a constructivist manner, the audience joins the cast in understanding the phenomenon. Scenes are constructed to encourage this type of discourse. Second, a variety of dramatic styles is encouraged. One scene could be mimed, another could be a series of frozen pictures or tableaux, and another use percussive instruments to represent the tone of the experience. Norris suggests in "The Use of Drama in Teacher Education: A Call for Embodied Learning" a number of ways to generate and present dramatic material.

In the production "Warts and Beauty Marks," data were generated by having the cast members participate in a guided imagery to recall their experiences from the first day of school. In small groups, they retold their memories. Each group was instructed to create a composite scene—one using mime to tell a day in the life, another using mime but with an added narrator, a third was a slide show of tableaux on the day's events, and a fourth was a slide show on a common theme. All scenes were recorded, but not all were polished into performance quality. Since many scenes do not make it to the final presentation, polishing at this time is considered inefficient. In this case, a composite scene of ideas from all presentations was performed in the final production. One group of actors provided a series of frozen pictures or tableaux of the day's events while others provided typical dialogue and gave the characters' inner dialogues.

These rigorous research rehearsals usually go on for approximately ten 3-hour sessions until a saturation point is reached and/or a deadline is looming. The scene construction is considered data generation, albeit immediately translated into a performance piece. The underpinning belief is that any data collection device, including questionnaires and interviews, does not record but constructs meanings. Creating scenes and eliciting memories through drama is a different but a no less valuable way of creating understandings than more traditional means. Anna Banks and Stephen Banks claim that any research that denies its literary elements, denies itself. The playbuilding genre recognizes that its processes structurally frame knowledge. This framing is true of all research, including ANOVAs and *t* tests that represent opinions and behaviors as numbers and manipulate them mathematically.

The process then narrows with the question, "Based upon our conversations and scenes, what do we want our play to be about?" This process is similar to the

What's the Fine Line?

This picture is taken from the scene "What's the Fine Line" in the play with the same title. It employs a form of gibberish in which the only word used by both actors is the word "no." It demonstrates how variations in body language and inflection change the dictionary meaning of the word. This scene toured for a number of years yielding many valuable audience discussions on miscommunication on the part of both senders and receivers.

Female: (Sees boyfriend playing video game and tickles him.)

Male: (Laughing) No.

Female: (Pauses then snuggles next to him.)

Male: (Absorbed by the game responds firmly.) No!

Female: (Dejected stands, walks behind him and covers his eyes.)

Male: (Looses the game and with remorse for his player moans) No. (He faces her and starts to tickle her.)

Female: No. (The scene escalates. . .)



Playbuilding.

Source: Female played by Diane Conrad, male by Philip Zinken. Photo by Joe Norris. Used by permission.

seeking of overarching themes in traditional qualitative research. All file folders are reviewed at this time for the selection of dominant themes and scenes. New scenes may be written based upon the themes chosen, and the selected rehearsed scenes are then cast and polished. Performers in the original scenes may not be in the final scene as cast members' priorities vary when the workload is shared. However, all do comment on each scene that their peers present. A spirit of co-authorship is encouraged throughout the process. Once polished, a sequence of themes is chosen, usually with a strong humorous opening and a thought-provoking conclusion. One guiding principle is that the scenes collectively provide a balance of thesis and antithesis, inviting audience members to seek and form synthesis.

Working With an Audience

The playbuilding process concludes with a live performance after which cast and audience members enter into dialogue using popular theater techniques, including those of Augusto Boal. Through forum theater and simultaneous dramaturgy, audience members make suggestions to rework the scenes. At times, audience members confirm the scenes as representing

their lives, and at other times they provide new scenes. A scene from Mirror Theater's "One of These Things Is Not Like the Other" examined how the song taught exclusion by removing difference. During their tour of *Fair Play Rulz* that included this scene, some audience members reported that this song was sung to them by peers and siblings as an act of exclusion, confirming the validity of the scene. A remount of Mirror Theater's show *What's the Fine Line?* contained a scene provided by a previous audience. Junior high students co-created a scene on how sexism was made manifest in coed inclusionary sport.

Working with an audience continues the research spiral by confirming and adding scenes. It is a dialogic element that acts as a continuous research renewal process. Playbuilding as a research method creates a spiral of data generation and data presentation in a metaphorical manner that invites audience participation. The participants co-create the product with the researchers or actors, making playbuilding a form of participatory research.

Joe Norris

See also Arts-Based Research; Audience Analysis; Collaborative Research; Ethnodrama; Fictional Writing;

Focus Groups; Imagination in Qualitative Research; Participants as Co-Researchers; Performance Ethnography; Readers Theater; Research Team; Storytelling

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PLURALISM

Theoretical pluralism occurs whenever qualitative researchers draw on more than a single theory as a theoretical framework to guide decisions about the research design and to make sense of their research findings. In this entry, the nature, rationale for, benefits, and risks of theoretical pluralism in qualitative research are illustrated by identifying the limits of single theory research and by highlighting the potential contributions of theoretical pluralism. In addition, the entry highlights some of the challenges of theoretical pluralism, such as selecting appropriate theories and accounting for differences. Although it is acknowledged that every researcher brings a multitude of

formal and informal, stated and unstated, theories to any research endeavor, for the purposes of this entry, theory refers to formal, published, theories.

The Nature of Pluralism

The goal of theoretical pluralism is not to produce a single theory that explains all aspects and attributes of a phenomenon; rather, it is intended to integrate and organize alternative theoretical perspectives in order to develop a broader perspective about the phenomenon of interest than is possible with a single theory. Theoretical pluralism can be considered as scholarly inquiry because it generates new or expanded theories to explain certain phenomena. It can occur in a variety of ways, but in each case it is intended to provide stronger theoretical support to the research than what is available in a single theoretical perspective.

Rationale for Pluralism

In recent years, researchers have recognized that many of the phenomena they are studying are too complex to be framed within a single theory. For instance, common explanations of race do not sufficiently explain why adolescent suicide is more common in some ethnic groups than in others. Practitioners in a variety of practice fields have long complained that research has lagged behind the advances in practice. One reason for this is that researchers have tended to rely on single theories to explain practice phenomena; these do not accurately reflect the changing realities of practitioners' worlds. Some of the current theories are focused on the individual; these are inadequate to explain multifaceted phenomena, such as health, at a societal or population level. In addition, in most areas of study, there now exists a plethora of theories, each with its own concepts, language, and underlying assumptions, but there is a lack of critical comparison, integration, and synthesis in this body of theory, resulting in conceptual clouding and ambiguity. For example, concepts such as social capital have been obscured because the various theories that represent the concept differ greatly as to whether it is considered an attribute of a community or a person, and there is considerable variation in how it is operationally defined. Finally, there are new areas of study that have previously drawn on generalized theories but are now requiring a more distinct and differentiating theory than what has been previously articulated. These concerns have given rise to the need for theoretical pluralism.

Forms of Pluralism

The most common form of theoretical pluralism is when theories that pertain to a common phenomenon are blended together to form a single theoretical framework. For example, three theories of motivation (one that refers to attributions made about ability, another that discusses motivation as a socially constructed phenomenon, and another that proposes that motivation is the result of reinforcements from authority figures) could be used to form a theoretical framework for a study about students' motivation to study for exams. The concepts and constructs of the separate theories could be organized into a single whole; that is, a new theory that incorporates the components of all three theories. Such a study would then include research methods that examined how individual students perceived their academic success or failure, the social and contextual influences in students' motivation, and how teachers' interactions with students reinforced, negated, or fostered students' motivation to study.

Theoretical pluralism can also occur as separate stages in qualitative research; that is, the same research questions are asked in each stage, but a different theory provides the lens through which the research is designed and interpreted. Pluralism in this approach is most often used to reveal the unique contributions of each theory in explicating the phenomenon under investigation; each theory provides a different angle or lens with which to regard the phenomenon of interest. For example, a researcher could decide to study the experience of widowhood in two stages. In the first stage, a theory of bereavement could be used to frame the study. In the second stage, a theory of transition could be used. After both stages were completed, the researcher could examine the research findings to determine how assuming these different lenses affected the portrayal of the experience of widowhood. Reflecting on the implications of the differences and similarities in the research findings of both stages will foster theoretical clarity and at times lead to the development of new theory that incorporates the research findings and the foundational theories.

The Selection of Theories

Theories that are used to form a pluralist theoretical perspective in qualitative research should be mutually informative about the situation, behaviors, or experience that is under investigation. Together, they should provide a way to organize the research so that it

incorporates a broader theoretical perspective than that provided by a single theory. Ideally, each theory should illuminate the phenomenon from a different angle or with a different lens. For example, stigma theory may contribute to the design of research that focuses on why someone who is mentally ill perceives discrimination in health care, but theories of organizational culture may explain why it is that such discrimination occurs most often in hospital emergency departments. Although most formal theories lend themselves to theoretically pluralist research, the qualitative researcher might consider using theories that emerge from the findings of other qualitative research studies, such as those that emerge from grounded theory research.

Selecting the theories to frame the research requires that they fit the research question(s) and that they permit a broad investigation of relevant concepts. The selection of theories in pluralist research is a partisan choice and a political process. It is often based on the researchers' experience with the theories and on their personal sensibilities. This decision is also affected by researchers' beliefs about the fit of the theory to their understanding of the phenomena they are studying and their attitudes about the credibility and popularity of the theory in their field of study. Few graduate students, for example, choose a theoretical framework for their thesis that has been highly criticized or discounted in the literature as lacking scholarly integrity.

Qualitative researchers should consider asking the following questions in selecting theories for pluralist research:

- Is there an appropriate fit between the theory and the research problem, aims, and context of the research?
- What is the likelihood that using the theory will lead to new insights?
- How much work and cost (in terms of money, time, and energy) will incorporating the theory into methodologies require?
- How well does the researcher understand and feel comfortable with the theory? If the researcher is not familiar with the theory, is there a readily available resource to teach him or her about the theory?

Benefits of Pluralism

The benefits of theoretical pluralism include that it can lead to theory development, expansion, and/or clarification; it can foster researcher consciousness;

and it supports the aims and processes of interdisciplinary research.

Contributions to Theory

One of the basic assumptions underlying theoretical pluralism in qualitative research is that no theory offers in itself a complete picture of any phenomenon. A pluralist approach can enable qualitative researchers to address the limits of a single theory by supplementing it with other theories that focus on elements that have been excluded or overlooked in that theory. For example, theories that concentrate on the individual may not include aspects of the broader context that influences the individual's responses and behavior. Conversely, theories that examine phenomena from a macro perspective are likely to overlook how people's understanding and experience of social phenomena influences how they act in particular contexts. Because social phenomena usually entail a combination of individual, societal, and other factors, in-depth explications of these phenomena cannot be limited to a single perspective. Consequently, research that draws on both micro and macro theories can provide a portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation that acknowledges both the complexity and the contextual basis of human behavior. Such research is critical to the development of theory that incorporates the complex and multidimensional nature of many of the phenomena researchers study.

Theoretical pluralism can lead to new insights about the phenomenon under study and ultimately to revisions and improvements in the theory. For example, a researcher may use particular practice theories to frame research about the medication errors in hospitals; however, the research findings may suggest elements of this phenomenon that the theories do not address, such as how medication errors were handled in the health care practitioners' basic education program. Several advances in theories, such as theories about stigma and racism, have been prompted in just this way.

One of the benefits of theoretical pluralism is that it provides a basis for cross-theoretical comparisons in their application to the study of various phenomena. It brings theories into relationship with one another, establishing their connections and highlighting their differences. In most areas of investigation, there exists an abundance of models or theories explaining the phenomenon of interest. Often, these hold competing perspectives on the research topic. Theoretical pluralism provides a forum for a comparative

assessment of theories and consequently promotes the development of new or expanded theories

Theoretical pluralism can also provide a unifying framework for theoretical concepts that are often used in research but are not sufficiently clear to guide research. For example, in community-based research, concepts such as empowerment, partnership, or community are commonly used as theoretical frames to justify including representatives of the community in all facets of the research; however, the relationship between these concepts is unclear. Research that used all three theories might make this relationship transparent.

Contributions to the Researcher

Theoretical pluralism can lead researchers to become theoretically conscious. It contributes to researchers' consciousness by helping researchers acknowledge competing theories and the limitations of any single theoretical perspective. It requires that researchers learn new paradigmatic and theoretical languages, as well as the social and political aspects of theories. Researchers adopting a pluralist approach must be prepared to entertain new ways of thinking about the phenomena they are studying.

Harry Wolcott advises qualitative researchers to entertain theories as they do ideas in their research projects; he suggests that such a process will lead to a significant personal and academic transformation. The reflexivity that is required for researchers to select theories outside of their usual theory base fosters a deepening of the researchers' capacity to recognize their ethnocentric views in relation to theoretical perspectives and to acknowledge that they have certain ways of avoiding or discounting theory that appears at first glance to be contrary to those perspectives.

A theory is a way of making sense of a phenomenon, and it provides a lens through which researchers can understand and explain that phenomenon. Unfortunately, once researchers have learned a theory as one way of interpreting a phenomenon, they often are hard pressed to see the phenomenon in any other way. Theoretical pluralism helps qualitative researchers to move outside of the theories they know and to open their minds to new ways of seeing the phenomenon—that is, new theories. In addition, theories move in and out of fashion. Some theories that were once touted as insightful and explanatory are now in obscurity. Theoretical pluralism allows researchers to move beyond allegiance to a single theory as the “best” and to view each theory as having a distinct contribution to make to the field of study.

Contributions to Interdisciplinary Research

Pluralism both contributes to interdisciplinarity in qualitative research and is congruent with the tenets of interdisciplinary research. In practice, the theoretical frame of qualitative research is often selected on the basis of what the researcher views as common sense, trendy, familiar, and pragmatic. Although it is possible to draw on theories from one's own discipline in qualitative research, true theoretical pluralism requires researchers to move beyond their comfort zones to consider theories in other disciplines and/or other fields of study. As such, theoretical pluralism is in keeping with interdisciplinary research because it reflects a commitment to move beyond silos of knowledge. This move can lead to the development of theories that are alternatives to those that currently dominate any discipline. For example, researchers in the field of chronic illness typically use trajectory or transition theories to frame research about how people with chronic illness change in their response to the disease over time. Theories from other fields that might have equal relevance (e.g., transformational learning from education) are often overlooked because the researcher does not know about them and/or is unwilling to entertain them.

Unfortunately, researchers tend to stick to the theories they know and have learned within their own discipline or field of study. A broad systematic search of interdisciplinary literature can be a first step in locating unfamiliar theories. Another important step is to consult with those who are more familiar with the theory. One benefit of interdisciplinary research is that the researchers are likely to know a myriad of theories that they can draw upon for pluralist research.

Challenges of Pluralism

There are significant challenges to the enactment of theoretical pluralism in qualitative research. These include too much pluralism, too much or too little difference, the lack of standards of rigor in theoretical selection and in the application of theoretical pluralism in the research, and the lack of receptivity of others toward pluralist approaches.

The Amount of Pluralism

There is a risk that theoretical pluralism will be considered as the panacea for all qualitative research. Qualitative researchers should consider, however, that

there is a danger of including too many theories in any one research study and that not all research requires a pluralist approach. More is not necessarily better, particularly if the theories do not contribute in a significant way to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. An eclectic synthesis of too many theories can result in overly complex research designs and a superficial treatment of the phenomenon under investigation, as well as can tax the researcher, who attempts to design the study in a way that is methodologically congruent with all the theories.

A pluralist theoretical framework should function as a closet organizer, permitting the researcher to organize the theoretical concepts and constructs so that the research objectives are achieved. If it results in making undue work for the researcher by unnecessarily complicating the research process and blurring the phenomenon under investigation, it is possible that the inclusion of theories has been too ambitious, and the researcher should select fewer theories that are complementary to the research goals.

The Amount of Difference

There are varying notions about the level of difference and similarity between the theories that should exist in a pluralist approach to qualitative research. One school of thought is that the theories should share similar paradigmatic, epistemological, and ontological assumptions, and these in turn should be congruent with the methodology the researcher has selected. These authors argue that selecting theories that differ too much (e.g., with competing paradigms) will result in overly inclusive research in which the researcher is unable to effectively organize the theories into a coherent whole. Others propose that pluralist researchers should deliberately select theories that differ because it is in the differences that new theoretical insights lie. For example, research that has a modernist approach will differ in its philosophical and epistemological assumptions from one that has a post-modernist paradigm; however, blending the two in one study can permit the research to tap into insights that might be invisible in a monoparadigmatic approach to qualitative research.

Receptivity to Pluralism

A criticism of pluralism is that theoretical pluralism will produce a soft and mushy science that

contributes little to understanding particular phenomena. Although a growing number of qualitative researchers are exploring theoretical pluralism as a way of generating new theoretical developments and insights, not all researchers will share the view that such research has a place as scholarly inquiry.

Pluralism can threaten the traditions and conventions of disciplinary or academic cultures. Many researchers have been socialized to believe that their research will have more legitimacy and credibility if they become experts in particular lines of inquiry, using a single theoretical perspective. Consequently, reviewers of research proposals that propose theoretical pluralism may perceive the research to be unscholarly or lacking in scientific integrity.

Qualitative researchers who use theoretical pluralism in their research should account for the role of the various theories in their research. Researchers who adopt a pluralist approach should make clear in manuscripts and proposals why they chose such an approach, how it was enacted, how they dealt with any contradictions that exist between the theories, and how a pluralist approach has or will contribute to the investigation in a way that extends the benefits of a single theoretical perspective.

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See also Epistemology; Methods; Ontology; Theoretical Frameworks

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POETRY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Poetry in qualitative inquiry refers to the use of poetry written by participants and/or by researchers themselves through all stages of research. For example, scholars in the field known as *ethnopoetics* have studied verbal arts from around the world, transcribing poetic traditions and analyzing texts and performances, particularly those borne among Indigenous communities. Other poetic scholarship draws on elements of poetic craft such as meter, rhyme, form, image, and metaphor as interpretive tools for analyzing qualitative data, for example, thinking through provocative metaphors and similes to describe a piece of discourse or observed event. Perhaps the most overtly poetic activity qualitative researchers engage in is their own written poetry based on experiences during data collection and analysis. Qualitative inquirers are more likely now than ever before to find research about poetry and/or research that includes data poems in scholarly journals and books. Poetry offers scholars a means to say what might not otherwise be said, creating a more engaging and passionate form of social science.

Despite a long tradition of figurative language and poetic representation in all types of scientific research to express novelty, such as the clockwork metaphor for the solar system and the pump metaphor for the heart, qualitative researchers in general and ethnographers in particular have been the most avid and publicly reflexive about using poetry and other expressive forms in research. However, despite many qualitative researchers who are advocates and public users of poetic research methods, there is still very little written about how this approach takes place and the specific techniques used by poet-researchers. Scholarship that merges qualitative inquiry with poetry is still emerging, and there are many questions regarding poetic craft and its applications and use as researchers develop theories and heuristics for qualitative understanding. What possibilities does poetry offer for data collection, analysis, and presentation, and what impact might poetic scholarship have on the public and political community at large?

Poetry and Qualitative Research

Poets often refer to visits from the muse and her ability to see truth before the writer sees it. However, most

Ghetto Teachers' Apology

I'm afraid, sweet Wilmarie, we've lied.
 We didn't teach you how to hide
 your Rite Aid salary from Wel-
 fare in a Dominican bank. We didn't tell
 you how to find a roommate or put a lock
 on your bedroom door or how to walk
 after sundown by yourself, how to slouch
 at your brother's funeral, patched
 bullet holes in an open casket in your living room.
 We never told you,
 like your boss, you can't speak English,
 or like your cousin, you can't speak Spanish.
 We didn't tell you how to live on
 \$5.50 an hour or that at seven-
 teen you'd be an orphan. We didn't want to sour
 our hopes and fictions, we wanted you to flower,
 and prove us wrong. Sweet Wilmarie,
 we're sorry.
 We didn't live on your side of town
 between crack houses and crackdowns.
 We're not like you, we didn't know how to survive
 behind shatter proof glass with those pretty brown
 eyes.

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor

writers will also agree they are much more active in the creation process than this romantic image suggests. Below I describe some of the devices poets use to sustain and fortify their original impulses that have also been useful to qualitative researchers. Though not an exhaustive list, I highlight central devices such as meter, rhyme, form, image, and metaphor that make important contributions to a qualitative researcher's interpretive frame and presentation.

Rhythm and Form

First and foremost to any poet and valuable to the qualitative researcher's craft is a heightened sense of language, from the sounds of phonemes, prosody, tone to syntactical structures of word order to the way phrases and sentences are ordered to create images, meanings, logic, and narrative. Though many poets have broken free from the strict confines of sonnets and villanelles from the past, elements of formal craft such as meter, rhyme, and repetition appear in the work of most free verse poets from Walt Whitman to Gertrude Stein to Allen Ginsberg. Formal elements of craft are critical to all poets because their existence offers the writer techniques to play with for greater effect.

Meter, Greek for measure, is a term used to describe the patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line. For example, *cre-áte* and *in-spíre* are iambic words because they have unstressed syllables followed by stressed ones (often represented as "U/"), making up what is called a *foot*. Thus, Shakespearean iambic pentameter (five iambic feet) is often rhythmically associated with the *daDum daDum daDum* we hear in a heartbeat, for example, such as in the following line from *Hamlet*, "Or thát the Éverlásting hád not fíx'd/His cánon gáinst self-sláughter! Ó God! Gód!"

Qualitative researchers such as discourse analysts and microethnographers have a tradition of analyzing speech for its rhythm and meter, pitch, and tone. Experience in the study of sound patterns in music and poetry may allow researchers to develop what poet Richard Hugo called "obsessive ears," enhancing our ability to notice, name, and make sense of both regularities and irregularities in the stress patterns of everyday speech in research settings. Poetic interpretations of participant speech fall within a tradition of qualitative scholarship that recognizes the relationship between different ways of talking and social identity, equity, and access to cultural, linguistic, and educational capital.

In addition to assisting analysis, the study of written poetry forms may enhance a researcher's presentation of recorded data, building on previous transcription conventions to best represent the authenticity and dimensionality of an observed interaction. A researcher who is exposed to various poetic approaches to line breaks can exploit the possibilities to control representation and effect. For example,

poets work alternatively with end stop lines, lines that end with a period, comma, or semicolon, or with enjambment where one line runs into the next. Researchers too might use end stops, punctuation, white space, and short lines to slow down a transcript and focus visual and auditory attention. Alternatively, a researcher might enjamb lines of a transcript to convey the speed of an interlocutor's contribution and use long overlapping lines to show motion in turn taking. Taking in the many different visual layouts of poems on the page offers researchers new ways to represent interview data that respect the tone and movement of the original conversation in ways that may not yet have been imagined in qualitative research. Poetic researchers pay attention to the rhythms of speech in communities where they carry out inquiry and learn how to adapt that speech to the page so that they learn to ask new questions and use poetic structure to represent and interpret complexity in research settings.

Image and Metaphor

Another shared aspect of craft in poetry and qualitative research is the documentation of everyday details to arrive at concrete universals. Images, anecdotes, phrases, or metaphors that are meaningful are those that keep coming back until the researcher-poet is sure the concrete detail means something more than itself. A poetic approach to inquiry requires what poet Robert Bly refers to as associative leaping, deep images that connect the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. By taking observation notes both in and away from the field, poetic researchers accept the imagination and the unconscious are vital forces that shape and contribute to research discoveries.

Just as poet William Carlos Williams wrote, "So much depends upon a red wheelbarrow," highlighting the importance of a telling detail, so too good qualitative researchers (e.g., Laurel Richardson, Jane Piirto, Rishma Dunlop, among others) incorporate poetic images and metaphors drawing attention to the rhythms of everyday speech and images of the ordinary, particular, and quotidian. Increasing the use of ordinary language and concrete, resonating images and decreasing the use of academic jargon and theoretical abstraction, we are more likely to communicate intellectual as well as emotional understanding. We may enhance the

visibility and impact of our projects, and with hope, increase our influence on those who lead social change.

Conclusion

All phases of a qualitative research project can benefit from poetic sensibilities. By reading poetry and implementing poetic craft, researchers can enhance their abilities to listen and notice in the field during data collection, creatively play with metaphor and image during analysis, and communicate with more liveliness and accuracy when representing data to larger audiences. A poetic approach to inquiry also understands that writing up research is a part of a critical iterative feedback loop that informs ongoing decision making in the field.

The available traditions for analysis and write up of research are not fixed entities, but a dynamic enterprise that changes within and among generations of scholars and from audience to audience. We cannot lose by acquiring techniques employed by poetic researchers. We must assume the audience for our work longs for fresh language to describe the indescribable emotional and intellectual experiences in and beyond our field sites. We may not all write great popular or literary poems, but we can all draw on the craft and practice of poetry to realize its potential, challenging the academic marginality of our work. As an alternative to purely linear ways of thinking, the free associative nature of poetry offers a polyphonic, multidimensional, and insightful form of social science writing to engage more diverse audiences.

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor

See also A/r/tography; Arts-Based Research; Fictional Writing; Metaphor; Researcher as Artist

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POLITICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As Howard Becker said in a classic article, it is not a question of whether social scientists take a political position; it is a matter of whose side we are on. In other words, all research is political inasmuch as it comes out of a particular view of the world, makes claims about reality, and supports or refutes existing knowledge claims. Qualitative research, which generally makes no pretense of disinterested objectivity, has been more likely than quantitative research to be labeled as political. Qualitative researchers have risen to this challenge and engaged in a variety of discussions regarding the politics of their work. Over the past several decades, the discussions of the politics of qualitative research have primarily revolved around three distinct yet interrelated strands: the qualitative–quantitative debate, the question of the relationship between researcher and researched, and the evidence-based movement.

Qualitative–Quantitative Debate

At its heart, the qualitative–quantitative debate has been about different ways of seeing and approaching the social world. Those on the quantitative side for the most part have followed the Enlightenment tradition that emphasized the supremacy of rational thought and the ability of people to control both the natural and social worlds through the acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge in this case meant observable facts that led the researcher to uncover general laws that could help to predict human behavior. Qualitative researchers, meanwhile, believe that it is neither possible nor desirable for researchers to stand outside of a social world of which they are necessarily part. The quest for objectivity and neutrality that is fundamental to quantitative work is all but unimportant to most qualitative researchers. Knowledge is seen as situational and provisional. Acquiring knowledge will help researchers to better understand the human condition and explain how things have developed or persisted in particular ways. Rather than seeking to find cause-and-effect relationships that might be used to predict, and perhaps control, patterns of interaction, most qualitative researchers have sought to understand the complexity of social life. Although it is certainly possible to do qualitative research from a positivist perspective, for the most part qualitative researchers have built their work on postmodern understandings of the world.

Although some have characterized the qualitative–quantitative debate as a dialogue, it might be more accurate to describe it as a struggle on the part of qualitative researchers for legitimacy and place. For years, qualitative research has suffered from accusations of being unscientific and unreliable. This criticism has meant, for example, that unlike their quantitative counterparts, qualitative researchers have routinely included sections in their articles and books justifying their methodology. By the end of the 1990s, researchers from a number of social science disciplines were proclaiming an end to the “paradigm wars,” but recent developments indicate that it is probably more accurate to say that an uneasy truce had been declared. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers seemed to have agreed that a variety of methods are required to adequately investigate the range of questions we have in relation to the social world. What was not resolved was the divergence between the epistemological positions that undergird

the two research traditions. As the current debate over evidence-based research has shown, “scientific” inquiry continues to be portrayed as superior to “naturalistic” inquiry. In other words, the privileging of research designed to control and predict, as opposed to research that seeks to understand, remains strong in our research communities.

Qualitative researchers are concerned about what knowledge is being uncovered as a result of their work, and they are concerned with having their work taken seriously by their colleagues and by other policy actors. As a result, they have over the years sought to establish rigor in a variety of ways. Some have discussed the importance of the credibility of the results. They have encouraged the use of strategies such as constant comparative method, using a variety of data collection methods, and returning transcripts and analyses to participants to verify conclusions. Others have talked about establishing the trustworthiness of the research by describing all aspects of the research process in sufficient detail. This description could include recounting the events that took place, the influences on the study, specifics of the analytical process, and the actions of the researcher. More recently, some have talked about bricolage as a way of establishing the value of qualitative research. Building from postmodern understandings, bricolage requires that researchers approach a topic from multiple disciplinary perspectives, which implies employing multiple methods of inquiry as well as diverse theoretical and philosophical underpinnings in the work.

Relationship Between Researcher and Researched

In the positivist paradigm, the researcher is the expert, a neutral investigator who stands apart from his or her research subjects. Qualitative researchers, having rejected this position, have needed to come to terms with their relationship to both the research and the researched. In terms of the research, qualitative researchers generally declare their relationship to a topic of research and uncover some of their biases before embarking on a study. They talk about strategies to minimize researcher bias or ways to foreground the perspective and commitments of the researcher so that the research process is as open and transparent as possible. Most acknowledge that this is a good starting point, but it is insufficient in and of itself as a way to think about the entirety of the research activity.

The relationship with the people who are part of the research has led to an ongoing conversation among qualitative researchers about power relations, insider versus outsider knowledge, and the purposes of research. This conversation, sometimes labeled *the politics of the gaze*, asks researchers to think about who is looking at whom and for what purpose, who is explicitly or implicitly in the more powerful position in the situation, and what consequences this dynamic has for those in the less powerful positions. It asks us as researchers to question many aspects of our own undertakings including why it is important to do particular kinds of research, who will benefit from the research, who has the right to do different kinds of research, and how best to ensure the participants in the process are respected. It has, in some cases, led to a sustained engagement between researchers and members of minoritized groups (e.g., some First Nations communities and researchers in Canada) but this type of collaboration does not come easily, and its continuation cannot be taken for granted.

Qualitative researchers from various marginalized groups have extended arguments related to the politics of the gaze to ask if any methodologies developed for and by members of the dominant groups can ever be appropriate for the study of issues of importance to minoritized groups. From the perspective of many people from marginalized groups, research as a term and an activity is inextricably linked to imperialism and domination. To use Audre Lorde’s words, many marginalized peoples believe, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” This sentiment and the explicit relationships of exploitation and oppression that are written into it have resulted in yet another set of political discussions and activities aimed at developing new methodologies that grow out of knowledge traditions that may be called Indigenous, traditional, or marginalized. The purpose of such activity is to find ways to confer legitimacy on perspectives and knowledge that have generally been devalued and excluded from the public realm.

This second aspect of the politics of qualitative research, while engaging qualitative researchers in productive conversations about the meaning and ethics of research, has done little to enhance the aura of qualitative research to those outside the tradition. Intertwined as it has been with other conversations about representations of minoritized groups, it has raised concerns about censorship and limiting academic

freedom. Moreover, it has reinforced in the minds of some who are not social science researchers and who remain heavily influenced by the positivist assumptions that are woven into the fabric of most Western cultures that qualitative research is messy and biased and therefore not to be trusted. The threads from this aspect of the politics of qualitative research have also become part of the complex political tapestry that surrounds what is currently known as *evidence-based research*.

Evidence-Based Research

Starting in the 1990s, the term evidence-based research began to appear more and more frequently in the vocabulary of policy developers and research funding bodies in a number of Northern and Western countries. The term itself seemed benign enough. It seemed to suggest that research findings should be taken seriously only if they were supported by evidence. Quickly it became clear that it was linked to larger political and economic changes of the day.

The late 1980s ushered in an era of neoliberalism and globalization. Neoliberalism refers to an ideology that privileges the economic model of the free market. It posits that the market is the best model for structuring all relations in society, particularly those between governments and citizens. Although it advocates minimizing state intervention, there are certain ways in which the state has become more involved in public sector activities than it was previously. One of those ways is through control of what counts as “real” research.

Globalization is the name given to the current phenomenon of the spread of political and economic ideas and practices throughout the world. Many researchers have noted that globalization, rather than being a haphazard collection of ideas, is built on neoliberal principles. As early as 1999, noted educational researcher and sociologist Martin Carnoy warned that globalization would have a significant impact on educational practice, especially in five areas: (1) the organization of work, (2) strengthening ties between education and capitalism, (3) growing emphasis on international comparisons as a measure of accountability, (4) introduction of information technologies in ways that would transform the field, and (5) new struggles over the meaning and value of knowledge. Similar lists could have been developed for other social science related fields. Within this

framework, research that is of value to those in power is primarily that which will help to predict, control, and replicate results.

The only evidence that is considered worthy in evidence-based research, therefore, is that which is gathered through positivist-inspired quantitative studies; in other words, the evidence that counts is evidence that can be counted. Not surprisingly, throughout most Northern and Western countries, state agencies that provide contracts and grants to researchers have increasingly turned their back on qualitative researchers. In addition, policy developers have relied to a greater extent on the work of quantitative researchers to support their policy decisions. The lack of support for qualitative research also means that there is less financial and political support for emerging scholars pursuing qualitative traditions, and they will, therefore, be disadvantaged in the quest for tenure at research universities. Quite clearly, then, it is not only the current state of qualitative research, but also the future of the tradition that is at issue.

Qualitative research, particularly critical qualitative research, has come under progressively heavier fire. Nowhere is this more evident than in the struggle in the United States over the terrain of educational research. In 2002, the National Research Council (NRC) issued a report on educational research that favored the positivist paradigm. It stated that social science research in general and educational research in particular had become so muddled that it was of little or no value in terms of helping to shape the direction of policy. Therefore, in order to be funded, educational research would henceforth be evaluated on the basis of experimental or quasiexperimental design, and random field tests would effectively be the gold standard. Although the report goes on to justify this position on the basis of science and rationality, many critical qualitative researchers have challenged this stance.

For example, Patti Lather and Yvonna Lincoln have both, in different contexts, argued that the position the NRC takes is ironically unscientific in that it refuses to examine alternate views of evidence, analysis, or purpose. According to Lather’s analysis, the neoliberal mind-set, with its predisposition for managerialism, consumerism, and accountability, invariably leads to a kind of proceduralism that is compatible with positivist research traditions. Additionally, it imposes a rigid frame around what counts as research. Understanding the complexity of

real life becomes far less important than producing research results that appear to justify particular policy positions. In other words, officially sanctioned research becomes little more than a political tool.

Lincoln's analysis calls attention to the fact that three groups of people have seemingly joined forces in this recent attack on qualitative research. The first is a group of what she characterizes as traditional conventional researchers who want to rehabilitate what they see as the awful reputation of social science research. The second is a loose-knit group on the political Right who subscribe to a neoliberal view of the world. The third is often identified as the religious Right. The latter group tends to be guided by neoconservative ideology, a part of which is a longing for a mythical "golden age" when conservative values reigned supreme and issues of power and privilege had not yet surfaced. Thus, the attack on qualitative research has become part of a larger campaign against social historians, feminists, multiculturalists, post-modernists, and others who have questioned the conventional Western canon and other manifestations of power and of privilege.

Although the foregoing example comes from education in the United States, it finds echoes in other fields and other geographic locations. Critical qualitative researchers have drawn criticism because of their arguments that objectivity and value-neutrality in research are myths and that conventional science has served to reinforce the structures of power and privilege that exist in society. They have gone some way toward legitimizing the knowledge and traditions of marginalized groups. The existence of qualitative traditions has created a space for researchers from marginalized groups to enter into the academy and to challenge existing representations of themselves and others. All of these endeavors are highly politically charged. Consequently, the recent backlash against qualitative work in general is as closely related to the perception that minoritized groups are destabilizing taken-for-granted power structures as it is the demands of the neoliberal-inspired state.

Conclusion

From this brief account, what must certainly be obvious is that research is always and forever a political enterprise. Because of the predominant societal perspective of qualitative research, positioned as it is alongside critical and questioning movements, it will

more often than not be characterized as political, whereas quantitative work within a positivist paradigm will be characterized as scientific and therefore neutral.

What distinguishes the current political debate surrounding qualitative research from previous debates is that it has involved people from outside the research community and that it is so clearly part of a larger movement against all manner of critique and dissent. Qualitative researchers are increasingly becoming activists within and outside of the academy, forming their own links and coalitions with other outsiders who continue to challenge the status quo.

Reva Joshee

See also Evidence-Based Practice; Funding; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Trustworthiness

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POPULATION

Looking beyond how population is often construed in everyday life (i.e., as every person who resides in a

given country, town, state, or province), population as a concept in research methods refers to every individual who fits the criteria (broad or narrow) that the researcher has laid out for research participants (e.g., all individuals who took Sociology 101 at the University of Victoria in 2001).

Conceptually, population is perhaps most easily understood when it is contrasted with the concept of a sample. A sample is different from a population because it includes only a portion of the population. In the case where the researcher uses a sample of participants, the researcher may have decided that it is not financially or chronologically feasible to study the whole population of, for example, unwed mothers in Canada. Hence, he or she may choose instead to study a subset of that population (i.e., a sample).

Because qualitative researchers tend to study smaller numbers of people in great depth, it is perhaps more common for them to study small samples. An example helps illustrate why this tendency is the case. It is not feasible to complete an in-depth, qualitative, interview study of the full population of unwed mothers in Canada. Even if it were theoretically possible to interview this full population, the analysis of the transcripts would be completely unwieldy. That being said, as mentioned earlier, a population can be a very small group as well—particularly if the criteria for the group being studied are very tightly defined. In this next case, the qualitative researcher may indeed study the full population. For example, perhaps the researcher in this instance is interested in examining the experiences of students enrolled in a new and experimental early education program. In this case, there may be only 10–12 students, and it is, therefore, realistic and perhaps important to get the perspective of everyone participating in the program so as to more accurately examine the successes and failures of this experimental program.

In essence, whether qualitative researchers decide to study a population or a sample from the population, the choice should reflect which approach will provide the answers they require from their research question. For example, they should consider whether a sample of unwed mothers can provide the insight they are seeking into the experience of being an unwed mother or whether a sample of students in a new and experimental educational program can fully answer the questions related to this program's successes and failures. With this in mind, qualitative researchers can decide whether they need to collect data from the full

population (i.e., all eligible participants who meet the study criteria).

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Convenience Sample; Nonprobability Sampling; Purposive Sampling; Sampling

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PORTRAITURE

Portraiture is an artistic process. Framed by the traditions and values of the phenomenological paradigm, portraiture shares many of the techniques, standards, and goals of ethnography. Portraiture is a suitable methodology for capturing the essence of the human experience as portraitists seek to record and interpret the perspectives of the people they are studying. Portraiture allows the researcher to organize a narrative around central themes from the data and write layered stories where study participants are the subjects, not the objects, of the research.

In *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis define five essential features of portraiture: context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole.

Context

Portraitists view human experience as being framed and shaped by the setting. The context of a portrait is the setting—or where data collection happens. The context takes into account the physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, and aesthetic nature of the research site, participants, and their experience. The context becomes the reference point to place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they do and say.

The internal context is the physical setting. In portraiture methodology, personal context, or the place and the stance of the researcher, are made clear.

A historical context considers the origins and evolutions of each participant.

Voice

In portraiture research, the researcher's voice is evident throughout the research—as witness, as interpretation, as preoccupation, as autobiography, as discerning others or listening for the voices of other identities or feelings, and as voice in dialogue through interviewing and having informal conversations with participants.

The researcher may use voice as witness to express the outsider's stance, to look across patterns of action and see the whole picture or portrait. In this way, the researcher is acquiring knowledge about her or his participants, but as a witness to the experience being captured and from a position on the boundary.

Voice as interpretation underscores the role of the portraitist for this is where she or he makes sense of the data. In making an interpretation, the portraitist must be vigilant about providing enough descriptive evidence in the text so that the reader might be able to offer a different interpretation of the data. Thick description contributes to authenticity by providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match and can be generalized to the research situation. Using multiple data sources, repeated observations, and interviews provides the qualitative researcher with rich data for making the interpretative voice evident.

Voice not only seeks to witness the participant's stance through new eyes, but also it is used as preoccupation, or the ways in which the researcher sees and records reality. This concept of voice could also be viewed as the personal context or the researcher's perspective of the story, as it reflects the researcher's disciplinary background, theoretical perspectives, intellectual interests, and understanding of relevant literature.

Voice as autobiography also reflects the life story of the portraitist. In this sense, the researcher's perspectives, questions, and insights are inevitably shaped by her or his own developmental and autobiographical experiences. The researcher uses these experiences as resources for understanding and as sources of connection and identification to participants.

Listening for others' voices refers to how the portraitist seeks out and tries to capture the varying identities or feelings that may be captured while observing

or interviewing participants. When the portraitist listens for voice, she or he observes very closely, watching for the ways in which the actor's movements and gestures speak much louder than the words. For example, in the margins of observation protocol, the researcher could make notes of participant's gestures and expressions.

Voice in dialogue chronicles the developing relationship between the researcher and participant. It refers to the presence of the portraitist's voice discerning the sound and meaning of the actors' voices and sometimes entering into dialogue with them. Most qualitative research methods include voice in dialogue through interview and informal conversations with participants.

Relationship

Portraits are created, formed, and sketched through the development of relationships. Portraitists must try to forge a relationship during the first site visit and maintain that relationship throughout the research process, and maybe even beyond the study period. The relationship between the researcher and participant serves as the researcher's road in the search for goodness. That is, portraitists search for what is working, what is happening, and why rather than focusing on the identification of weaknesses. Relationship also considers the ethic of care the researcher takes in conducting her or his research and in being empathic to participant experiences. Relationship acknowledges the indebtedness toward the participants in the giving of their time, space, and personal experience. Finally, relationship considers the research boundaries that must be set by the researcher and the participant.

Emergent Themes

The development of emergent themes reflects the portraitist's first efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data. The themes give the data shape and form. They are consistently born from the data. In most qualitative research, emergent themes are constructed by first listening for repetitive refrains that are spoken frequently and persistently. Then, the researcher listens for resonant metaphors, poetic and symbolic expressions that reveal the ways participants experience and illuminate their realities. The qualitative researcher may also listen for the themes expressed through

cultural and institutional rituals and seem to be important to organizational continuity. Later, she or he uses triangulation to weave together the threads of data converging from a variety of sources. Finally, the researcher constructs themes and reveals patterns that are contrasting and dissonant by the participants.

The Aesthetic Whole

Portraits, the product or the aesthetic whole of portraiture, have four dimensions: conception, the development of the overarching story; structure, the sequencing and layering of emergent themes that scaffold the story; form, the movement of the narrative of the story; and cohesion, the unity and integrity of the story. Portraitists begin their investigations with a perspective, a framework, and a guiding set of questions that are a result of their previous experience, their reviews of the literature, and their conceptual and disciplinary knowledge. The aesthetic whole is the actual portrait that evokes context, voice, relationship, and emergent themes of the research. As a picture or painting, the aesthetic whole is that which is placed inside of the frame.

Djanna Hill-Brisbane

See also Critical Arts-Based Inquiry; Feminist Research; Poetry in Qualitative Research

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POSITIVISM

Positivism is the codeword for a package of philosophical ideas that most likely no one has ever accepted in its entirety. These ideas include a distrust of abstraction, a preference for observation unencumbered by too much theory, a commitment to the idea of a social *science* that is not vastly different from natural science, and a profound respect for quantification. Like empiricism, to which it is

closely related and with which it overlaps to a considerable degree, positivism is the label for a series of claims rather than any single claim. Moreover, many of these claims are analytically separable and do not entail one other so that it is entirely possible to accept some and not the rest. Inevitably, then, it is sometimes difficult to attach the label, without qualification, to any particular position or writer or even to identify the central ideas when several distinct positivisms (12, according to Peter Halfpenny) can be differentiated. But this problem has not prevented some methods writers in the social sciences from referring to positivism as a paradigm, implying that it makes up a quite determinate set of ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical beliefs, all locked together in an unbreakable structure that must, therefore, be rejected or embraced as a whole. This view requires a certain finessing of philosophical history, so this entry will begin with some excerpts from positivism's checkered career before returning to its role in social scientific methodological writing and in particular, its influence on qualitative research. Given that the history of positivism and the history of empiricism are entangled, it might be a good idea to read this entry alongside the corresponding one on empiricism.

Philosophical Positivism

Origins

The term was coined by Auguste Comte, but even for him it has several different connotations. It refers, in part, to a theory of history according to which every branch of knowledge passes through three stages (the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive state—when explanations by appeal to unobservable entities are finally abandoned) and which asserts that improvements in knowledge are responsible for historical progress. For Comte, positivism is also the assertion that there can be a science of society aiming at universal laws akin to those in the natural sciences; the name of a proposed secular religion, involving the worship of society, and with its own priesthood and church; and, less strangely, the label for a unity of science thesis claiming that all the sciences can be integrated into a single system. But perhaps the central thread in Comte's positivism, at least from the point of view of the subsequent history, is its empiricism, the view that the only source of knowledge

is experience. This idea is taken from the British empiricists and leads (as it did with John Locke, Bishop Berkeley, and possibly David Hume) to the view that there can be no knowledge of any reality beyond experience. It also led Comte to acknowledge the impossibility of obtaining absolute truth. This knowledge turns out to be a perennial positivist theme and is worth noting in the light of a familiar tendency to claim that positivism involves a commitment to absolute truth as well as knowledge with certainty. At any rate, the pivotal nature of empiricist ideas in positivist thought means that positivism is, in effect, a variant of empiricism.

A project frequently associated with positivism is that of quantification; indeed, for some writers, positivism and the quantitative paradigm are more or less synonymous. The incorporation of statistics into positivist thinking is normally attributed to Émile Durkheim, who built on Comte's empiricism by combining the idea of a science of society with the tradition of social physics. This tradition had developed during the 19th century and involved the collection of statistics for largely administrative purposes. What was innovative about Durkheim's proposal was the claim that statistics could be used to construct and test social theories, not just for the purposes of administration or reform. This claim has since become entrenched in popular understandings of positivism, and as a result, Durkheim's work (particularly *Suicide*) is recognized as one of the classic examples of positivist sociology.

Logical Positivism

However, the most iconic version of positivism is associated with the Vienna Circle and the school of logical positivism that emerged from it along with an affiliated group in Berlin. The circle's 1929 manifesto emphasizes two fundamental commitments: to empiricism (i.e., there is knowledge only from experience) and to logical analysis, by means of which philosophical problems and paradoxes would be resolved and the structure of scientific theory made clear. It is, of course, the second of these commitments that represents logical positivism's distinctive contribution to the empiricist tradition.

Empiricism, then, was a premise of logical positivism, but there was much debate as to what counted as the experiential foundation of knowledge. For Ernst Mach, an important influence on the Vienna Circle,

this foundation consisted of, quite literally, the scientist's own sense impressions, although some logical positivists held that sensations were not themselves the basis of science, but that *protocol sentences*—sentences recording those sensations—were. Later, however, this position was abandoned, at least by some positivists, in favor of the view that the experiential building blocks are in fact sentences that record not sensations, but the behavior of observable objects (e.g., measuring devices). In replacing sentences about sense impressions (which could be known to be true) with sentences about physical objects (which could not), this group of positivists effectively gave up the idea that knowledge could be certain and that there could be such a thing as absolute truth.

The logical analysis component of positivism has been based on developments in formal logic since the 19th century. Instead of a system of generalizations about psychological processes, logic was now seen as a formal symbolic language, empty of any empirical content that could be used to define precisely the conceptual relations between sentences. This development provided the logical positivists (or so they believed) with a means of translating theoretical sentences into sets of statements about experience and enabled them to organize the whole of scientific knowledge into an axiomatic system. These projects eventually broke down, as the positivists were the first to accept, partly because the translations were not forthcoming and partly because of the realization that no account of experience, no set of observations, can be theory-neutral. So, theoretical sentences cannot be translated into an observation language because observational terms are already theory-laden. Even so, two ideas persisted: first, that there are logical relations between theory and observation and second, that explanations consist of law-like generalizations from which the occurrence of specific events can be deduced. The latter is known as the *covering law* model.

Verifiability

The combination of empiricism and logical analysis leads to the principle for which logical positivism is best known: verifiability. This concept was an attempt to define a criterion capable of distinguishing between statements that are meaningful and those that are not (i.e., nonscientific, metaphysical statements). There were various formulations of this principle, but

the basic idea was that any statement is literally meaningless whose method of verification cannot be specified in terms of experience. An associated principle, verificationism, held that the meaning of a statement just is its method of verification.

Verificationism eventually failed for the same reason that other logical positivist projects failed. Yet its position as a defining principle in the movement was strong enough to confirm the positivists in a form of antirealism. For example, if subatomic particles are not directly observable in experience and if it proves difficult or impossible to translate statements about them into the language of observation, then these statements cannot be regarded as meaningful. In which case, belief in the existence of subatomic particles is at best an optional extra. In fact, almost all the logical positivists were antirealists in this sense: They were, at the very least, noncommittal about the actual existence of unobservable entities. The same is true of their attitude toward law-like generalizations of the form *all X are Y*. Statements of this type cannot, strictly, be verified, as it is impossible to observe all Xs, so some logical positivists were equally skeptical about the meaningfulness of universal laws.

Summary

Like empiricism, then, positivism is a family of claims and concepts on which different authors have placed varying degrees of emphasis. It shares with empiricism a commitment to making experience the test of all knowledge and is skeptical about the idea of an unobservable reality that includes entities and forces not discoverable in experience, a skepticism that extends even to laws of nature. In its later forms, positivism adds to empiricism an enthusiasm for statistics—indeed, for quantification in general—and the assumption that if a statement is meaningful, then it can, by definition, be subject to scientific testing and verification (an assumption subsequently weakened or dropped). It also attempts to translate what is known into formal languages, including mathematics, and to organize scientific theory into logical structures. However, if there is an overlap with empiricism, there is also common ground with American pragmatism, which had a similar preference for experience, verifiability, antirealism, and operationalism. This common ground largely explains why the logical positivists were accorded such a favorable reception in the United States following their flight from Nazi Europe in the 1930s.

It is noticeable, though, that the resonances of positivism, as well as its variety, are now often ignored. The term frequently signifies what is regarded as an exaggerated respect for the natural sciences and is inevitably associated with quantification. Moreover, it is usually assumed that positivists believed in a determinate reality and in the possibility of a correspondence between that reality and representations of it. This image of positivism, approaching a caricature, has been boosted by postmodernism, which portrays it as a reactionary force, committed to oppressive universal truths, a chimerical objectivity, and foundational narratives. In this guise, it is a convenient foil for a great deal of recent writing on social scientific methodology.

Positivism and Social Science

In contemporary methodological writing, positivism is apparently dead, yet it still receives constant criticism; it is significant that the most influential examples of modern social theory, such as critical realism, constructivism, hermeneutics, and structuration theory, take a critique of positivism as their premise. Recently, however, it has become clear that positivism is still a pervasive influence—although this influence is more marked in some social scientific disciplines than it is in others—to the extent that comments have been made about its surprising longevity. It is a visible force in American sociology and political science, has dominated the American history profession until the 1980s, and survives in various guises in economics. The record in sociology is particularly interesting, with a marked difference between the British and American sociological communities being evident, according to recent research by David Gartrell and John Gartrell. From the 1960s to the 1990s, British journals became less positivistic, so the evidence suggests, while the American journals became more so. There appears to be something of a discrepancy, then, between the pronouncements of social theorists and sociological research practice, at least in the United States.

Can Qualitative Research Be Positivist?

The study just referred to takes as its criterion for positivism an emphasis on measurement, the testing of generalizations, and the determining of relationships between variables using statistical analysis. So it

would seem that qualitative research, by definition, cannot be positivistic. This definition does appear to be one use of the term reflected in the familiar claim that qualitative and quantitative research represent different paradigms, with the quantitative paradigm often identified with positivism. The justification for this claim, where it is not simply derived from the assumption that positivism equals numbers, is that doing quantitative research entails commitment to a particular ontology and, specifically, to a belief in a single, objective reality that can be described by universal laws. In contrast, it is suggested that qualitative researchers, almost *ex officio*, do not share this belief: They see the universe as inherently subjective, socially constructed, more subtle and complex than mathematics can accommodate, and comprising multiple realities. On the other hand, those who are skeptical of this position ask why the use of quantitative methods, or any other technique, should presuppose beliefs about the universe at all. They point out that tools and instruments are not usually regarded as having philosophical views built into them: using a spoon, for example, does not commit one to the claim that the world consists entirely of fluids and small particles. So why should the use of specific research methods, for specific purposes, commit one to the claim that the universe is subjective or objective, multiple or singular?

The alternative is to take the distinction between positivist and nonpositivist as independent of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative, with the consequence that qualitative research can be positivist. Given this view, the various inquiry paradigms—positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism, the participatory-cooperative paradigm, and so on—can all be mapped onto qualitative research, each with its distinctive ontology, epistemology, methodology, and values and each manifested in a particular way of conducting qualitative studies.

Paradigm Tables

This mapping is evident in the tables that have become a familiar feature of qualitative methodological writing, especially by authors who draw on the work of Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba. Typically, the paradigms are represented in the columns while the rows represent inquiry issues on which different stands can be taken. For example, the positivist account of the nature of knowledge might be verified hypotheses established as facts or laws; the postpositivist

version might be nonfalsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws; the critical realist view might refer to structural-historical insights; the constructivist position might involve individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus; and so on.

One unfortunate feature of these tables, irrespective of the intentions of the authors, is that they imply a certain rigidity in the idea of a paradigm. It can appear, at least to the novice, that each column is a vertical tramline from which there is no prospect of escape. Acceptance of what positivism says about one of the inquiry issues irrevocably commits one to accepting what it has to say about all the others because every paradigm is in effect a package deal. Accept realism, for example, and one is thereby committed to accepting dualism, reductionism, absolute truth, certainty, correspondence, knowledge by accumulation, and an extrinsic ethic “tilting toward deception.” Once the positivist column has been entered, there seems to be no way out. It is a little like getting married and finding oneself stuck with an entire family. Yet it is clear from the history of positivism that there is no such rigid structure, that it is possible to be a positivist without being a realist and without believing in correspondence, dualism, or certainty. To this extent, paradigm tables oversimplify the philosophical issues they try to elucidate and demand that one embrace or reject in its entirety something misleadingly called positivism.

Parallels Between Positivism and Qualitative Methods

In fact, there are several positivist ideas that sit comfortably with the claims of other paradigms and with the convictions of some qualitative researchers. For example, the positivist’s instinct is to stick with the observable phenomena and to distrust any theory that purports to give an account of reality. This instinct is quite consonant with what qualitative methodologists recommend, whether they are grounded theorists (who say that theory must be semantically tied to data), phenomenologists (who aim at an atheoretical description of phenomena), or constructivists (who present multivocal accounts, building toward the achievement of consensus rather than a theoretical evaluation). In all these cases, there is a preference for not going too far beyond the data and for not invoking theoretical, but unobservable, social forces such as class, power, socialization, or culture. Even the multiple

realities favored by constructivists are not too distant from the position arrived at by some logical positivists. Rudolf Carnap's mature view, for example, was that there are a number of different linguistic frameworks in terms of which the world can be described and that the choice between them is conventional and pragmatic, a matter of what is suited to a particular purpose. Consequently, all standards of correctness, validity, and truth are relativized to the rules and principles associated with whichever framework has been adopted. This view is not one that constructivists should find uncongenial.

Conclusion

This is not, of course, to deny that other positivist instincts, such as the preference for quantification and formalism, are at odds with those of qualitative researchers. But this is part of the point. There is no single thesis that counts as positivism, no single criterion that defines it; and of the variously assorted claims that belong to the positivist family, some are compatible with alternative paradigms such as constructivism, while others are not. To this extent, the concept of a paradigm, the concept of an encapsulated and rather rigid set of ontological, epistemological, methodological, and ethical beliefs, is itself a social construction, and (arguably) not a particularly helpful one. Instead of a fluid, historical, evolving, and internally contested discourse—which is what positivism is—it creates the image of a coherent, unified, and highly inflexible creed. Conceivably, however, the recent reexamination, and partial rehabilitation, of positivist thinkers will serve to unsettle this image, and will prompt qualitative researchers to discover what they can learn from positivism, however unlikely that may currently seem.

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See also Constructivism; Empiricism; Paradigm; Postmodernism; Pragmatism; Realism

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POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism is a broad theoretical approach that examines the past and present impact of colonialism and racism on social, political, and economic systems. It focuses on the ways particular groups of people because of notions of race or ethnicity have been excluded, marginalized, and represented in ways that devalued or even dehumanized them. Postcolonial theorists not only examine the position of people who have been colonized, but also analyze the impact that the process of colonialism has on those people who benefited from colonial acts such as dispossession, violence, and the promotion of racist ideology.

There are a number of major postcolonial theorists who have had a huge impact on the ways key concepts developed as an intellectual discipline: Frantz Fanon, whose groundbreaking work emphasized the effects of colonialism on the psyche; Edward Said, who developed the notion of “Orientalism”; Gayatri Spivak, whose work on the “subaltern” has been enormously influential; and Homi Bhabha, who has emphasized the value of psychoanalytical concepts such as ambivalence and hybridity in the study of colonialism. More recently, however, the field of postcolonial studies has been characterized by a

commitment to unpacking the complex connections between “race,” ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and many other forms of social stratification. These works tend to move beyond an additive model of identity, instead examining the specific ways in which various forms of inequality intersect in particular discourses and in particular historical locales.

Debate Over Definitions

There have been significant debates over the term *postcolonialism*. In general, however, the term postcolonialism refers to ongoing effects of historical racism, as well as the changing forms of oppression embedded in contemporary international relations, following the national liberation movements of various majority world countries. *Postcolonialism* is used to indicate the end of colonialism, but new forms of colonialism, as well as new challenges to the legacies of colonialism, are also examined within this area. In this sense, postcolonial criticism is understood as examining the relations of domination between and within nations, races, or cultures, recognizing the historical roots of such practices within colonialism.

In postcolonial studies, colonialism is not conceived simply in terms of military and economic expansion. It has important social, cultural, and religious dimensions as well. For instance, the export of cricket to colonial outposts by the British is a classic example of the way sport can be an element of colonialism.

Postcolonial studies also tend to be aware of Eurocentric assumptions within language and practice. For instance, postcolonial scholarship tends to avoid the use of the phrase “developing country” because it might be taken to imply that they are in some ways behind the “more advanced” countries in the West. Such language is problematic because it does not validate the economic, social, or political development of countries on their own terms and also seems to imply the ethnocentric assumption that the Western pattern of development is somehow superior to all others.

Colonialism's Effects on the Psyche

The effect of colonialism on the human psyche was the subject of a number of books by Fanon. Whether writing about his own experiences growing up in Martinique, examining the effect of racism on the

choice of sexual partners by women of color, or discussing the effects of the Algerian war of independence, Fanon consistently emphasized the damaging effects of racism and colonialism on the self-image and psyche of both colonizers and colonized people. However, he did not believe that people of color were destined to experience the same dehumanization as previous generations. As Fanon comments in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1991, p. 230), “I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors.”

Fanon also believed that colonialism was responsible for the creation of specific mental pathologies and disorders. For instance, Fanon (1991) described one person with “marked anxiety psychosis of the depersonalization type,” (p. 261) and another with “accusatory delirium and suicidal conduct disguised as ‘terrorist activity’” (p. 273) as a result of their involvement in the Algerian war.

Fanon was very concerned to show the effects of colonialism on the ways in which people from different countries, ethnicities, and cultures interact and the way that stereotypes of “the Negro” are a direct result of colonialism. He also emphasized the way access to colonial languages and adoption of elements of colonial cultures mediated the effect of inequality and dispersed relative privilege on particular groups of colonized people.

Fanon consistently emphasized the violence associated with both colonization and decolonization (a term he used to describe the achievement of political independence by formerly colonized countries). He highlighted the violence and exploitation of the Indigenous people by settlers, and he also argued that decolonization could be achieved only through a violent revolution in which colonized people overthrew the colonizers in a “murderous and decisive struggle” (p. 28)

Orientalism

Said's book *Orientalism* was a landmark work: It is widely regarded as one of the reasons why the whole field of postcolonial studies became a recognized academic discipline. Said argued that the whole idea of “the Orient” was an imposed, thoroughly European notion. It did not stem from the diverse cultures found in Asia; rather, it is an ideology through which European countries demonstrated their dominance. He believed that the idea of the Orient was produced and managed by European countries in a way that

reflected their political, social, economic, military, ideological, and scientific power. Orientalism, therefore, places the West in a position of superiority over the Orient.

Said suggests that the phrase *the Orient* was applied to Asia or the East and was meant to be a catch-all phrase that was inclusive of geographical, moral, and cultural factors. Orientalism had cultural, political, and economic effects: It reflected the power, domination, and hegemony of the West (which he referred to as *the Occident*), over the Orient. Orientalism has an in-built arrogance: Like other forms of colonialism, Orientalism assumes that the colonizers (in this case, the West) know what is in the best interests of the colonized (in this case, Asia). Orientalism was not simply aimed at Asia: It was also important in terms of the ways people in the West understood themselves and their country.

Said emphasized that Orientalism not only justifies colonial acts after they have occurred, but also justifies colonization in advance. That is, it helps people in colonizing countries to develop an imperialist spirit and also promotes disrespect for the people in non-Western countries. Some of the prejudices that Orientalism helps to promote include the image of people from non-Western countries as childlike, irrational, depraved, and different, in contrast to the supposed Western traits of maturity, rationality, morality, and normality. For instance, Said compared the ways in which Islam is represented by the Orientalists as symbolizing terror, devastation, barbarians, and the demonic, whereas the West is seen as civilized, Christian, and originating.

Said's work was extremely influential because it challenged the way many scholars had previously understood Asia and the Middle East. It emphasized their reliance on secondary texts rather than on the original sources in non-English languages, and questioned their authority, leading to an increased emphasis on the ways in which people in colonized countries understood and responded to the challenge of colonialism.

Orientalism is a landmark text in the field of postcolonial studies. It has, therefore, been the subject of a great deal of academic discussion. One of the most common criticisms of this book is that it does not place enough emphasis on the way that colonized people resisted the process of Orientalism. It seems to give too much power to the West and its power to construct a dominant image of the Orient without

recognizing that people from non-Western countries have spent a great deal of time and energy challenging the biases colonialism promotes and reproduces. Said admitted that this was a problem with his book and tried to rectify this problem in his later work, most notably in his book, *Culture and Imperialism*.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said developed his thoughts on the importance of discursive and cultural domination within colonialism. He focused specifically on 19th- and 20th-century literary representation and narrative as an essential element of colonialism. He argued that such cultural practices attempt to justify colonialism by positioning colonized people as somehow subordinate or inferior, but also suggested that colonized people also mobilize cultural resources to challenge and resist such discourses and assert their own history and identity.

The Subaltern

One focus of Spivak's work is the way the Third World (and, in particular, Third World women) have been represented and silenced within Western discourse. She has employed the concept of the subaltern to describe the situation of Third World women, and the concept of the subaltern has gained a great deal of popularity in postcolonial theory, largely due to her use of it. However, Spivak was not the first theorist to use the term the subaltern; it had also been used by Indian historians collaborating under the Subaltern Studies project, and they had been inspired by the earlier use of the term by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci.

Spivak argues that the subaltern cannot speak; that is, she argues that any attempt by Western scholars to represent or articulate subaltern experience is problematic because it runs the risk of speaking on behalf of the people being studied (which is a similar dynamic to colonialism itself). Furthermore, it also runs the risk of exaggerating the degree to which the subaltern is a unified, homogenous group. Instead, she emphasizes their diversity while recognizing that there is sometimes a need to use the rhetoric of a unified subject as a form of what she calls *strategic essentialism*.

The term subaltern seems to have a number of potentially contradictory meanings for Spivak. She sometimes seems to regard it as all the members of a society who do not make up the elite; but at other times (e.g., when she talks about the subaltern

within the subaltern) she seems to mean the groups who have attained political dominance. Indeed, the ambiguity of the term subaltern is one of the themes of Spivak's work: She argues that it is not possible to construct an unproblematic category of the subaltern whose interests can be identified and represented. Instead, Spivak emphasizes the heterogeneity of the subjects who occupy the position of the subaltern.

A characteristic feature of Spivak's work, unlike some other postcolonialist writers, is her attention to the dynamics of gender. Her work has been incredibly influential in encouraging other scholars to explore the ways in which gender, and to a lesser extent sexuality, operate in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Ambivalence and Hybridity

Homi Bhabha has profoundly influenced the development of postcolonial theory. Bhabha's contribution to postcolonial theory lies in his emphasis on those in-between moments that unsettle the power relationships involved in colonialism. Bhabha's work suggests that viewing colonialism in terms of binaries (whether they are black–white binaries or Western–Eastern binaries) is incredibly simplistic and naïve. Instead, he suggests that cultures and identities are characterized by in-between moments, hybridity, ambivalence, and uncertainty. For Bhabha, hybridity is politically produced in the process of colonialism. It occupies an ambivalent space between the colonial power and its subjects.

Rather than simply looking for direct and overt opposition to colonialism, Bhabha suggests that other responses (such as uncertainty, ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradiction) may be equally important forms of resistance to colonial domination. Bhabha examines the cultural issues associated with liminality and ambivalence because he is interested in those in-between moments within colonialism that initiate new sites of identity, new collaborations, and new conflicts over identity.

Bhabha does not believe that ethnic or cultural identities are preexisting, homogeneous entities. He also believes that it is too simplistic to suggest that cultural difference simply involves polarities. And he certainly does not believe that particular ethnic groups have preexisting cultural traits. Instead, he suggests that these identities are thoroughly affected by power relationships and that all identities are performative.

That is, people negotiate and perform their identities in an ongoing, reflective, and complex manner, albeit within certain economic, cultural, and political constraints. Identities are always influenced by cultural, territorial, and psychological factors; they rarely exist in the simplistic manner suggested by colonialist ideology. Likewise, he suggests that cultural identities are always incomplete, open to translation, and capable of negotiation and change.

One form of resistance to colonialism that Bhabha emphasizes is mimicry. He believes that when colonized people mimic colonizers, they demonstrate the ambivalence inherent in colonial discourse, and they also challenge its authority. Mimicry by colonized people indicates that they partially represent and recognize the colonized, but it also demonstrates their resistance to colonialist discourse. Through mimicry, colonized people reinscribe the meanings of colonialist discourse, subtly challenging its meaning. This means that colonialism does not involve a simple, unilateral power dynamic, but instead a process of displacement, distortion, and dislocation.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, Bhabha's approach relies on a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis, engagement with deconstruction (an analytical approach often associated with the work of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida), and postmodern ideas about performativity and identity. His emphasis on ambivalence, contradiction, hybridity, and liminality has opened up many new areas for study—providing a new framework for studying the patterns of recognition and disavowal that are involved in the negotiation of racial, cultural, and historical differences.

Beyond Additive Models of Identity

The complex ways in which colonialism and postcolonialism intersect with various forms of social stratification have been an important focus of recent postcolonial study. But integrating experiences from colonial and postcolonial contexts does not simply mean adding them on to preexisting understandings of concepts such as race, culture, or ethnicity (or more broadly, other analytical categories such as gender, sexuality, or disability). Instead, such work challenges scholars to fundamentally rethink the analytical categories and essentialisms contained within many sociological concepts. For instance, studies of colonial desire have challenged basic understandings of

sexuality, race, eroticism, exoticism, fetishism, conquest, domination, and violence.

Postcolonial studies of AIDS are another example of the attempt to explore the ways in which colonialism intersects with various forms of prejudice, such as racism and sexism. For instance, scholarship has emphasized the racist discourses that attribute contamination and disease to particular populations (such as the process of attributing AIDS to people from Haiti and their alleged bestiality in the early stages of the AIDS epidemic). These racist images have been laden with sexist messages also with specific emphasis on the alleged hypersexuality of Black women. By highlighting such prejudices, postcolonial scholarship has identified important power dimensions that affect broader discourses of public health, gender, sexuality, and international relations.

The study of transnational identity, ethnicity, culture, and language has also become a major area of recent scholarly interest. The liminal positions of various groups, in the context of transnational migration, have also been incorporated into some postcolonial research. Questions of home, exile, diaspora, and cultural identity have, therefore, become very important themes of such scholarship. Also, acculturation and creolization (the development of new social or linguistic practices as a result of cross-cultural contact) have been an emerging area of studies of such transnational immigration.

Experiences in the contact zones between nations and cultures, or in the borderlands, have also been a major focus for recent postcolonial scholarship. The borderlands (literally and metaphorically) are sites of transition and displacement where dominant assumptions are unsettled and new hybrid forms of power and identity emerge. However, borders are sites of exclusion where national boundaries are articulated, examined, and policed. Decisions about inclusion and exclusion at the borders are important statements about conceptions of the nation and its citizens.

Another theme of recent work is to identify hidden forms of power—such as the forms of privilege associated with Whiteness. For instance, the ways in which Caucasian ethnicity influences the standpoint and position of researchers and of community members have become emerging areas of scholarly interest. Likewise, the inclusion and exclusion of various ethnicities within the broader discourse of Whiteness (such as the interstitial position of Jews in this regard).

Qualitative Methods Used in Studying Postcolonialism

Robert Young's (2001) cross-national study of the development of postcolonialism is one example of the way in which qualitative methods have been used to study the development of specific national anticolonial movements and their interaction with the history and legacy of colonialism. Young's broad-ranging study covers Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America—but what is noteworthy in terms of its methodology is its deliberate attempt to recognize and incorporate the diversity of experiences that have occurred in various postcolonial situations. Young's approach, like that of some (but certainly not all) postcolonial theorists, draws heavily on—and emphasizes—Marxist economic themes in various transnational contexts. Young's transnational research is the exception rather than the rule, however. In general, the scholarly study of postcolonialism tends to focus on specific national contexts—and may involve field research on a particular topic—so that the researcher can record (as close as possible) “authentic” Indigenous perspectives on the topics being investigated. When working with some Aboriginal communities, this means that scholars have an obligation to describe how they came by certain information, what access they had to the community being studied, and how they conducted any fieldwork with this community. Fieldwork with Aboriginal communities in a postcolonial context has additional ethical obligations—ensuring that their rights (including their right to be free from harm, their right to be consulted on projects that affect their lives, and their right to confidentiality and privacy) are upheld.

Conclusion

Postcolonialism (the study of the ways in which past and present societies are influenced by a history of colonialism) is a theoretical approach that is gaining in popularity as a result of the need to theorize cross-cultural contact in the context of colonialism and globalization. Although early postcolonial critics, such as Fanon, tended to characterize the power relations as involving colonizers and colonized subjects, later work tended to move away from such simplistic binaries. Such later work has emphasized the importance of studying hybridity, ambivalence, and areas of intense contact such as the borderlands, in order to

develop a more sophisticated and nuanced approach to postcolonialism. The complex ways in which postcolonialism intersects with categories of gender, sexuality, and other forms of social stratification has also been a topic of growing scholarly interest in recent years. Qualitative research in this field tends to emphasize the situatedness of the researcher and the nation state being examined. Overgeneralization beyond the realms of one particular postcolonial context is particularly frowned upon in this area of study.

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See also Authenticity; Critical Race Theory; Field Research; Otherness; Situatedness; Voice

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POSTMODERNISM

Perhaps the most radically transformative intellectual movement (or perhaps, more accurately, movements) of the latter part of the 20th century, postmodernism nonetheless defies ready definition. The term, used by Daniel Bell, Jean Francois Lyotard, Mark Poster, and others to describe contemporary, mediasaturated late-capitalist society is also widely, even indiscriminately, used to describe the work of a range of influential Continental philosophers and social thinkers, such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard. Postmodernism in the social sciences is strongly associated with a range of approaches to social research, including discourse analysis, post-structuralism, social constructivism, critical theory, feminist and queer theories, and so on. Indeed, ideas associated with postmodernism have become so all-pervasive in contemporary academic discourses, and its proponents and critics have become so numerous,

that its influence can be seen in virtually all areas not only of the social sciences from anthropology and sociology to information behavior research and knowledge management, but also of the academy as a whole.

Despite or perhaps because of this wide-ranging influence, a coherent definition of postmodernism remains problematic. Many of the key writers associated with it propound markedly different theoretical approaches or epistemological positions, while the research approaches and methodologies employed by postmodern researches range from textual analysis and deconstruction to interviewing and ethnomethodologies.

The term postmodernism is perhaps itself significant—indicating, as it does, not an affiliation with a particular philosophical viewpoint, but rather a desire to transcend the limitations of the modernist viewpoint that has dominated Western academic discourses since the Enlightenment. If postmodern writers and approaches can be said to have anything in common, despite their manifest heterogeneity, it is their critique of the core values and belief systems that have underpinned modernist approaches—such as rationalism, objectivity, and the idea of scientific as social progress.

One important area of ambiguity surrounding the term postmodern relates to the fact that it is widely—and ambiguously—used to describe both a sociohistorical epoch (contemporary Western, postindustrial society) and an (admittedly related) paradigm shift in the late 20th-century academy.

Postmodern Society

Baudrillard argues that while the modernist period of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries was dominated by industrialization, mass production, and commodification, contemporary postmodern society has become a postindustrial mass-media society where the emergence of new information and communication technologies allows the virtually unlimited reproduction and transmission of signs and symbols. Drawing on semiotic theory, he argues that the resulting continuous and ever-changing flood of signs and simulations has led to a hyper-real society where the distinction between the real and the unreal has become meaningless. This new hyper-real, postmodern society, he argues, is a “second revolution” as radically transformative of late 20th-century society as

the industrial revolution was of the 19th. He further argues that this radical transformation of the nature of knowledge and reality has rendered all existing modernist social theories obsolete.

Similarly, Lyotard in his *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) also argues that the emergence of computers and information and of communication technologies (ICTs) has radically transformed the social order of contemporary Western society. He argues that the emergent ICTs have undermined existing, modernist conceptions of knowledge and legitimacy. Recent developments in the sciences, as well as the emergence of intellectual movements such as feminism and action research have also, he argues, undermined the authority of existing meta-narratives, whether positivist, hermeneutic, or Marxist. Postmodern society is, therefore, defined by an incredulity regarding meta-narratives. For Lyotard, postmodern society is characterized by heterogeneity—a proliferation of different discourses and disciplines in the arts, sciences, and popular culture and a consequent decline in the hegemony of prevailing modernist social and political ideologies.

Like Bell and Baudrillard, Lyotard also sees postmodern society as dominated by postindustrial capitalism. Further, he argues that if industrial capitalism saw the commodification of agricultural and industrial goods, then postmodern capitalism is characterized by the commodification of knowledge.

Its association with developments in the contemporary West raises the question of whether postmodern ideas and theories are relevant only in that particular sociohistorical context. As commentators such as Steven Seidman have pointed out, debate about the emergence of a radically different postmodern society has occurred in the context of the Western democracies with their well-developed ICT infrastructures and advanced capitalist economies—and even there, largely among academic writers, many with strong associations with the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The question of whether the idea of a postmodern society has any relevance outside the developed world remains an open one.

Since one of the key principles espoused by postmodern thinkers such as Foucault and Lyotard has been a critique of teleologies—the idea that a single theory can provide a universal explanation—postmodernists would have no difficulty in accepting the notion that postmodernism is itself the product of a particular sociohistorical context and that different contexts will inevitably require different solutions.

Postmodern Theory

What is clear, however, is that postmodernism's critique of prevailing modernist approaches, its problematizing of many of the key assumptions underpinning 20th-century academic research practices, has caused many researchers to fundamentally reevaluate their way of looking at the world. As such, it marks a major paradigm shift, particularly in the humanities and social sciences.

Historical Antecedents: Modernism and Its Critics

The major research paradigms of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries in both the sciences and the social sciences, such as Marxism and scientific empiricism, were the product of modernist world-views. The historical and philosophical antecedents of modernism can be traced to the work of late 17th- and 18th-century Enlightenment philosophers such as René Descartes and Immanuel Kant, who were themselves drawing on and adapting ideas from classical philosophy.

Drawing on classical traditions of logic and rhetoric, as well as the Aristotelian tradition of the importance of observation, a strong rationalist tradition emerged during the Enlightenment. From this emergence evolved the principles of positivism, scientific objectivism, and empiricism that underpinned the development of the modern sciences and social sciences, from biology to sociology.

In the modernist, rationalist view, science was constructed as producing a truth superior to anything that had gone before, rendering all previous belief systems obsolete. The “objective” scientific researcher employing the tools of empiricism was seen as uncovering “facts”—unraveling the mysteries of the physical and social worlds—discovering and describing and “capturing” aspects of “reality,” which in this positivist paradigm is seen as objective, external, and observable. The philosophical basis for such modernist approaches is *Cartesian dualism*—a distinction between the observing mind and the object of research—as is a tendency to view language as an essentially neutral tool for the representation and transmission of scientific discoveries. From this approach developed the idea of scientific progress—that science offered humankind not only the means to understand both the physical and social worlds, but also the

opportunity to create a new, better society in which old problems and prejudices would be swept away.

Modernist social science was perhaps best exemplified by the influential Chicago School of the 1920s and 1930s, a positivist school that aimed to develop social theory and research methodologies based on scientific principles of deductive analysis.

The origins of postmodernism are complex, but important historical antecedents of the movement include the work of the 19th-century philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as the work of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.

Nietzsche's radical perspectivism, his rejection of positivism was an important influence on postmodernist thought. Nietzsche rejected rationalists' claims that they could describe objective reality, arguing that all scientific facts are—and can only ever be—interpretations. This argument is central to postmodern perspectives on the nature of knowledge.

Wittgenstein's work in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) on the primacy of language—"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world"—is also clearly a core influence on postmodernism, which is frequently referred to as the linguistic turn in social theory. Saussure's structuralism, although in many ways a quintessentially modernist approach to defining the nature of language, was nonetheless an important influence on the work of such key postmodern writers as Foucault, Baudrillard, and Derrida. Saussure's vital contribution to the development of postmodernism derives from his contention that the relationship between the signifier and the signified—between symbol and what it represents—is a purely arbitrary one.

Knowledge and Power

If modernist social science was defined by the development of meta-narratives—teleologies or foundational theories, such as Marxism, claiming to have explanatory power across all time periods and cultural contexts—then, as Lyotard (1984) points out, postmodernism is defined by incredulity regarding meta-narratives. Postmodern critics point out that rationalist meta-narratives are not universal or objective, but are themselves the product of a particular sociohistorical context. A number of postmodern critics, such as Foucault, have pointed out that modernist discourse emerged from the 18th-century battle between humanist ideas and traditional religious worldviews—and

the political battle between the emerging industrial bourgeoisie and the traditional aristocratic and ecclesiastical ruling elites. Modernism emerged as a means of making sense of the social, political, and intellectual challenges of a changing world.

Similarly, postmodernists such as Lyotard argue that the social and political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s—civil rights, student and labor movements, the rise of feminism, gay rights, and so on—have raised serious questions about the equity and objectivity of modernists' social theories and institutions. They ask the question, "Who has been excluded or marginalized by the 'universal' narratives of 'equitable' Western social discourse?" They argue that just as the industrial age required a new way of looking at the world, which was modernism, so must contemporary postindustrial society, which problematizes this worldview and requires the development of new theories, new paradigms, to meet the challenges of a postmodern world.

Postmodernists explicitly reject the totalizing claims of modernism. The work of Foucault is particularly important in this context. Although Foucault rejected identification with postmodernism, in an ironic example of his own principle of death of the author—that meaning is not dictated by authors but constructed by audiences—he has become one of the writers most strongly identified with the movement and one of the most important influences on postmodern theories and approaches.

For Foucault, meaning—whether in a text or a natural or social phenomenon—is not discovered, as positivists believe, but constructed. He argued that knowledge is not objective, to be measured in terms of its supposed correspondence to an external reality. Rather, it is a social construct, the product of the shared beliefs and interpretive practices (what Foucault called the discursive rules) shared by a particular community at a particular social point in space and time.

Foucault and other postmodern theorists, thus, reject the Cartesian dualist worldview of an objective material world and a subjective consciousness, instead regarding even apparently individual meaning-making—the creation, acceptance, rejection, and reinterpretation of knowledge as intersubjective. Postmodernists argue that knowledge and understandings, the sense-making processes, are never truly idiosyncratic, rather they are inextricably linked to social context. People learn through experience how to construct meaning in

different contexts and what they hold to be true will reflect (although not necessarily agree with) the beliefs and understandings of those around them. Furthermore, all discourse communities—whether nuclear physicists or 10-year-olds on the school playground—develop shared sets of social practices (discursive rules) by which the validity of a particular truth claim can be tested, accepted, modified, or rejected and a shared understanding negotiated.

These social processes of collective meaning-making Foucault called “the Battle for Truth.” He argued that the dynamics of discursive practice—the rejection, acceptance, reaffirmation, and reinvention of truth claims—are both the product and the producer of power relations. For Foucault, knowledge and power are inextricably linked, two sides of the same coin. Any acceptance of a knowledge claim as valid or true by a discourse community generates power—knowledge (*pouvoir-savoir*) within that community and will affect the subsequent sense-making processes of members of that community.

Scientific discourses from this perspective are, therefore, seen not as the privileged discoverers of objective facts, but the product of power–knowledge relations within and between scientific communities and their sociopolitical context. Discourses are sites for generating social agreement but also resistances—changing circumstances and the dynamics of discursive interaction must inevitably give rise to new discourses and new ways of looking at the world.

Like Foucault, other key postmodern thinkers’ work is also characterized by a rejection of modernist paradigms and grounded in a fundamental reconceptualization of the nature of language, signs and symbols, and knowledge and power.

Further developing Saussure’s insights, Derrida developed his poststructuralist deconstructionist approach. Derrida argues that since all meaning is contextual and based on difference, any philosophical or social theory that claims to uncover a fundamental truth is inherently flawed. His deconstructionist approach is, thus, a “method for revealing the radical contextuality of all systems of thought” (Dickens & Fontana, 1994, p. 8).

Deconstructionism has been influential in a number of areas of the social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, where it has been used to question the authoritative status of traditional ethnographic texts and techniques. The technique has also been used by feminist researchers, for example, to analyze patriarchal discourses.

Critics and Criticism

Postmodernism has also attracted a great deal of criticism, both from within the academy and from politicians and the mass media. This criticism has no doubt been exacerbated by postmodernism’s long-standing association with the left wing—many of its leading figures such as Foucault, Derrida, and Baudrillard come out of the French postwar Marxist tradition—but not all criticisms can be attributed to political and social conservatives. Continental postmodern writers in particular are frequently accused of being impenetrable and obscure. This criticism may at least in part be attributed to the fact that their work was written in the context of European philosophical and intellectual traditions and debates that the majority of English language readers are unfamiliar with.

Another criticism of postmodern writers such as Foucault, Derrida, and Baudrillard is that while their work is grounded in a critique of teleologies, they have simply replaced modernist teleologies with meta-narratives of their own. It certainly has to be acknowledged that in developing their theories, postmodern authors have not—and can not—entirely exempt themselves from the discursive and rhetorical practices of post-Enlightenment Western scholarly life. It is perhaps ironic that Foucault, the champion, along with Barthes, of “death of the author” has become perhaps the most cited author in the social science and humanities literatures.

Among the most important critics of postmodernism has been Jurgen Habermas. Habermas interprets the heterogenous nature of contemporary societies as an extension of the modernism state. He sees modernism as an incomplete project and regards postmodern theories as anti-Enlightenment, even fascist.

There has been widespread criticism of postmodernism’s cultural relativism, which has been characterized as nihilistic, even morally bankrupt. This critique seems to be based on a belief that if all discourses are social constructs and the product of social agreement, then repressive and discriminatory discourses must be just as valid as emancipatory ones. Foucault argued that this was not the case. Rather, in recognizing gender, race, social class, and so on as social constructs, postmodern perspectives can form the basis for political debate and societal change.

Research Implications

In questioning the fundamental truths that have underpinned Western academic practice for centuries,

postmodernism requires social researchers to question and radically redefine their identity. Some critics, such as Baudrillard, even suggest that given the modernist origins and assumptions of disciplines such as sociology, postmodernism requires the “death” of the social sciences as we know them.

Others take a more optimistic view. Lyotard argues that postmodern ideas can liberate, reinvigorate, and reinvent the social sciences. Postmodern social science, its proponents argue, involves abandoning the absolute standards and grand meta-narratives of the modernist tradition in favor of more pragmatic, limited, and sociohistorically located forms of social enquiry.

So while modernist, positivist approaches saw research as a window on the world, with the objective social researcher applying research methods with appropriate rigor in order to discover and capture the reality of the phenomenon being investigated, postmodernists demand researchers recognize the social or constructive nature of the research process itself. Postmodern researchers such as Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, for example, argue that interviewing needs to be seen not as a mechanism for accessing the participant’s consciousness, but as an interactional event. Postmodernists argue that the rhetorical nature of the research interview needs to be recognized—that it is a narrative produced by the interaction between researcher and researched, produced in a particular discursive context, embedded in power relations. Postmodernists argue that social researchers must reject the totalizing claims of modernist approaches and recognize that all research is a partial and sociohistorically located construction.

Postmodern perspectives have been applied to an enormous range of sociocultural contexts and phenomena: from Foucault’s archaeology of the discourses and institutions of the Enlightenment and the classical world, through Lyotard’s macrosociological analysis of contemporary society, through more microlevel or localized interview-based studies (such as the work of Gubrium & Holstein in sociology), to autoethnographies. Postmodernism should, thus, be seen as a sensibility or worldview not confined to any particular discipline or methodological approach.

Postmodern principles require researchers to be more reflective on their research practices, more conscientious in describing the influences on their work and the power relations that underpin any research process: between researcher and researched, between researcher and their field, and so on. These principles

also imply that researchers should reject the modernist tradition of seeing the researcher as a neutral, objective observer and write more openly about their own role in shaping the research process. Some postmodern researchers, such as the sociologist Laurel Richardson, even argue that social researchers should cast off the straitjacket of modernist academic prose in favor of rhetorical forms that allow researchers to more openly engage with their emotions.

The issues raised by postmodern theories have thus engendered a widespread debate about the nature and limitations of social research, the effects of which are still being played out throughout the social sciences.

Michael Russell Olsson

See also Constructivism; Deconstruction; Discourse;

Discourse Analysis; Epistemology; Foucauldian Discourse Analysis; Intersubjectivity; Knowledge; Positivism; Postpositivism; Poststructuralism; Power; Semiotics; Social Constructionism

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POSTPOSITIVISM

Postpositivism describes an approach to knowledge, but it is also implicitly an assessment of the nature of reality. Thus, it is both an epistemological and an ontological position. It may be simplistically defined

as those approaches that historically succeeded positivism (e.g., realism), but more rigorously, it may be understood as a critique of positivist epistemology and ontology in which positivist claims concerning both the objective nature of reality and the ability of science to discern that reality are rejected.

Positivism and Its Critics

Positivism is a position in the philosophy of science that emphasizes the importance of observation for the growth of knowledge and thus considers the measurement of phenomena as central to the development of understanding. In its more sophisticated characterizations, however, it recognizes the need for a theoretical framework within which to structure data. Karl Popper, the philosopher of science, argued that theories should be tested against data with the intention of their falsification and subsequent replacement with improved theoretical models. In this way, science would contribute a closer and closer approximation to the truth of how phenomena work and the causal relations between these phenomena. Positivism has been widely applied in the natural sciences, where empirical observation is used to generate theories and models that can be generalized. This approach rejects nonobservable (and hence untestable) sources of knowledge as unscientific.

Positivism can be criticized for ruling out various sources of understanding of the world including those deriving from human experiences, reasoning, or interpretation as inappropriate for scientific enquiry. In the social sciences, these sources of understanding (e.g., qualitative interview data) are of great importance as bases for the growth of knowledge, and many areas of social scientific enquiry would be impoverished without recourse to such sources because this interpretative work is itself the subject of interest. A second criticism is that positivism ignores context and attempts to establish generalities independent of setting. In social science, setting is often an integral component of activity and as such, cannot be discounted—indeed, claims to knowledge require full contextualization. A third criticism is that as social order emerges from the sense making of human beings it will be largely contingent upon value-perspectives, and it is problematic to describe a single truth concerning the nature of the social world. Finally, positivism is committed to removing subjectivity from knowledge growth and thus denies any role for reflexivity among researchers.

For these reasons, positivism has been widely criticized since the inception of social science and has been largely replaced with postpositivist epistemologies (theories of knowledge) and ontologies (theories of the nature of reality), particularly in qualitative research. For postpositivists, while the pursuit of knowledge remains an aim of social scientific enquiry, the concept of an absolute truth may be seen as an aspiration rather than as something that can be discovered once and for all. Understanding rather than explanation is sometimes regarded as the objective of postpositivist enquiry, and this objective is often further constrained by acknowledgments of context and contingency. Furthermore, in postpositivism the role of the researcher as interpreter of data is fully acknowledged, as is the importance of reflexivity in research practice.

The Roots of Postpositivism

Postpositivism can be defined broadly to incorporate approaches to knowledge growth rejected by positivism as unscientific, such as psychoanalysis, Marxism, and astrology. However, this entry will restrict itself to examining the rival ontological and epistemological approaches to the theory and practice of social research that are both opposed to and critical of positivism.

An early manifestation of postpositivism in the social sciences can be found in the work of Max Weber, the late 19th- and early 20th-century sociologist. Weber developed the concept of *Verstehen*, or understanding, as a hermeneutic technique by which knowledge of the social world is to be gleaned. At the root of Weber's concept is the recognition that social realities need to be understood from the perspective of the subject rather than that of the observer and in totality rather than in isolation. However, to achieve this perspective, it is insufficient simply to try to imagine oneself in another's position or to interpret another's responses to a research instrument from the basis of the researcher's own assumptions about what these responses may mean. Rather, researchers need to recognize that actors are active subjects who are productive of their social reality, not simply the objects of social forces. The process of *Verstehen* involves understanding the intention and context of these social realities for the subject herself or himself. For social researchers to gain knowledge about actors in a field will require that the meanings and interpretations

of those subjects are fully acknowledged and understood. Understanding rather than causality is the key element to this approach.

This perspective offers the basis for both an interpretivist social science that recognizes the need to understand and interpret the meanings of subjects in order to make sense of the social order and a constructivist (or constructionist) approach in which social reality is seen not as objective and independent of actors, but as emergent from individual or collaborative constructions of concepts, values, beliefs, ethics, and norms of actors within a social field. The stability of social order derives not from social structures and independent forces, but from the customary habits of thought and shared meanings of actors that create a sense of continuity and order. Although these customs may be based in rationalizations, it is also possible to extend these constructions to encompass emotional or affective responses. Consequently, for the social researcher, *Verstehen* would require understanding not only rational thoughts and reflections, but also the affective components that contribute to the constructions of an actor's or groups of actor's social reality.

Methodologically, it will require a degree of empathy with the actors that a researcher is trying to understand and as a result, an element of reflexivity about the processes by which constructs are generated and deployed in the constitution of social reality. These elements have been highly influential in the development of social science research in the 20th century and have underpinned the development of movements including symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, feminist, and postmodern approaches in the social sciences. In all these approaches, the constructed and multiple character of the social world is acknowledged, and the need for reflexivity is seen as central to the enterprise of both research and social engagement.

Development of Postpositivist Ontologies

During the mid-20th century, Weber's postpositivist approach to the study of society was linked to phenomenology (the study of the structures of consciousness) to establish the basis for a sociology of knowledge that questioned many of the tenets of positivism and thus the objectivist approaches to social research that derive from the latter. Names associated

with this development include Alfred Schutz, Thomas Luckmann, and Peter Berger, but this development can be discerned also in Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science, which recognized the social production of all scientific knowledge in both the natural and social sciences. This body of work underpins many elements of postpositivist research including the main strands of interpretivism, constructivism, and reflexive approaches, as well as many threads within the sociology of science and technology.

Drawing both on Weber's notion of *Verstehen* and upon phenomenological concerns with the collaborative nature of meaning, Schutz offered not only a perspective on the construction of reality but also an agenda for social research. He argued that knowledge and social reality are results of the sense-making work of human beings, but that these do not simply emerge out of individual rationalizations, but are constructed collaboratively between subjects and that, therefore, this intersubjective social production of knowledge (and the consequent social distribution of knowledge) should be the object of research.

He suggested that, unlike the objects of study in the natural sciences, those studied in social research are active, sense-making human beings, who are engaged in interpreting and ascribing meaning to their world in interaction with each other. Yet this description also applies to the social scientist, who is a further active interpreter of the same social world inhabited by those she or he would observe and understand. The social scientist is differentiated only by her or his aspiration to objectivity, in theory at least deriving from an interest that is purely intellectual.

Schutz pointed out a consequence for social science that is both methodological and epistemological. Researchers need to acknowledge their own interpretative work as they analyze the social worlds they are researching and to recognize that in making sense of an actor's sense making, they impose a second level of interpretation that is subject to *Verstehen*. This issue is critical for social researchers, especially those using qualitative interpretivist approaches, as they must recognize that their human, rationalizing, constructivist activity is behind their analyses of actors' life-worlds. This limitation may lead to accusations that these analyses are no more than relativistic interpretations. Schutz was keen to find ways to ensure that social science interpretations were congruent with actors' own interpretations and imposed the requirement that the former's interpretations should be comprehensible by

the latter and thus consistent with the understanding that an actor would impute to a social phenomenon.

Schutz's analysis has a further consequence. Because social science is part of the social world, the theories and models propounded by social scientists may contribute to the very social reality that is being researched. This possibility is the double hermeneutic of social science, according to sociologist Anthony Giddens.

This approach to the social scientific enterprise encompasses the main features of postpositivism. First, it acknowledges that the objects of study are engaged in an ongoing project of producing the social world, and therefore, their sense making must become part of the subject matter of a social science, ruling out a simplistic limitation of study to social facts and accepting the context-specificity of knowledge. Second, it recognizes that the tools of study in social science are human beings' own capacities as interpreters of the world. As such, these instruments work by means of exactly the same processes of intersubjective meaning-attribution that the social scientist seeks to study. Although there may be an aspiration to objectivity by the social scientist, this aspiration inheres only in her or his detachment from the practical commitments and interests of her or his subjects, not from some essential difference in her or his ability to interpret free from values, norms, and so forth. This problem leads to the third feature, the need for social scientists to be reflexive about their interpretative work, both to aspire to detachment but at the same time to accept its ultimate impossibility.

Realist Postpositivism

These elements of a full-blown postpositivist social science acknowledge both the ontological nature of social worlds as based in phenomenology and the epistemological constraints that result from the limitations that this ontology imposes on knowledge growth and the pursuit of truth in social science. The inevitable relativism that follows from fully adopting the postpositivist stance has been problematic in the social sciences, as its practitioners have been keen to retain some aspirations toward learning the truth about the social world. This problem has led to two contrary perspectives within postpositivism that can be broadly described as realist and constructivist. The former adheres to the notion that there is some objective reality to the social world, while acknowledging

that the Schutzian analysis of social science as interpretative and therefore ultimately subjective sense making precludes the discovery of that reality once and for all. All that can be achieved is the aspiration to knowledge through rigor, multiple data and theory analyses, building and testing. Constructivists, by contrast, consider not only that objective knowledge is impossible because of these problems of interpretation, but also that given that the world is variously constructed by human beings with their context- and interest-specific views of the world anyway, that reality is itself multiple, contingent, and value laden. Constructivists would contend that realism cannot, therefore, be considered a postpositivist position.

The roots of the realist ontological compromise can be discerned in the work of Schutz's phenomenological contemporaries and sometime collaborators Berger and Luckmann, although it has been further developed to establish contemporary critical realism. Berger and Luckmann argued in *The Social Construction of Reality* and other works that the social world has a dual character. On one hand, it is the outcome of the constructive work done by human beings as they seek to make sense of the world. On the other, because this work is done intersubjectively with other people, it achieves a kind of independence and, over time, accretes a "commonsense" reality with layers of institutionalization, tradition, and socializations. Within these relatively stable meanings, people's sense making becomes progressively trammelled, until the social world has the appearance of objective reality with a semblance of continuity that also limits the meanings that can be attributed to objects. This limitation renders the social world available to enquiry independent of the human agency that constitutes it. Subsequent realist perspectives have built on this idea to argue that society is not created by individuals, though it is reproduced and transformed by them. Rather, the enduring social structures, processes, and institutions (e.g., class stratification and liberal democracy) are always the conditions of human agency and amount to an independent social reality to be studied objectively and potentially fully described.

This realist position, however, does not simply recapitulate positivism. Although realism considers there is an objective social reality that could be discerned were social researchers to possess sufficiently sophisticated tools, realism recognizes that when it comes to studying the social world, our tools (human understanding and interpretation) are inevitably value laden,

theory laden and context dependent. All that can be hoped for is that by continual efforts toward methodological rigor, triangulation from various data sources, and meticulous analysis of data that an approximation to truth can be derived and generalized.

Constructivism and Poststructuralism

The tensions within realism between individual interpretations of the world and an independent social reality that is still reproduced and even transformed by agency do not exist for constructivist and poststructuralist approaches. Although drawing to an extent upon phenomenological approaches (but with a background within but also in opposition to anthropological structuralism), these perspectives reject any notion of an objective reality to the social world independent of human action and thought and conclude that we cannot seek to study society and social action in the same way that a natural scientist would study a chemical reaction. The basis for this conclusion, broadly speaking, inheres in the primacy of language as the mediator of the human experience of reality.

Poststructuralist thinking is highly skeptical about truth and antagonistic to any assertion that one or another interpretation of reality is the only way in which it may be understood. Power and authority, often vested in archives of ascribed knowledge, underpin attempts to persuade groups and cultures to one view or judgment, for example, to a particular perspective on sexuality, form of worship, models of health, and so forth. Language comes to serve these authoritative bodies of knowledge so that they become more and more closed to challenge, and according to Jean-Francois Lyotard, may serve to effectively silence contrary voices. Furthermore, Michel Foucault argued that sources of power and systems of knowledge work together to create subjectivities in those whom they seek to persuade. However, poststructuralist approaches also recognize the unending potential that human subjects have for resisting these bodies of knowledge, and the entire history of human society can be understood as the struggle between power and resistance to control over what counts as knowledge and what it is to live ethically. The aim of poststructuralism has in general been to expose these power plays and claims to truth and thus to undermine them and offer alternative ways of thinking about the social world.

Constructivist and poststructuralist ontologies are consequently interested less in the continuities within

the social order and more with the fluidity of meanings that are held by social actors. They emphasize the extreme context-specificity of knowledge, suggesting that truth depends entirely upon point of view and that multiple truths may be said to exist concurrently within groups or communities that operate doddering systems of thought or have different commitments. Epistemologically, this means that knowledge is entirely dependent on context and indeed that the role of the researcher (with all her or his baggage of culture, norms and values) in constructing knowledge about a research setting must also be fully accounted for.

These perspectives have been highly influential within qualitative research, and in their strongest forms (e.g., James Clifford and George Marcus's collection *Writing Culture*) have sought to expose the processes and rhetorical devices whereby qualitative fieldwork has been translated into (realist) social science knowledge. These include the techniques by which the researcher's view is privileged over that of the researched (who sometimes appears in realist texts as a "cultural dupe," unable to discern the reality of her or his own situation and doomed to false consciousness), and the politics of the academy, which considers social theory as superior to the practical knowledge held by participants in a field setting. Constructivism variously argues for research that is context sensitive, engaged with the practical needs of the subjects of research, and committed to supporting resistance to power and authority. It is critical of social science knowledge that does not reflect on its own production and its own values and assumptions.

Constructivism approaches to ontology and epistemology also underpin various other strands in social theory that are not explicitly poststructuralist in provenance. Some feminist researchers, for example, have adopted this stance to critique both the ontological status of social reality as constructed by patriarchy, and the epistemology of positivism and realism in which (male) knowledge about the social world is claimed as truth. These perspectives emphasize the importance of reflexivity for researchers, both in understanding data and in acknowledging their own identities and subjectivities. Broadly, these approaches embrace relativism in knowledge growth, emphasizing the value of a research practice that is sensitive to difference and does not seek to establish "grand narratives" of theory and social modeling. They further embrace reflexive knowledge in addition to empirical data as sources for exploring the social world and

potentially transforming and improving the lives of those they research.

Summary

Postpositivism is a critique of both the ontological and epistemological foundations of theories of knowledge. It is a range of perspectives that have in common a rejection of the positivist claims to be able to discern a single social reality and to observation as the sole technique for its discernment. Realism and constructivism both recognize that our ability to know the world is constrained by the need for interpretation by researchers of data. Constructivists, however, also reject any sense that there is an independent reality that is there to be uncovered and consider instead that the social world is a consequence of authoritative claims to know the truth. The purpose of research, in the latter perspective, is exploratory and transformational.

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See also Constructivism; Positivism; Realism; Relativism

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POSTREPRESENTATION

Postrepresentation is primarily concerned with the extent to which researchers disclose authorial presence or

“voice” within their work. For the purposes of this entry, we can operationally define it as the process of transforming subjectively collected data into an intersubjective narrative. This transformation is brought about through the researcher’s use of his or her own lens of experience being used as a filter for subjectively collected data taken from the participants of the research.

Because qualitative researchers are a part of and not apart from their studies in qualitative inquiry, qualitative research approaches lend themselves particularly well to the explicit inclusion of the author’s first-person perspective (i.e., the personal voice). In qualitative research, the researcher’s voice is always present, so the phenomenon of postrepresentation is avoided only in autobiographical and autoethnographical accounts, where the researcher either is the participant or is deeply entrenched in the relationship of the phenomena of interest.

Narrative, Truth, and Rigor in Postrepresentation

By employing a narrative style, the researcher attempts to represent the subjects of research by describing his or her interpretation of the phenomenon of interest. Was the authorial presence balanced? Did it increase the reader’s understanding of the research? How relevant is the author’s perspective to the reader’s understanding of the data? Researcher and reader are enlightened and enriched by the inclusion of the researcher’s voice, the researcher through self-awareness and the reader through the representation revealed by the author. Balance can be gained through determining how much or how little authorial presence is relevant to the effective portrayal of the participant’s reality.

Valid representation of their informants, participants, or co-researchers concerning the phenomenon of their inquiries is a primary purpose qualitative researchers seek in presenting their studies. The measures taken for achieving validity or trustworthiness of qualitatively collected data have been largely constructed to maintain this representation using credible procedures. These procedures, including rich thick description, member checks, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and inquiry audits, are all situated to promote and maintain that representation.

Held within the need for such procedures are two unrelated phenomena: (1) under-representation, where

the participant's experience with the phenomena is captured in an incomplete manner thus under-representing the nature of the phenomena under study and, (2) postrepresentation, where the participant's experience or perspective is interwoven within the researcher's perspective of the experience. To the novice qualitative researcher, under-representation appears more imperative—"Did I get 'it' right?" In this regard researchers employ a variety of verification processes in order to avoid under-representation and to gain epistemologically credible products from the research. To the practiced qualitative researcher, postrepresentation appears unavoidable and more critical in terms of producing meaningful research. "*Did I tell it right?*" captures the central postrepresentation dilemma. In the former "it" is the central concern; in the latter it becomes the "I." On one hand there is epistemology (it) and on the other, axiology (I).

The challenge of postrepresentation begins as the qualitative researcher employs the use of the personal pronoun by using first-person accounts. While this is an acceptable and useful practice in producing readable qualitative narratives, postrepresentation holds that the products of qualitative research are fictive narratives concerning the phenomena of interest because of these first-person accounts. The evidence for this is accounted for when one considers the researcher as the tool for data collection within qualitative studies. That being the case, all data are scrubbed through the researcher's values and currently held reality, which may or may not be close to the values and reality of those being researched.

Postrepresentation: Challenge and Critique

Postrepresentation represents both a challenge to and critique of qualitative inquiry. Epistemology can be defined as the study of the nature of knowing or knowledge. Ontology, on the other hand, is often referred to as the study of reality. The challenge for qualitative researchers is to position their findings epistemologically within the nature of reality (ontology). The critique centers upon the philosophical paradox of achieving the truth concerning the phenomena of interest. In the qualitative case this is represented as subjective truth while in quantitative designs the representation is objective truth. The difficulty present in qualitative research, and not present in quantitative designs, is that due to the researcher's presence this subjective truth is transformed within the researcher-participant relationship

into an intersubjective disclosure that is less related to a singular essence of "truth" and more representative of the reality surrounding the phenomena of interest than either the researcher or participant could capture or articulate on their own. The "I" of both the researcher and the participant is resituated as the "we" of this co-revealed inquiry. It should be noted that the more typical phraseology of "co-revealed" in this case would likely be "co-constructed." The concept of "co-reveal" is purposed to situate postrepresentation as an ontological construct. Truth becomes the perennial problem as these narratives become seen as essentially fictive yet very real.

In their attempt to be representative, qualitative researchers create postrepresentation by replacing the singular experience of the of the researcher with a new intersubjective reality created by the researcher and participant in relationship.

Postrepresentation as a Developmental Model

Postrepresentation can be seen as an attempt to use the perspective of transpersonal studies, which seeks a balanced development of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical, social, and creative expression aspects of a person's life. Transpersonal studies seek to honor transformative human experiences. Interdependently and intersubjectively situated transpersonal dialogs represent a universality of the human experience. Postrepresentation is a transpersonal developmental construct in two key regards. It invites the reader to join in the developmental leap or learning, and it globally attempts to move the researcher-subject relationship from an epistemological center to that of an ontological center.

Qualitative researchers are also participants within a developmental scheme aimed at achieving some higher level of consciousness concerning the subject of their inquiry. The engagement (interviews, observations, or hermeneutical analysis) immediately makes apparent an intersubjective bridge from which all experiences or co-experiences must travel.

Postrepresentational development resolves the epistemological and ontological constraints of abstract reasoning by allowing that the reflective knower can indeed know himself or herself. In that regard postrepresentation does not preclude representation but deepens it. It suggests a relational construct for research that would intentionally probe the intersubjective

experience in order to directly illuminate the nature of reality. Practices such as setting intentions or meditation aid in positioning the researcher within the setting.

The great hope of representation is that different faculties of a subject (sensibility, imagination, memory, understanding, reason) can be portrayed in harmonious accord. Postrepresentation holds this harmonious accord is not the complete reality. In postrepresentation, the artist should not reveal that which we can already see but that which we cannot yet see, thus rendering visible that which remains logically or empirically invisible.

Mark L. McCaslin

See also Aesthetics; Autoethnography; Axiology; Co-Constructed Narrative; Embodied Knowledge; Epistemology; Hermeneutics; Intersubjectivity; Ontology; Reflexivity

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POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Poststructuralism refers to a range of theoretical perspectives that can be seen to move away from the tenets of structuralism, although poststructuralism has to be

regarded as being more wide ranging and theoretically nuanced than a straightforward oppositional positioning of structuralism–poststructuralism would suggest. Poststructuralist research practices do not look to identifying participant responses that can be seen to give rise to essentialist or uniquely privileged accounts that discover “the truth” of a situation. Instead, emphasis is placed on identifying meanings that are context specific and that relate to the varying discursive practices operating. This entry reviews the theoretical basis of poststructuralism. Next, it examines the similarities and differences between poststructuralism and other qualitatively orientated research methods. Last, it examines some of the critiques that have been brought to bear on poststructuralism.

Theoretical Underpinnings

There are various viewpoints on the relationship between poststructuralism and postmodern perspectives. Some scholars (such as Sarup, 1993) maintain that there are so many similarities between poststructuralist and postmodern orientations that it is difficult to distinguish between them. However, others (such as Huyssen, 1990) insist that there are significant differences and that combining the two is misleading and results in an unhelpful form of conceptual blurring.

Poststructuralism is a broad term, but generally focuses on exploring concepts such as relativity, plurality, fragmentation, and antifoundationalism. Comprehensive and prescriptive ideological frames or meta-narratives that clearly define and place boundaries around certain forms of knowledge are rejected. All-embracing theoretical frameworks such as Marxism, liberalism, psychoanalysis, and economic rationalism can be seen as examples of structurally orientated meta-narratives that poststructuralist perspectives both interrogate and deconstruct.

Poststructuralist perspectives tend to concentrate on the operation of language, the production of meaning, and the ways in which knowledge and power combine to create accepted or taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and social practices. Theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have proved to be particularly influential, although neither would have regarded himself as a poststructural theorist. Derrida (1978), for example, rejected the idea that meanings could ever be fixed and developed the concept of *différance*. He maintained that meaning can be

produced only by the ongoing juxtaposition of the signified (meaning) and signifier (sound or written image) in discursive contexts. This concept has influenced poststructuralist perspectives in that meaning can never be regarded as being fixed or stable, but has always to be seen as ever changing and fluid. Meaning can be produced and temporarily fixed only in specific contexts. In relation to research, words and temporary meanings acquire a particular significance and are open to constant and continuing interrogation and analysis.

Foucault's view of power and knowledge has also served to shape poststructural perspectives. Unlike the structuralist views of power that focus on the hierarchical operation of institutional and positional power, Foucault developed a social relational view of power. According to Foucault, power operates from the "bottom up" in an ever-present, low profile manner in daily social relations or *micropractices*. He maintained that to understand how power is operating, micropractices or everyday social relations have to be viewed in their discursive contexts. This view makes it possible to pay attention to the historically specific relationships between combinations of power, language, and institutional practices in order to open up the knowledge bases that inform the taken-for-granted to critical scrutiny. Foucault tended to regard the operation of power within daily social practices as being manifested in a piecemeal and localized way. He maintained that it emanated from forms of disciplinary power exercised in disciplinary institutions such as the army, prisons, monasteries, and hospitals. He held that such institutions produce microtechniques for objectifying and regulating those inside. He saw these techniques as definitive of modern power and drew attention to two main types, which he called *synoptic* and *individualizing*. According to Foucault, synoptic visibility is associated with forms of unidirectional maximum surveillance that, for example, enable prison warders to continually survey the inmates via a one-way, 24-hour gaze. Individualizing visibility related to the power and technologies of "experts" who, by means of expert knowledge systems and confessional practices, control and mold the subject. However, he also identified how power operates to control and surveil the expert. He argued that the more seemingly powerful experts appear to be through their positioning in relation to dominant discourses, the more they are subject to processes of self-amplification. As a result, those with the most to gain

within a dominant discourse because of the way they have been positioned within it are voluntarily more constrained by regulatory aspects than others occupying less privileged positions. They, as a result, become docile bodies. Foucault associated disciplinary forms of power with biopower, which he regarded as the integration of microtechniques into global microstrategies. He also developed concepts of genealogy and eventalization. Genealogy refers to understanding the conditions that make certain social practices acceptable at particular points in time. Eventalization, in turn, is associated with a process whereby the self-evident is deconstructed to reveal, layer by layer, the factors that assured its social dominance during a particular historical juncture.

When considering views of the self, poststructuralist orientations reject the idea of an essential or core self that remains the same in all situations. In contrast, emphasis is placed on decentered subjects, where subjectivity is regarded as changing, complex, and contradictory. It is always influenced by social relational as well as by biographical forces and by discursively constituted experiences. Identities cannot be viewed in a unitary way and subjects are regarded as having a shifting core that continually changes in relation to context. As a result, there can be seen to be a continual discursive struggle taking place for the temporary determination of a subject's identity, with different subjectivities being continually created by competing discourses and social practices.

Both Foucault's and Derrida's contributions to poststructuralist ways of thinking have a clear bearing on poststructuralist research practices. Derrida highlighted the importance of meaning and linked the formulation of meaning to different and shifting contexts. Foucault interrogated and deconstructed social practices and events in order to analyze how they came to be dominant at a particular point in time. Similarly, the decentering of the structuralist unitary subject has also had a significant impact. The ways in which these theoretical perspectives have informed poststructuralist research analysis will now be considered

Poststructuralist Qualitative Research Analysis

Poststructuralist analysis has drawn from phenomenology and ethnography in terms of the attention paid to subjective meanings and to the emphasis placed on

people adopting different roles and giving different sets of meanings and accounts in differing situations. Hermeneutic analogies, which regard social phenomena as texts, are also utilized, and it is accepted that a number of different readings of the same text are possible. Reflexivity and the positioning of the researcher in relation to collecting and analyzing the material are also important and the varying ways in which the researcher can be positioned have to be subject to ongoing attention and comment. In addition to the interpretation and analysis of texts, methodological rigor is attended to by providing ongoing detail about the analysis and the presentation of differing readings of the text. Poststructuralist analyses are also used to critique notions of experience where experience is viewed in an essentialist manner and where experience is associated with individuals accessing the “truth” of a situation. As Maynard (1994, p. 23) asserts,

There is no such thing as “raw” experience. Poststructuralist thinking clearly demonstrates that the very act of speaking about experience is to culturally and discursively constitute it. People’s accounts of their lives are culturally embedded. Their descriptions are, at the same time, a construction of the events that occurred, together with an interpretation of them.

Researchers utilizing poststructuralist forms of analysis also pay attention to social constructionist tenets. Social constructionist perspectives are not unique to poststructural orientations, and some exponents have provided a poststructuralist emphasis (e.g., Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Macnaghten, 1993) while others (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Harvey, 1992) have maintained a structuralist focus. The range of social constructionist interpretations within poststructuralist perspectives is wide ranging. There are top-down forms of analysis that position the subject within discursive regimes in order to examine the operation of contributing discourses. In turn, bottom-up approaches have drawn from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis to concentrate on conversational and linguistic devices so that the operation of interpretative repertoires can be identified.

Poststructural analysts are concerned with the detailed examination of texts, with a very broad definition being given to what is meant by a text. As highlighted, particular attention is paid to language,

meaning, power–knowledge frames, discursive interplays, and constructions of self, although other areas can also be the subject of detailed interrogation. Different researchers place emphasis on different areas. However, the integral association of linguistic practices with social practices can be seen to be a common feature, with the study of these connections facilitating the mapping out of interpretative repertoires or discourses. Meanings are also related to specific contexts. However, one area of difference is that for some researchers linguistic form would have a greater relevance than linguistic context. For other researchers this ordering would be reversed and for others still, both areas would be emphasized. Linguistic form concentrates on aspects such as grammar, cohesions, style(s), and the linguistic resources utilized. Rhetorical devices and the ways in which particular constructions have been used to create legitimacy are also attended to. Analyses that focus on content and form rather than on form and content pay attention to language to the extent that the significance given within the text to experiences and events within the text are socially and culturally available linguistic resources and practices. However, the main aspect of the analysis is not to concentrate on a repertoire, conversation analysis, or the operation of discourse in grammar, but to critically interrogate social relationships and social practices.

Textual analysis places emphasis on processes of deconstruction. As with social constructionism, it is important to highlight that other theoretical approaches such as critical theory also utilize deconstructive techniques. However, a major difference between poststructural orientations and critical theory, for example, is that critical theory aims to deconstruct to uncover the truth of a situation, while poststructuralist analysis focuses on taking apart the endless layers that are seen to constitute social reality.

In terms of the analytical techniques involved in carrying out deconstructive textual analysis, within poststructuralist orientations researchers pay detailed attention to the different voices of the respondent(s) manifested in the text and to emotional tones, styles, and levels of intensity. Points within the text where variation, contradiction, and paradox are apparent are also emphasized. Attention is paid to interpretive shifts and the ways in which the subject develops the account or deals with prompts introduced by the researcher. Similarly, omissions and gaps within the text are closely scrutinized, as what is not said or

attended to can be seen to be as revealing as that which is said and included in the text. Differences and tensions within and between texts are also studied in detail and the researcher engages in an ongoing interpretative process, simultaneously and reflexively reading the text in association with their own positioning. With regard to deconstructive readings, Flax (1990, p. 38) notably commented,

Deconstructive readers are disrespectful to authority, attentive to suppressed tensions or conflicts within the text and suspicious of all “natural” categories, essentialist oppositions and representational claims. In a deconstructive reading one looks for what has been suppressed within the text. . . . Given the premise that the Real is always heterogenous and differentiated, it follows that whenever a story appears unified or whole, something must have been suppressed in order to sustain the appearance of unity . . . recovering the suppressed allows the strains and self-division that are an at least equally important part of the story to reappear.

The use of poststructuralist analytical processes and techniques will produce many different readings of the texts. These readings will variously concentrate on recurring themes, contradictions, and the identification of patterns in the ways in which participant experiences are articulated. Readings will also place emphasis on absences, avoidances, inconsistencies, and contradictions. Some readings will demonstrate a concern with function and consequence and will focus on formulating hypotheses about the function and effect of what has been said in the text. Such hypotheses will then be tested by searching for further textual material. If supported, these hypotheses will continue to be built upon; if not supported, they will be disregarded.

In any research project, the question of sample size has to be carefully considered. Research designs utilizing quantitative orientations and survey or experimental research approaches rely for their reliability, validity, and generalizability on the statistically amenable way in which the sample has been formed. However, the situation with regard to poststructuralist forms of deconstructive textual or discourse analysis is somewhat different. The aim is to generate enough texts to address the research question or the area of focus, and emphasis may be placed on a poststructuralist deconstructive interrogation of just one text. As highlighted, methodological rigor is attended to by

considering the positioning of the researcher, the provision of ongoing detail about the analytical process, and the posing of different textual readings. In relation to matters concerned with representativeness, it has to be borne in mind that the site of the analytical investigation is the textual frame within which the participants speak, rather than the participants themselves.

Critiques

Poststructuralist perspectives and associated forms of analyses have been subject to considerable critique. Proponents regard poststructuralist analyses as a means of overturning accepted knowledge frames and opening up all areas for re-analysis. Deconstructive analyses allow surface layers to be peeled away, not to reveal an essentialist core but to draw attention to pervasive, insidious, and constitutive aspects that require interrogation and critique. However, others have drawn attention to how relativity, plurality, and antifoundationalism make it impossible to recognize and address inequality and forms of oppression. Deconstructive critique, which remains forever in process, has been seen as dangerous and as moving attention away from those absolutes associated with extreme injustice and poverty. As everything becomes plural, all claims are relative and none can be seen to claim validity. It therefore becomes difficult to take an ethical position and to recognize and address social justice.

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See also Ethnography; Discourse Analysis; Hermeneutics; Postmodernism; Structuralism; Textual Analysis

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POWER

Power is one of the most important and widely used concepts in the social sciences. Nevertheless, widespread as this concept may be, there is far from general agreement upon its definition. To begin with, there is not one basic concept of power, but two: *power to* and *power over*.

Power to may be defined as having the ability to affect things. For example, power to can be understood as what enables individuals to move their arms, to dream, to get out of bed in the morning, and, generally speaking, to proceed through life as unique individuals. It is also worth noting that power to is the wellspring from whence human agency derives. Important as the notion of power to may be, social scientists often gloss over this individual-level instantiation of power in favor of focusing their attention on the phenomenon of power over.

Power over may be defined as occupying a position of dominance or command over others. Thus, power over implies an essential social relationship; this power, no doubt, accounts for the penchant among social scientists to give power to short shrift. Nonetheless, despite the inclinations of social scientists, it is essential to acknowledge that social power (i.e., power over) cannot exist in a vacuum. Human beings must be endowed with intrinsic capabilities to affect things (i.e., power to) or else manifestations of interrelational social power become untenable.

The Three Faces of Power

If the definition of power was not already complicated enough, scholars have also argued that social power is a multidimensional phenomenon that can be exercised simultaneously on three distinct dimensions: the individual, organizational, and cultural dimensions of power. Employing this terminology, or what we might refer to as the three faces of power, we can say that an exercise of power takes place when *A* gets *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do. The key indicators that an exercise of power has taken place are as follows:

1. An identifiable (i.e., often, observable) conflict of interests emerges between two or more distinct parties, that is, *A* versus *B*. (Whether or not such conflicts are observable in the traditional sense is a matter of additional debate.)
2. As a result of their conflicting interests, the distinct parties engage in a power struggle, that is, they call upon their power to overcome the will of their opponent(s).
3. One of the contestants emerges victorious—or paraphrasing Max Weber, the more powerful succeed in achieving their goals despite opposition. Therefore, the victorious can be described as having power over their opponents.

Individual-Level Power

To identify an exercise of power, one must first specify a relevant counterfactual. A counterfactual is a conditional in which the antecedent is false and the consequent states what would have been the case had the antecedent not been false. For *A* to have exercised power over *B*, it must be that case that if *A* had not exercised power over *B*, *B* would have done *X* (or would not

have done X). That is, a relevant counterfactual refers to a situation where one may detect the interruption of an actor's interests by the imposition of another set of interests. According to these criteria, identifying exercises of the first face of power is relatively straightforward. That is, observable conflict (i.e., individuals visibly manipulating the behavior of others) serves as a clear example of a counterfactual. According to this definition, power relationships exist only when A can be observed or identified as getting B to do something B would not otherwise do. Therefore, one may recognize exercises of the first face of power in situations such as boxing matches (i.e., two opponents, fighting each other in a ring), parents sending reluctant children to bed, or police hosing down protestors with water cannons (and thereby forcing the protestors to retreat).

Organizational Power

However, in the case of the second and third dimensions of power, identifying a relevant counterfactual becomes more complicated. Exercise of the second (or organizational) dimension of power still implies a conflict of interests between distinct parties. However, organizational power contests take place on an entirely different scale than struggles between individuals. Because, by definition, organizations tend to be larger and mightier than individuals, it is possible for organizations to exercise power over their adversaries with enhanced complexity and sophistication. Although organizations are perfectly capable of exercising the first dimension of power (e.g., employing security officers to dispatch the unruly), organizations can also manipulate power struggles without visible demonstrations of force by making nondecisions. Nondecisions are conscious choices made by organizational agenda-setters that tend to thwart challenges to decision makers. Therefore, power brokers can suppress challenges to their authority by designing organizational agendas to advance the interests of the powers-that-be while silencing adversaries. For example, political parties often enhance the perception of unanimity by failing to yield podium time to radical splinter groups during national conventions. In this way, power over may be exercised quite effectively without creating unseemly episodes of visible conflict.

Cultural Power

Exercises of the third (or cultural) dimension of power are even more complex. Briefly, the third

dimension of power works as a remarkably effective macrolevel social glue because of the way that it encourages individuals to apply themselves insatiably to the pursuit of those things that extant cultural systems are designed to provide. For example, the "tastes" of even 21st-century Americans are shaped to instill a passion for such "typically American" things as baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolets. Conveniently, the same taste-shaping forces facilitate the reproduction of the cultural context within which voracious consumers are embedded: Our hunger for automobiles effectively sustains the viability of numerous global industries that are bent on satisfying consumer desires, for example, petroleum, steel, shipping, and so on. Therefore, the third face of power can be perceived as a thoroughly enveloping blanket of power that steers microlevel individual behavior toward goals that bring about the reproduction of prevailing sociocultural macrostructures.

In conclusion, power is a multidimensional force that operates within (power to) and between (power over) individuals on three distinct levels: individual, organizational, and cultural. Although exercises of power at the organizational and cultural levels are somewhat more difficult to observe, they nevertheless may be identified and analyzed by anyone with a well-developed sociological imagination.

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See also Agency; Truth

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PRAGMATISM

As a philosophical movement, pragmatism was first introduced through the works of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), and then further developed by

William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952). William James was the first to use the term *pragmatism* in print; however, he credited Peirce with formulating the concept in the early 1870s. The central notion of pragmatism focuses on the nature of truth. In its simplest explanation, pragmatism holds that truth is found in “what works,” and that truth is relative to the current situation. However simple these statements may be, they created some of the most heated and widespread debate concerning the value and “truth” of pragmatism as a philosophy. Its earliest critics, emanating from the European continent, saw pragmatism as a quaint American philosophy of little value. Later it was viewed by many quantitative and qualitative researchers as an attack on epistemology. What made pragmatism a lightning rod for criticism was, first, its softening of the nature of truth, which made the empirical sciences less certain of their moorings; and, second, its subtle shift toward a separation of truth and reality, or, more accurately, a separation of epistemology and ontology. As James was quick to point out, pragmatists speak of how truth is not ready made and therefore uncertain or relative. Adding to that was the ontological bridge contained within the philosophy of pragmatism that held that we and reality “make” truth.

Pragmatism is derived from the Greek word *pragma*, meaning action. Interestingly this is the same root from which words like *practice* and *practical* are created. Pragmatism is often seen as the practical philosophy in which truth is not seen as an absolute but a moveable and usable construct for understanding the nature of reality. Therefore, a chasm formed between empirical scientists, and the methods, truths, and philosophies they held as certain, and the pragmatist who maintained a blatant disregard for the certainty of empirically revealed truths. Pragmatists selected their truths by their functionality. If a truth or theory could be easily seen as practical, the pragmatist was an early adopter; if not, it simply became unusable. Thus the pragmatist was often seen as having an ability to put theory into practice.

In the end, as was William James’s complaint, the pragmatist is simply unable to make truth a representation of reality, which was what the empiricist desired. Reality, according to the pragmatist, is to be revealed and experienced. Truths, portable or otherwise, were relative or practical only as long as they provided a tool for that reveal. Truths were easily seen as mutable and relative to an interpretive dialog. This

was of great concern to the epistemologist and to the empirical sciences. Pragmatism when treated as an epistemological construct fails at every measure because it violates too many empirical conventions. For that reason it is quite easy to attack pragmatism. However, when pragmatism is treated as an ontological construct it is exceptionally informative and nearly impossible to attack using any epistemological razor.

Pragmatism's Impact on Qualitative Research

To understand the full measure of pragmatism on qualitative methodology, it is necessary to reveal its full philosophical weight. In its earliest formations pragmatism moved away from an epistemological center held by both quantitative and qualitative research. As it shifted toward a more ontological rendering, it also reached out to axiological (beauty, aesthetics, values) aspects that had been formally dismissed by the quantitative researcher: Research is to be value free, and dismissed by way of simple blanket inclusion by the qualitative researcher: Research is value laden. Neither side of the epistemology debate formally probed the issues of values even though this issue was the key to the separation of the objective–subjective dichotomy. The pragmatists, however, insisted that because truth is relative or situational it can best be utilized as a way of forming signposts or landmarks concerning the nature of reality.

The pragmatists’ rendering of reality positioned it not as holding an objective view, as held by the quantitative researcher, or a subjective view, as held by the qualitative researcher. Since objectively and subjectively positioned methodologies were both contained within the epistemological domain, they both sought to discover either a verifiable or generalizable truth. The pragmatists, because of their move toward ontology, saw the world differently. The dichotomy that had formed between the objective world and the subjective world seemed for the most part inconsequential. The pragmatists found no value in absolute objectivity or absolute subjectivity, seeing neither as sufficient for understanding the nature of reality. The pragmatist pointed out that the affinity between quantitative methodologies and qualitative methodologies may be more deeply rooted than is commonly thought. In parts, this perspective was formed when the pragmatists positioned their philosophy as being *value informed*. This immediately positioned pragmatism as an ontologically centered philosophy not unlike other such positions

articulated by the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the early transcendental renderings of phenomenology by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and the phenomenology of perception presented by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This philosophical position held by pragmatism yielded an intersubjective rendering of the truth in that ontology was seen as relational and situational. The “we” or relationships aspect would hold that truth is co-created by way of intersubjective relationships. This co-created truth is epistemologically valid because it is co-constructed by the collective experience. It is through this relational construct that the nature of reality is revealed.

The pragmatist would hold that for all our methodological cleverness in design and approach to research, the focus has remained upon epistemology and as such is perennially flawed. The epistemologist would likely say “rightly so” since the true nature of inquiry is to discover how we come to know what we know. The pragmatic retort is informed by William James: “true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those we cannot” (1907, p. 97). In reading this construct do not forget that the center of pragmatism is held within ontology, so its usability is being gauged not by its ability to render a truth but by its ability to assist in revealing the nature of reality. As such, it is important to avoid the epistemological trap of misconceiving the whole notion of pragmatism; for example, that it is only “a re-editing of positivism,” or that it is “primarily an appeal to action,” or that “the pragmatists cut themselves off from the right to believe in objective realities,” or that “no pragmatist can be a realist in his epistemologies,” or of the many others misconceptions concerning a concrete and practical way of seeing things—the reality of things. The pragmatic notion is that truth is always just in front of us. It has no history or future. Truth is always present, it is always now, and concerns itself with how we use it now to understand our realities—our historical and emergent goodness; our capabilities, capacities, propensities, power, and potential to embrace one another in relationships of values and beauty. Any attempt to give truth a prevailing or privileged position in these dimensions immediately freezes our realities’ and our values’ relevance and consequently and immediately arrests our development toward our full potential and toward full humanity. This immediately reveals the added dimension of humanistic and transpersonal psychology influences contained within the pragmatist philosophy.

In some ways the pragmatist philosophy was poison to both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. The pragmatist has often been referred to as a pacifist seeking to bridge the two paradigms that are seen by the purist as incompatible. Pragmatism is seen as a theoretical position that privileges practice and method over reflection and deliberative action. In short, pragmatism links theory and practice, but it is the practical and experiential that is essential to the relational construct of pragmatism. Epistemology would privilege the findings of our research while ontology and pragmatism would privilege the direct usability and suitability of that knowledge in revealing the intersubjective nature of reality.

Beyond the humanistic and transpersonal implications of pragmatism are the deep ecology constructs found within this philosophy. Pragmatism purposes a deep probe into the intersubjective interactions between people and their environment. Ecology, as a comparison, is defined as the study of the interaction between an organism and its environment. Accordingly, all subjects, objects, and the interaction of subjects with subjects (intersubjectivity) and subjects with objects (interobjectivity) are taken into consideration in the inquiry. Consequently, pragmatism is positioned at three distinct intersections with other fields: philosophy (particularly an ontologically centered philosophy), humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and deep ecology.

Pragmatism is a very purposeful stance that engages the totality of philosophy; beauty (axiology), goodness (ontology), and truth (epistemology). As a way of priming their understanding of the nature of the ecology, pragmatists do not seek an epistemology (truth) and then following that retreat to ontology (reality/goodness). The pragmatist begins with a deep probe into the values and value complexes (axiology) held by subjects and the researcher and then positions them squarely within the ecology (reality/ontology) itself. It is from the emergent intersubjective and inter-objective interpretation that epistemology emerges within a pragmatic philosophy. Truth is relative to the nature of reality from which it was tendered. In this regard, truth is not only what works within the prevailing reality but also relative. Pragmatism gives reality a privileged position.

The Compatibility Thesis

The compatibility thesis states that qualitative and quantitative methods are compatible in that they are

both largely epistemologically centered methodologies that can be equally useful in probing the nature of reality. This position would hold that researchers do not choose their method of inquiry and then construct the appropriate problem, but that researchers locate the problem and then choose the appropriate methodology. The primacy given to the location of the problem is precisely what positions the pragmatic approach within the ecology (reality). The centrality and utility of pragmatism are found in its open ontological stance within the nature of reality—open to both the prevailing values (axiology) and currently held truths (epistemology). Ontology takes on an active transforming process in that within the intersubjective frame of reference, values are engaged and new understanding (new knowledge) is formed or revealed, thus repositioning epistemology as a following construct (truth is relative or transformative), and therefore truth is found in what works within the ecology. Or said another way, theory and practice are spanned effectively through pragmatism. Pragmatists take a philosophical viewpoint and position their probe at the intersections of subjectively and objectively held knowledge seeking to understand the nature of reality, whereas traditional qualitative and quantitative approaches take the epistemological position, choosing to construct or deconstruct either inductively or deductively new or existing knowledge. The epistemologist is seeking finite knowledge while the pragmatist is seeking universal knowledge.

The other central difference between the focused intention of the epistemologist and that of the universality of pragmatism is the belief by pragmatists that values (axiology) or value complexes play a very large role not only in the conduct of the research but also in its interpretation. They are less concerned about inductive or deductive approaches, choosing a holistic or ontological approach to revealing the nature of reality. Thus, unlike epistemologically centered research, pragmatic research is driven by anticipated consequences as given by the search for the practical.

Pragmatism Defined

Defining pragmatism accurately is difficult due to its complexity and emergent nature. The complexity is held by its intersectional relevance to multiple disciplines (deep ecology, philosophy, humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and education) and its emergent

nature held by its ontological center. In its roots in humanistic and transpersonal psychology, pragmatism is above all else an endeavor that seeks to liberate the will to pursue the purposes of self-actualization. In deep ecology, it is seeking a sustainable and grand synergistic society. In philosophy, it is seeking a return to a holistic rendering of beauty, goodness, and truth. In education, it is seeking the truth of what works.

In formalizing a definition for pragmatism, it is essential to return to the central argument that truth is subject to change. There are, according to Émile Durkheim, two central arguments contained within pragmatism: (1) Truth changes over time because reality changes, and (2) Truth changes through space because people have differing ideas. Definitions have generally been formulated in a dual fashion, splitting the philosophical aspect and the practical aspect. A composite rendering would produce the following:

Pragmatism. An American philosophical movement consisting of varying but associated theories marked by the doctrine that practical consequences are the central criteria of knowledge. Originally developed by Charles S. Peirce and William James, pragmatism is seen as the function of reflective thought and relationships to guide action and that truth is relative to the practical consequences of any belief. [adapted from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pragmatism>]

The practical, matter-of-fact way of accepting the facts of life and approaching or assessing situations or of solving problems. [adapted from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pragmatism>]

Criticisms

The criticisms aimed at pragmatism are generally sourced from the epistemological view of truth. In that regard, the general conclusion is that pragmatism is much less an undertaking to encourage philosophical action than it is an attack on theoretical thought. Critics would contend that the pragmatist is impatient with any rigorous scientific or intellectual discipline. Pragmatism seeks to free thought much more than it seeks an action and therefore is often seen as duplicitous. The desire of pragmatism, as William James would position it, is to “make the truth more supple.”

The other major criticism is made by those who see quantitative and qualitative research as being

incompatible. Since pragmatism wishes to bridge this gap, its position is held as unattainable and as an assault on the truth. Because the pragmatist maintains that reality is a co-construction of thought and relationship, reality is seen as apperception itself. In the process, they attach to thought and relationship the same power and the same qualities as given by empirical scientist from their more rigorous methodologies. Pragmatism, because it attempts to link the subjective and objective worlds, is found to be incompatible with either. Pragmatism therefore is seen as lacking the basic characteristics that one has the right to expect of any philosophical doctrine.

Methodological Implication

The key methodological implication for the qualitative researcher begins with the formation of the statement of the problem. Prior to that formulation, pragmatists would not select their research tools (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodology). Since the problem itself emerges from the nature of reality the pragmatist enters the field of inquiry with a practical problem-solving attitude. Therefore the pragmatist avoids Abraham Maslow's concern: "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail." (*The Psychology of Science*, 1966.) For the qualitative researcher this perspective must signal the possibility that the problem emerging from the ecology (reality) may indeed be unsuited for the myriad of qualitative-based research designs.

The other methodological implication emerges as the pragmatists close their inquiry. Since the whole purpose of pragmatic approaches is to locate practical and usable solutions to the stated problem, the research would close with this direct articulation. This direct articulation is ontologically centered and as such is significantly distant from epistemological theories, hypotheses, propositions, suppositions, or verifiable narratives. In short, the pragmatist does not work around the truth of the problem but instead attacks the very nature of the problem by seeking a direct intervention or solution without regard to the epistemological rules of validity, reliability, or other issues surrounding the trustworthiness of data. Ontologically, it signals a problem being solved or a solution being constructed. Epistemologically, this signals a fatal weakness for this approach in that it cannot be validated or verified.

Mark L. McCaslin

See also Aesthetics; Axiology; Co-Constructed Narrative; Epistemology; Intersubjectivity; Ontology

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PRAXIS

Praxis refers to a particular philosophy used to guide and conduct research. Like action researchers, those who engage in praxis-oriented research involve the community or group under study in the research process. However, praxis is distinct in that its explicit goal is to empower marginalized peoples and help them challenge their oppression. Engaging in praxis is not a path for the harried researcher interested only in quickly collecting and analyzing data. Praxis-based research is a long process that involves establishing mutually beneficial relationships between the researcher and members of the community of study.

Though the effort and time investment may be great, the payoff has the potential to be huge. By engaging in collaborative research, researchers may help participants acquire the critical tools to transform their own lives. This entry examines the historical development of the concept of praxis and then explores the role it plays in contemporary research. It also describes implications of praxis for both researchers and participants and discusses the practices that characterize it.

Theoretical and Historical Definitions of Praxis

This section describes the evolution of the definition of praxis from the work of the ancient Greeks to the philosophy of Karl Marx and then the work of Paulo Freire. The section concludes with a discussion of the differences between praxis and other similar theories.

Ancient Greek Roots: The Work of Aristotle

The earliest known reference to praxis is found in the writings of Aristotle, who identified three different types of human activity: *theoria*, the production of truth; *poiesis*, a goal-oriented action; and *praxis*, action that is an end to in itself. Aristotle did not privilege one activity or view one to be in opposition to another. He understood each to be suited to different situations with different purposes and end goals. Poiesis, for example, is typically associated with the scientific method. Those engaged in poiesis aim to produce theoretical or scientific knowledge using tools such as proof or analytical reasoning to lead to a tangible result. The resulting knowledge is expressed in universal propositions and is true across all situations.

In contrast, the goal of praxis is not the knowledge obtained through an end result or the production of an object, but rather the knowledge produced through action. For Aristotle, the goal of praxis was to produce a morally worthwhile good. Whereas poiesis is defined through the production of a value-free object, praxis is defined as the production of a value-laden and moral good. Unlike the universal knowledge produced through poiesis, knowledge produced through praxis is concerned with the local and the particular. That is, it cannot be universalized across all situations. Those who employ praxis use their knowledge of a particular situation to understand a more general problem.

Early Philosophers: Marx and Gramsci

Marx wrote about praxis mainly during his early years, when the bulk of his scholarship concentrated on philosophy, as opposed to later in his life when he focused on economics. In his 11th thesis on Feuerbach, Marx takes other philosophers to task, criticizing them for not translating their theorizing into concrete action, writing, “philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (Glass, 2001, p. 16). Thus, Marx issued one of the earliest calls to action, arguing that people could challenge the status quo. Like Aristotle, who divided human action into various realms, Marx subdivided praxis into two distinct categories. The first type of praxis derives from the capitalist market and refers to the unreflective labor that enables capitalism to thrive. Those who participate in the market automatically engage in this form of praxis, which simultaneously reproduces itself and oppresses the majority of those who participate. The second form of praxis offers an opportunity to challenge the capitalist, involuntary praxis. As Marx describes, this form of praxis is enacted through labor that has the potential to emancipate workers from, and challenge, the status quo.

The Italian writer Antonio Gramsci followed in Marx’s footsteps. Imprisoned by Mussolini due to his involvement with the Communist Party, Gramsci spent his time in prison writing thousands of pages on history and Marxism. His essays were later published as *The Prison Notebooks*. In his writing, he often refers to a “philosophy of praxis.” Many argue that he used this phrase as a stand-in for Marxism since prison censors did not allow such discussion to appear in prisoners’ correspondence. More recent scholarship suggests that Gramsci saw Marxism and a philosophy of praxis as two separate, though highly related concepts. For Gramsci, the philosophy of praxis describes the struggle that people undertake to obtain a critical perspective. Like Marx, Gramsci argued that such a philosophy generally stemmed out of the class struggle and was more easily accessible to those in the proletariat. Such a position—that praxis was for the disenfranchised—is critical in the works of future theorists, including Freire.

Recent Critical Conceptions: Paulo Freire

Perhaps the most influential figure in the development of praxis is Freire, the Brazilian-born educator

and theorist who developed his theory of praxis after working with Brazilian peasants in the mid-20th century. Freire began by teaching illiterate peasants to read, but later transitioned into advocating for conscientization (or consciousness-raising), a process of empowerment for marginalized people. Freire argued that oppressed groups had internalized society's power structures and accepted the inevitability of marginalization. Not only had they implicitly accepted the existence of power hierarchies in society, but they also were actively engaged in trying to climb up the hierarchy. In other words, marginalized groups accepted their oppression by striving to become the oppressor. Freire argued that such a practice failed to challenge existing power structures and continued the reproduction of inequalities.

For Freire, the way to challenge oppression was to engage in praxis, which he defined as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p. 51). Mere activism was insufficient. Those engaged in praxis needed to engage in reflection to understand their position in society and how they used their position to perpetuate a cycle of oppression. A key element of praxis calls for oppressed groups to engage in dialogue with one another. Such a process challenged the imposition of norms by the ruling group and involved oppressed groups in formulating a solution for their own liberation. This dialogue was facilitated by a leader, possibly one from an external community. Through praxis, the distinction between leader and community members (or teacher and students) dissolved. The teacher's knowledge ceased to be privileged. Teachers and students engaged together to create knowledge originating from the oppressed group's experience. Freire's notion of praxis involved a community of individuals from a marginalized group coming together to recognize their own oppression and create strategies for change.

A Family of Critical Theories

The theory of praxis is one of a few theories that push researchers to engage in action-oriented research. Other theories, including critical theory and feminist theory, also focus on marginalized populations. Feminist theory places women's oppression at the center of inquiry and focuses on ways in which women have been excluded from positions of power. Despite this shared focus on oppressed

populations, feminism and praxis emerged from distinct theoretical origins. However, in recent years, some feminists have drawn upon the work of Freire to inform their own practice. In contrast, critical theory and praxis stem from the work of Marx and his followers. Like praxis, critical theory promotes human emancipation from all forms of oppression. Critical theorists vary in the type of oppression they focus on: some focus on freedom from capitalist oppression while others are concerned with freedom from racial oppression. All are concerned with freeing people from the conditions that disempower them. Freirean notions of praxis typically focus on working with the poor and uneducated to provide them with the tools to overcome their oppression. Unlike critical theory, praxis is primarily concerned with helping the uneducated emancipate themselves. Upon emancipation, these groups then help the privileged seek emancipation. Though critical theory and praxis share the same general goals, praxis tends to focus on one particular population and provides concrete guidelines on how to achieve emancipation from oppression.

Praxis in Research and Method

The goals of praxis remain similar to those espoused by Freire and his followers. Praxis involves a commitment to challenging the status quo and helping people from marginalized communities understand their oppression. Although the research project may be used to accumulate data and build better theory, social transformation remains the primary goal.

The definition of praxis in research continues to evolve. Whereas Aristotle perceived no inherent conflict between poesis and praxis, current proponents of praxis point to a divide between the two traditions. Praxis arises out of the need to challenge the universal norms that characterize poesis and the scientific method. Such norms were developed out of a privileging of the positivist paradigm, which is characterized by the search for objective knowledge and truth. In contrast, praxis is based on the idea that knowledge is not objective, but rather is socially constructed. In positivist research, the objective researcher enters the field to discover new knowledge about a problem or a population. Such a scenario tends to result in the researcher's worldview being imposed upon the research site and the findings conforming to the researcher's expectations and experiences. Researchers who engage

in praxis recognize that such a tradition has privileged the dominant group and way of thinking. As a result, existing knowledge is incomplete as it has typically excluded the perspectives of those not conducting the research. Praxis-based research seeks to include the voices of those who have been excluded from mainstream research. This type of inquiry tends to lead to new definitions of the researcher and researched. The rest of this section discusses four areas that a researcher engaging in praxis might consider: (1) the role of the researcher, (2) participants, (3) method, and (4) audience.

The Role of the Researcher

Although researcher and participants may be engaged in research as collaborators, this relationship does not absolve the researcher from assuming a leadership role. The researcher still enters the research site with more technical expertise than participants. The researcher may also possess a sense of critical consciousness that has been denied to participants. Particularly in the beginning stages of a research project, a researcher may exhibit more of a leadership role in challenging participants to consider the research problem from a new perspective. Like Freire, who recognized that oppressed groups may not necessarily be aware of the ways in which they were marginalized, researchers may need to challenge participants to adopt an alternative perspective to evaluate their lives. Part of the process of engaging in praxis-based research is arming participants with the critical tools to transform their lives or their community. The researcher takes a more directive role in challenging participants to consider topics that they had typically neglected or by helping them learn to critically analyze a situation.

This help is one of the real paradoxes of praxis-based research. Praxis necessitates that all research arise out of the experiences of the community being studied. However, members of marginalized groups may not possess the theoretical tools to engage in critical analysis or to identify the ways in which they are oppressed. In fact, they may have internalized their oppression and fail to perceive societal inequalities. Researchers committed to praxis need to find a balance between being directive and being responsive to community needs. Ultimately, researchers ensure that the research arises out of the needs of the community and reflects their experiences and equips them with

the tools to continue to engage in analysis and action long after the research has ended.

Participants in Praxis

Given its reliance on the social construction of knowledge, praxis-based research is generally a communal undertaking. No longer can a researcher expect to be able to adequately represent the experiences of a community of others. As a result, praxis calls for researchers to engage in collaborative inquiry with participants. In such an arrangement, the researcher recognizes the authority and knowledge that resides with community members. No longer need the researcher be looked to as the arbiter of knowledge definition and production. Community members who engage in praxis-based research simultaneously are trained to see themselves as sources of knowledge and capable of contributing to research. Often, nonacademics envision research as something best left to professors. Praxis-based research, however, functions by way of mutual cooperation. Ideally, the distinctions between researcher and researched will disappear as members of each group share their knowledge, teaching one another and engaging in the construction of knowledge together.

Method

Not only do researcher and participants engage in inquiry together, but the research problem arises out of the experiences of the community members. Researchers committed to praxis do not impose their own agendas upon the community site. Rather, they seek to understand the lives of participants and develop research that arises out of participants' experiences and concerns. Co-defining the research with community members helps prevent researchers from imposing an ill-fitting theory to explain participants' experiences. To ensure this equal participation in the research process, praxis-based research is characterized by three practices: (1) reciprocity, (2) reflexivity, and (3) dialogue and negotiation.

Reciprocity

Engaging in collaborative research necessitates that a foundation of trust be established among all participants in the research process. Reciprocity is one way to achieve this goal. Achieving reciprocity in the

research process occurs through recognition that researchers and participants are interdependent; researchers need participants as much as the participants need the researchers. Researchers seek to establish mutually beneficial relationships, or relationships through which all parties gain. Such an undertaking is in marked contrast to the typical method of research in which researchers are often seen as entering the research site, taking what they need, and leaving nothing in return. Through praxis, all parties benefit. For the researcher, the gains include the obvious—data collection—but also the less tangible—growth through reflection. For community participants, the potential for change is great. As discussed above, researchers help participants develop critical consciousness and learn to question their situation. Gains also occur on an even more mundane level. Researchers may provide day-to-day assistance, specific to the needs of the community, in ways that help all involved in the project benefit.

Reflexivity

A researcher might establish reciprocity by helping participants learn to think critically. Critical thinking helps participants and researchers develop reflexivity. Reflexivity is particularly important for those engaged in praxis as it forces participants to evaluate their actions and the way in which their own experiences might shape their interpretations of the research outcomes. Reflexivity helps those engaged in research gain insight into the research process. Reflexive participants learn to analyze their lives and their positions within society from a new perspective. For researchers, reflexivity helps remind them not to impose their own agendas upon the research site. It also highlights a researcher's position within the world and the ways in which knowledge is socially constructed. Being reflexive has the potential to remind researchers that they cannot engage in research alone, but rather their research needs the voices of their participants to truly gain an understanding of the study site.

Dialogue and Negotiation

Since praxis-oriented research emerges out of collaboration between researchers and participants, dialogue and negotiation help facilitate this partnership. Dialogue encourages all parties to engage in critical reflection and may help participants better understand

themselves and their collaborators. Dialogue also provides the tools for collaborators to engage in negotiation, a process crucial for producing accuracy in interpretations. The researchers and the participants are likely to possess different perspectives and may interpret the same situation through different lenses. Researchers engaged in praxis negotiate with participants throughout the research process. They negotiate with participants from the onset of research when establishing roles and responsibilities. They negotiate with participants when performing data analysis to reconcile varying interpretations of the same situation. They may even submit an initial draft of a written report to participants to receive feedback and negotiate their final interpretations of the data. Since praxis is built upon the collaboration of researchers and researched, dialogue and negotiation ensure that all parties are involved and represented in the research from start to finish.

Audience

Although praxis has recently seen an increase in popularity among researchers, not all disciplines readily embrace its use. Given its historical roots in Freire's work, education has the lengthiest tradition of employing praxis-based research. Fields such as nursing, public health, social work, and public administration also have had praxis emerge as an emphasis and focus in the literature. Discussion of praxis is largely absent in literature in science and engineering. Given that the focus of praxis is to partner with communities to create change, scholars in the physical sciences have seen less of an opportunity to employ such methods in their research. Although praxis-based research is reported in academic journals, it also has a considerable tradition in appearing in popular texts. Like Freire, who wanted to reach a wider public, many who employ praxis write in clear, stripped-down prose to allow their ideas to be accessible to all.

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See also Action Research; Experiential Knowledge; Participants as Co-Researchers; Reciprocity; Reflexivity; Social Constructionism

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PRIVACY

Historically, privacy has been defined as the right to be left alone. An increasingly technological society has extended privacy to include rights to be free from surveillance, to make private communications, and to have autonomy and control over one's own body.

Most research ethics codes have established the need for privacy for research participants. Privacy is also a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although most people have an expectation of privacy in their lives, it is also understood that social, political, and technological changes are threats to privacy: Increased population density, antiterrorism initiatives, and the internet all pose challenges to privacy. When privacy is lost, it is often impossible to retrieve.

The moment a researcher begins to collect information from participants, privacy is being encroached upon. When researchers offer to respect the privacy of participants, they are giving participants the right to decide how much information to share and how it will be used. This discussion usually takes place through the process of informed consent. That is, participants are given an explanation about the kind of personal information they

are being asked to share, how that information will be protected from other parties, what the information will be used for, and how it will be used.

A common way to protect participant privacy is by offering confidentiality—an assurance that information shared with a researcher will not be disclosed in a way that can publicly identify the source. This can be accomplished by using the least amount of personal identifiable information to complete the research purpose. Researchers should code information about participant identity and store it separately from non-identifying data. Sometimes it is unnecessary for a researcher to know the true identity of a participant, and therefore a pseudonym can be employed.

Research that involves sensitive topics has the greatest privacy imperative. George Radwansky, former Privacy Commissioner for Canada, has said that information in health research must remain within the program of study and must not find its way into the hands of an "individual's employers, insurers, relatives or acquaintances, governmental or law enforcement authorities, marketers or any other third parties."

The internet's ease of use as a research tool and the vast amount of information it offers has attracted many social scientists. Researchers may decide against disclosure of their presence on the internet, which raises issues around deception. The capacity to assume anonymous or pseudonymous identities is available to researchers and participants, which can confuse distinctions between reality and cyberspace. The sense of privacy that can be felt through the internet may be more illusion than reality. The internet also poses challenges with respect to informed consent processes, not least because researchers cannot easily verify age, mental capacity, and characteristics relevant to sampling. There is controversy about the expectation of privacy on the internet. Some researchers argue it is a public space and offers no expectation of privacy, and others point out that many internet users regard their chat rooms as private personal spaces where like-minded people interact.

Russel Ogden

See also Anonymity; Confidentiality; Deception; Pseudonym; Sensitive Topics

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PROBABILITY SAMPLING

Probability samples require that every member of the overall population have a known chance of being included in the sample. The most basic form of probability sampling is simple random sampling, where every member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Thus, a simple random sample of 100 people from a population of 10,000 gives each person a 100 to 10,000 or .01 probability of being in the sample. Another common form of probability sampling is stratified sampling, which divides the total population into separate subsets or strata (e.g., racial groups or geographical locations) before drawing random samples from each of these strata. In both cases, probability sampling ensures that the size of any subgroup in the population is the only thing that influences how often its members are included in the sample.

For quantitative research, probability samples have two main advantages. First, they allow statistical statements about the accuracy of the sample's numerical results. For example, a political poll may say that there is a 95% likelihood that its results are within 3% either way of the actual population value. Second, they are necessary for tests of statistical significance. For example, the results from a survey may show that the scores for men and women are so far apart that there is only a 5% chance that the difference is due to having drawn an unusual sample. These statements about a 5% chance of error or 95% degree of confidence explicitly recognize that probability samples are not always accurate. Instead, they make it possible to say precisely how likely it is that the sample does accurately represent the population. The results are thus generalizable within statistically well-defined limits.

For qualitative research, probability samples typically require information that is not likely to be available in most studies. In particular, if there is no way to count all the members of the original population, then there is no way to know what proportion of the total population is represented by any given sample. And even if the population size is known, there may not be any realistic way to give every member of that

population a known probability of being included in the sample. As a further limitation, an accurate probability sampling requires a relatively large sample size, and the accuracy of generalizations from probability samples declines rapidly for small samples.

For quantitative research, the statistical analyses that are possible only with probability samples justify the demands of knowing the population size, determining the probability of selection for each sample member, and gathering large samples. In contrast, for qualitative research, statistical analyses are not only of little interest but also are largely impractical due to the small sample sizes in those studies. Instead, most qualitative research concentrates on pairing purposive selection procedures to define the population of interest with nonprobability techniques to select the actual data sources for any given study.

David L. Morgan

See also Generalizability; Nonprobability Sampling; Purposive Sampling; Random Sampling; Stratified Sampling; Sample Size; Sampling

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PROBES AND PROBING

Probing is a specific research technique used by interviewers in individual and group interviews and focus groups to generate further explanation from research participants. Probing may be achieved nonverbally with pauses or gestures, or verbally with follow-up questions. Effective and efficient probing in interviewing relies on the interviewer's ability to actively listen to what interviewees have said and judge if further information is necessary to making meaning from what has been said, and then judiciously probe for further descriptions concerning the topics of interest. Methodologists who provide directions for how interviewers can ask interviewees for further explanation, clarification, or elaboration of their responses agree that mastery of this technique is critical for "good"

interviewing—whether using standardized survey protocols or open-ended interview guides.

One of the most extensive discussions of probing in interviewing has been provided by Raymond Gorden, who has outlined seven forms of probing questions that may be used by interviewers to manage the topic of interview talk. The silent probe—in which the interviewer refrains from commenting—allows interviewees to take up the topic of the talk in ways that are meaningful to them and is the least intrusive prompt. However, interviewers must be able to identify when it is useful to pause to allow interviewees to continue, and when participants have completed their turns. In the latter case, if participants are seeking direction from the interviewer, misplaced pauses may interfere with the flow of talk. Encouragement to speakers to continue may be conveyed by head nods, gaze, facial expression, gestures, and words such as “mm” and “uh huh.” Next, particular probes call on interviewees to provide immediate elaboration. For example, interviewers can request further information about the topic by asking questions such as, “Tell me more about that.” “What happened then?” Probes for immediate clarification, in contrast, request further information about particular topics. For example, this could include questions such as, “You mentioned *x*, tell me who was involved at that time?” or “What happened after you had completed *y*?” Probes involving retrospective elaboration orient the interviewee to earlier talk and seek further information. For example, the interviewer might begin by stating, “Earlier you mentioned that you were involved in *z*; thinking back to that time, tell me more about that.” Similarly, probes focused on retrospective clarification seek specific information about earlier talk. For example, “You talked earlier about the very first time you heard about *y*. Describe that event in detail—Was anyone with you at the time? What was that like for you?” The final form of probe outlined by Gorden is that of mutation. In this kind of probe, the interviewer uses prior talk to expand the topic into a new area. For example, “You’ve told me how you became involved in *z*, and what that was like for you. Tell me about your friends’ responses to that.”

As Gorden has explained, clarification probes exert more control over the topic than elaboration probes. That is, clarification questions specify the topics that participants should provide further information about; elaboration probes seek more information, while not specifying what kind. Whether interviewers should

seek further elaboration and clarification immediately or retrospectively is another question to be considered. Here, general guidelines for good practice are useful: Interviewers should avoid interrupting interviewees, should pose probes using participants’ words wherever possible, and, in probing, interviewers should show that they have been actively listening to participants.

In asking follow-up questions, novice interviewers may resort to the use of formulations, rather than using effective probes. Formulations are a conversational resource that speakers use to show they have been listening and understanding prior talk. In formulations, speakers summarize, delete, and transform various aspects of prior talk. A more effective way of probing for clarification than formulating the researcher’s understanding of prior talk is to use the interviewee’s own words. For example,

You’ve talked about the problems you’ve had with *y*.

Tell me more about that.

Or

Describe the kinds of things that you do.

For researchers who would like to use formulations in interviews as a way of checking their understandings of prior talk, the following question may also be useful:

From what I’ve heard you say, I understand *x*. Have I understood that correctly?

As Stewart and colleagues have pointed out, probes are an essential technique in eliciting further information from participants of focus groups. In focus groups, moderators can also use probes to give the next turn to other members of the group and ensure participation of group members. For example,

Does anyone else have something to add to that?

Is anyone able to provide a specific example of that?

In focus groups, moderators are advised to avoid creating conflict by posing questions that may lead to disagreement and defensive responses from group members. Rather, probes can be formulated that allow for different perspectives among group members:

What are other views on that?

In learning how to use probes effectively, novice interviewers must attend to several issues simultaneously. First, interviewers must listen attentively to interviewees, paying attention to the issues of relevance for the purposes of examining the research questions. Second, interviewers must learn how to pose follow-up questions that purposefully elicit further information that will provide data to understand the topic. This involves recognizing points in the talk in which interviewees have provided insufficient information about topics, used terms that may need to be defined, or avoided answering questions in detail. Third, interviewers must mindfully pose probes without interrupting the flow of interaction and disrupting the interviewer–interviewee relationship. To sum up, in qualitative interviews, effective use of probes entails selecting the topics about which the researcher needs more information, asking probes that seek further information without providing possible responses in the questions, and using probes in a way that invites interviewees to provide more information without transforming interviews into an interrogation. Probing, then, is a skill that requires careful listening, sensitive question-posing, and attentive timing.

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See also In-Depth Interview; Interview Guide; Open-Ended Question; Semi-Structured Interview; Unstructured Interview

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PROGRAM EVALUATION

To evaluate is to determine the value of something, that is, to determine its merit, worth, or significance. Program evaluation is the systematic application of research to inform evaluative judgments. It involves the systematic collection of empirical information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program's merit or worth, improve program effectiveness, and/or

inform decisions about future programming. *Merit* refers to the intrinsic value of a program, for example, how effective it is in meeting the needs of those it is intended to help. In schools, this means determining to what extent students are learning what they need to know. *Worth*, in contrast, refers to extrinsic value to those outside the program, for example, to the larger community or society. A welfare program that gets jobs for recipients has merit for those who move out of poverty and worth to society by reducing welfare costs. *Significance* involves determining the relevance and importance of evaluation findings, for example, the extent to which one can confidently attribute observed outcomes to the program intervention. In all these cases, program evaluation is undertaken to inform decisions, clarify options, identify improvements, and provide information about programs and policies within contextual boundaries of time, place, values, and politics. Program evaluators use a variety of social science research methods to gather information, including qualitative methods. Qualitative methods have become widely used in program evaluation, often in conjunction with and to illuminate quantitative patterns, but also to contribute to in-depth understandings of program processes and participant outcomes.

Variety in and Standards for Program Evaluation

Evaluation research is characterized by enormous diversity. From large-scale, long-term, international comparative designs costing millions of dollars to small, short evaluations of a single component in a local agency, the variety is vast. Contrasts include internal versus external evaluations; outcomes versus process evaluations; experimental designs versus case studies; mandated accountability systems versus voluntary management efforts; academic studies versus informal action research by program staff; and published, polished evaluation reports versus oral briefings and discussions where no written report is ever generated. Then there are combinations and permutations of these contrasting approaches.

Despite this diversity, the professionalization of evaluation has led to standards for judging the quality of evaluations. The standards published by the Joint Committee on Standards in 1981 identified four areas of quality for judging evaluations: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The rationale for this framework

was that an evaluation should not be done if there is no prospect for its being useful to some specific intended users. Moreover, it should not be done if it is not feasible politically and pragmatically (including financially). Evaluations also have to be conducted fairly and ethically. No matter how technically rigorous an evaluation study might be, by the criteria of the standards, if the findings from an evaluation are not used, it is an inadequate evaluation.

Moreover, the standards established the value and appropriateness of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Indeed, in the section of the standards on accuracy, there is a standard on qualitative analysis and one on quantitative analysis. They are worded identically to be sure that in no way were the standards seen as preferring one approach over the other:

Analysis of Quantitative Information—Quantitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

Analysis of Qualitative Information—Qualitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

Purposes of Evaluation

Evaluation findings typically serve three primary purposes: rendering judgments, facilitating improvements, and/or generating knowledge. Judgments are undergirded by the accountability perspective, improvements are informed by a developmental perspective, and generating knowledge contributes to theory formulation and testing. These are by no means inherently conflicting purposes and some evaluations strive to incorporate all three approaches, but one is likely to be dominant in any given effort and prevail as the primary purpose informing design decisions and priority uses. Confusion among these quite different purposes is often the source of misunderstandings in an evaluation and can become disastrous at the end when it turns out that different intended users had different expectations and priorities.

In judgment-oriented evaluations, specifying the criteria for judgment is critical. Different stakeholders will bring different criteria to the task of judging a program's effectiveness. Summative evaluation constitutes an important purpose distinction in any menu of alternative evaluation purposes. Summative evaluations

judge the overall effectiveness of a program and deal with the problem of attributing measured results to the program intervention. Summative evaluations are particularly important in making decisions about continuing or terminating an experimental program or demonstration project. As such, summative evaluations are often requested by funders.

In contrast to summative evaluations, improvement-oriented (formative) evaluations often use an inductive approach in which criteria are less formal as one searches openly for whatever areas of strengths or weaknesses may emerge from looking at what's happening in the program. Qualitative methods can be especially useful for this purpose. Improvement-oriented evaluations aim to determine which participants are making good progress, which are not doing so well, and what kinds of implementation problems have emerged. The formative evaluator looks for unexpected consequences and side effects. It is especially important to gather data about how staff and clients are interacting, and about staff and participant perceptions of the program, finding out what they like, dislike, and want to change. Data on perceptions of the program's culture and climate may be part of the evaluation. The evaluation may examine how funds are being used compared with initial plans and how the program's external environment is affecting internal operations, looking for efficiencies that might be realized. In formative evaluation, it is especially important to gather evaluative feedback from program participants who receive services and to take that feedback seriously.

One classic metaphor explaining the difference between summative and formative evaluation is that when the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative.

Both summative and formative evaluations involve the instrumental use of results. Instrumental use occurs when a decision or action follows, at least in part, from the evaluation. Evaluations are seldom the sole basis for subsequent summative decisions or program improvements, but, when well done, they can contribute, often substantially, to programmatic decision making.

Special Contributions of Qualitative Evaluations

Certain purposes, questions, problems, and situations are more consonant with qualitative methods than

others. Understanding what people value and the meanings they attach to program experiences, from their own personal and cultural perspective, are major inquiry arenas for qualitative evaluation. This requires interviews to capture participants' perspectives.

Document analysis and review of program files can also be an important area of qualitative evaluation. However, in-depth reviews of the quality of care for participants in programs can draw on case files only if those files contain appropriate and valid information. When files are to be used for evaluation purposes, program staff need special training and support in how to gather and report highly descriptive qualitative data in program case files.

There are many aspects of programs that can be measured quantitatively, for example, counting the number of people who enter a program, the number who leave, and the number who receive or report some concrete benefit from the program. However, many attributes of programs do not lend themselves to counting. For example, school outcomes can be looked at both in terms of quantity of change and quality of change. Quantity of change may involve the number of books read, a score on a standardized achievement test, the number of words spelled correctly, and the number of interactions with other students, the teacher, or people of a different race. Each of these dimensions has a corresponding quality dimension that requires description rather than scaling. Thus, to find out *what it means* to a student to have read a certain number of books invites in-depth, qualitative interviewing and observation. In addition to counting the number of words spelled correctly, qualitative evaluation focuses on what spelling means to the student. How is spelling integrated into the student's approach to writing? How does the student think about spelling, approach spelling, feel about spelling? The answer to such questions requires description of individual students' perspectives and situations such that the meaning of the experience for the students is elucidated.

The same distinction holds with regard to programs that emphasize deinstitutionalization, for example, community mental health programs, community corrections, and community-based programs for the elderly. It is possible to count the number of people placed in the community. It is possible even to measure on standardized scales certain attributes of their lives and livelihoods. It is possible to have them subjectively rate various aspects and dimensions of quality of life. However, to fully grasp the meaning of a

change in life for particular persons it is necessary to develop a description of life quality that integrates interdependent dimensions of quality into a whole that is placed in context: What is their daily life like? Who do they interact with? How do they perceive their lives? How do they make sense of what they experience? What do they say about the path they are on? How do they talk about their quality of life? What do they compare themselves to when deciding how well they are doing? These are areas of qualitative inquiry that support quality enhancement efforts and insights.

To understand what happens to people in programs, participants' stories are important. It is through these stories that we come to understand how program staff work with clients and each other or with family and friends of their clients and how what goes on contributes to outcomes. Stories depict how participants grow and change in response to program interventions and other forces in their lives. There is a depth and richness to such evaluation stories that numbers alone cannot capture. Getting into case details better illuminates what worked and did not work along the journey to outcomes—the kind of understanding a program needs to improve.

Qualitative Syntheses of Findings About Effectiveness

As the field of evaluation has matured and a vast number of evaluations has accumulated, the opportunity has arisen to look across findings about specific programs to formulate generalizations about effectiveness. This involves synthesizing findings from different studies. An early and important example of synthesis evaluation was Lisbeth Schorr's *Within Our Reach*, a study of programs aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty. She identified the patterns of successful programs as follows:

- offering a broad spectrum of services;
- regularly crossing traditional, professional, and bureaucratic boundaries;
- seeing the child in the context of family and the family in the context of its surroundings, that is, holistic approaches;
- coherent and easy-to-use services;
- committed, caring, results-oriented staff;
- finding ways to adapt or circumvent traditional professional and bureaucratic limitations to meet client needs;

- professionals redefining their roles to respond to severe needs; and
- overall, intensive, comprehensive, responsive, and flexible programming.

Such generalizable evaluation findings about principles of effective programming derive from qualitative syntheses of diverse case studies. Such extrapolations have become the knowledge base of the field of evaluation research. Being knowledgeable about patterns of program effectiveness allows evaluators to provide guidance about development of new initiatives, policies, and strategies for implementation. These kinds of lessons constitute accumulated wisdom—principles of effectiveness that can be adapted, indeed must be adapted, to specific programs, or even entire organizations.

Michael Quinn Patton

See also Accountability; Action Research; Applied Research; Empowerment Evaluation; Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Research; Evidence-Based Practice; Researcher Roles

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PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

Historically, projective techniques were differentiated from related approaches such as enabling techniques

(which help participants to express themselves non-verbally) or from a variety of creative techniques. Nowadays, the term *projective technique* is commonly used to refer to a range of creative or enabling tasks, and the term is used in this broader sense here.

Projective techniques are research tools or approaches designed to access thoughts, feelings, or needs that are not easily accessible to research participants and/or to the researcher. They also provide permission for participants to express embarrassing or antisocial views by projection—attributing these views to other people. In this way, unacceptable ideas can be expressed, but personally disowned. Projective techniques, therefore, offer a structure for participants that makes it easier for them to access thoughts and emotions that are difficult to verbalize or difficult to express publicly. They can be invaluable in certain research situations, especially when we need to get beneath the top of mind or rational data. They enable access to hidden aspects and layers of respondents' experience and help translate the intuitive, the emotional and nonverbal into concepts that can be explored in the research situation.

Many projective techniques are directly borrowed from clinical psychology practice and are embedded in particular theoretical approaches. But to commercial researchers, what matters is their usefulness in developing understanding and answering the research question. They can generate additional layers of data that are difficult or impossible to access through conventional discursive means.

Projective techniques can be used in a wide variety of situations, for example,

- to obtain fresh perspectives on heavily researched markets,
- in new product or brand development or brand repositioning,
- in developing advertising strategy, and
- to evaluate courses/conferences when there is limited time and access to research participants.

Material generated through projective techniques can enable client or creative teams to develop a more holistic understanding than would be possible by verbal input alone. Visual and auditory material, music, drawing, word associations, and drama can provide a rich understanding of target markets and their relationships with brands and organizations.

The range of projective techniques is extensive. They can be very simple, incorporated into standard

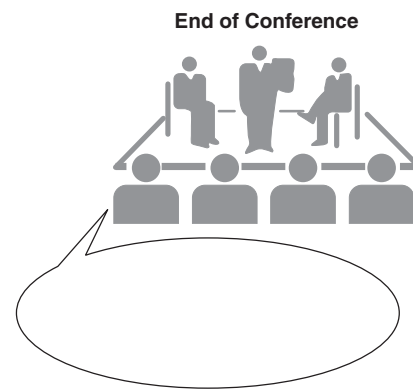
research approaches, and used without preplanning. Alternatively, they can be complex and time consuming, requiring prior preparation, specific materials, training, and experience. Projective techniques can easily be adapted to fit the needs of almost any project.

Some examples of projective techniques are as follows:

- *Personification*: If this chocolate bar came to life as a person, who would it be?
- *Market Mapping*: Group a collection of products together according to those that you see as similar in feel.
- *Bubble Drawings*: Cartoons in which speech or thought bubbles are filled in by participants, for example, what is the shopper thinking about X brand?
- *Life Graphs*: Draw a graph of a particular experience, for example a plane journey, noting the highs and lows, when and why these happened, and how you experienced each stage.
- *Collages*: Working as a group, construct a collage that represents how you feel about organization Y, using pictures from magazines, words, drawings.
- *Psychodrawing*: Draw a picture of your relationship with money.
- *Role Play*: Two people, one takes the role of the bank manager, the other plays the customer looking for a loan. Play out the conversation.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when using projective techniques is that they are a means to an end, the end being greater understanding. The materials produced through using such techniques are not the findings. It is essential to explore with participants what they mean; why they have represented a brand or organization in such a way. Projective techniques work most effectively and have greater validity when research participants themselves interpret the outcomes. Equally, it is important to be clear on their usage. For instance, with sophisticated consumers, it is sometimes easier and more effective to talk about brand imagery rather than spend precious time on projective techniques.

Projective techniques can be used in many different types of research, but they are particularly useful in a group context, because there is time, because it is a relatively secure and less exposed environment for research participants, and because they can work in supportive teams. When exploring brand issues, a



Thought Bubble. This is an example of a thought bubble used to capture experiences at the end of a conference—useful when interviewing time is tight.

group context is particularly relevant in that brands are culturally defined. Accessing shared meanings and taken-for-granted assumptions within a group context is therefore more appropriate than using individual interviews.

It is very important that projective techniques are introduced at the appropriate stage in the research process. If introduced too early in the process, when participants are establishing the group, they may not engage participants. Too late in the group and participants may be flagging. Ideally, projective techniques should be introduced when the group is warmed up and enthused about the topic under discussion. Projective techniques change the style and energy of the group. Often they speed up the process and increase involvement. Participants may need a quiet period afterwards to reenergize.

In order to encourage participant involvement, it is important to introduce the particular technique appropriately. Participants need to be given a simple, clear explanation in a clear and confident manner. They need to feel that what they are being asked to do is reasonable, makes sense, and could be interesting. Projective techniques have value only insofar as they encourage people to talk in different ways.

Projective techniques work in different ways; some allow consumers to identify implicit structures, for example, the differences and relationships between brands. Others present consumers with materials they must react to, leading to discussion, or they disrupt the taken-for-granted world, which forces consumers to behave in different ways or explore new possibilities.

They are an invaluable part of the qualitative armory and enable richer, deeper, and more creative understanding of how research participants' understand their worlds.

Sheila Keegan

See also Data Collection

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A project is a nonroutine, one-time effort undertaken to create a specific measurable outcome, namely a product or service. Project management has been described as both a discipline and a process concerned with the successful completion of a defined project from inception to completion. The process involves planning, coordinating, and executing all project tasks and associated resources with specific attention to time, cost, scope, and quality.

A research study is a project. Large or small, funded or unfunded, research projects involve significant planning from initial proposal design to data collection to publication of results. Increasingly, large external research grants and contracts are requiring project-management expertise as a condition of funding. Qualitative researchers would benefit from adopting project-management techniques as an integral part of their research.

History

Although not formally labeled examples of project management, evidence of successful project management throughout history ranges from the building of the pyramids to the construction of the Eiffel Tower to advances in the industrial world. During the previous century, the main disciplines engaged in adopting and popularizing project-management practices came

from the construction, manufacturing, engineering, and defense industries. The establishment of the Project Management Institute (PMI) in 1969 was instrumental in promoting the profession of project management and working to standardize terms and processes across a spectrum of corporations and organizations. In recent decades, information and technology, computer system development, pharmaceutical, and financial companies have contributed to advances in the discipline of project management. Today, project management is rapidly being adopted across a wide spectrum of industries, both large and small. Project management is also being adopted for personal use such as planning a vacation or a wedding. For qualitative researchers, project management could be used to coordinate tasks such as budgeting, hiring research assistants, obtaining appropriate certifications and approvals, collecting and analyzing data, submitting reports to agencies, and preparing presentations and publications.

Phases of Project Management

Typically, the process of project management involves five phases. The labels used to describe these five phases vary somewhat in the literature; however, the generally agreed principles of project management according to the PMI are initiating processes, planning processes, executing processes, monitoring and controlling processes, and closing processes. During Phase I, initiating processes, the project objectives are defined. Details concerning the overall scope of the project are documented in order to keep the project manageable. At this phase, qualitative researchers may determine the size of the project (regional or national focus) as well as general timelines (e.g., expected deliverables at the completion of a 3-year research grant). Phase II, the planning process, involves detailing all of the activities to be accomplished in order to successfully complete the project. Work breakdown structures are created to illustrate the hierarchy of all work units, subprojects, tasks, subtasks, and the interdependencies among these components. Time estimates and cost factors are carefully considered as well. During this phase, qualitative researchers plan all tasks, responsibilities, and time estimates associated with the project. Once finalized, this plan is considered the baseline plan. During Phase III, the executing

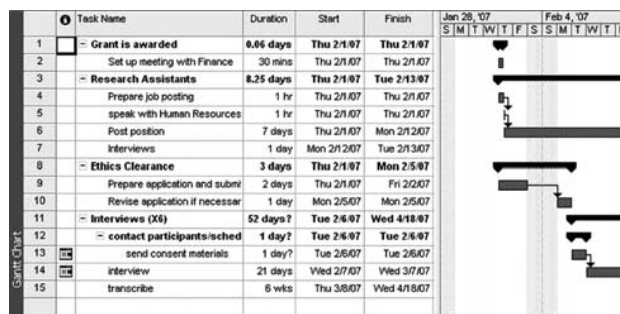


Figure 1 GANTT Chart

Source: Microsoft Project 2003 screen shot; reprinted by permission of Microsoft.

Note: This is a screen view of a GANTT chart, used to plan and monitor progress in a qualitative research project.

process, the activities detailed in the baseline plan are implemented. In Phase IV, the monitoring and controlling process, progress is compared with the baseline plan. Any problems that arise are dealt with by adding, deleting, or adjusting activities to work toward successful completion of the project. For example, the time estimated to transcribe and analyze the interviews may have been underestimated, so adjustments would be made to keep the project on track (e.g., reduce the number of interviews, or hire additional assistants to transcribe and analyze data). The baseline plan is not changed, but revisions and progress are documented. This phase provides flexibility in an emergent research design as the research path evolves. The final phase, the closing phase is an often overlooked but vitally important aspect of project management. This phase allows for reflection and evaluation of what went right and what needed improvement. The changes made during Phase IV are reviewed in preparation for subsequent projects.

Techniques and Tools

Tools and techniques used to facilitate the project-management process for both small and large organizations range from paper-based templates to software and web-based products. The most accepted format to view project planning and progress is to use a GANTT chart. This type of bar chart was first developed by Henry Gantt in the early 1900s and allows users to visually monitor all scheduled project activities and their progress. Figure 1 is a sample GANTT chart

showing the baseline plan and progress bars from Phase IV of a qualitative research project.

Benefits and Challenges

The benefits of using project-management techniques as well as software and web-based tools include improved organization and time saving. Schedules and responsibility assignments are prepared early in the planning process. Monitoring progress as the plan is implemented ensures that problems are recognized early and appropriate modifications to the project are introduced with attention to time, scope, and cost. Project-management tools also facilitate improved communication among members of a given project team. Continual communication and reflection throughout the project cycle facilitate success of the current project and provide the groundwork to ensure that the lessons learned will benefit future research project planning. Qualitative researchers can use project-management tools to manage a single research project or a range of related or unrelated research projects. Project-management plans could also facilitate student-supervisor communication and progress monitoring.

Implementing project-management techniques and tools does not guarantee project success. The challenges are to ensure that the project objectives designed in Phase I are realistic and achievable. As the project moves through the five phases, project managers must be prepared to revise plans, scale down projects, or potentially end the project, if for example the original assumptions and projects were overly ambitious, the time estimates unrealistic, or delays unforeseen (e.g., difficulty accessing the research site, turnover of research assistants). Using software or web-based tools, one must be careful not to become overly consumed with managing the plan, making constant adjustments and micromanaging team members rather than managing the actual project. Implementing project-management techniques to facilitate the management of a research study will improve over time as researchers continually learn from one project to the next. Researchers will become more adept at estimating time associated with various tasks (e.g., obtaining ethics clearance, analyzing data, preparing manuscripts) resulting in successful research planning.

Deborah McCarthy VanOosten

See also Checklists; Data Analysis; Emergent Design; Funding; Research Team; Transcription

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PROLONGED ENGAGEMENT

Prolonged engagement refers to spending extended time with respondents in their native culture and everyday world in order to gain a better understanding of behavior, values, and social relationships in a social context. The immersion of the researcher in the culture of the respondents on a long-term basis involves the development of congenial relationships between the researcher and members of the respondent community. The notion of prolonged engagement is most associated with traditional anthropology studies, such as those of Margaret Mead, but it is becoming increasingly used in a variety of qualitative research studies in an effort to move beyond the “observer” role of the researcher to one of engagement.

The use of prolonged engagement allows the research study to go farther in the investigation of certain phenomena that cannot be adequately explored with short-term study designs. By becoming engaged in and learning the cultural environment through experience in the natural everyday world of respondents, researchers can explore multiple constructions of reality and become familiar with the variety of ways that respondents interpret experiences. Spending sufficient time in a culture provides a more appropriate basis for determining the relationships between empirical results and the way individuals behave, speak, and interact in the natural setting of everyday life. While intensive interviewing on a short-term basis can provide valuable data about respondents’ culture, prolonged engagement goes beyond the words of respondents to the deciphering of meaning of language narratives and social interactions. In essence, researchers who employ prolonged

engagement seek to become members of the community, going beyond what respondents tell them in initial interviews to discover more fully things that go unsaid in the early stages of all human encounters.

The purpose of this method is to spend longer periods of time both in the world of the respondent and their community in order to better understand contextual meaning through the eyes of the ones who know it best. The world reality of the respondents can be more fully explored and experienced by the researcher through prolonged engagement, rather than “sitting on the sidelines” of the research setting. Explanations are clarified through repeated encounters, the researcher can understand to a much greater degree what is being said and not said, thus focusing on the topics related to the focus of the research study. The research study then becomes a joint experience between researcher and subject, allowing for greater understanding for both in how a phenomenon is experienced over time.

Issues Related to Prolonged Engagement

Prolonged engagement involves significant commitment and investment, not only for the researcher but also for the respondents as well. Erving Goffman, who advocated such an approach in his classic ethnographic research, believed that to truly learn a community’s culture, the researcher must effectively penetrate the community circle, even to the point of becoming a member. Goffman noted that by going beyond the traditional, superficial, and formal researcher-subject encounters, researchers subject themselves to the life circumstances of those being studied. He further asserted that the researcher must actually be authentically bound to the group or community. He explained his conception of prolonged engagement in this way:

You’re empathetic enough—because you’ve been taking the same crap they’ve been taking—to sense what it is that they’re responding to. To me, that’s the core of observation. If you don’t get yourself in that situation, I don’t think you can do a piece of serious work. (Goffman, 1989, p. 126)

Although not all researchers agree with Goffman’s position concerning the degree of going completely “native” in a community in order to produce valid research, prolonged engagement provides the ideal

foundation for the emic researcher who desires to go beyond simply describing the range of experiences of “typical” respondents to one of cultural immersion in the research setting. This occurs through being engaged on a long-term basis with respondents in their world as both researcher and respondent evolve in shared interactions. In other words, the sights and sounds of the world of the respondent, which had initially been unknown and foreign territory to the researcher, become familiar and comfortable. Prolonged engagement in a community requires extensive involvement in the culture and, as such, is more appropriate for specific research topics, especially those related to the discovery of cultural meanings. For example, the case study of specific events in a community’s history may employ prolonged engagement as the most appropriate approach for the study design and purpose.

Methods of Prolonged Engagement

In order to effectively engage with a community on a prolonged basis, the researcher must first find a way to effectively gain entry and membership in the community, establish a trust relationship with the respondents, and then commit to remaining as an active member participant for sufficient time to understand, and become a part of, the every day lives of the respondents. It is only at this point that the researcher can effectively explore, analyze, and interpret the data derived from the fieldwork of the research study.

As the researcher slowly gains acceptance into the community, he or she must constantly remain focused on the issues and focus of the research study’s purpose. This can be one of the most challenging aspects of prolonged engagement: remaining objective while still interacting and being a part of the culture under examination. By defining the complexities and culture of the group, the researcher begins to learn the unique and often secret language common in all communities in order to decode meanings that are reflected in the communication and actions of the members. The researcher using the method of prolonged engagement is in somewhat of a contradictory position: although seeking to become a part of the community, he or she must also remain focused on the purpose of the engagement, which is to more fully understand and explore the culture as an objective participant.

Social scientists have traditionally relied on informants and “insiders” in field research, and prolonged engagement involves similar techniques. The

researcher must gain confidence and trust, to provide more fully native insights and explanations that are not always apparent to the community outsider. Prolonged engagement allows for ample time and community involvement in the identification of those who can best represent the authentic views according to the study’s focus.

Validity and Reliability Issues of Prolonged Engagement

When researchers are up close and personal in the lives of the community and its members, the rigorous criteria of credibility, reliability and validity become intrinsically linked. The value of any research is to demonstrate what many researchers refer to as truth value. Through multiple encounters and learning the native language of the members of the community, as well as exploring the variety of ways that respondents express themselves, the researcher further establishes validity. The multiple constructions of reality of the respondents should be well represented through repeated encounters and immersion in the community’s rituals and everyday interactions. By clarifying contradictions or misinformation injected either by the community members or by the researcher, as well as analyzing differing perspectives, credibility is enhanced. The focus of the study guides these constant comparisons and contrasts as well as allowing for the identification of those elements in the situation that are most relevant to the study’s focus and purpose. By pursuing the specific issues related to the research study, the researcher can focus on validating them in detail and document them as they evolve.

To do this, the researcher must demonstrate that these multiple constructions are adequately described in the native words of the respondents and are deemed credible by the members themselves. This can be achieved by the use of member checks as a means of requesting the community members to validate the interpretations of the researcher. This occurs simultaneously with data collection, as analysis of members’ expressions, words, behaviors, and interactions are tested with the members themselves. If the analysis and conclusions of the researcher using prolonged engagement as a research strategy are recognizable to community members as adequate representations of their own “version of reality,” credibility is more likely to be established in the final results of the study. This can be done through formal means, such as repeating words back to the

respondents, clarifying terms unfamiliar to the researcher in the respondents' own words, and verifying interpretations of the researcher with the community members. It is critical to ask continuously for clarification and verification from diverse members of the community about their worldview in order to avoid misrepresenting and losing in translation the meaning of important concepts critical to the study's purpose. Such checks and rechecks help the researcher "connect the dots" of the cultural milieu and represent more accurately how the findings relate to the purpose of the research. Credibility and validity can also be demonstrated through less formal means, such as using thick descriptions of narratives and a variety of examples from interactions between the researcher and community members in the final report. As a final note, it is even more important when using prolonged engagement as a method that the researcher acknowledges an estimate of his or her biases that may exist due to the type of intimate engagement between the researcher and the community.

Ethical Issues in Prolonged Engagement

Because of the intimate and personal relationships formed during prolonged engagement, researchers must be especially vigilant that the members of the community comprehend the purpose of the study and their role in the research. Transparency between researcher and the community is essential. While knowledge about the community's culture is critical to understanding individual behavior, values and the construction of meaning, detailed descriptions, and quotes and narratives should be restricted to the aspects of the study focus. This can be a daunting task, as all researchers who have conducted field studies know, since most of the data collected is of interest to both the researcher and community. Building trust and dealing with sensitive issues between the researcher and members of the community must be a constant consideration and respected as such. Statements made about a culture in the final report should be consistently phrased in terms that are acceptable to the community. Trust and rapport can be established only if the researcher takes a genuine interest in the community and its members, learns the native language and rituals, attempts to truly understand the cultural nuances of the community, and has genuine respect for the members of the community and their way of life.

Karen Saucier Lundy

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Everyday Life; Meaning; Member Check; Participants as Co-Researchers; Researcher-Participant Relationships; Reality and Multiple Realities; Storytelling; Trust

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PSEUDONYM

A pseudonym is a fictional name assigned to give anonymity to a person, group, or place. Many ethical codes outline the importance of anonymity and confidentiality, and researchers routinely use pseudonyms as a means to this end. Pseudonyms are very useful for research in sensitive topics, particularly with regard to deviant or criminal behavior. When pseudonyms are used, it is important that this be clearly identified in any dissemination of findings.

Although pseudonyms are usually assigned to those who take part in research, researchers themselves occasionally employ a pseudonym. For example, in Sjaak van der Geest's anthropological research on marriage, death, and witchcraft in an African village, she gave pseudonyms to the village and participants. Later, she published her work under a

pseudonym because her university colleagues could have easily determined the name of the village and the small number of people living there.

Pseudonyms can be effective in protecting confidentiality and anonymity, but their use presents both practical and ethical issues. Although the researcher or participant may determine a pseudonym, care should be taken to consider whether the name may redefine the pseudonymized person's character. For example, in his doctoral dissertation, Francisco Ibanez-Carrasco retold the story of a student who had sued a university, and he pseudonymized the student as "Rogue," but otherwise portrayed the student positively. When participants choose their pseudonyms, problems can occur when a sample is sufficiently large that they select the same names. This can be problematic for researchers during manuscript preparation if participants cannot be contacted to approve new pseudonyms.

A general rule about the presentation of data is that individual respondents should be able to recognize themselves, but a reader should not be able to recognize the respondent. Therefore, it is ethically important that participants not be offended by pseudonyms that detract from how they see themselves or others. For example, in narrative research participants may take great care to share intimate and detailed accounts about themselves and persons they care for. Researchers should be sensitive to this and consider how participants might feel if they see themselves and others lost in a randomly selected pseudonym. In some research, such as that dealing with loss and bereavement, participants may actually prefer to have themselves and their loved ones presented as who they really are.

Researchers have been criticized for the overuse of pseudonyms and engaging in a form of ethical paternalism for assuming that participants must be anonymized. Many research participants do not wish to be anonymous. They participate in research because they anticipate a benefit, such as the hope that their contributions are valuable enough to make a difference and that they will be recognized for it. Anonymizing through pseudonyms defeats such a benefit, not only for individuals but entire communities if their geographical locations are concealed.

Russel Ogden

See also Anonymity; Benefit; Codes and Coding; Confidentiality; Privacy; Sensitive Topics

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PSYCHOANALYTICALLY INFORMED OBSERVATION

Psychoanalytically informed observation as a research method derives from the method of infant observation as it was established in the 1950s by child psychoanalyst Esther Bick in her teaching of child psychotherapy trainees at the Tavistock Clinic in London. Infant observation is now a widely established method in psychoanalytic training. An appropriation of the principles of this method for research purposes, observing people of any age, in any relational, group, or institutional setting, affords a method that transcends reliance on what participants say—a reliance characteristic of most contemporary social science research. For any research broadly interested in identities and relational dynamics, the method can ensure that affect, unconscious intersubjectivity, and embodiment are not ignored and that identity change over time remains in view.

Classically, the infant observation method involves the observer visiting the new mother (or other primary caregiver) and baby at a regular time each week for one hour over a 2-year period. Supervision is essential as strong feelings are stirred up in observers during the process. The observer intervenes as little as possible, while recognizing that her or his presence has effects on the family. The observation is as naturalistic as possible in not selecting in advance any categories of behavior. Note writing is deferred until after the hour and emphasizes fine detailed description kept distinct from making theoretical inferences. The notes provide the basis for discussion at a weekly supervisory seminar group, enabling the observer to go beyond her or his single viewpoint and reveal and learn from transferences that are inevitably produced as a result of powerful identifications. The emotional significance of the observation experience provides a central vehicle for learning about babies' early self-development.

Stephen Briggs used the method to follow six babies of at-risk mothers. He identified characteristic and persistent patterns in the way that mothers and babies managed anxiety. This method, adapted for use as a formal qualitative research tool, provides a qualitative case-based and in-depth method for studying the extra-discursive alongside what people say. For example, as part of a research program into identities, funded by the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council, a research team investigated the identity processes involved in becoming a mother for the first time. Psychoanalytically informed observation was used alongside free association narrative interviews in order to open up for exploration the aspects of becoming a mother that are less conscious and therefore less capable of being expressed directly through language. Six observed mothers were part of a group that was interviewed three times over the baby's first year. The observational focus was the mother–baby couple; this being based on the principle derived from object relations psychoanalysis concerning the relational nature of subjectivity. The many other relationships affecting new mothers' identities were often also observable.

In this method, the ontology of research participants—including researchers—is consistent with the epistemology that guides the method in producing data and their analysis. Both are based on psychoanalytic premises, namely the effectivity of a dynamic unconscious and the relational, affective, and embodied nature of subjectivity. In contrast to epistemologies based on rational cognitive assumptions, psychoanalysis uses a method based on using one's subjectivity as an instrument of knowing. Different conceptualizations of reflexivity, objectivity, and validity underpin this methodology. This is reproduced in the style of note-taking, in which any experience that engenders a notable emotional response is attended to and recorded as such, and in the way that the group works with data. Observers' notes, each set developing a unique case as the mother's identity changes over her baby's first year of life, provide the material for discussion at weekly seminars attended by the observers, the seminar leader, and the researchers. Seminar notes provide a preliminary pass at making sense of the observation data and constitute another layer of data available for analysis.

Compared with interviews, observation data reveal the strains and conflicts associated with becoming a mother that she may not talk about or even be consciously aware of. They also register the deep emotional bonds that are often expressed in embodied ways.

Wendy Hollway

See also Free Association Narrative Interview

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PSYCHOLOGICAL GENERALIZATION

Psychological generalization refers to cognitive processes employed by both producers and consumers of qualitative research. Producers of research, for instance, engage in psychological generalization when they make sense of what is happening within a case or a collection of cases.

Within-Case Psychological Generalization

A psychological approach to within-case generalization was first articulated by the German historian Wilhelm Dilthey during the advent of the social sciences in the mid 1800s. Dilthey argued that the social sciences required a different methodology than the physical sciences because social scientists studied worlds of meaning that had been constructed by human beings.

Thus, according to Dilthey, the goal of social science is to understand the different meanings that both were created by and, in turn, influenced people and shaped events in different historical eras. Dilthey argued that researchers could do this by engaging in a hermeneutical process, that is, a circular approach to inquiry in which generalities were inferred by looking at particulars (e.g., cultural artifacts such a historical period's legal code or popular works of art) and in which inferred generalities, in turn, permitted social scientists to see particulars in new and richer ways. These enhanced perceptions of particulars added additional depth and dimension to general statements about a historical era or a particular culture, and these new general insights, in turn, shed additional light on the meaning of particulars.

Dilthey argued that social sciences could do all of the above because they were human beings studying other human beings. Because of this shared humanity, social scientists could understand social phenomena psychologically. Unlike scientists who studied physical phenomena, social scientists could use their own life experiences, along with their imaginations, to make sense of other historical eras and the general meaning implicit in the artifacts these eras produced.

Most contemporary qualitative researchers accept some variation of Dilthey's view of how within-case generalizations are generated. They have, however, also developed a range of strategies—for example, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, audits—to reassure skeptics that their psychologically generated within-case generalizations are not merely figments of researchers' imaginations.

Generalizability in Psychological Terms

Contemporary researchers also have used variations of the psychological generalization notion to redefine generalizability in psychological terms. Robert Stake, for example, has written about naturalistic generalization, and Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba have articulated the notion of transferability. Both notions rely on the research consumer's psychological judgment.

In addition, Robert Donmoyer used schema theory to reconceptualize generalizability in psychological terms and, in the process, to answer a long-standing question about the utility of studying atypical cases. He argued that outlier cases can be useful because such cases require consumers of the research to not only assimilate the details of a case into their existing cognitive structures, but also to expand their existing structures to accommodate the idiosyncratic elements of the case. This accommodation process leads to cognitive structures that are both more integrated and more differentiated than they were before the accommodation occurred; such structures, in turn, should produce more sophisticated perceptions and action.

Robert Donmoyer

See also Empathy; Generalizability; Hermeneutics; Tacit Knowledge; Transferability

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PUBLISHING AND PUBLICATION

Publication refers to the act of circulating written results in order to disseminate and communicate these findings within academic and/or professional circles, or the broader public. Increasingly, scholarly publications are distributed electronically as well as in print. For researchers outside of academia, publications may be reports, articles in professional journals, or other avenues that disseminate research to colleagues, agencies, government institutions, or related bodies. For researchers within academia, the quality and sustainability of individuals, departments, and universities is largely based on publications in international refereed journals and books. A central part of being an academic researcher is publishing and disseminating results, often encapsulated in the mantra “publish or perish.” Publication prowess is furthermore often tied to funding opportunities and resource allocation in addition to providing substantial returns in terms of career mobility and recognition. This entry defines the central features of publishing and publications, with a focus on academia.

The Writing and Publishing Process

Publishing begins with the writing process, which should be based on clarity. Numerous articles and books can aid researchers in producing high quality manuscripts (see Further Readings). It is also essential to avoid fundamental mistakes like spelling errors, follow standard style guidelines (available from general texts such as William Strunk and Elwyn Brooks White's *The Elements of Style*), and keep the level of competence of readers in mind. Finally, avoid numerous footnotes or endnotes, write concisely and logically, remain focused, and show a command of the secondary literature.

To achieve success, it is advisable to first engage in an internal review (advisors, coworkers, discussion groups), look for a suitable journal or publisher, and submit a professional manuscript. After the manuscript has been submitted, it is generally sent for peer review and often undergoes a double-blind review process (i.e., both author and reviewers are anonymous). This process of peer review and revision is intended to maintain the quality of the publication;

however, some have argued that peer review is more reminiscent of a lottery than a rational process, or (at worst) a process that forces authors to “sell their souls” by editing to suit others’ intentions or risk not being published at all. Authors are then informed of the editorial decision, receive comments, and if the article has received a “revise and resubmit,” have the opportunity to revise the manuscript. If the revised article is accepted, it is usually copyedited prior to being typeset and distributed through print and digital means.

The Citation and Journal Impact Factor Indexes

In the increasingly competitive academic system, the journal impact factor and citation indexes have emerged as the central evaluation device in many academic institutions across most disciplines. These tools were developed by Eugene Garfield and presented in his 1955 paper, “Citation Indexes for Science: A New Dimension in Documentation Through Association of Ideas.” Quantitative and seemingly more objective indicators in the form of journal impact factors and citation indices were developed as a practical and cost-effective tool to serve these evaluation goals. Evaluation often takes place using publication counts, number of citations, and the prestige of journals.

The journal impact factor is a quantitative measure of journal quality in the form of an index that charts the frequency with which articles from a journal are cited. The impact factor is a simple calculation that covers a 3-year period calculating the average number of times published papers are cited for up to 2 years after publication. The impact factor for a journal in 2005 is calculated as follows:

A = total number of times articles published in 2003–2004 were cited in articles published in 2005

B = total number of articles, reviews, proceedings, or notes published in 2003–2004

Therefore, the 2005 Impact Factor = A/B .

In a similar manner, the impact of individual researchers is also assessed via a citation index. The Institute for Scientific Information in the United States produces citation information by recording the number of times each publication has been cited within an allotted period and by whom. This information is published in the form of a citation index.

Numerous researchers across multiple disciplines have criticized whether these indicators are a valid measure of scientific quality. For instance, particular journals with a broader focus, more review articles, or English language often fare better. Others have argued that it is questionable whether the impact factor measures the quality of publications. Further limitations include the 3-year window in calculating impact factors and the fact that only a few key articles are repeatedly cited. Other key criticisms are the general limitation/bias of the database to English language, reliance on journal articles alone at the expense of books, and inclusion of incorrect and self-citations. There also appears to be a great deviation in the way that scientists in different cultures and disciplines “do science,” which affects these indicators. Several studies have shown that scholars in the United States appear to be more prone to self-citation and citing one another, that disciplines such as psychology have longer reference lists (thus, more citations), or that other disciplines such as the medical sciences publish shorter articles, frequently with more coauthors. Other factors that may distort indicators include the absolute number of researchers and journals within certain disciplines, the number of authors, citation habits, article length, and speed at which results become obsolete.

The reliance on these indicators has several consequences. Librarians may use them to select relevant journals or book series for their collections. Researchers may seek to publish their work only in journals with a high citation index, even when other, specialized journals may be more useful for the dissemination of ideas. As a result, specialized fields or unpopular topics may become marginalized or local topics and non-English language contexts may not be well represented in the published literature. On the other hand, the positive impact of this system is that researchers must think in international terms, their work will be more widely disseminated, and they will receive more feedback on uses of their own work.

Melinda C. Mills

See also Peer Review; Writing Process

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PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

To say one will engage in purposive sampling signifies that one sees sampling as a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how one does one's research. This statement implies that the way that researchers sample must be tied to their objectives. A second implication follows from the first: There is no one best sampling strategy because which is best will depend on the context in which researchers are working and the nature of their research objective(s).

Purposive sampling is virtually synonymous with qualitative research. However, because there are many objectives that qualitative researchers might have, the list of purposive strategies that may be followed is virtually endless, and any given list will reflect only the range of situations the author of that list has considered.

Nevertheless, some specific objectives and interests characterize qualitative research. For one thing, qualitative researchers are less often interested in asking about central tendency in a larger group (e.g., "What do most people in this population think about an issue?"), and much more interested in case study analysis—why particular people (or groups) feel particular ways, the processes by which these attitudes are constructed, and the role they play in dynamic processes within the organization or group. Embedded in this is the idea that who a person is and where that person is located within a group is important, unlike other forms of research where people are viewed as essentially interchangeable. Research participants are not always created equal—one well-placed articulate informant will often advance the research far better than any randomly chosen sample of 50—and researchers need to take this into account in choosing a sample.

The general theme here is that the biggest questions all researchers need to ask themselves are what they

want to accomplish and what they want to know. The appropriate sampling strategy will follow from that. Some examples of the kinds of purposive alternatives available include the following:

Stakeholder Sampling: Particularly useful in the context of evaluation research and policy analysis, this strategy involves identifying who the major stakeholders are who are involved in designing, giving, receiving, or administering the program or service being evaluated, and who might otherwise be affected by it.

Extreme or Deviant Case Sampling: Sometimes extreme cases are of interest because they represent the purest or most clea-cut instance of a phenomenon researchers are interested in. For example, if researchers were interested in studying management styles, it might be most interesting to study an organization that did exceptionally well and/or exceptionally poorly.

Typical Case Sampling: Sometimes researchers are interested in cases simply because they are not unusual in any way. For example, years ago Howard Becker and some of his colleagues were interested in studying how medical students were socialized into the profession. They did their research at the University of Kansas Medical School precisely because there was nothing unusual about it, and for that reason it was probably typical of the medical school experience.

Paradigmatic Case Sampling: A case is paradigmatic when it is considered the exemplar for a certain class. For example, if one wanted to study the management of professional sports teams, the paradigmatic case in hockey of a successful franchise would be the Montreal Canadians; for baseball it would be the New York Yankees.

Maximum Variation Sampling: Searching for cases or individuals who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon one is studying, and would include both of the previous categories, that is, both extreme and typical cases plus any other positions that can be identified.

Criterion Sampling: This involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion, for example, that they have a certain disease or have had a particular life experience. For example, a colleague of mine is doing research with men who have been clients of sex workers.

Theory-Guided Sampling: Researchers who are following a more deductive or theory-testing approach would be interested in finding individuals or cases that embody theoretical constructs. As this could be considered a particular type of criterion sampling, it also illustrates the overlaps that can exist between these categories (e.g., theory-based sampling might also lead the researcher to look for particularly intense or extreme cases).

Critical Case Sampling: Here the researcher might be looking for a decisive case that would help make a decision about which of several different explanations is most plausible, or is one that is identified by experts as being a particularly useful choice because of the generalizations it allows, for example, recent findings that life exists at the bottom of the ocean where there is no sunlight, bitter cold, and immense pressure, suggests that life can exist almost anywhere.

Disconfirming or Negative Case Sampling: With this strategy the researcher is looking to extend his or her analysis by looking for cases that will disconfirm it, both to test theory and simply because it is often from our failures that we learn the most. The general principle here is, “If you think your results are not

generalizable or the existence of a particular kind of case will undermine all that you ‘know’ to be true about a phenomenon, then look for that kind of case.”

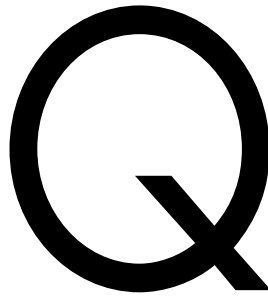
These do not exhaust the possibilities but illustrate some of the strategic lenses through which purposive sampling can be considered. The general principle, however, remains, “Think of the person or place or situation that has the largest potential for advancing your understanding and look there.”

Ted Palys

See also Sampling

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Q METHODOLOGY

Q methodology is a composite of philosophy, concepts, data-gathering procedures, and statistical methods that provides perhaps the most thoroughly elaborated basis for the systematic examination of human subjectivity. Central to this enterprise are the meanings and understandings that individuals bring to their endeavors. This preservation of the person's perspective (rather than submerging it in categorical averaging) has rendered Q methodology attractive to investigators who are partial to qualitative methods. In addition, it takes advantage of the leveraging power of sophisticated statistical procedures that often reveal patterns within subjective perspectives that can be overlooked by even the most sensitive and discerning eye.

Q methodology was invented in 1935 by William Stephenson (1902–1989), who initially received a doctorate in physics and then later in psychology at the University of London while serving as the last graduate assistant to Sir Charles Spearman, inventor of factor analysis. He subsequently served as director of the Institute of Experimental Psychology at Oxford, underwent psychoanalysis with Melanie Klein, and after World War II, accepted a position at the University of Chicago; later he became a distinguished research professor in advertising in the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. His *The Study of Behavior* is the most thorough statement concerning his innovation, which has been applied in a wide variety of fields and more recently adopted as a method for qualitative analysis.

Although fortified by the mathematics of factor analysis and often presented as a purely quantitative method, Q methodology was advanced by Stephenson as the basis for the systematic study of subjectivity in which self-referential meaning and interpretation are central. It therefore shares many of the same goals with qualitative analysis and is contrapuntal to R methodology, which is the study of all that is objective.

Phenomena

Central to Q methodology is the concept of *con-course*, a term denoting the volume of common communicability with regard to any topic. During the Iraq War, for instance, assertions similar to the following were made and were collected from sources such as the media, interviews, and the internet: “The focus should be on Afghanistan rather than on Iraq,” “Saddam Hussein knew how to make weapons of mass destruction and could have passed this information on to terrorists,” “The war in Iraq was the right thing to do,” and so forth repeatedly and all in ordinary language. Or to take another example, consider comments similar to the following made by Koreans in reference to their own national identity and abstracted mainly from English-language books, chapters, and articles: “We are a sentimental and lyrical people,” “Our goal is to establish stability and happiness by first establishing proper relationships in all aspects of life,” the corpus of communicability comprising an ongoing cultural dialogue. Or, consider comments similar to the ones taken from interviews with Uruguayan farmers concerning their participation

in a dairy herd improvement program: "I don't believe milk prices are likely to increase, so I don't think I will participate to keep records," "If we want the producers to participate, we have to help them to become more efficient," and so on. Or consider possible ruminations of a single authoritarian personality in the course of prolonged in-depth interviews: "Some of the old rules help keep us in line," "It's stuck in my head that homosexuality is wrong," "There's not enough kindness," and so forth. Or consider the concourse of communicability attending the quantitative-qualitative debate itself, drawn from the professional literature: "Research is influenced to a great extent by the values of the researcher," "Quantitative and qualitative paradigms operate under different ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions," "Students should be pragmatic and use both kinds of techniques," and so forth, each proposition a pristine element in the grand debate and a matter of shared communicability understandable to all attending to it.

Statements of this kind are limitless and subjective in that they are matters of opinion and understanding rather than fact and explanation, and they constitute the phenomena of a science of subjectivity. Such statements can be obtained from interviews, publications, and any other source. But concourse is not necessarily restricted to talk. Photographs, advertisements, posters, music, and even foods and odors have been taken as phenomena to be examined. Concourse is more general than the related concept of discourse, which constitutes a special case. Whereas terms such as discourse and narrative imply coherency and a mainly linear storyline, concourse applies as well to inchoate ramblings of the kind encountered in daydreams, personal musings, and free associations.

Instrumentation and Observation

A universe of communicability on any topic typically numbers into the hundreds or thousands and is unlimited in theory. For purposes of study, therefore, the concourse is typically represented by a Q sample of 30 to 60 statements, which are frequently structured in terms of some conceptual framework. In the study of Korean identity noted previously, for instance, the hundreds of statements gathered into the concourse were first divided into (a) traditional and (b) modern values, each then subdivided into statements focused on (i) personal characteristics, (ii) philosophical and religious concerns, (iii) social relations, and (iv) political

orientations. Six statements were then selected from each of the resulting eight cells for a Q sample of 48 statements. The statements are printed on standardized cards (one statement per card) and are administered in the form of a Q sort, which requires participants to rank the statements, usually from agree to disagree. Just as the Q statements are matters of subjective opinion, so also is their ranking. The operation of Q sorting, therefore, effects a quantification of qualitative preference and constitutes the focal observation. The Q sort also nullifies consideration of validity insofar as it represents a person's own point of view for which external criteria are of no importance. There is no correct way to do a Q sort.

As in grounded theory, participants are selected in terms of their theoretical saturation. In the study of Korean identity, for example, participants were purposely selected to ensure a wide age range, diversity in terms of social class and education, and both males and females. To take another illustration, a study of physician-assisted suicide included participants selected according to whether they were experts (e.g., medical ethicists), authorities (religious leaders, politicians, journalists), had special interests (doctors, hospice workers, persons near death), or were representatives of the social classes. Beyond their use in facilitating the selection of interviewees, however, categories based upon respondent characteristics are of little interest and rarely enter into subsequent analyses. The goal in the sample of both statements and participants is representativeness, that is, to effect as much diversity as possible among participants as well as the statements to which they respond. Since the application of Q technique resolves responses into functional types, the number of participants is comparatively small, usually fewer than 40. Q can also be applied in the study of single cases.

Analysis

Q data can be analyzed using either of two dedicated software packages, PQMethod and PCQ. Each Q sort produces a set of scores (typically ranging from +4 to -4) representing the degrees of preference for all statements, and each person's subjective response is then statistically correlated with every other; the magnitude of the correlation coefficients indicating the degree of similarity among the various perspectives.

The factor analysis of the correlations reveals the number of qualitatively different ways in which the

various Q sorts have been organized, that is, the number of different viewpoints (or attitudes, identities, narratives, schemata, etc.) that are inherent in the population. Were all participants to organize the Q statements in essentially the same order (an indication of a commonly held outlook), then all of the correlations would be highly positive, and only one factor would be in evidence. At the other extreme, were all participants' views idiosyncratic, then there would be as many factors as persons, each factor representing a unique view. Usually, two to five factors prevail depending upon the degree to which the audience is segmented, each of the factors representing a perspective held in common by a subset of the participants. In the study of Korean identity, for instance, three factors emerged from the data, indicating three perceptions of the character of Koreans from among the Korean people themselves. These factors are natural categories that are beyond the investigator's control. Factor analysis as employed in Q methodology is outside the exploratory–confirmatory distinction and rests primarily on abductive rather than hypothetic-deductive logic.

Q sorts provided by the persons comprising a factor—that is, Q sorts demonstrating a high degree of commonality—are merged to provide a single composite Q sort, there being as many composite Q sorts as there are distinctly different views. Therefore, what began as many separate Q sorts (one representing each participant's vantage point) ends as just a few factor Q sorts (usually only three or four of them), one for each of the response types. The factor arrays are composed of the scores associated with each statement within each of the factors, and these scores provide the basis for factor interpretation.

It is significant that the factors in Q methodology are purely inductive, their number and character being indeterminate a priori. Faced with volumes of interview transcriptions, the qualitative analyst who inevitably has to place responses into categories (often with the assistance of content-analytic procedures) is never wholly free of uneasiness that the categories, despite conscientious effort, have been influenced in some way by observer bias. In Q methodology, on the other hand, the factors that emerge through analysis of the data are solely the function of the Q sorters themselves. Consequently, the factors are grounded in more than just a conceptual sense: They are wholly naturalistic inasmuch as they are inextricably tied to and emerge from the concrete operations of the participants.

Interpretation

In conventional research, trait measures and scale items are assumed to have fixed meanings (e.g., as measures of authoritarianism or anomie), and this eliminates the need for interpretation, but in Q methodology the meaning and significance of each statement is entirely in the hands of participants, thereby rendering a posteriori interpretation inescapable. In this hermeneutic phase, the investigator's interpretation of the factors that have emerged from the data is both facilitated and limited. First, the investigator is constrained by the factor scores—that is, the scores (typically from +4 to –4) registering the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements within each of the factors. Moreover, any interpretation of a factor must comport with the entire pattern of scores, that is, the pattern of all statements constrains the meaning of particular statements. Second, interviews are normally taken following each Q-sorting session during which the participant elaborates on the reasons for having arranged the statements in this particular way, and these interviews provide auxiliary information concerning the coherency of each factor. What began as undifferentiated concourse, therefore, ends with a set of factors, or patterns of meaning, that explain why the volume of subjective communicability displays this particular form and content.

Taking the above-mentioned study of Korean identity as illustrative, the 40 Q sorts obtained condensed into three factors, which were interpreted as realistic, alienated, and idealized viewpoints. The meanings and significance of these dimensions were based on examination of the patterns of statements (as determined by the factor scores) supplemented with personal interviews. In general, the concourse of subjective communicability gives rise, via Q sorting and factor analysis, to underlying dimensions, which in turn denote the cultural geometry inherent in the concourse.

Resources

Additional information about Q methodology can be found at the Q website (www.qmethod.org), where the PQMethod and PCQ software packages can also be accessed. Ongoing research is facilitated by an online discussion group (Q-Method@listserv.kent.edu) and by annual meetings of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity. Three journals

specialize in Q-related studies: *Operant Subjectivity*, *Journal of Human Subjectivity*, and the Korean language *Q-Methodology and Theory*.

Steven R. Brown

See also Abduction; Context and Contextuality; Grounded Theory; Interpretation; Subjectivity

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QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH (JOURNAL)

The journal *Qualitative Health Research (QHR)* was established to provide a forum for exploring the experience of patients, caregivers, and families in illness and health; for caregiving; and for the administration of health care. Introduced as a quarterly journal by Sage Publications in 1991, *Qualitative Health Research* was the first journal specializing in qualitative inquiry for health professionals. As of 2008, it has been published 10 times a year as a full-sized, two-column journal of 1,500 pages per volume.

The journal's mission is both to contribute to the enhancement of health care and to further the development and understanding of qualitative research methods as they contribute to clinical practice and to the education of health professionals. To achieve this goal, in addition to publishing unsolicited research articles, *QHR* is organized into several special, but peer reviewed, sections: Pearls, Piths, and Provocation; Computer Monitor; Teaching Matters; and Knowledge Utilization. The journal also contains solicited keynote addresses from the Qualitative Health Research and Advances in Qualitative Methods annual conferences and book reviews. "End Notes" is space for short, solicited and unsolicited commentaries, and each issue has an editorial.

In every second issue, a special topic is addressed. Recent topics include relationships in health care (Vol. 15, No. 6), narratives and discourse (Vol. 15, No. 7), perspectives on qualitative evidence (Vol. 16, No. 3), family care (Vol. 16, No. 5), and identity issues (Vol. 17, No. 2).

One interesting issue was Qualitative Proposals (Vol. 13, No 6), which included examples of proposals by Tony Kuzel and information on submitting a small grant by Janice Penrod, resubmitting and responding to reviewers by Margarete Sandelowski and Julie Barroso, and criteria for committee evaluations of proposals by Janice Morse.

QHR ranks as one of Sage Publications' 10 top journals (of approximately 350). Its 2005 ranking on the Thomson Scientific (formerly ISI) journal list was 23 of 39 Health Policy and Services journal listings, with an impact factor of 0.938. *QHR* is indexed in the major social science and health indexes, including Academic Search–EBSCO, Applied Social

Sciences Index & Abstracts (ASSIA), CINAHL database (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), Current Contents: Social & Behavioral Sciences, MEDLINE, Psychological Abstracts, PsycLIT, and Sociological Abstracts.

Janice M. Morse

See also International Institute for Qualitative Methodology

Websites

Qualitative Health Research: <http://qhr.sagepub.com>

QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The Qualitative Health Research (QHR) Conferences are organized annually by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM). The first conference, in 1991, was held to launch the journal *Qualitative Health Research* (Sage Publications). These conferences provide an important forum for the discussion and dissemination of qualitative research results pertaining to health, and are attended by qualitative researchers worldwide.

Plenary and keynote speakers are international leaders in the field. In the 2006 conference, Carl Mitcham's (Colorado School of Mines, USA) closing plenary address, "Philosophical Challenges of Qualitative Research," spoke to the challenges of qualitative research and how qualitative research "struggles against the tide of quantitative methods." James Waldram (University of Saskatchewan, Canada) presented on the ethical and methodological issues of conducting research with imprisoned sexual offenders.

Panel discussions are lively: For example, the panel discussion "Building a Career Using Qualitative Methods" from the 2006 conference included viewpoints from Jeanie Kayser-Jones (University of California at San Francisco), John Engel (Northeastern Ohio Universities) and Julianne Cheek (University of South Australia).

The conferences are usually organized into sessions around topics. Sessions of four presentations, often

with a discussant, make possible some coherence for those with special interests, but the presentations are also coordinated so that participants can move between sessions to hear papers of particular interest. Sessions from the 2006 QHR Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, for instance, addressed topics such as cognitive impairment (including papers on people who live alone and have dementia by Lorna de Witt; on caring for relatives with dementia by Anne Neufeld, Kaysi Eastlick Kushner, and Gwen Rempel; on marriage relationships and dementia by Judie Velnes; and on a phenomenological study of losing one's memory by Karen Ann Parsons). Seminars are collections of presentations submitted as a set by participants, who are often members of the same research team (e.g., "Transitioning Out of the Sex Trade: What Makes a Difference?" presented by researchers from Counseling Psychology, Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, Canada) or who have wanted to address a special interest topic in greater depth, such as "Engaging in Collaborative Health Research With Aboriginal Communities" by Fay Fletcher.

Pre- and post-conference workshops (and some in-conference sessions) focus on methodological training and issues in conducting qualitative inquiry so that new researchers are mentored into qualitative health research by international experts. For example, sessions are often held on grounded theory, phenomenology, or focus groups, or on using various qualitative software programs. Special sessions for graduate student networking are usually offered.

Recently, these conferences have been held at the following sites: 13th QHR Conference, Seoul, Korea, in June 2007; 12th QHR Conference, Edmonton, Alberta, in April 2006; and the 11th QHR Conference in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in May 2005.

Information about forthcoming QHR Conferences may be found on the website for the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology or by a search of the internet using the conference name.

Janice M. Morse

See also International Institute for Qualitative Methodology;
Qualitative Health Research (Journal)

Websites

International Institute for Qualitative Methodology:
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/iiqm>

QUALITATIVE INQUIRY (JOURNAL)

Qualitative Inquiry is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal that focuses on qualitative methodology. The journal provides a forum for social scientists to share their work and to discuss practical and theoretical issues regarding the treatment and advancement of qualitative research. Since its initial publication in 1995, *Qualitative Inquiry* has published articles across disciplinary, racial, ethnic, gender, national, and paradigmatic boundaries, presenting research from a variety of academic disciplines including anthropology, communication, cultural studies, education, evaluation, family studies, gerontology, health, history, management, medicine, nursing, psychology, and sociology.

One aspect that distinguishes this journal from others in the field is its emphasis on publishing new forms of qualitative inquiry, which often defy the format, methods, and contents used in more traditional periodicals. A reader perusing a typical issue of *Qualitative Inquiry* may find photographs, papers with a methodological focus, short stories, poems, and ideological debates about qualitative research. Although this diversity may pose some challenges to those accustomed to traditional textual forms, the thread that unites all these perspectives and formats is the search for tinkering with, dialoguing, or reflecting on topics and issues across the social sciences. Examples of articles published in recent issues include "Only a Piece of Meat: One Patient's Reflections on Her Eight-Day Hospital Experience," by Elaine Feder-Alford; "Reading and Writing Womanist Poetic Prose: African American Mothers With Deaf Daughters," by Valerie Borum; "The Participant as Ally and Essentialist Portraiture," by Klaus G. Witz; "Balancing the *Berimbau*: Embodied Ethnographic Understanding," by Neil Stephens and Sara Delamont; and "Found Poetry as Literature Review: Research Poems on Audience and Performance," by Monica Prendergast.

Qualitative Inquiry—a bimonthly journal—also publishes special issues on specific topics. A case in point was the 2002 issue on the events following the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. This issue included mostly short pieces—between 300 and 1,000 words—that ratify the journal's commitment to publish work that radically reformulates social science and is responsive to social justice issues. That same year, in

an effort to provide a space for the many submissions the editors received on the topic of September 11, 2001, the editors decided to publish a second issue on the same topic. This action alone exemplifies the participatory, collaborative, innovative, and responsive nature of this journal.

Gisela Ernst-Slavit

See also Qualitative Research, History of; Methodology; Representational Forms of Dissemination

Websites

Qualitative Inquiry: <http://qix.sagepub.com>

QUALITATIVE REPORT, THE (JOURNAL)

The Qualitative Report (TQR) is an English language, online, open-access journal devoted to qualitative, critical, action, and collaborative inquiry and research. *TQR* serves as a home for researchers, scholars, practitioners, and other reflective-minded individuals who are passionate about ideas, methods, and analyses permeating qualitative, action, collaborative, and critical study. *TQR*'s pages are open to a variety of forms: original, scholarly activity such as qualitative research studies, critical commentaries, editorials, or debates concerning pertinent issues and topics; news of networking and research possibilities; and other sorts of journalistic and literary shapes that may interest readers.

In 1990, Nova University and Northern Illinois University, two institutions of higher education in the United States, launched *TQR* in response to emerging needs in the psychology, counseling, psychotherapy, social work, and marital and family therapy communities that were just beginning to adopt qualitative research methods. From 1990 to 1994, the journal was published in paper form with limited circulation. In 1994, *TQR* was published solely by Nova Southeastern University (formerly Nova University) as an online publication, and its website also became home to web-based resources that provided visitors with information on qualitative research websites, online papers, and syllabi.

In becoming an online publication, *TQR*'s existing community was joined by colleagues from public

administration, information technology, business, health care, human services, political science, geography, nursing, education, architecture, law enforcement, and others who submitted their papers to the journal and who subscribed to the publication. In addition, going online led to an increase in papers from international authors—now representing 40 different nations.

The journal's leadership team, Ron Chenail from Nova Southeastern University, Sally St. George and Dan Wulff from the University of Louisville, and Maureen Duffy from Barry University, upholds the journal's mission to mentor authors and to support them throughout the entire paper development process. In doing so, *TQR* works as a virtual learning environment dedicated to helping all authors produce papers of excellence and distinction. The hallmark of *TQR* is not its rejection rates, but rather its commitment to assist authors to improve their texts to the highest quality. The journal's success in meeting this mission was exemplified by its 2005 grant from the Open Society Initiative in recognition of *TQR's* editorial support of authors from developing and transitional countries.

Ron Chenail, Sally St. George, and Dan Wulff

See also Internet in Qualitative Research; Virtual Community

Websites

The Qualitative Report:

<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html>

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (JOURNAL)

The journal *Qualitative Research (QR)* is published by Sage Publications (United Kingdom) and first appeared in 2001. Its founding editors are Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont. The founding book reviews editor was Amanda Coffey. All of the editorial team is from Cardiff University, which has a long tradition of qualitative research in the social sciences. *QR* appears four times per year. There are four associate editors—one for continental Europe, one for Australasia, and two for the Americas—and an international editorial board. Atkinson and Delamont were invited to start *QR* by Sage after they had edited the *Handbook of Ethnography* with Amanda Coffey, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland.

QR is committed to publishing papers of the highest quality that advance or reflect upon methodological or epistemological aspects of qualitative research in the social sciences. A full range of qualitative methods is represented: focus groups, participant observation, all types of interview, documentary analyses, audio and visual recordings, and narrative, conversational, and discourse studies. The editors do not seek to promote narrow or sectarian perspectives on the conduct of qualitative research. *QR* is intended to be multidisciplinary: Papers from anthropologists, economists, educational researchers, geographers, historians, psychologists, and sociologists are all eligible, as are papers that cross those and other disciplinary borders. The journal recognizes the increasing significance of qualitative social research in a diverse range of substantive and disciplinary fields—including education, health and nursing studies, business and management, urban studies, and film and music studies.

Given these commitments, there are two fundamental requirements for publication. First, papers must advance the discussion of methods or methodology. *QR* does not publish papers that are primarily devoted to reporting empirical research. Second, papers must be of interest to an international readership. Papers based on empirical research should always be contextualized so that readers from countries other than the research site can gain insight from them.

The book review section, which regularly contains excellent reviews of a wide range of books, many of which are not being evaluated in other journals that either eschew reviews altogether or ignore methods books when commissioning reviews, is a key part of the journal. *QR* is one of the few academic publications in which those books are reliably reviewed.

Sara Delamont and Paul A. Atkinson

See also Methods

Further Readings

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QUALITATIVE RESEARCH, EVOLUTION OF

See EVOLUTION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH, HISTORY OF

Qualitative research has a long and vibrant history in the social sciences, health sciences, and humanities. Qualitative research has meant different things at different times across its history. The development of qualitative research has been heavily influenced by the variety of subdisciplines. Although the work for the Chicago School in America in the 1920s and 1930s highlighted the central role of qualitative research in social research, a range of other disciplines was also responsible for the rise and continued development of qualitative approaches, including history, medicine, nursing, social work, and communications. Subdisciplines of social sciences, health sciences, and humanities, including cultural anthropology, symbolic interactionism, Marxism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, feminism, cultural studies, and postmodernism, each with its own theoretical leanings, its own conception of reality, and its own methodological preferences, have played significant roles in the continued development of qualitative research. Despite their differing theoretical assumptions and methodological preferences, these disciplines and subdisciplines are united in their reasons for employing qualitative research—to identify, analyze, and understand patterned behaviors and social processes.

Vidich and Lyman's History of Qualitative Research

Although some historical accounts have taken as their starting point the development of qualitative research in the beginning of the 20th century, for example, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln's "Seven Moments of Qualitative Research," other accounts begin their analysis with the development of qualitative approaches in the 17th century. In their now classic historical account of qualitative research, Arthur J. Vidich and

Stanford M. Lyman split the history of qualitative research used by sociologists and anthropologists in ethnographic research into a series of interconnected stages. This continuum begins with initial encounters by early ethnographers and ends with the unique theoretical and practical considerations characterizing contemporary qualitative research.

Early Ethnography

The beginnings of qualitative research, according to Vidich and Lyman, are located in the work of early ethnographers during the 17th century. Qualitative research during this period involved the Western researcher observing the customs, practices, and behaviors of "primitive" societies, to understand *the other*. During this period, the other was often regarded as a non-White person living in a society considered less civilized than the society to which the observer belonged. Such interest in "primitive people" was exacerbated by the problems experienced by explorers during the 15th and 16th centuries when attempting to account for people they discovered in the New World. Difficulties occurred when explorers attempted to explain the existence of such groups according to received biblical accounts and explanations regarding the history of geography and the origin of humankind. Acknowledging racial and cultural diversity and the limitations of religious (i.e., Christian) teachings to account for this diversity, early ethnographers sought to locate such diversity into new theories of racial and cultural historical origins.

Colonial Ethnography

Qualitative research during this second phase (17th to the 19th century) was regarded in terms of colonial ethnography. During this period, ethnographic descriptions and analyses, written by Western explorers, missionaries, and colonial administrators, were deposited in church archives and/or local and national archives. Many of these early writings sought to civilize the world. These accounts are regarded by some contemporary ethnographers as biased, and attempts are made to separate more recent ethnographies from earlier Western reports. Colonial administrators, fostering a type of colonial pluralism, created a new type of anthropology, which did not focus on natives and their social processes, and highlighted the positive preservation effects of indirect rule. This period would

later shift in emphasis to encapsulate Auguste Comte's comparative method and theories surrounding the social evolution of culture and civilization. These evolutionary theories led to the creation of a cultural classification system handbook to guide the ethnographers' observations and provide the basis for the classification of traits. Ethnographic findings based on this classification of cultural traits were housed in the Human Relations Area Files at Yale University. The two main themes of this period—colonial ethnography and evolutionary schemes and cultural traits—were challenged by decolonization movements in Africa and Asia and critiques of ideas related to the primitive. This phase saw the introduction of new terms such as *underdeveloped* and *third world*. Research opportunities available to the ethnographic researcher decreased dramatically as ethnographers were regarded as partially responsible for the underdeveloped nature of third world countries. Ethnographers thus turned their attention to linguistic analysis, American society, and the files based at Yale University.

Ethnography of the American Indian as Other

During this next phase (late 19th to early 20th century), American ethnographers focused on American Indians, who were still regarded as primitive and as representing a specific other. These others were researched to shed light on prehistoric times. This period also saw a shift in the perspective of ethnographers, from ethnographies written by missionaries to those written exclusively by anthropologists, for example, those writing after the creation of the ethnology section of the Smithsonian Institution or for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Ethnography of the Civic Other

During the early 20th century and up to the 1960s, the religious beliefs, practices, and customs of Black, Asian, and European immigrants who had arrived on American soil during the early days of industrialization were a source of worry for White American citizens who were concerned with the future development of the American Protestant society. Initial efforts to preach a social gospel in the settlement houses were hindered by the sheer number of new urban inhabitants. In order to deal with these increasing numbers

and to identify the numbers of each denomination, nationality, and race, statistical surveys were implemented. The desire to incorporate immigrant groups into existing Protestant communities resulted in the first qualitative community analysis by W. E. B. DuBois—*The Philadelphia Negro*. Interviewing 5000 Black immigrants, the researcher sought to boost the status of Black immigrants through the Quaker community in which they were located. Church-led and corporate-sponsored community studies and ethnographies of the ethnic other exploded during this period. It was during this period that ethnography and qualitative research were professionalized. Through the work of the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology, ethnography was recognized as a particular method of social research. Community studies were conducted by those connected to the Chicago School, including Robert Park, Robert Redfield, and William Foote Whyte, among others. However, Chicago School sociologists soon discarded any Christian or religious research impetus, celebrated heterogeneous communities, and conducted research driven by a humanistic moral agenda. Using qualitative and sometimes quantitative methods, Park provided accounts of large American urban communities that were created toward the end of the 19th century and developed assimilation theories and race relations cycles. Due to the methodological tools used by Foote Whyte in his account of Italian Americans in Boston in *Street Corner Society*, this period also saw the introduction of participant observation as an appropriate qualitative research technique.

Ethnography of Assimilation

Debating and challenging the processes of assimilation and amalgamation, post-1960s (1950–1980) ethnographies and ethnographers included Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans seeking to take control of the study of their own groups. Attention shifted away from how to measure assimilation and acculturation, as identified by Park in the earlier phase, toward a consideration of a range of other topics, including the importance of individual character.

Ethnography Today

As with other areas of the social sciences, health sciences, and humanities, qualitative research from

the mid-1980s onward was influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism. Assumptions regarding the role of the observer and the observed that underpinned many of the qualitative approaches during the above periods were challenged from the mid-1980s. In many contemporary ethnographies, the researcher is not regarded simply as an observer of history, for he or she plays a significant role in the creation of history. Reflective practice plays a fundamental role in postmodern ethnography as the researcher reflects and critiques his or her personal engagement with the research topic and subject. Some postmodern ethnographers have extended their focus of analysis of lived experience to representations of real life in, for example, media images. Contemporary modes of representing qualitative data include drama and poetry or presentation of unedited extracts of talk without commentary to remove the presence of the author.

The historical analysis developed by Vidich and Lyman suggests that the history of qualitative research is based on the ways in which researchers have defined social research in terms of their values, hopes, religious beliefs and political and/or professional ideologies. Over the centuries covered by this historical account, qualitative research has been released from the ideologies that focused the attention of early ethnographers. Qualitative research has flourished since the 17th century, and points of view, the reasons for conducting qualitative research, and subjects for study have broadened. Whereas the historical analysis offered by Vidich and Lyman is a comprehensive and detailed account covering four hundred years, other historical accounts have been written covering substantially shorter periods in history.

Denzin and Lincoln's Seven Moments of Qualitative Research

The historical analysis offered by Denzin and Lincoln focuses on the developments in qualitative research from the 20th century onwards. Their analysis identifies seven moments in the development of qualitative research. These seven historical moments can be viewed as supplementing the developmental periods identified by Vidich and Lyman.

Traditional Period

During the first moment (1900–1950), which corresponds with Vidich and Lyman's second and third

phases, qualitative researchers sought to provide valid and objective accounts of the alien "other". Qualitative research involved the researcher entering the field and then returning with observations and comments about strange societies and peoples. Some scholars, such as Renato Rosaldo, describe the qualitative researcher during this period as the *lone ethnographer*. The lone ethnographer was committed to objectivism, imperialism, monumentalism, and the timeless nature of the societies studied. Influential figures in this period include Bronislaw Malinowski and Margaret Mead. Although the image of the lone ethnographer represented the beginnings of classic ethnography, this image is not applicable to contemporary ethnography. Some contemporary qualitative research does, however, reflect the view that the researcher is capable of constructing theories about the societies and peoples studied, a view that was evident during this first moment.

Modernist Age

The second moment (1950–1970), dubbed the golden age of qualitative research, saw a shift toward making qualitative methods as rigorous as quantitative approaches. This shift is evident in Harold S. Becker, Blanche Greer, Everett C. Hughes, and Anselm L. Strauss's *Boys in White*. Subjects explored during this moment included deviance and social control in specific settings, such as classrooms, and in society more generally. New interpretive theories (such as ethnomethodology and feminism) and a shift to giving the underclass a voice and presence also characterized this moment. This golden age drew to a close toward the end of the 1960s with the publication of Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss's *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.

Blurred Genres

This moment (1970–1986) is characterized by pluralism, open-endedness, and interpretive approaches, or what Denzin and Lincoln refer to as genre diaspora. During the third moment, the qualitative researcher had a wealth of methods and theories to choose from—from semiotics to neo-Marxist theory, and from critical theory to postpositivism. Disciplinary boundaries between the social sciences and humanities became blurred as social scientists employed theories, methods, and concepts previously the preserve of humanities. Ethical and political considerations in

social research came to the forefront, as did a range of data collection and analysis techniques (from personal experience to documentary methods) and different strategies for reporting research findings (from case studies to biographical research). Further, possibilities were provided with the introduction of computers in assisting data analysis. The researcher's presence in the research text was also questioned and problematized during this period through the writings of Clifford Geertz, among others.

Crisis of Representation Period

As a consequence of the blurred genres period, the fourth moment (1986–1990) witnessed an increase in reflexive research practice. Research led by feminist and racial and ethnic concerns gathered momentum during this period. The crisis of representation occurred as a result of these new research trends destabilizing the assumptions that had previously underpinned qualitative research. The researcher's ability to capture social experiences was questioned due to the view that such experience is created in the very act of writing the research text. Further, long-entrenched views of the most appropriate ways in which to evaluate qualitative research were destabilized through problematizing concepts such as validity and objectivity.

Postmodern Period

The fifth moment (1990–1995) attempted to address the crises characterizing the previous period. Innovative approaches to ethnographic writing were introduced, and the perception of the distant observer was eroded. Situation-specific and localized theories replaced grand theories and narratives.

Postexperimental Period

The trends occurring in the postmodern period continue in the postexperimental period (1995–2000) through the use of poetry, drama, and multimedia techniques in ethnographic writings.

The Future

New researchers across a number of disciplines are continuing the more reflexive and interpretive approach to qualitative research.

Although Denzin and Lincoln separate the history of qualitative research into these seven linear moments, the moments are not isolated and unitary but are interconnected. Earlier moments influence later moments, and some of the trends and beliefs of earlier moments are evident in later periods. Movement through the seven moments illustrates how qualitative research is no longer bound by an objective positivist perspective and how contemporary qualitative researchers have a wide range of methods, theories, and paradigms from which to choose.

Qualitative Debates in German-Speaking Areas

The forementioned historical analyses have largely focused on the development of qualitative research in Anglophone countries. However, methodological developments in European countries, for example, Germany, have been particularly significant in the continual development of qualitative research. During the 1960s, American sociological critique concentrated on quantitative social research and quantitative techniques. German methodological discussions later took up such critiques in the 1970s. American methodological debates resonated in German-speaking areas as a number of influential American methodological texts (on ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism) and critiques from the mid-1960s were translated and imported, making them available for German methodological debates.

German methodological discussions during the 1960s, according to Uwe Flick, placed fair treatment of research participants and objects at the forefront of methodological discussions, argued for research openness and flexibility, and called for a delay of any theoretical creation or development until the end of the research process when research participants and objects would demonstrate their "true colors."

From the end of the 1970s, methodological debates broadened out and lost their dependency on the translation and import of American texts. The role and position of interviews in empirical research dominated methodological debates during this time.

From the beginning of the 1980s, German methodological literature and methodological development focused on two specific qualitative approaches—the narrative interview and objective hermeneutics. In his review of German methodological literature, Flick observes that from the middle of the 1980s concerns surrounding the validity and generalizability of qualitative

findings and their presentation dominated German methodological debates, and, more recently, textbooks have been published on the history of qualitative research in German-speaking locations.

Other Important Historical Developments

Reflecting wider sociopolitical developments and feelings, based on distrust of authority and control, and on a celebration of individualism and personal freedom, qualitative research has experienced a renaissance since the 1960s (in the United States) and 1970s (in German-speaking countries). The second half of the 20th century saw an increase in the amount and strength of criticisms directed toward positivism, which until then had dominated social research. These nonpositivist or antipositivist attitudes resonated from a variety of subdisciplines, including cultural anthropology, symbolic interactionism, Marxism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, feminism, cultural studies, and postmodernism. Critiques of positivism included attacks on the manner in which the methods used in the natural sciences were incorporated into social research, the ways in which reality was conceived and identified, the relationships between the researcher and the researched, the manner in which research was designed and executed, and the methods of data collection and data analysis employed. Positivist social theory and social research lost momentum and popularity as a result of such critiques.

Another increasingly prominent discussion evident in some social sciences, health sciences, and humanities methodological literature from the mid-1970s centered on the use of mixed methods. Advocating methodological pluralism, some researchers, such as Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, argue for mixed method or multimethod approaches, including within-method and between-method mixing. Instead of taking a philosophical approach to methodology, mixed methodologies are often employed by pragmatic researchers who allow the nature of the research problem to dictate the methods employed for each research study. Although traditional stereotypes and assumptions about distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research have not been fully removed, for some scholars, such as Clive Seale, recent debates over mixed methods suggest that the future lies in dropping the terms “qualitative” or “quantitative,” research so that it is referred to simply as research.

A Note on the Limits of Historical Accounts

Historical accounts that navigate and review past events are often criticized for their artificiality, and their content depends on the authors’ methodological preferences, interpretations, and experiences. Although such limitations are recognized, these limitations should not detract from the importance or significance of historical accounts in contributing to our understanding of the development of qualitative research.

Sharon Lockyer

See also Evolution of Qualitative Research

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QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SUMMER INTENSIVE

The Qualitative Research Summer Intensive is the signature event for ResearchTalk, Inc., a qualitative research consulting company based in Bohemia, New York. This 5-day event features a series of professional development courses covering various aspects of qualitative analysis. Courses are taught by leading scholars in the field of qualitative research. Course content is defined by an explicit focus on the intersection of theoretical foundations and practical skills and is divided into three areas: qualitative approaches, foundation courses, and applied skills.

These courses introduce core approaches to qualitative analysis. Instructors use real data examples to illustrate applied use of ideas presented in class. Course topics include the following:

- autoethnography
- case study
- ethnography
- grounded theory
- phenomenology
- multidimensional qualitative analysis

Foundation courses cover basic knowledge common to most qualitative approaches and provide core skills allowing participants to move forward with their qualitative projects. Course topics include the following:

- introduction to qualitative analysis
- integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches
- building a codebook and writing memos
- moving from codes to findings

Applied skills courses focus on how-to aspects of qualitative research and offer theoretical foundations and practical tips for performing key functions

integral to any qualitative project. Course topics include the following:

- conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups
- focus groups: tips and pitfalls
- integrating software into qualitative analysis
- writing rites for qualitative research

Past Presenters

Presenters at the conference are leading scholars in the qualitative research field. Past presenters have included Mitch Allen, Elijah Anderson, Kathy Charmaz, Adele Clarke, John Creswell, Leslie Curry, Kathleen DeMarrais, Carolyn Ellis, Valerie Janesick, Udo Kuckartz, C. Deborah Laughton, Ray Maietta, Douglas Maynard, Paul Mihas, David Morgan, Patricia Munhall, Judith Preissle, Jean J. Schensul, Robert Stake, and Tom Wengraf.

Raymond C. Maietta

See also ResearchTalk, Inc.

Websites

ResearchTalk, Inc.: <http://www.researchtalk.com>

QUALPAGE

QualPage is arguably the oldest website of internet resources for qualitative researchers. It began in the early 1990s as a Gopher site developed by Judy Norris, who was then on the nursing faculty at the University of Alberta in Canada. She initially designed the site for students in her qualitative research classes, but found that other qualitative researchers wanted to link it to their own websites. In 1995, she redesigned QualPage as a complex collection of web pages pointing to the variety of internet resources available for qualitative researchers. In preparation for her retirement, she transferred the ownership and management of QualPage in 2003 to Judith Preissle and to the faculty at the University of Georgia, where the Qualitative Interest Group contributes to its maintenance and development.

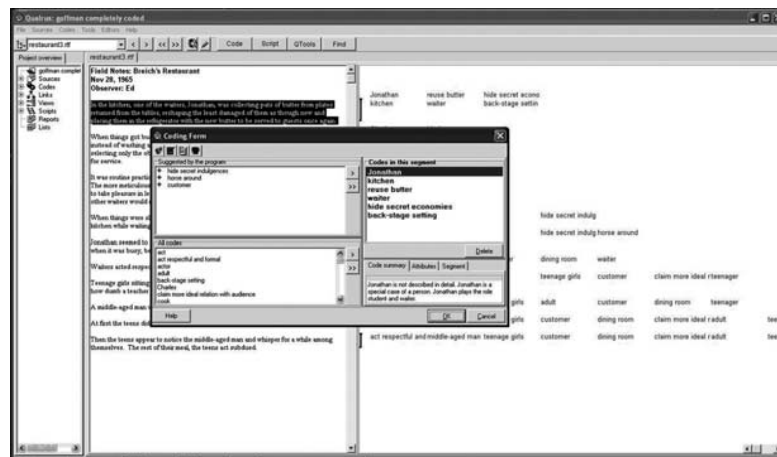
The QualPage website maintains a page of announcements of conferences, workshops, and other events of

Judith Preissle

Websites

QUALRUS (SOFTWARE)

Codes are displayed in the margin with overlapping codes shown in different colors. The colors are controlled



Source: Used by permission from www.idealworks.com.

by the program rather than by the user. It is not possible to print out the coded transcript. From the Code Editor, code details and all segments for a particular code can be quickly retrieved or printed. Clicking on any segment takes one back to the Qualrus Viewer, but the need to move between these two screens increases the distance between the analyst and the data. A useful feature of Qualrus is the network interface, which can be viewed from the Code Editor. The nodes on networks are clickable so that the researcher can quickly trace the connections between codes.

Qualrus has many sophisticated analytical tools including a statistical tool that displays individual and coincidental code usage; a coincidental code explorer, which enables quick inspection of all segments where co-occurrence does or does not occur; a tool for categorizing codes; a hypothesis testing tool; and a tool that reveals the extent to which the coding of each coder coincides with the program's advice. Qualrus also allows the researcher to write coding scripts using a special scripting language. These give the technically minded analyst unparalleled flexibility and can be used for auto coding, but this feature is less user friendly than the auto coding in some alternative programs.

Ruth Rettie

See also Codes and Coding; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis

Websites

CAQDAS Networking Project:
<http://caqdas.soc.surrey.ac.uk/index.htm>
 Online QDA: <http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk>
 Idea Works: <http://www.ideaworks.com>

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The term *quantitative research* refers to approaches to empirical inquiry that collect, analyze, and display data in numerical rather than narrative form. Not surprisingly, quantitative research is often viewed as the antithesis of—and, at times, even a foil for—the qualitative type of research that is the focal point of this encyclopedia. The qualitative–quantitative distinction, however, can be a bit misleading. This entry first reviews issues related to this distinction and then examines these differences.

Caveats About the Qualitative–Quantitative Distinction

The qualitative–quantitative distinction is a bit misleading in part because many quantitative researchers are interested in and study the qualitative aspects of phenomena. To study qualities quantitatively, of course, quantitative researchers translate gradations of quality into numerical scales that are amenable to statistical analysis.

The quantitative and qualitative labels also are misleading because qualitative researchers can never totally avoid quantification. Whenever they use terms such as *sometimes*, *often*, *seldom*, or *never*, for example, they are employing a form—albeit an exceedingly imprecise form—of quantification.

Furthermore, some qualitative researchers actually move beyond primitive forms of quantification by administering questionnaires and reporting results in the form of descriptive statistics. This sort of numerical data is employed in some qualitative studies to triangulate qualitative findings and/or to determine whether or not the insights gleaned from a limited number of in-depth interviews are reasonably consistent with the views of those who were not able to participate in what is often a time-consuming and labor-intensive interview process.

Thus, the qualitative–quantitative distinction is not a completely clean one. Still, quantitative and qualitative approaches to research do normally exhibit some rather pronounced—and quite significant—differences. These differences become apparent when quantitative and qualitative researchers' differing views of reliability and validity are examined.

The Qualitative–Quantitative Distinction: Reliability and Validity

Reliability and Validity in Quantitative Research

Quantitative researchers invariably embrace the concepts of reliability and validity. *Reliability* is viewed as a property of the instruments (e.g., tests and observation schedules) that quantitative researchers use to measure the phenomena they are studying. An instrument is considered reliable if it consistently produces the same results when administered to the same or comparable individuals. Quantitative researchers normally employ measures of consistency to determine the reliability of a particular instrument.

Quantitative researchers also are concerned with validity and they normally employ measurement to assess the extent to which a study and the study's key components are valid. Both internal and external validity are assessed.

Internal validity refers to whether an instrument used in a study actually measures what it purports to measure. An instrument's internal validity can be assessed in a number of ways: by correlating the instrument's results with the results produced by another better established instrument that presumably measures the same phenomena (*concurrent validity*), by determining whether the results accurately predict something that the instrument's results would be expected to predict (*predictive validity*), or by determining whether empirical studies support—or fail to support—reasonable hypotheses about the theoretical construct that an instrument makes operational and measures (*construct validity*).

Quantitative researchers also, at times, rely on more qualitative procedures to assess an instrument's validity. They might, for instance, ask a panel of experts to review the contents of an instrument and make a judgment about the instrument's *content validity*. Quantitative researchers also, at times, claim that the validity of an instrument is self-evident; in these situations, the instrument is said to have *face validity*.

Quantitative researchers also are concerned about the external validity of their studies. *External validity* (which also is referred to as *generalizability*) refers to the likelihood that a study's findings will apply to the larger population represented by the study's sample. Once again, statistical procedures are employed to assess the degree to which a study exhibits this second general type of validity. Specifically, statistical procedures are used to determine the extent to which a study's results might have occurred by chance. If the likelihood that chance produced a study's results is low, the study is said to have high external validity.

Qualitative Researchers' Views of Reliability and Validity

Quantitative researchers' constructs of reliability and validity are problematic for qualitative researchers in part because they represent rules of a research game that qualitative researchers cannot possibly play. For example, in most qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary—and in some cases, the only—instrument;

in such situations, quantitative researchers' formal reliability assessments cannot be performed.

Some qualitative researchers, however, also object to traditional notions of reliability and validity on philosophical grounds. For example, the concept of triangulation—which often is seen as an analog for reliability in the qualitative tradition because it entails looking at multiple data sources—frequently has a significantly different meaning than reliability. Sandra Mathison, for example, noted in the 1980s that qualitative researchers who assume that different people construct different meanings of the same events should not expect interview results to be consistent across individuals or subgroups, even within the same organization. Consequently, qualitative researchers should not aspire to produce consistent—that is, reliable—findings; rather, their task is to document the different ways different individuals and subgroups have constructed reality and to make whatever sense they can make of these different constructions.

Qualitative researchers also have redefined quantitative researchers' notions of validity. Once again, this redefinition has occurred, in part, for pragmatic reasons: Quantitative researchers' external validity or generalizability game, for example, simply cannot be played when one is studying a single case—or even a small number of cases—as those who employ labor-intensive qualitative methods tend to do.

But again, qualitative researchers also have philosophical reasons for rejecting quantitative researchers' thinking about validity. Qualitative researchers, for instance, tend to assume that contexts are idiosyncratic and ever changing. If one assumes this, there is little reason to play the external validity game because findings will never apply to other individuals or contexts than the ones that were studied in anything but a heuristic way. Even the individuals and/or contexts that were studied are likely to change over time, according to many qualitative researchers.

Thus, some qualitative researchers have reconceptualized quantitative researchers' notion of external validity-generalizability in more psychological terms by talking about the *transferability* rather than the generalizability of findings. The transferability notion, for instance, assumes (a) that all research findings are merely working hypotheses about what is likely to happen when similar things are done in even apparently similar contexts and (b) that only the consumers of research can determine whether a finding is likely to be transferable to their situations.

Qualitative researchers also normally have rethought quantitative researchers' notion of internal validity. Once again, some sort of rethinking was required: Equating internal validity with the results of statistical analyses of instruments makes absolutely no sense in single-case or limited-case studies that employ the researcher as the study's primary instrument. Consequently, qualitative researchers, especially in fields where quantitative researchers' notions of validity have not been challenged on philosophical grounds, have been forced to invent procedures like member checking as analogs for the statistical procedures quantitative researchers use to assess concurrent, predictive, and construct validity.

One should not push the member checking analogy too far, however, for as was the case with the reliability and external validity concepts, quantitative researchers' notion of internal validity also has been challenged by qualitative researchers on philosophical grounds. This philosophical challenge, in fact, reflects a fundamental disagreement among many quantitative and qualitative researchers about the nature of social phenomena and consequently about how those who study social phenomena should do their work. The next section attempts to unpack this fundamental disagreement.

The Qualitative–Quantitative Distinction: Causal Versus Constructivist Perspectives of the Social World

Historically, influential quantitative methodologists such as E. L. Thorndike, Thomas Campbell, and Julian Stanley embraced a cause-effect view of social life and promised to provide valid knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships. Such knowledge, they argued, could be used in the real world not only to predict, but also to control events. Consequently, knowledge of cause-and-effect relationships could make decision making in a variety of policy and professional contexts rational rather than political.

Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs

The agenda alluded to above, of course, required not only quantification, but also the use of experimental research designs. Researchers, in other words, could determine only which treatment worked best—and

consequently which policy option or professional practice should be implemented—if they went beyond establishing statistical correlations between variables and instead placed research subjects into control and experimental groups and conducted experiments. Of course, if experiments are to produce valid results, experimental researchers must randomly assign research subjects to control and experimental groups. They also must institute sufficient controls so that the only differences in the treatments that control and experimental groups receive are those related to the independent variable being studied.

Employing random assignment and instituting tight controls in the real world can be difficult and at times even impossible. Consequently, many experimental studies are conducted in laboratory settings. This certainly is the situation in fields like experimental psychology where virtually all studies employ experimental designs.

Unfortunately, laboratory results do not always hold in real-world contexts. The developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner coined a term to characterize the problem: He indicated that results generated in artificial settings such as laboratories lack *ecological validity*.

To correct the ecological validity problem, many quantitative researchers have conducted quasi-experimental studies in real-world settings. In principle, at least, findings from these studies exhibit ecological validity; the trade-off, however, is less control over such things as the assignment of research subjects and the standardization of treatments than one has in laboratory settings.

Many quantitative researchers have argued that this trade-off is worth making. In the 1960s, for example, Thomas Campbell and Julian Stanley published a handbook chapter titled “Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research.” The chapter later was published as a monograph. The monograph has influenced thinking in a number of social science fields.

In their chapter-monograph, Campbell and Stanley described 12 threats to a study's internal and/or external validity and suggested how these threats are likely to play out in different experimental and especially quasi-experimental designs. They indicated, however, that these threats do not mean that quasi-experimental studies have to be abandoned as long as (a) consumers of research are aware of and take into account the likely threats associated with different quasi-experimental designs and (b) consumers do not expect a single study to produce definitive results.

Indeed, Campbell and Stanley argue that, despite the flaws that individual experiments might exhibit, the only way we have to resolve disputes in the policy and practice domains is to rely on the cumulative insights that experimental studies provide about cause-and-effect relationships. Later, quantitative researchers developed meta-analysis techniques to systematically analyze the sometimes contradictory findings from different studies and produce what some take to be statistically validated cumulative results.

Cronbach's Evolving View of Research Design and Cause-Effect Generalizations

Campbell and Stanley provided a tempered, but still quite positive view of the likely contributions of quantitative research that employed experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Another giant among quantitative methodologists, Lee Cronbach, came to a very different conclusion about the potential of experimental and quasi-experimental studies. Cronbach's thinking on the topic evolved over a number of decades in response to the failure of quantitative methods, in general, and experimental and quasi-experimental designs, in particular, to produce the definitive result that quantitative researchers (including Cronbach) had promised to produce. It is instructive to trace the evolution of Cronbach's thinking.

By the mid-1950s Cronbach had taken note of the failure of researchers in his field of psychology to produce even useful probabilistic generalizations that linked causes with effects. At that point, however, he suggested that the problem could be remedied if researchers would stop looking at the effects of treatments in a general way and instead examined the effects of treatments on individuals with particular characteristics or (to use Cronbach's terminology) aptitudes.

By the 1970s, however, after Cronbach and other psychologists had spent roughly 20 years trying to discover what Cronbach called aptitude \times treatment interactions, Cronbach concluded publicly that this goal could not be accomplished. The problem was not that the social world was not as law-like as the physical world, Cronbach contended at this point. Rather, the problem was that the social world was too complex for experimental studies to ferret out law-like relationships between independent, intervening, and dependent variables. The phenomenon of culture, along with the fact that cultures were constantly

changing, added to the complexity problem, according to Cronbach.

Cronbach did not recommend completely abandoning the search for generalizations in his writings during the 1970s. Instead, he recommended that quantitative researchers add a qualitative component to experimental studies so qualitative researchers' thick descriptions could be used *ex post facto* to generate grounded hypotheses about what produced any atypical results. Cronbach suggested that these hypotheses could contribute to clinical understanding; such understanding would have to substitute for the experimentally validated generalizations that researchers had traditionally sought but failed—and would continue to fail—to produce due to the complexity of an ever-changing social world.

In the 1980s, Cronbach reversed his earlier position about the lawfulness of social phenomena. He argued that action in the social world was constructed, not caused, and indicated that those who expected social science eventually to produce definitive cause-effect generalizations were, in effect, waiting for Godot, the character in the Samuel Beckett play who never appears.

Qualitative Researchers' Views of Cause-Effect Explanations

By the 1980s, Cronbach had embraced a position that also has been adopted by many qualitative researchers, including qualitative researchers who worked in the symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodology traditions within sociology. Those who had been socialized into these traditions also rejected cause-effect explanations and like Cronbach in the 1980s, they assumed (a) that human beings act on the basis of the meaning that they attribute to events and (b) that meaning is both constructed—and constantly reconstructed—as human beings interact. Because of this constant reconstruction process, symbolic interactionists and ethnomethodologists argued that it does not make sense to treat socially constructed meanings as intervening variables in a cause-effect explanatory framework.

Many other qualitative researchers also have rejected—or at least radically reconceptualized—the role of cause-effect generalizations in social science research. An example of reconceptualization can be found in anthropologist Clifford Geertz's discussion of the thick description approach to ethnography. Geertz treated theories—including theories

about cause-and-effect relationships—as rhetorical tools for doing thick description rather than as end products of ethnographic research. He argued that when theoretical generalizations about cause-and-effect relationships are stripped of the rich, concrete details of particular cultures, they become little more than commonsense—and consequently exceedingly pedestrian—truisms.

Causation as a Functional Fiction

Philosopher of social science Peter Cohen has provided a somewhat different take on the causation versus constructivism debate that has occurred between many qualitative and quantitative researchers and also to a lesser extent within the quantitative research community itself (see the discussion of Cronbach's evolving views above). Cohen indicates that the notion of causation in the social world may, indeed, be a fiction, but he argues that it is nevertheless a highly functional—and even perhaps an indispensable—fiction.

Cohen notes, for example, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to create public policies if we totally rejected cause-and-effect thinking. Similar arguments could be made about activities such as counseling, teaching, leading, and presumably any other social activity in which someone acts with the intention of influencing others.

Rethinking Possibilities for Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Viewing quantitative researchers' talk of causation as a functional fiction has implications for mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in research studies. To be sure, some mixing of methods has always been tolerated. Indeed, as noted above, even deeply committed constructivists normally have not objected to using descriptive statistics to triangulate qualitative data. Constructivist-oriented qualitative researchers, however, often viewed experimental designs that attempted to ferret out cause-and-effect relationships as indefensible, and they almost never incorporated inferential statistics—which contemporary researchers often employ in lieu of using difficult-to-implement quasi-experimental designs—into their studies.

If quantitative researchers are no longer seen as making an ontological statement when they employ experimental or quasi-experimental research designs, a major barrier to a more extensive approach to mixing

methods seemingly has been removed. Furthermore, inferential techniques such as multiple regression and hierarchical linear modeling, when used with nonexperimental data, technically cannot address issues of cause and effect. Consequently, those who employ these techniques in nonexperimental research cannot legitimately make causal claims, even if they wanted to do so. This fact should open the door even further for the mixing of quantitative and qualitative procedures.

Views of Quantitative Research Today

Of course, not everyone today views the concept of causation as a functional fiction. Indeed, many influential policymakers continue to expect quantitative researchers to produce knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships that will, in essence, dictate which policies and programs should be implemented. Many quantitatively oriented researchers also continue to promise that experimental studies can, in fact, produce such knowledge.

Some rather striking examples of all of this can be found in the field of education. For instance, the head of the Institute of Education Sciences, the federal agency that funds educational research in the United States, recently declared randomized trials (i.e., experimental or quasi-experimental studies in which research subjects are randomly assigned to control and experimental groups) the new gold standard in federally funded research.

Similarly, a committee of prominent educational researchers set up by the National Research Council (NRC, the research arm of the National Academies of Science) to define what constitutes scientific (and by implication, fundable) research in education made the search for theoretical knowledge that links causes and effects a defining property of scientific research and relegated qualitative research to the hypothesis generation role that it was forced to play in the educational research field prior to the qualitative revolution in the final quarter of the 20th century. Ironically, the NRC committee's report, *Scientific Research in Education*, was dedicated to that circumspect—and quite visionary—quantitative methodologist and researcher, Cronbach.

Thus, the traditional battle between qualitative and quantitative researchers has not ended. Truly thoughtful individuals on both sides of the qualitative–quantitative methodological and philosophical divide, however, at

this point understand that neither qualitative nor quantitative research can provide truth in any absolute, definitive sense because even the most rigorous empirical inquiry is rooted in a priori assumptions that cannot be proved empirically. Thoughtful individuals also understand, however, that each approach to inquiry—and in certain situations some combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures—can serve a heuristic function and can provide insight that is useful for accomplishing some—but of course not all—purposes.

Robert Donmoyer

See also Constructivism; Empiricism; Evidence-Based Practice; Explanation; Generalizability; Mixed Methods Research; Psychological Generalization

Further Readings

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QUEER THEORY

Queer theory emerged during the 1990s, influenced by queer social activist aims to expose and to challenge heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia. Its interdisciplinary development in academe has been heavily influenced by poststructural feminism and other post-foundational, multiperspective theoretical discourses. These discourses have had currency across a spectrum of academic disciplines and areas of study including anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. Queer theory continues to develop and build on these discourses. It is a multifaceted theoretical and creative space for contestation and discovery. Queer theory contests, interrogates, and disrupts systemic and

structural relationships of power that are historically caught up in heteronormative attitudes, values, and practices, as well as heteronormative ideological, linguistic, existential, and strategic conventions and constructs. These power relationships have variously defiled or dismissed sexes, sexualities, and genders not sanctioned by heteronormativity. Heteronormativity presumes and values heterosexuality (or the opposite-sex attraction between a biological XY male and a biological XX female) as the norm against which other sexualities have historically been labeled deviant. This entry engages queer theory in its opposition to heteronormativity by discussing the meaning of queer, the emergence of queer theory since the early 1990s, and the relationship between queer theory and research.

The Meaning of Queer

Historically, *queer* has been a derogatory term used to diminish sexual-minority persons and assault their integrity and dignity. Including lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, intersex, and two-spirited individuals, queer represents a diverse and at best loosely configured spectral community across sex, sexual, and gender differences. Queers have different histories, identities, identifications, needs, and desires that set them apart not only from heterosexuals, but also from one another. The interwoven historical, social, and cultural thread connecting queers across differences is marginalization. For some, the terms *trans-identified*, *intersex*, and *two-spirited* may be new. Trans-identified describes individuals whose gender identity does not conform to the simplicity of the male-female, two-gender model. Intersex depicts individuals who may possess both male and female biological sex characteristics. Two-spirited is an Aboriginal term used to refer to persons whose bodies are believed to have both a masculine and a feminine spirit.

In terms of its etymology or history as a word, queer has long been used to connote someone odd, curious, different, peculiar, strange, or unusual. Since the early 1990s, beginning with the U.S. grassroots activist group Queer Nation, queer has been reclaimed as a proactive and public term that is more encompassing and expansive than the limited and problematic descriptor *gay*. Queer is a fluid concept with multiple meanings that collapse identity politics delimited by static understandings of sex, sexuality, and gender—nonconformist heterosexual desiring and acting can also be considered queer. Sexual minorities

use queer to describe themselves and their social and cultural geography in terms they set out within a politics of hope and possibility. As part of a language of visibility and representation, the term queer is now linked to empowering those disenfranchised by sex, sexual, and gender differences. As a concept and a way of naming, queer by nature and intention resists the inimical prescription and inscription of sexual-minority characteristics and differences found in heteronormative classification. It exposes heteronorms that limit meanings, positionalities, and possibilities. These countercultural dynamics seek to resignify the concept of queer to proclaim the visibility, vocality, and transgressive politics of those long shamed and silenced by heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia. The new queer colloquial chant, made popular by Queer Nation, is “We’re here. We’re queer. Get used to it.”

Queer understands that queers have been shattered by a heteronormative society and a heterosexualizing culture. In an effort to transgress the unacceptable in the history of the gay liberation movement that started in 1969, queer rejects lesbian and gay concerns with assimilation and integration into heteronormative society, which can be coded as “passing straight.” It also rejects the conception of gay and lesbian as stable, unitary, and essentialized identities since such an understanding reinscribes the power of the heterosexual–homosexual binary to defile or dismiss homosexuals. Queer is about grappling with sex, sexual, and gender differences as a spectrum of fluid subjectivity markers. Queer and all it encompasses moves and shifts, challenging notions of citizenship and what it means to be, become, and belong. In this sense, queer marks diverse disenfranchised positionalities that variously lie beyond what by convention has been morally, politically, socially, or culturally accepted and acceptable in civil society.

The Emergence of Queer Theory as a Field of Study

Queer theory assumes a spectrum of fluid sex, sexual, and gender differences that are always in a state of becoming; being is never fixed and belonging is never a certainty. In a queer context, differences, representations, expressions, and desires are considered dynamic, multiple, and varied, which makes queer theory a volatile formation. Queer theory depicts how ignorance of queer often leads to fear of queer and actual and/or symbolic violence toward queer (or

those perceived to be queer) persons. It works to dissolve dominant social binaries that subjugate women and queers in particular: public–private, male–female, and heterosexual–homosexual. For example, queer theory challenges us to understand such differences as intersexuality (anatomic sex differentiation such that a person is neither specifically a biological XY male nor XX female) and transsexuality (dissonance between one’s biological sex and intuited gender). As it focuses on ontological and epistemological facets of queer, queer theory is counter expression as expression. It resists categories limited by heteronormativity and engenders positionality as fluid and spectral. It exposes how queers have been historically, socially, culturally, and politically dislocated in a disenfranchising heteronormative world as it works to revitalize queerness (being, believing, desiring, acting queer).

William G. Tierney and Patrick Dilley, both influential in the emergence of queer theory in education, provide this useful summary of the purposes of queer theory. First, queer theory exposes the heteronormative nature of power. Second, queer theory works to empower queer voices in order to interrupt heteronormative power. Third, it interrogates language in the intersection with knowledge, experience, and action. Fourth, it deconstructs the heteronormative notion of natural as well as institutional processes of legitimating and sanctioning certain ways of being in the world. Fifth, queer theory engages power in intersections where sexual orientation and gender identity encounter other relationships of power, including race and class. Sixth, queer theory considers research itself to be a form of cultural politics, and it considers how the researcher-writer is positioned and implicated in relation to knowledge production, exchange, and distribution.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, Diana Fuss, and Michael Warner are considered key theorists in the emergence of queer theory. Published in 1990, Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* is usually considered the founding text in queer theory. In this text and the subsequent *Tendencies*, published in 1993, Sedgwick engaged queer not only to name and represent a spectrum of sexual-minority differences, but also to speak to issues of race, ethnicity, and postcolonial nationality in ways that leveraged queer in the interests of exploring the intricacies of language, positionalities, and power relationships. In her work, Sedgwick hypothesized that modern figurative, commonsensical constructions of sexual identities, which situate lesbians or gay men either

between genders (inversion models) or as discrete genders (gender-separatist models), are rhetorically meaningless because they ignore the complexity of multiple sexes, sexualities, and genders and their subjectivities, identities, identifications, desires, and agencies. Queer takes this complexity as a given. As Sedgwick sees it, acknowledging anything less than the complexity of queer reduces sexual-minority studies to inutility, incoherence, and prejudice.

Another text published in 1990, Butler's groundbreaking *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, is also most influential in the emergence of queer theory. Butler queered theory by confronting the indeterminacy and messiness of gender inside and beyond the binary constriction and purported categorical fixity of male and female. In keeping with a queer standpoint, she considered how best to trouble gender, moving analysis beyond presumptive heterosexuality and the hegemony of a masculinist sexual economy. Butler, conceiving what she called a performative theory of gender, had readers question the positionalities of women, the dynamic complexities of language and power, and the fictions marking the constructions of the body, sex, sexuality, and gender from a masculinist gaze.

In 1991, de Lauretis edited *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*, while Fuss edited *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. These pivotal texts in the emergence of queer theory further marked a move toward transgressive queer studies that contests the limited identities and identifications as well as the assimilation and integration of sexual minorities associated with lesbian and gay studies. In her theorizing, de Lauretis articulated a transgressive politics of queer resistance that is still collaborative, interactive, and participatory. As she set out terms of engagement in these politics, she cautioned readers to remember history amid moves to meet sexual-minority demands for vocality, visibility, and representation. In her writing in *Inside/Out*, Fuss argued that binaries associated with patriarchy like male–female and heterosexual–homosexual are socially, culturally, and historically based on an inside–outside binary that places limits on sexual desire, identity, and expression. As these binaries work to order what is “normal”, Fuss asserted that they also symbolically eradicate diverse positionalities contained between their binary ends. For example, the heterosexual–homosexual binary leaves bisexual, intersexual and transsexual persons out. Paralleling Butler's standpoint, Fuss set this task for queer theory as it worked to bring standard binaries to the point of

collapse: to challenge the hegemony of heterosexuality as a compulsory identity, practice, and institution that is deemed legitimate and necessary against the purported pathology of homosexuality. For Fuss, this meant interrogating the systematic construction of language, subjectivity, and repression that designates the construction of exclusion, oppression, and repudiation in a masculinist sexual economy. In contemporary queer theory, such work is enhanced when we intersect differences in sex, sexuality, and gender with differences in other relationships of power to consider how heteronormativity and homophobia impact, for example, queers of color, poor queers, variously abled queers, and other multiple subjects.

Two other key texts in the emergence of queer theory are Warner's edited collection *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* and Butler's *Bodies That Matter*, both published in 1993. In his text, Warner pondered what queers want and took the novel stance that queer studies ought to gain vitality not from rethinking the social, but from rethinking the meaning of sexuality as a subjective formation that impacts how queer is constructed. From this perspective, he challenged queer theory to interrogate how ideology and social structures impact the sexual order and how heteronormative language, themes, and concepts lack utility and limit possibility in developing queer theory. Butler also called for such interrogation in *Bodies That Matter*, situating queer as a discursive term with historical and revisionist meanings that are always constructed through and against the grain of heteronormativity. She cautioned queer theorists to consider what it means culturally and politically to take back a term historically associated with accusation, pathology, insult, and deviance. Butler also emphasized that queer is a term that can divide despite its intended expansiveness. For example, queer is divisive in its common association with a predominantly White sexual-minority movement and with youth resisting the delimitations of lesbian and gay while seeking a more expansive term to include a spectrum of sex, sexual, and gender differences. In this light, Butler argues that queer will always be volatile, discursive, political, open to redeployment from earlier usage, and never entirely owned.

From Queer Theory to Queer Research

Since they emerged only during the 1990s, queer theory and queer studies lack a significant history of

research traditions. Qualitative research methods that focus on investigating everyday experience and making meaning have proven advantageous to queer research bent on social and cultural change at the grassroots level. Queer research is still coming to terms with ethical, strategic, and methodological aspects of research on sexual minorities and their everyday experiences in culture and society. Thus researchers who engage in queer research are mediating research terrain that is in genesis as they take up matters of research design, methods, ethics, and research politics. During the 1990s, much queer research focused on textual and linguistic analyses. In this period, queer research largely failed to engage in dispositional, relational, and contextual analyses of the ways medical, educational, and other institutions and their heteronormative practices affect sexual minorities. There is still an urgent need to conduct queer research and to queer heteronormative research by challenging heteronormative ontological, epistemological, methodological, and textual aspects of inquiry. These aspects are embodied and embedded in contexts, relationships, dispositions, concepts, constructs, assumptions, and affiliations that perpetuate heteronormativity and limit utility and possibility in research on sexual minorities. Thus, for queer theorists, applying queer theory to research practice intersects academic studies with advocacy. This engagement involves exposing queer exclusion and derision historically embodied and embedded in the heteronormative knowledge-culture-language-power nexus. It also involves counteracting characterizations and representations of queer that stereotype and demean persons along a spectrum of sex, sexual, and gender differences. This requires taking detours through queer history and culture as spaces to encounter what queerness incorporates and how queerness has been treated.

Historically operating within a heteronormative paradigm, research in medicine, education, and other disciplines has usually been biased to the detriment of sexual-minority persons. For example, medical science has traditionally diagnosed those categorized homosexual as individuals who engage in aberrant or deviant behavior outside heteronormativity. Although gay liberation coupled with demands for more scientific rigor in research into homosexuality led to the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) 1973 decision to depathologize homosexuality, the current categorization of gender identity disorder as pathological is still used to legitimate inhibiting the development of homosexuality. As another example, sexual minorities

have fared no better in educational research. In his typology depicting researchers' understandings of the locatedness of sexual-minority youth, Ritch Savin-Williams demonstrated that the APA's 1973 decision had little initial impact on educational research. During what he categorized as the first stage of research on sexual-minority youth (1970s and 1980s), emphases were placed on deviance, pathology, and the need for specialized medical intervention. During his second stage (1980s and early 1990s), emphases were placed on sexual-minority youth as at-risk for social problems, including increased drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, violence, and suicide. Emphases in his third stage (late 1990s and the early 21st century) appear more positive. Research has focused on education for social change to counter the social, cultural, and political marginalization of sexual minorities. Building youth capacity and resiliency have been focal points. However, Savin-Williams notes that third-stage research remains largely assimilationist in nature and that the heteronormalizing structures of mainstream education remain largely intact.

Queer research has been critiqued for its apparent failure to link the fluidity of the concept queer to the concreteness of social activism and cultural work focused on sexual minorities. Queer research needs to interrogate the politics of research in general and focus on researcher subjectivities and positionalities and how they influence research processes and outcomes. It also needs to critique the designs used in mainstream research in medicine, education, and other disciplines that have been historically heteronormative and homophobic in their everyday practices. This need is in keeping with queer theory's critique of dominant power and interests and the ways they maintain heteronormativity. From this perspective, queer research has to be a reflexive engagement with the researcher, the researched, social dynamics and power plays, and the cultural politics and practice of research engagements.

A key challenge in queer research is to dissolve public-private, male-female, and heterosexual-homosexual binaries that carry the weight of history and limit utility and possible outcomes in queer research. Another key challenge is to work in the intersection of relationships of power where queer as a construct intermeshes problematically with constructs of race, class, and other relationships of power that have their own histories of excluding queer. Queer has to be understood and mediated in intersections with other relationships of power, and more queer research is needed to understand how heteronormative discourses

on race, gender, ethnicity, age, ability, and class contribute to queer exclusion and homophobia. For example, more queer research is needed to help us understand historically and culturally why a heterosexual Black male might assimilate a White supremacist's misogynous and homophobic masculinity. Understanding how the knowledge-culture-language-power nexus works in intersections where racism and homophobia have been normalized is crucial to cultural work to dismantle compulsory heterosexuality.

Queer research also needs to continue to gaze inward and investigate how disenfranchising forces like heterosexism, sexism, classism, racism, ableism, and ageism infect queer culture just like mainstream culture. Queer research is needed to investigate issues of language and power at play when, for example, a gay male seeks a straight-looking, straight-acting partner, a lesbian avoids a bisexual or transsexual woman, a gay male uses sexist language smattered with demeaning references to "she" and "her," a gay White male avoids a two-spirited male in a gay bar, a professional gay male dismisses another gay male who works in sales as a "retail queen," and a younger gay male calls an older gay male an "old queen." In all this queer research, we need to be open to possibility and learning outside the heteronormative box. Here we might start from the open stance suggested by William Shakespeare's description of sexual ambiguity in *Twelfth Night* when Clown says to Sebastian in Act IV, "Nothing that is so, is so."

André P. Grace

See also Advocacy Research; Agency; Marginalization; Poststructuralism; Researcher-Participant Relationships

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QUOTA SAMPLING

Quota sampling uses key categories in the larger population to specify how many members of the sample should fall into each of those categories or combinations of categories. This sampling is a nonprobability technique because it requires only that the quota for each category be met without any further attention to how those sample members are actually located. For example, a study of social service organizations might set quotas for both the number of public and private providers and the number of larger and smaller agencies in the sample. Similarly, an interview study might select participants using a two-by-two table for gender and age so that one quarter of the informants were younger women, one quarter were older men, and so on.

Survey research originally used quota sampling as a quicker and cheaper alternative to random sampling, but abandoned this approach during the 1950s because of the potential for producing unrepresentative samples. Quota samples are not truly generalizable because even though the quota-based categories may match their size in the larger population, the sample may be unrepresentative on other characteristics outside the quota system. For example, in the population of older people, there are more women than there are men, but adjusting the quotas for a study of this group to reflect gender accurately would not ensure that the sample was representative with regard to income, health, frequency of family contacts, and so on.

In contrast, quota sampling in qualitative research is a specific technique for selecting a sample that has been defined using a purposive sampling strategy to define the categories of data sources that are eligible for a study. As a technique for selecting a sample in qualitative research projects, quota sampling is often connected to stratified sampling as a specific approach to purposive sampling. In particular, stratified sampling often breaks the population into theoretically specified categories for comparative purposes, and

these categories would then be matched by quotas for data collection.

Another important use for quota sampling in qualitative research is not to create a representative sample, but rather to avoid bias on key characteristics, by assuring their inclusion in the sample. For purposive sampling, this process is much more likely to set quotas that match important substantive categories from study, rather than demographic or background characteristics that are not directly relevant to the topic of the study. For example, a study of how health affects older men and women would set quotas for gender and poor versus good health and then investigate how other factors, such as income and frequency of family contacts, operated within the key categories of interest. This

demonstrates how quota sampling assures that the most important population categories will be adequately represented in the sample.

David L. Morgan

See also Generalizability; Nonprobability Sampling; Population; Purposive Sampling; Random Sampling; Sampling; Stratified Sampling; Survey Research

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RANDOM SAMPLING

In random sampling, every data source in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Because random samples are probability samples, this creates the possibility for generalizing to a larger population, but this generalizability is not absolute. To see that random samples are not automatically representative of the population from which they are drawn, consider the example of flipping a coin five times. This will produce a random sample of all the possible outcomes, but it is still possible to obtain either five heads or five tails—which definitely are not “typical” results.

The key point is that the statistics associated with random sampling simply define the probability of getting an unusual result rather than guaranteeing that the sample will actually match the population (e.g., in flipping a coin five times, there is a 6.25% chance of getting either all heads or all tails). In addition, the ability to make accurate generalizations from random sampling is highly dependent on sample size. In qualitative research, however, the sample sizes are typically so small that even random sampling would yield too little accuracy for meaningful generalizations. For example, a random sample of 20 people would have virtually no value for representing any sizable population—regardless of whether the data are quantitative or qualitative.

For some cases, the use of random sampling in qualitative research comes closer to what is technically known as “random assignment.” In particular,

after a purposive sampling process locates a set of eligible data sources, the next step might be to use random selection in deciding which cases to study. Although this use of probability sampling would eliminate what are known as “selection effects” by ensuring that the size of a group in the larger population is the only factor that influences how often its members appear in the sample, it once again does not guarantee a representative sample—especially when the sample size is small. For example, if a researcher wants to select 5 people to interview from a pool of 30 eligible cases that are evenly divided between men and women, random sampling will produce results that are at least 80% male or female more than a third of the time (to be precise, 37.5% of such samples will have at least four men or four women). As this example demonstrates, random sampling is an inefficient method for creating representativeness in small samples. For many qualitative studies, a nonprobability sampling method, such as quota sampling, would be a better strategy for making certain that a small sample was well balanced with regard to the characteristics that are most important. Although quota samples are not generalizable, a small size sample will make that consideration irrelevant for most practical purposes; hence, the more important goal is to avoid producing a sample that is obviously different from the population on some crucial characteristic.

David L. Morgan

See also Generalizability; Nonprobability Sampling; Probability Sampling; Purposive Sampling; Quota Sampling; Sample Size; Sampling

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RAPID ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Rapid assessment is defined as intensive, team-based qualitative inquiry using triangulation, iterative data analysis, and additional data collection to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of a situation from the insider's perspective. Rapid assessment allows a team of at least two researchers to investigate complicated situations where issues are not yet well defined and where there is not sufficient time or other resources for long-term, traditional qualitative research. A call for this type of more rapid qualitative research was implicit in the declaration in *BusinessWeek* magazine in June 2006 that "ethnography is the new core competence." The article described the use of ethnography to "develop a deep understanding of how people live and work" (p. IN10) but was accompanied by the observation that most researchers do not have the time or the resources to do it. Although there is greater recognition of the need for qualitative inquiry and for results that can be used quickly, there has also been increased attention given to the resources needed and time associated with traditional, long-term qualitative research. There are issues concerning participation and related ethical issues associated with rapid assessment.

Basic Characteristics

Rapid assessment allows a team of at least two individuals to gain sufficient understanding of a situation in 1 to 6 weeks to make preliminary decisions for the design and implementation of applied activities or additional research. Rapid assessment can also be used for monitoring and evaluation. Usually rapid assessment should not be used for estimating numbers or percentages. Rapid assessment has been used in areas as diverse as wetlands evaluation, citywide needs assessment, early childhood care evaluation, monitoring of home ownership patterns among minorities, client satisfaction assessment at clinics in Africa, marketing studies, and landscape planning.

Results are different from those produced by longer-term fieldwork. In some cases, intensive interaction by a research team over a short period may produce better results than those produced by a lone researcher over a long period. Rapid assessment will almost always produce results in a fraction of the time and at less cost in comparison with traditional qualitative research.

Although the 1- to 6-week time period for rapid assessment is recognized as arbitrary, there is growing consensus among practitioners that it is extremely difficult to complete the process of data collection, data analysis, and additional data collection as part of an iterative process and to then prepare a report in less than a week. "Rapid" does not mean "rushed." Schedules must be designed with sufficient flexibility that the team can take full advantage of unanticipated opportunities.

Triangulation is a critical element of rapid assessment. Triangulation is a metaphor employed by social scientists for the use of data from different sources, the use of several different researchers, the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and the use of multiple methods to study a single problem.

Rapid assessment shares many of the characteristics of ethnographic research but differs in two important ways. First, more than one researcher is always involved in data collection. Second, more than one researcher is involved in an iterative approach to data analysis and additional data collection. The intensive teamwork for both the data collection and analysis is an alternative to prolonged fieldwork associated with traditional qualitative research.

Rapid assessment process (RAP) is one way of reducing the costs and speeding up the process. Terms such as rapid appraisal, rapid assessment, rapid rural appraisal, and participatory rural appraisal, as well as the acronym RAP, have been widely used to identify other rapid research methods based on the use of teams with results produced in several months or less. Quick ethnography is another approach for speeding up the process based on using greater structure for the process and taking between 30 and 90 days.

Data Collection: Intensive Teamwork

There are usually two to six individuals on the RAP team, and the team needs to be multidisciplinary and

diverse and must include at least one “insider” as well as “outsiders.” Rapid assessment cannot be done by one researcher. The assumption is that two sets of eyes and ears are better than one and that the use of different techniques can help to make the best use of the extra eyes and ears. Also, the assumption is that two heads are better than one in figuring out what has been seen and heard and in making decisions about what should be asked in the next round of data collection. Sensitivity to cultural differences is essential, and team diversity improves cultural sensitivity and helps to establish credibility with local communities. The success of RAP depends on the quality of the teamwork.

Semi-Structured Interviews and Directed Conversations

Rapid assessment is based on talking with people and getting them to tell their stories. The acronym RAP communicates the essential ingredient for successful implementation. The objective of rapid assessment is to communicate with participants using their vocabulary and rhythm and is *not* to get answers to questions. One definition of RAP is to talk freely and frankly. Although the process is often identified as a “semi-structured interview,” it is better thought of as directed conversation. Directed group discussions involve the entire team talking with one or more local participants and is *not* sequential interviewing by individual members of the team.

Individuals with whom the RAP team talks are purposefully selected. They are not a sample. They are selected not because they are believed to be average but rather because they are believed to represent the diversity found in the local situation. The RAP team should seek out the poorer, less articulate, more upset individuals and those least like the members of the RAP team.

Other Techniques for Data Collection

In addition to semi-structured interviewing, other specific techniques are chosen from among a wide range of techniques based on the specific topic being investigated and the resources available. Observations and team interaction with respondents based on what is seen and heard are necessary. All interviews should be conducted in a setting where listening can be combined with observing.

Iterative Analysis and Additional Data Collection

Rapid assessment explicitly divides research time between blocks used for collecting information and blocks used when the RAP team does data analysis and considers changes in the next round of data collection. Beginning on the first day, time is scheduled for team interaction. Usually more time is spent on team interaction than on data collection. The constant shifting between data analysis and additional data collection is an iterative or recursive process. An iterative process is defined as a process in which replications of a cycle produce results that approximate the desired result more and more closely. For rapid assessment, the replication of the process of data collection followed by analysis and additional data collection contributes to the goal of understanding the situation under investigation from the perspective of the local participants in the system.

Each rapid assessment must adapt the data analysis process to the specific setting. An approach that has worked for many rapid assessments and that can serve as a beginning point for modification involves (a) coding the data, (b) displaying the data, and (c) drawing conclusions. Analysis is an ongoing process that begins with, or even before, the first round of data collection and continues through the preparation of the report.

The Issue of Participation and Ethics

Rapid assessment is a type of participatory action research. There is widespread consensus on the value of the participation in the research process by members of the local community. However, there are ethical issues related to participation that have often been ignored. These issues are almost always aggravated by inappropriate instances where problems are identified and solved at the local level without the involvement of outsiders. Rapid assessment assumes that decision makers should be part of the effort to identify and address issues and that often this involves outsiders who control resources. Even when outside decision makers are not part of the research effort, it is critical that the research effort be designed with sufficient rigor to allow them to make decisions based on the results.

The most serious negative consequence of an excessive focus on participation is the shifting of the burden onto the poor and the relinquishing by outsiders of their

responsibilities to promote development with equity. Even when such a shift does not occur, participation can raise unrealistic expectations in local communities. Closely related to raising unrealistic expectation is “bogus empowerment” that occurs whenever someone is asked for his or her input but there are no intentions of using it.

One of the major challenges of rapid assessment is to promote inventiveness and creativity concerning implementation without losing rigor. Other challenges include overselling it, confusing “rapid” with “rushed,” and failing to implement it rigorously. The overall challenge is to embrace the potential of rapid assessment while recognizing its limitations.

James Beebe

See also Action Research; Community-Based Research; Ethnography; Participants as Co-Researchers; Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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RAPPORT

Rapport refers to the degree of comfort in the interactions between the researcher and research participants. For participant observation, rapport refers to the quality of the relationships that the researcher makes at the field-site. For interviewing, it refers to the relative ease of exchanges between the interviewer and interviewee(s).

Participant observation raises a unique set of issues associated with rapport due to the length and complexity of the relationships involved in this method. Once the participant observer has access to the study site and research participants, the creation and management of relationships becomes an ongoing issue with this method of data collection. In this case, the creation of rapport often begins with a process of trust building, but once relationships are established, issues of reciprocity and mutual obligation become increasingly important. In particular, the kind of “prolonged engagement” that is often seen as essential for high-quality participant observation is likely to require rapport across a web of relationships that goes well beyond the dyadic relationships that are usually considered in discussions of rapport.

In contrast, nearly all studies based on interviewing involve more transitory relationships where the collection of data is the primary basis for interaction—with extended oral histories being the most notable exception. Thus, concerns with rapport in interviewing center on the need to build an appropriate relationship within a relatively short period of time. Hence, the way the researcher describes both the nature of the project and the procedures for the interview itself sets the stage for the rapport building that occurs in the subsequent interaction. In particular, it is frequently helpful to let the participants know the extent to which the interviewer will be primarily a listener, an active questioner and facilitator, or even a relatively directive and agenda-driven data collector because the nature of rapport will be different in each of those approaches to qualitative interviewing.

Among the factors that affect rapport in both participant observation and interviewing are the topic of the research and the amount of self-disclosure that it requires from the participants, the ability of the researcher to protect the participants’ privacy, the nature of the research setting, the extent to which the researcher has an “insider status” or other preexisting contacts with the participants, and the extent to which the participants perceive themselves as similar to the researcher. As this list indicates, rapport in research relationships can be a complex issue. Furthermore, these factors often occur in combinations that may have strong effects. Most notably, the combination of the research topic and the degree of similarity between the researcher and the participants can have a powerful effect on rapport, especially when the topic involves contested social boundaries such as race, gender, and sexuality.

Overall, the concept of rapport is a good illustration of the classic claim that the qualitative researcher is the “research instrument” because the quality of the research often depends on the quality of the researcher’s relationships with the participants.

David L. Morgan and Heather Guevara

See also Interviewing; Oral History; Participant Observation; Privacy

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RAW DATA

Raw data can be broadly defined as information collected by a researcher to understand phenomena under investigation. Raw data include words that participants use, diagrams of environments, observations, documents, memos, transcripts of focus groups, and pictures. Any information collected by the researcher, before any manipulation (e.g., analysis) has been conducted, is considered raw data. From a sociological perspective, raw data are viewed as a window into the human experience. Hence, the qualitative researcher can collect two types of raw data: (1) narratives, open-ended interviews, and discourses; and (2) information collected from methods that elicit systematic information from respondents.

Qualitative research can generate enormous amounts of raw data. Thus, before any data have been collected, it is essential for the researcher to design a method of arranging, organizing, and categorizing the raw data as they are being collected. When choosing a method of organizing the raw data, the researcher should keep in mind the importance of where or by whom the raw data were produced. Therefore, having a coding method for tracking where or by whom the raw data were produced is paramount.

The most important principle when working with raw data is ensuring their accuracy. Raw data need to be as correct, thorough, and complete as possible. The qualitative researcher has the responsibility to ensure

that the raw data are an accurate reflection of the participant’s voice. To check the accuracy or trustworthiness of the raw data, member checking can be used. For example, to undertake member checking of raw data from an interview, after the interview has been audiotaped, the researcher transcribes the data so that they are in written text. This text, or a portion of the text, then can be member checked by asking the interviewee to read through the text to determine whether it accurately and adequately captures her or his voice. Member checking the raw data actually can provide additional raw data, especially if it leads to the transcript being modified or expanded.

Raw data in qualitative inquiry have many unique features. Most notably, raw data provide naturally occurring information that allows the researcher to increase his or her understanding of the phenomena. Furthermore, raw data tend to be collected in close proximity to the actual situation such as via direct observation or interview, with the influence of the local context forming part of the data rather than being ignored or manipulated. In addition, raw data often yield rich descriptions that are contextualized and reveal complexity. Also, raw data often are collected over a long period, allowing for in-depth analyses of institutional, historical, psychological, and social processes.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Data; Field Data

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REACTIVITY

Reactivity, also known as the observer effect, takes place when the act of doing the research changes the behavior of participants, thereby making the findings of the research subject to error.

Different types of reactivity have been identified. One of the first to be noted, the Hawthorne effect, is

associated with experiments conducted by Elton Mayo at the Westinghouse Electric plant in Hawthorne, Illinois, during the 1920s and 1930s. Modifications in working conditions (e.g., changes in lighting) were introduced, and it was observed that productivity increased after each modification. Mayo hypothesized that workers were responding to increased attention received as being part of the experiment and knowing they were being observed rather than to the changes in work process. The Hawthorne effect encompasses changes in behavior arising from knowledge about participation in research. Another type of reactivity is the novelty effect, which involves changes in behavior due to the introduction of something new in the research setting (e.g., the presence of the researcher). Novelty effects usually disappear with passing time. The placebo effect has been well documented in drug trial research but also can occur in other research settings. Finally, reactivity may result from demand characteristics, with participants doing what they think the researcher expects them to do or what will please the researcher.

A number of factors have been seen to influence the degree of reactivity. Conspicuous observers, or those who place themselves in the middle of the activities, are more intrusive than those who stand to the side. Characteristics of the observer (e.g., age, race, gender, dress) that differ substantially from those of participants are likely to cause more reactivity. Characteristics of participants may also influence behavior. For example, children usually return to naturally occurring behavior more quickly than do adults. Reactive behavior usually decreases as time passes, a process known as habituation. It is postulated that this return to normality arises from the development of rapport and trust between participants and the researcher and the fact that it is difficult to sustain unnatural behavior for a long period. Participants' understanding of the purpose of the research may cause reactivity. For example, if participants believe that the researcher is trying to document socially unacceptable or deviant activities, they may hide these behaviors.

In qualitative research, reactivity is usually seen as being inclusive of the researcher as well as the participants. The researcher keeps reflexive notes that document how his or her own behavior and understandings may have been affected by the research process. Reactivity is regarded as being inevitable in any research process that involves interaction among participants, the

researcher, and a setting of interest. Reflexive analysis helps to uncover and respond to reactivity in appropriate ways.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Observational Research; Reflexivity; Unobtrusive Research

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READERS THEATER

Readers theater is a genre of drama in which actors hold scripts, staging is kept simple, scenery is limited to things such as stools and ladders, and costumes (if used at all) are little more than articles of clothing (e.g., a hat, a scarf) intended to suggest, rather than literally represent, a character. Certain qualitative researchers have used the readers theater genre to display their data.

The use of the readers theater genre to display data is part of a larger movement within both the theater and research communities to translate qualitative data into drama. Different names (e.g., performance ethnography, documentary theater, data-based readers theater) have been used to characterize the products that have been created, and each form of data-based theater has its own unique characteristics.

The most obvious defining characteristic of the readers theater genre is the convention of actors holding scripts during performances. This convention is used even in well-rehearsed professional productions where actors have memorized scripts because readers theater is by design a stylized, rather than realistic, form of drama. Readers theater productions exhibit other forms of stylization as well. When actors enter or exit a scene, for example, they are unlikely to literally walk on or off the stage. More often than not, they simply turn toward or away from the audience to symbolize entering or leaving, respectively.

Why this focus on symbolization and stylization? Theater scholars indicate that readers theater is a presentational, rather than representational, type of theater. Whereas representational forms of theater attempt to portray action realistically, presentational forms ask audience members to fill in what has been intentionally omitted onstage and, in the process, to co-construct with the actors the meaning of the work. Some social scientists who advocate the use of the readers theater genre to display qualitative data have even compared the holding of scripts and the genre's other stylization techniques to the distancing devices that playwright Bertolt Brecht used to ensure that audiences do not get so emotionally caught up in his plays that they forget to think and analyze.

This emphasis on promoting thinking and analysis as well as empathic understanding makes readers theater an especially appropriate form of drama for use in academic contexts. Of course, the genre also offers a more practical benefit in that because scripts do not need to be memorized and staging, scenery, and costumes are simple (or nonexistent), a readers theater script can be rehearsed relatively quickly and presented at research conferences and in other venues where the performance of data can be used to stimulate a rich discussion of the issues implicit in the script.

Robert Donmoyer

See also Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Dramaturgy; Performance Ethnography

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REALISM

Realism refers to a range of ontological and epistemological positions within which research may be

conducted. Realist ontologies (assumptions about the nature of reality) range from the view that the world of objects and social structures exists independent of human experience to the idea that, although the world exists independent of any one person, human perception is such that our reality is a preinterpreted one. Realist epistemologies (theories about what counts as knowledge) range from the view that the world can be known directly through the senses to the idea that internally consistent interpretations of reality can count as knowledge if bounded by, and revisable in light of, interactions with the world. Holding a realist ontology does not always commit a researcher to a realist epistemology.

Realism has often been associated with quantification, but it is compatible with many qualitative methods and is the position of choice of many qualitative researchers. In this entry, realism as a philosophical position influencing the development of research methodology is first set in context. Positivist philosophies of science are then outlined, and naive and scientific realism are explored. The nature of postpositivist science is then considered along with subtle, analytic, and critical realism. Finally, the relation of critical and standpoint theory to forms of realism is explored. Although these subdivisions can be identified and described, the dividing line between positions is often a matter of emphasis. Moreover, what is described under each heading can contain contradictions because some stances have more than one strand.

Realism in Context

Realism as an overarching philosophical doctrine is the position that we should strive to understand the world from an objective point of view. In this, realism is a radical counter to religious and authoritarian truths and, as such, was defended by Galileo. Realism brought an optimism that the world is knowable and that this knowledge could be value free, and it has dominated Western thought since the 18th-century Enlightenment. Throughout the 20th century, antirealist positions have made headway into the philosophy of science, particularly the social sciences, arguing for the impossibility of human objectivity. The impact of antirealism and modified realism on social science has gained momentum since the 1960s, evolving into what is sometimes referred to as the “turn to language” or “reflexive turn” in relation to qualitative methodology. However, forms of realism are still

compatible with contemporary understandings of science that incorporate an element of interpretation into what counts as knowledge and are adopted by many qualitative researchers.

Realism and Positivism

Positivism

Positivism is a hugely influential philosophy of science associated with a 19th-century model of the physical sciences. It is empiricist in asserting that the world exists of observables that are knowable through sensory experience, aspires to the discovery of universal causal laws through the identification of statistical regularities, and commits to value neutrality. The ontology proscribed to positivism ranges from the naive realism that the world exists of objective material things to the more complex position that although there is a real world to be discovered, it can be apprehended only imperfectly and probabilistically. The epistemology of positivism is tied to the scientific principle of verification that specifies rules for what counts as knowledge, in particular confirming sensory experiences through replication. However, although an objective stance is sought, positivist empiricism admits a certain subjectivity through restricting the knowable to the experienceable. In fact, during the 1920s and 1930s, logical positivists introduced elements of epistemological relativism, arguing that the truth of a statement was always internal to a culturally produced linguistic framework of meaning. Moreover, although strongly associated with quantification, the role of interpretation in statistical analysis is acknowledged in logical positivism, inductive theory generation accepted as a stage for scientific inquiry, and qualitative methods not disqualified *prima facie*, particularly in the social sciences.

Many authors suggest that since the mid-20th century, positivism has no longer been held as a coherent philosophy of science, even though the language of positivism may still be entrenched in most scientific disciplines. It is argued that the idea of empirical science offering a solid foundation for knowledge has been successfully refuted. For example, postmodern and constructionist perspectives argue that methodology is never neutral, that guiding ideals such as objectivity are value laden and untenable, and that methods used to study the social world of self-conscious agents must differ from those used in the natural sciences.

However, in dismissing and “othering” positivism, qualitative researchers may be oversimplifying this complex philosophy, which in some forms actually anticipated postpositivist science. Moreover, some qualitative methods themselves involve elements that might be considered positivist, including the search for universal causal laws in analytic induction, the verificational aspects of grounded theory, and the strict empiricism of conversation analysis.

Naive/Commonsense/ Descriptive/Crude Realism

Naive realism asserts the ontology that, under normal conditions, things are just as we perceive them to be and asserts the epistemology that true knowledge can be identified through its correspondence with reality. Arguably, it is the commonsense philosophy adopted tacitly in daily life. Naive realism is an unsuitable position for inquiry into things that are not directly perceptible, but in itself it is compatible with both quantitative and qualitative methods and is drawn on within both positivist and postpositivist theories of science.

In qualitative methodology, naive or descriptive realism is most associated with naturalist ethnography and symbolic interactionist research in the tradition of Erving Goffman and Herbert Blumer. The methodology of naturalism requires an immersion and co-participation in the social environment under study in its natural state. The empathic understanding gained is the basis for knowledge of the context investigated. In focusing on cultural meanings, as opposed to universal laws, naturalism was developed as a counterpoint to positivist science but maintained the claim that social reality can be apprehended directly. This naive realism has been attacked by Thomas Kuhn, who argued that all scientific knowledge is relative and provisional. Moreover, naturalism has been derided by postmodern perspectives arguing that “descriptively real” texts of research findings are a rhetorical construction imposing univocality on what is a multiperspectival social world. However, there is an argument that, in using a basic process of human sensemaking (i.e., intersubjectivity), immersive understanding has a claim to be able to produce knowledge of social life.

Scientific Realism

Scientific realism accepts the broad ontological and epistemological postulates of naive realism and

adds a commitment to the scientific method as the best mode of inquiry into the nature of reality. The natural sciences are often held as exemplifying methodological procedures, and some qualitative researchers, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, sought to emulate them. This included pioneers such as Florian Znaniecki, Herbert Blumer, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown. However, striving to emulate the natural sciences is fraught with problems from the start because there is no one true method. Even physics has been shown to have divergent underpinnings, including positivist, conventionalist, and realist interpretations, among others. However, although scientific realism is heavily associated with positivism, postpositivist approaches are developing a modified version in critical realism.

Realism and Postpositivism

Postpositivism

Many argue that contemporary science is dominated by postpositivist positions that favor quantification and the search for causation, although amenable to certain forms of qualitative method, and includes a concern with subjectivity and meaning. In general, postpositivists are ontological realists in being willing to accept the existence of an independent reality. However, they espouse a more explicitly skeptical epistemology than do positivists, doubting that reality can be known in a direct way but having faith that language is in some way referential. Even so, postpositivist epistemology is nonfoundationalist in the sense that truth is considered so only relative to a paradigm. However, a major principle of postpositivist science is falsificationism; that is, the principle that knowledge claims must be tested empirically in conditions under which such claims could be refuted. Hence, in subjecting beliefs to empirical test, postpositivists allow that the world sets constraints on what can be accepted as truth even if human understanding requires this to be interpreted within a contemporaneously acceptable framework of meaning. Moreover, postpositivists argue that some beliefs are just more plausible than others and that evidence (e.g., consistency of account, set of associations), although not proof of truth, helps to provide this credibility. Some critical perspectives argue that postpositivism can be an overly conservative philosophy by awarding the power of truth determination, however provisional, to contextually dominant paradigms of knowledge.

Postpositivism has developed positions that attempt to claim the middle ground between realism and relativism—subtle realism, analytic realism, critical realism, and Kantian soft or “transcendental” idealism (because the latter does not identify as a realist position, it is not explored further here).

Subtle Realism

Ethnography is one of the oldest forms of qualitative method in the social sciences, and the reflexive turn during the late 20th century had a particularly profound impact on ethnographers, leading to a critical examination of its foundations. In response, Martyn Hammersley articulated a position termed *subtle realism*, and David Altheide and John Johnson articulated a position known as *analytic realism*.

Subtle realism, argued to be applicable to social science research in general, is a middle ground between the naive realism of naturalism and the relativism of constructionist and postmodern approaches. Subtle realism shares the naive realist ontology that the world consists of independent phenomena but argues that we do not have direct access to them. In terms of epistemology, subtle realism agrees with naive realism that the world is knowable but adds that our understanding always relies on cultural assumptions and is, at best, a selective representation; that is, one of many possible valid accounts. This is a correspondence theory of truth but one that allows that, because we have no direct access to reality, we can never have absolutely certain knowledge. Hence, subtle realism requires that researchers make explicit the relevances on which their accounts are based. For example, accounts must be plausible given our existing knowledge, have credibility as the kinds of accounts that might reasonably be expected given the conditions of the research, and have relevance to issues of human concern.

Analytic Realism

Altheide and Johnson’s analytic realism is a humanistic approach to qualitative methodology, particularly ethnography, focusing on what they called the empirical world of lived experience. Like subtle realism, analytic realism rejects the dichotomy of realism and relativism, although Altheide and Johnson argued that analytic realism places the stronger emphasis on knowledge verification. Ontological assumptions concern the social world,

and this is conceptualized as interpreted rather than literal. Epistemologically, interpretation is accepted as a valid way of knowing even though knowledge is considered relative to a perspective and it is accepted that different researchers, and research conducted at different points in time, may come to different conclusions. So, although analytic realism shares with naturalism a faith in immersive understanding, it includes a particular concern with the interpretive validity of research accounts and is careful to specify criteria increasing the validity of reports. Criteria include clear delineation of the research context and method, reflexive reporting, and attention to the multivocality of members' perspectives. Such procedures do not ensure the objective truth of findings given that the report is considered to be truth only as the researcher has come to understand it, but they make the researcher's claims better open to evaluation.

Critical Realism

Critical realism is a position under development by a growing number of proponents but is associated most with Roy Bhaskar. Writings on critical realism often stress the position as an ontology, although it does have epistemological implications and may even be considered a philosophy of science.

The ontological position of critical realism states that the objects of the world consist of the emergent properties of physical and social entities, although our beliefs and expectations influence the way we perceive and theorize these objects, particularly in the social sciences. Hence, as an epistemology, critical realism accepts a perspectival theory of knowledge situated within a socially and historically relativist theory of science. However, some forms of knowledge are argued to be more plausible than others, and critical realism accepts the importance of empirical investigation, with Bhaskar arguing for a form of naturalism in the social sciences. This substantiates the interpretation that Bhaskar views critical realism as a development within scientific realism that jettisons some of its more positivist assumptions. That is, in viewing meaningfulness as the key element of social life, critical realists eschew the use of quantification and experimental control in the social sciences. Moreover, although accounts of the social world are believed to be grounded in practices with an underlying structure and logic, critical realism is nonreductionist in arguing that the best explanations are not necessarily at the level of most basic empirical elements and mechanisms.

The final defining characteristic of critical realism is that it is also a moral philosophy that places human emancipation as a central concern of science. Bhaskar has argued that social science theories, developed through empirical investigation, can show certain beliefs, or ideologies, to be false and can demonstrate how they have been generated within transitory, and hence changeable, social relations and structures.

Critical realism has been critiqued as being too vague and too general to be a convincing philosophy of science. Moreover, it is argued that faith that the social world is grounded in knowable, extra-theoretical deep structures seems to be at odds with Bhaskar's commitment to scientific relativism associated with Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigmatic shifts in the nature of the objects and processes with which science populates the world.

Realism and Critical Approaches

Critical Theory

Critical theory has had an influence on social science from the 1960s onward, incorporating a backlash to the perceived value neutrality of positivism and the perceived failure of interpretive, or hermeneutic, social science to recognize macrostructural constraints. Critical theory is emancipatory in its aims and focuses on the critique of ideology; that is, on revealing historically created distortions in understanding that influence everyday life. In general, three versions of critical theory can be identified: Marxism, the Frankfurt School version of Marxism, and positions influenced by feminism (as well as by Marxism).

Ontologically, critical theory allows that the world exists of real objects but that reality can take on different meanings within different, humanly constructed symbolic fields. Hence, critical theory has a nonfoundational epistemology, believing that there is no theory- or value-free knowledge given that human understanding consists of socially and historically situated patterns. However, critical theory retains the idea that knowledge can be objective by defining objectivity not in terms of correspondence with an independent reality but rather in relation to explicating the shared patterns of culturally and historically developed understandings.

This peculiarly historical and political emphasis, and strength with which discourses are understood to be constitutive of the world, makes critical theory difficult to match easily with subtle or analytic realism—or, perhaps, even critical realism. Although it has a

realist ontology, the discursive emphasis of critical theory can make it difficult to ground research findings as truth. Moreover, it seems inconsistent to claim that one truth is more empowering than another when the interests of one oppressed group may well be in conflict with those of another.

Standpoint Theory

The political and emancipatory elements of critical theory are shared by standpoint theory, which commits to the empowerment of oppressed groups informed by feminism but also stances such as antiracism and anti-colonialism. The ontology of standpoint theory is the acceptance of a materially real world. However, just as critical realism is sometimes presented as a particularly sophisticated ontology, the emphasis of standpoint theory is its epistemology. Standpoint epistemology provides a more secure grounding for truth claims than does critical theory through espousing a stronger foundationalist stance, although this foundationalism is complex and has been described as “fractured.” That is, truth claims are grounded in a material world understood to set boundaries on what is possible, whereas it is accepted that many different interpretations of this world are plausible and valid within the different contexts provoking them.

An important aspect of standpoint theory is the attempt to democratize knowledge production through approaching participants as experts on their own experience and for researchers to incorporate a reflexive awareness about how their own biographies and actions influence the knowledge produced. This does not *prima facie* exclude quantitative methods, but it tends to be more compatible with qualitative approaches. However, standpoint research does tread a precarious and (arguably) contradictory line between knowledge as construction and knowledge as experience. Some researchers argue that standpoint research produces more objective knowledge than do traditional methods through its revelation of otherwise ignored values and frameworks of power. This has been critiqued most pertinently by postmodern feminists, who argue that this glosses over the problems of accepting that differing accounts of the world may be true relative to their context, particularly when power relations between members of an oppressed group differ. For example, one may ask whether it is possible even for research on women by women to democratize the research process and produce value-free

knowledge when the actors have many different social identities, each with potentially different structural power relations—ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and so on. In support of standpoint theory, in good research such tensions are not dismissed but rather incorporated reflexively as dilemmas to be explored as part of understanding the complexities of lived experience.

Conclusion

Realism covers a range of complex ontological and epistemological positions within which research can be conducted. The philosophy of science is in continual development, and new and modified realisms are under debate. Many of these are relevant to qualitative research even if the perception can be that these methodologies are dominated by relativist, social constructionist, and postmodern perspectives. Realist positions offer qualitative analysis grounding for research findings—sophisticated, complex, and compatible with the ethos of many qualitative methods. Critical realism, in particular, is gaining advocates as a strong foundation for forms of discourse analysis, and other qualitative researchers, perhaps most notably in the phenomenological and humanistic traditions, are drawn to realist positions, allowing them to argue that they access the lived experience of those they study.

Anna Madill

See also Critical Realism; Epistemology; Ontology; Positivism; Postpositivism

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REALITY AND MULTIPLE REALITIES

The nature of reality has long been the topic of philosophical debate. In general, the debate falls along a continuum. At one end, reality is objective, existing independent of us. It is out there, waiting to be discovered. At the other end, reality is subjective, continually being co-created by us. It is dynamic and changing. What the researcher believes about the nature of reality is critical. The questions asked by the researcher who falls closer to the objective end of the continuum will be different from the questions asked by the researcher who falls closer to the subjective end.

The nature of reality is related to discussions of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology has to do with our assumptions regarding how the world works. Epistemology has to do with how we know what we know. Methodology has to do with how we go about investigating reality and making knowledge claims. What we believe leads to questions about our relationship to the world, how we understand it, and how we study it. Some people believe that the world shapes us and that we react to what is happening around us. Others believe that we shape the world and can control our own destinies. Still others take a stance somewhere in between these two views.

Perspectives on the Nature of Reality

There are many perspectives on the nature of reality. They can be traced through the development of scientific thinking through the ages. For purposes of illustration, three major periods are briefly described: prescientific revolution, scientific revolution, and postmodern.

Before the scientific revolution (pre-1500s), reality was commonly conceived of as both natural and supernatural. A natural world co-existed with a spirit world. Reality consisted of both worlds. Not everything that happened had an explanation; thus, a degree of mystery was acceptable. Primary sources of knowledge were mysticism and revelation. With the rise of the scientific revolution, the degree of mystery that could be tolerated changed.

The scientific revolution is linked closely with the Enlightenment following the Middle Ages. The emphasis was on rationality, science, and reason. People such as René Descartes and Isaac Newton proposed that there were natural laws to explain reality

and that those laws could be discovered. Descartes advocated deductive reasoning, coming to conclusions based on observable facts using reason and logic. Newton explained the principle of gravity, dispelling myths associated with that phenomenon. In addition, he suggested that the universe was like a giant clock and that if we understood its parts, we would understand the whole. This kind of thinking formed the basis of the scientific method and has been dominant for centuries. It is the basis of the positivist objective approach to research.

Recently, the positivist approach has been challenged by postmodern thinking. Postmodern thinking argues that the scientific method, as it has been advocated, has not served us well. The idea that the whole can be understood from its parts leads to fragmentation of systems and thinking. The postmodern approach suggests that the whole is greater than its parts. Deductive reasoning provides only partial explanations, and it is possible to understand the general by studying the particular. The possibility that there are multiple realities is presented. This is a more subjective approach to research.

Objective and Subjective Nature

As noted, reality can be seen to fall on a continuum between the objective and the subjective. At the objective end of the continuum, because reality exists independent of beliefs and perceptions, it can be identified and studied. We can confirm what is there through observation, experimentation, and measures. Meaning is fixed and verifiable. It does not need to be interpreted; it can be proven and tested. There are universal norms for truth and morality. Reality is predictable because people will react to what is around them, and those reactions can be predicted. Reality can be dissected and studied in fragments. There is an answer, and it can be found. Deductive modes of reasoning are used. Knowledge is stable. Bias should not influence the research. These are often the premises in quantitative research where a hypothesis is tested to see whether it is correct.

At the other end of the continuum, reality exists in many forms. It is co-created, and our understandings of reality are being constructed continually. Meaning is pluralistic and diverse. It is made, not found. Something exists only when it is experienced and ascribed a meaning. Experience and intuition are used to study holistic, interactive complex systems that can

be described and interpreted in many ways. Reality is unpredictable and can be challenged. Deductive modes of reasoning are used. Knowledge shifts and changes over time. It is accepted that bias will influence the research. These are often the assumptions in qualitative research. There are many possible interpretations; a qualitative study is presenting one of many.

Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, what the researcher believes about the way the world works becomes crucial. These beliefs will guide the direction of the research, the methodology chosen, data analysis and interpretation, and how the study is presented.

Researcher as Instrument

The researcher brings his or her views, values, beliefs, feelings, and assumptions to the research. When the researcher is the instrument, all of these have an effect on how the research is conducted. In addition, the gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and politics of the researcher will accompany him or her into the research setting. The researcher has a place in the research. That place needs to be made explicit. The researcher's personal and social perspectives shape the decisions that are made about the research. The topic chosen, who will be asked to participate in the study, the questions asked, the approaches to data collection and analysis, how the report is written, and what gets presented all are decisions made by the researcher. Those decisions are influenced by what the researcher brings to the research in the first place.

As an example, consider that two researchers are studying the topic of employee retention. Both want to know what the organization can do to generate higher retention rates. Researcher A sees this as a problem that can be solved. By understanding what the organization is doing wrong, corrections can be made. Study participants are those who have given notice that they will be leaving the organization. There is a postulation that by understanding why employees are leaving, the organization may learn what can be done to improve retention. Interview questions are designed to discover what is motivating the participants to leave and, from their perspective, how the organization could encourage employees to stay. Researcher B recognizes that several employees have been with the organization for many years. Perhaps by learning why they have been there so long, organizational strengths can be identified and expanded. Study participants are

those who have been with the organization for more than 10 years. Interview questions are designed to understand why they have worked there for so long and, from their perspective, what the organization offers employees.

Neither research design or approach is wrong; the two are different. Both designs or approaches will address the question of employee retention, but in different ways. Because they are asking different questions, the researchers will get different answers. This illustrates that the perspective of the researcher is one of many. Participants in both studies will also be providing perspectives, making for multiple realities.

Multiple Realities

It is important to remember that qualitative research is not designed to prove something; rather, it is designed to generate working understandings. A universal explanation is not being sought. Although a possible explanation may be presented, it is recognized that this is one explanation and that there could be many others. Qualitative research honors the idea of multiple realities.

One way in which the idea of multiple realities is honored is through the place of the researcher in the research. The researcher is not objective. It is expected that the researcher will bring biases to the research. Qualitative research addresses this by calling for the researcher to disclose his or her biases and explain how they may have affected the research. There also is acknowledgment that the researcher provides only one perspective.

Those who participate in the study provide additional perspectives. Each person who participates in the study provides a different view on the topic being investigated. Each brings his or her own assumptions, beliefs, and perspective. This is commonly shown through the use of different quotes from participants. Quotes may show that participants do not agree on the topic and/or that they have had different experiences. Consistency is not necessarily the goal. Dissonant points of view are acceptable. Qualitative research frequently illustrates the complexity of multiple realities.

A third way in which multiple realities are honored is through flexible guidelines. Due to their emergent nature, qualitative methodologies tend to be malleable. For example, there is no one correct way in which to conduct a phenomenological study. Although there are guidelines for conducting phenomenological studies, there is not a set procedure that must be followed.

Whereas quantitative research generally seeks to prove, measure, and verify, qualitative research generally seeks to understand, illustrate, and describe. Quantitative research lends itself to developing theories that explain and can be used to predict the future. Qualitative research lends itself to accessing the meaning made by others and describing how those meanings were created.

Four Broad Orientations

As stated earlier, what the researcher believes about the nature of reality is critical to qualitative research. This is demonstrated through a very broad brushstroke of four general orientations to research: positivist, interpretive, participatory, and critical orientations. (It is important to note that these are very general orientations to research and are not the only ones. They are used here for illustrative purposes.)

Positivist Orientation

The positivist orientation to research depends on a rational view of the world. This view tends to believe that reality is fixed and has an orderly pattern. There is a truth, and it can be found. It is most commonly associated with quantitative research but can be revealed in qualitative research, particularly through the use of language. The language tends to be factual and authoritative, in the third person (e.g., “the researcher”), and full of concrete details, and the voice of the author is dominant. What is discovered through the study tends to be expressed in informative statements; it may read like a documentary. A purpose of this orientation is to transform knowledge by supplementing the existing knowledge base. Using the study of employee retention as an example, the research question from this orientation might take the form of a sort of hypothesis: People leave organizations for reasons, and these reasons could identify factors that contribute to employee retention. Implicit in this question is an assumption that there are identifiable factors that can be discovered and explained. Unlike with a quantitative study, the working hypothesis would not be tested but instead would be used to gather data.

Interpretive Orientation

An interpretive orientation seeks to understand the world from the point of view of the individuals. Truth

must be understood from the perspective of each individual. No perspective is right or wrong, and all are presented. More than one reality can exist. The voices of those who participated in the study are primary. Although the researcher’s voice is present, it is in the background. The language of the study has a personalized empathic tone, is multivocal, is rich in description, and may be in the vernacular. What is learned from the study may take an arts-based form such as narrative, poetry, drama, photography, collage, or dance. An aim of this orientation may be to evoke individual transformation. In the study of employee retention, the research question here might be the following: How have long-term employees (those with 10-plus years of service) experienced the organization? The intent behind such a question would be to understand the workplace from long-term employees’ points of view. There is an assumption that there is something in these individuals’ experiences that has led them to stay with the organization for so long. By tapping into these experiences, the employees may gain a deeper understanding of why they continue to work for the organization and the researcher may gain an appreciation of what the organization is doing to retain employees.

Participatory Orientation

In the participatory orientation, the researcher is an active participant in the study. Reality is not fixed; rather, it is co-created and, therefore, can be re-created. A common goal of this orientation is to improve the setting by having people take charge of their own circumstances. The research is collaborative; participants may be co-researchers and co-authors. The research is not about or on people; rather, it is with people, blurring the line between the researcher and the researched. The researcher’s perspective may be presented alongside the participants’ perspectives. The language of the study has polyphonic and pragmatic qualities. What is discovered from the study may include an autobiographical or autoethnographic component, communicating the experience of the researcher. A desired result of this orientation is to transform the setting through taking action guided by the study. In this type of research, using the example of employee retention, the question may center more on the individual than on the organization. The inquiry might be around what the role of the individual employee is in retention. Besides understanding individuals’ role and increasing their awareness of self-responsibility, the aim may also be

for individuals to take a more active role in creating an inviting workplace.

Critical Orientation

The critical orientation puts the focus on structures, such as political and economic, and issues, such as knowledge and power. Here reality is seen as being shaped by issues of knowledge and power. An assumption is that knowledge and power can be used to oppress as well as to liberate. The purpose of the research is to raise consciousness and to prompt questions of power, economy, history, society, politics, and exploitation. Rather than maintain the status quo, it seeks to upset it. The research is directed toward illuminating issues of marginalization. It is purposely provocative, working toward the transformation of not only individuals but also entire systems through questioning their structures. What is learned from the study is expressed through a call to action. In the example of the study on employee retention, a research question from this orientation might focus on a specific issue. For example, the role of gender in employee retention might be explored to ascertain whether the organization is experienced differently by male and female employees and how the organization may be inadvertently (or even deliberately) set up to favor one gender more than the other.

Each of the preceding orientations provides a different perspective and will lead to different interpretations even when studying the same topic. The question is not one of which orientation is correct; all orientations have their place. The question is one of which orientation the researcher has chosen and why. Different orientations illuminate different things, providing different kinds of understandings. The researcher's ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions will influence which orientation he or she gravitates toward. Thus, it is incumbent on the researcher to understand and disclose his or her position on the continuum between objective and subjective reality.

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See also Epistemology; Methodology; Ontology; Researcher as Instrument; Truth

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RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity concerns balanced patterns of giving and taking between people. Research relationships are not necessarily reciprocal, but good research ethics practice requires that researchers consider what they take from research participants as well as what they give to them. There are several dimensions to this issue, including the different conceptualizations of what is given and taken, the rights and responsibilities of each party in research relationships, and the practicalities of building rapport.

Inviting people to participate in research always involves asking them to give up their time, and this may vary from a short one-off period (e.g., to be interviewed) to a substantial longer-term commitment (e.g., to participate in a longitudinal study). In addition to their time, people are being asked to share some aspects of themselves and their lives, such as their knowledge, views, and experiences. The research “bargain” is not only that honest and undistorted access to these often private realms is granted to the researcher but also that the data collected about them may be put in the public domain in some form of publication.

In turn, researchers are expected to include an assurance that the material collected will be treated ethically (e.g., through a commitment to treat the material as confidential and to anonymize participants when publishing findings). Researchers may also give something to participants through the opportunity to reflect on their lives and by providing a voice in the

wider public domain. There is, however, potential for misunderstanding and disagreement about the extent to which that voice should be reported uncritically; researchers rarely give participants a veto over how they are represented in research reports, although giving them the opportunity to comment on draft reports is more common.

Researchers may seek to compensate participants in further ways. Payments to participants may be presented as recompense for their time and trouble, although setting the levels for such payments is problematic. Concerns also exist about the impact on research if participants' motivation is financial. The idea of give and take can lead researchers to respond to participants' revelations by revealing similar aspects of their own lives. This may be done for practical reasons as well as for ethical reasons; for example, research inquiry may take the form of conversations in which the norm is for both parties to contribute equally, thereby building rapport.

Concern about the potentially exploitative nature of research relationships has prompted extensive consideration of what participants get from involvement in research. The opportunity to be listened to and given a voice is generally a more important motivation than the prospect of direct material benefit. Furthermore, the desire to contribute to the research process may be altruistic; therefore, the absence of reciprocity is not necessarily a problem provided that participants are given due consideration and respect at all stages of the research process.

Graham Crow

See also Informed Consent; Researcher–Participant Relationships

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RECONSTRUCTIVE ANALYSIS

Reconstructive analysis is the theoretically guided process of explicating the initially implicit components, structures, and/or generative rules of meaning. Jürgen Habermas introduced the expression “reconstructive

sciences” during the 1970s to distinguish reconstruction from inductive empiricist methods of inquiry. Reconstruction works from the implicitly grasped know-how of an insider and internally moves this knowledge into explicit form.

The Intersubjective and Pragmatic Basis of Meaning

Intersubjectivity as Position-Taking

In everyday life, people act meaningfully and understand the meaningful acts of others through forms of implicit and culturally contingent know-how. Meaning resides most primordially through the process of position-taking with other possible subject positions as constructed contingently within specific cultures. Individuals may take on several subject positions at once as well; for example, a woman with children who works part-time while attending school may take on subject positions of mother, employee, and student in her various life roles. Position-taking—intersubjectivity—is a process that has always already occurred as soon as it is noticed and is more primordial than objectivity or subjectivity. Uses of language, signs, symbols, and the like depend on more basic structures of intersubjectivity through which actors automatically juxtapose a cluster of subject positions in the experience of their own actions (including thoughts) and those of others. A wink, a gesture, and an upward cast of the eyes all convey meanings specific to social contexts because those addressed by such acts automatically position-take with assumed possible positions from which the acts came, with what their own position appears to be from the possible positions of the actor, and with any number of third-person uninvolved positions from which the act would be understood if observed. The same is true of fully linguistic acts. Misunderstandings and acknowledged ambiguities of meaning occur because the subject positions one automatically takes may or may not accord with those taken by others in the situation.

Typifications and Interactive Settings

Preinterpretations of social contexts are provided by cultural typifications, the most basic structures through which position taking occurs. Each such preinterpretation is constituted internally by the juxtaposition of

multiple subject positions such that each person finding herself or himself within the situation can anticipate the possible subjective states and actions of others as well as the anticipations that others have regarding one's own possible states and actions. An encounter with a stranger in a hallway, an arrival at a prearranged location with friends, and an accidental bump with another while walking together are three examples of a huge number of typifications that every culture provides its members. Typifications enable people to initiate interactions with each other and to mutually establish more specific interactive infrastructures—called “settings”—in the process.

Reconstructive analysis will always begin by acquiring an insider's position in relation to typifications and settings, so that the researcher learns to position-take with others as her or his participants routinely position-take with each other. The researcher must acquire forms of communicative know-how that are taken for granted by the participants. The next step is to articulate these forms of implicit knowledge discursively and/or facilitate the process of explication from the side of the cultural members. Validation of the resulting formulations must come from their ability to win the recognition of cultural insiders and from their fit with subsequently experienced expressions and actions. Typifications and routine interactive settings can be explicated by articulating their norms, role sets, power relations, and other intersubjectively constituted features if doing so serves the purposes of a study.

Meaning Fields

All meaningful expressions are usually experienced as a range of possible meanings, not as a singular unambiguous meaning, by people in everyday life. With an insider's understanding of typifications and settings, the qualitative researcher is able to make meaning fields for particular expressions and acts explicit, representing the range of possible meanings that her or his participants experience. A meaning field can be explicated by assuming the actor's position and expressing the act again several times with more words added to semanticize the differences in possible meanings. Conjunctions and disjunctions (e.g., and, or, or/and, and/or) are used to display the range of possible meanings.

As a very simple example, given a well-understood specific context, typification, and relationship history, the greeting “Hello, Mary, how are you today?” said

with a smile and in “friendly” tones could have the following meaning field:

“I'm pleased to see you!”

(or/and) “Let's talk a little.”

Much context familiarity, both with the stream of previous action and with the culture and site of interest, must be attained to articulate meaning fields for specific acts. A skilled researcher takes note of meaning fields mentally when coding data or otherwise analyzing them; it is neither necessary nor possible to explicitly reconstruct meaning fields for all items in a data set, but it is necessary to be aware of them in the same way that one's participants are.

Criticizable Validity Claims and the Validity Horizon

Categorical Distinctions

Ludwig Wittgenstein's work on meaning clarified its nature to reside in implicit, culturally contingent competencies for responding to it. The competency to respond includes three formal modes simultaneously at one's disposal: (1) as would be appropriate for one familiar with the culture who was just addressed by the act (second-person position), (2) as the actor herself or himself had just acted as when one mimics or otherwise reproduces the act of another for some purpose (first-person position), and (3) as one who describes the act from an uninvolved observer perspective (third-person position). Hence, given a shared typification and setting, the act “Hello, Mary, how are you today?” is understood if one can respond in the modes exemplified by “I'm just fine, how are you?” (second-person response), “Hello, Mary, how are you today?” (first-person reenactment), and “He said hello and asked me how I am today” (third-person description). These three formal categorical distinctions are fused together in a moment of holistic understanding and differentiated in one direction or another by the actual response (both in action and thought) that comes next.

Meaning-Constitutive Validity Claims, the Validity Horizon, and the Identity Claim

These three distinctions, based on what Donald Davidson called “the basic speech situation” of having

two or more subjects within an assumedly shared preinterpreted context, form the basis for three basic attitudes fused as potentialities within the understanding of meaningful action: an expressive attitude, a norm-conformative/nonconformative attitude, and an objectivating attitude. Habermas identified these three attitudes and pointed out that with every act, an actor demarcates herself or himself with three “world relations”: a relation with the actor’s own inner states, a relation with an assumedly shared domain of social norms, and a relation with a world to which there is multiple access from assumedly shared third-person perspectives.

Reconstructive analysis can be used to articulate the cultural milieu through which actors take on world relations and demarcate their identities. The first step is to become cognizant of the array of validity claims that constitute meaningful acts. Every expression of meaning is constituted by a cluster of claims falling into four categories: subjective, normative, and objective validity claims and the identity claim. An act such as “Hello, Mary, how are you today?” is constituted in part by claims such as the following: “I am feeling friendly toward you” (subjective claims referencing the intentions and feelings of the actor), “I am acting toward you appropriately” (normative claims referencing a shared social order and culture), and “We have just met for the first time today, we are people who know each other from previous meetings” (objective claims pertaining to objective or objectivated features of the interactive context). In addition, this act carries claims about the identity of the actor, perhaps as follows: “I am a polite and friendly woman and a good friend.”

Every meaningful expression can, in principle, be reconstructed as a horizon of validity claims falling within the three categories of subjectivity, normativity, and objectivity, and it can be arrayed along a continuum of foreground to background relations. This is called the “validity horizon,” and it is the most precise articulation possible for a meaningful expression. In our example of greeting Mary, foregrounded claims would include the subjective claim of feeling friendly toward Mary and happy to see her, intermediate-level claims would include the subjective desire for friendly interaction of uncertain duration as well as a normative claim that Mary ought to respond to this greeting, and backgrounded claims would include the objective claim of previous familiarity with each other.

Validity horizons will reveal backgrounded claims that occur frequently in the typical actions of cultural

insiders such that an entire worldview or ideology is instantiated and reproduced in routine social interactions and practices. In addition, the identity claims of actors will draw on cultural milieu supplying identity components in structured relations. Components related to gender, sexual orientation, race, class, and many other things are often within culturally specific relations of opposition, contrast, and hierarchy that maintain power relations in a social order. Reconstructive analysis, therefore, can be used to reveal forms of cultural power as well as deep-seated ideologies and beliefs that are embedded within a form of life.

Internal Critique

The insight that meaningful action demarcates an actor through three basic world relations establishes a theoretical ground for conducting sociocultural critique in qualitative research. The demarcation of the self with every act can be fruitfully analyzed in accordance with George Herbert Mead’s distinction between the “I” and the “me.” The “me” part of the self is the identity claim mentioned earlier. A chronic feature of all meaningful expression (although it is very backgrounded in many acts) is the claim that the actor is such and such kind of person (usually meaning that she or he is not another possible kind of person). But the “I” part of the self pertains to the fact that actors hold themselves and others responsible for their actions. One is never simply one’s roles and identity claims; one is also the *author* of one’s roles and identity claims. Similarly, one does not simply make validity claims with every act of meaning; one implicitly takes on the obligation of providing reasons for these claims if they are contested by others or of changing one’s position if others give good reasons for doing so. Meaningful actions are produced in relation to existential needs for being a *somebody* (having a “me”) as well as for being trustworthy, responsible and accountable in relation to at least some reference groups (the “I” feature of the claimed self).

Hence, the validity claims constitutive of meaning are inherently criticizable. Ultimately, this means that people in everyday life themselves are capable of criticizing the norms, identity repertoires, beliefs, and interpretive structures of their own culture. Reconstructive analysis becomes a form of critical qualitative research when it brings to light implicit and/or explicit forms of sociocultural criticism made

by cultural members themselves. Internal standards for critique include the relation of norms and identity repertoires to human needs for self formation, development, and emancipation as well as the relation of beliefs to actual experiences of an objectivated world.

Reconstruction of Semantic and Pragmatic Structures

The validity horizon is the most precise, but never an exhaustive, articulation of meaning for singular expressions. Thematic analysis of cultures, discourses, and ideologies takes the usually backgrounded portions of typical meaningful expressions to reveal interpretive generalities within a form of life. Such generalities are also embedded within broadly distributed semantic and pragmatic structures that can be investigated independently.

Semantic structures are instantiated through culturally distinctive uses of words and phrases whose meanings depend on relations to other categories through relations of opposition, contrast, similarity, analogy, metaphor, and homology. Use of the word *dude* within a particular group will have meaning dependent on how members implicitly contrast the term with alternative words such as *person*, *man*, *woman*, and *guy*. Each use of a word such as *dude* can instantiate a different semantic structure, and insiders implicitly grasp which structure is in play according to the context of interaction. Reconstructive analysis brings common semantic structures of this type into explicit discourse. Ultimately, the meanings carried by instantiated semantic structures can be fully articulated as validity horizons; the validity horizons of particular expressive acts are delivered in part by the semantic structures instantiated by the acts.

Similarly, ways of talking and acting deliver meanings in culturally structured forms. Insiders are aware of roles played by themselves and others through at least implicit understandings of whole structures of roles that exist in relations of similarity and contrast. The pragmatics of interaction—proxemics, pacing, gesturing, patterns of eye contact, and so on—all deliver portions of the validity horizon through culturally generalized structures. Reconstructive analysis can be used to explicate the distinctive pragmatic structures of a form of life as well as the distinctive semantic ones.

Examples of the use of hermeneutic reconstructive analysis include Mark Dressman's "On the Use and

Misuse of Research Evidence: Decoding Two States' Reading Initiatives"; Barbara Korth's "Gendered Interpretations Veiled With Discourses of Individuality"; and Mary-Ann Hardcastle and colleagues' "Carspecken's Five-Stage Critical Qualitative Research Method: An Application to Nursing Research."

Phil Francis Carspecken

See also Critical Discourse Analysis; Critical Research

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RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

In qualitative inquiry, *recruitment* refers to the process whereby the researcher identifies and invites (recruits) participants to join the study. Qualitative researchers strive to include participants who meet the study criteria and who represent the richest and most complex source of information (data) relevant to the phenomena being studied. The specific research questions will guide the choice of the research design that is best suited to address the study objectives.

A major element of the research design involves developing guidelines as to who will be recruited for the proposed study. "Inclusion" and "exclusion" criteria address who will be approached (involving criteria such as age group, diagnosis, geographic location, and ethnic background) and, on occasion, when they will be approached (e.g., requiring participants to be at a specific disease stage). Careful design of a sampling

strategy and recruitment scheme will help to ensure maximum discovery and knowledge about the phenomena under study.

Two key elements that must be addressed are the appropriateness of the sample being recruited (are participants who can best inform the research being identified and enrolled in the study?) and adequacy (are there enough data collected to develop rich thick descriptions of the phenomena under study?). If the answer to the last question is *no*, then theoretical saturation of the data has not occurred and further recruitment or revision of the inclusion criteria, based on data collected to date, is indicated.

Specific strategies include snowball recruitment, where nomination of other potential participants is made by those already enrolled in the study, and use of media approaches, such as paid advertisements in newspapers, posting and/or mailing of informational flyers, and publication of information about the study through online sources (e.g., chat rooms, discussion boards). Use of the internet for recruitment and implementation of data collection is receiving increased attention, but as with all recruitment strategies, it must first make sense in terms of the research question and not be used primarily for ease of access by the researcher.

In developing a recruitment strategy, researchers must carefully consider who they may be excluding by the strategy they will be adopting. For example, in the previous example of online recruitment, studies have shown that minorities, persons of low socioeconomic status, those with internet access issues, and socially isolated adults all may be underrepresented in this type of scheme. Use of existing agencies, service organizations, and/or social groups that involve the target population is another avenue for recruitment. This has the advantage of efficiency because the groups or agencies are already serving an identified population that meets all or most of the study's criteria. However, researchers must again examine the issue of who would not be reached if the recruitment strategy is overly reliant on this approach. Use of more than one recruitment strategy can assist in widening the potential audience and participant pool.

Barriers to recruitment may include certain groups' fear and/or mistrust of research and researchers based on historical wrongs such as may be found among some African American groups who know of the deceptive research practices used in the 40-year Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the United States. It can be challenging to engage in research when the

researcher's cultural background and that of the participants are not similar. There may be a lack of pre-existing knowledge by the community about the area of research proposed in the current study. Providing information about the study to interested community members through an informal orientation and question-and-answer period would be a prudent first step in recruitment.

All of these barriers can be addressed, but the qualitative researcher is well advised to plan additional time to implement these strategies. To overcome fear and mistrust issues, it is important to build strong coalitions and networks based in the culture and community. This entails finding key contacts and champions for the research who can then vouch for the researcher and the research and also assist in recruitment of initial participants. In transcultural research, having key contact people who are willing to serve in this liaison role is crucial for the success of participant recruitment and the overall study. In this context, the researcher not only is the "knower" of the research question and focus of the study but also must be sensitive to the need to "be known" by the community so that trust, veracity, and mutual respect can be ascertained and developed. It is vital to determine the cultural institutions and groups that are most trusted and seek to involve key contacts from these organizations in the study. For example, when engaging in research with members of the African American population, studies have involved local churches that serve this population as well as beauty salons and barbershops that serve African American clientele. Both ministers from these congregations and shop operators have been involved in recruiting participants for various qualitative studies with success based on the trusting interpersonal relationship these individuals have built up with members of the target population.

Other issues in recruitment may involve dealing with gatekeepers—those who have influence with or power over potential participants and who can either serve to facilitate contact or prohibit participation. There are also cost issues to consider. Placing advertisements in newspapers, reproducing and mailing out informational flyers, and making payments of stipends to cover participants' costs are examples of budgetary items that must be planned in advance depending on the recruitment strategy chosen by the investigator. Legal and regulatory issues need to be considered. Institutional ethics boards' approval of the research plan, including the strategies for recruitment, must be received before any research activities commence.

Qualitative investigators must be aware of laws and regulations that may restrict, for example, health care facilities' sharing of data relevant to recruitment of the desired sample. In summary, recruitment is a critical element of the qualitative research plan, requiring careful consideration of inclusion/exclusion criteria and development of strategies to most effectively access the population of interest for recruitment purposes.

Phyllis J. Eide

See also Ethics; Sample; Sampling

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RECURSIVITY

Recursivity refers to the cyclical nature of qualitative research where all procedures can be undertaken repeatedly until a specified condition is met. For example, in a qualitative study, data are collected and then analyzed. Based on the results of this analysis, the researcher might decide to collect data from a new source. If this decision is made, the researcher collects data from the new source and then conducts a type of analysis. The process of collecting and then analyzing the data continues until saturation is reached—that is, until no new or relevant information data emerge. This repeated cyclical process is recursivity. As such, recursivity refers

to nonlinearity of the qualitative research process, reflecting a nonstatic research design. Moreover, recursivity indicates an emergent research process in which the design and procedures unfold as the study proceeds. Recursivity represents a dynamic process of inquiry, yet at the same time it reflects a process that is methodical, logical, and cumulative.

Another example of recursivity in qualitative research is when the researcher considers the research focus and then analyzes the data; subsequently, the researcher might go back to the research focus, reflect on the data collected, and consider the possibility of reformulating the research focus based on the data collected. The research focus might or might not change based on the collected and analyzed data. Either way, the qualitative researcher then takes the original or new research focus and collects further data. In addition, recursivity helps the qualitative researcher to return to the sample as needed and to loop back and forth between data collection and analysis in a carefully constructed and documented manner so that others (e.g., researchers, peer debriefers whose goal is to legitimate the interpretations and conclusions made) can examine or replicate the path or audit trail left.

These are only a few examples of recursivity; there are many instances of recursivity in qualitative research. The recursive nature of qualitative research creates a basis for results to emerge from the data. Therefore, new decisions can be made throughout a study. The process of recursivity allows the researcher to look at the collected information in a holistic manner, moving from an inductive mode of inquiry to a deductive mode of inquiry and then back to an inductive mode of inquiry. This movement from inductive to deductive reasoning and then back to inductive reasoning allows the researcher to be open to unexpected results. Therefore, the researcher is open to the potential of building new constructs and integrating them within the existing results, creating linkages among results, and developing explanations for conclusions found within a study.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Data Analysis; Data Collection; Deduction; Induction

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REDUCTIONISM

Reductionism is a viewpoint that regards one phenomenon as entirely explainable by the properties of another phenomenon. The first can be said to be reducible to the second. It is a mere epiphenomenon of the second. It is really just another name for the second. It has no distinctive properties that require a distinctive theory or methodology.

For example, biological reductionism claims that the mind is explained entirely by physical properties of the brain, that the mind is physical, that what we call *mental* is really just another term for the brain, that mental/mind is actually only an epiphenomenon of the brain, that it can and should be studied by neurophysiologists, that there is nothing distinctively psychological about the mind, and that treating the mind as having properties distinct from those of the brain is an illusion.

An opposite form of reductionism is sociological reductionism. This reduces psychological phenomena to epiphenomena of social factors. In this view, psychology is determined entirely by nationality or social class. There is nothing to psychology besides the properties it acquires from one's nationhood or class. In this view, one may speak of U.S. psychology as a homogeneous phenomenon or lower-class psychology as a homogeneous phenomenon because no other factors determine psychology; it is reducible to social state or social class.

Another form of reductionism that bears directly on qualitative methodology is quantitative reductionism. The claim here is that qualitative characteristics of personality, emotions, and reasoning are entirely expressible in quantitative terms. An example is the notion of intelligence. IQ is construed as an entirely quantitative dimension. IQ can range from low to high. The only meaningful way to discuss IQ is in terms of its quantitative amount. IQ is reducible to quantity. Psychologists are concerned with operationalizing intelligence and measuring it, not with discussing theories about what it is.

Reductionism denies complex multiplicity and heterogeneity in favor of a single kind of phenomenon or factor. For example, biological reductionism construes the mind as continuous with the single realm of neurophysiology. It does not recognize the mind as a complication of neurophysiology that introduces a new kind of phenomenon.

Quantitative reductionism similarly simplifies psychology by recognizing only one order of reality, the quantitative order. Qualitative complexity and multiplicity is reduced to simple quantitative differences.

Alternatives to Reductionism

There are two alternatives to reductionism. Both of them emphasize that there is more than one order of phenomena. *Dualism* postulates separate orders of phenomena. René Descartes's postulating of a mind that is separate from the body is the classic dualistic alternative to reductionism. In this case, a separate realm of the mental stands apart from the physical body. In this view, the mind cannot be reduced to the body or be explained in physical terms. Studying the mind requires special theories and methodologies that are different from those that are applicable to physical phenomena.

Dialectical emergence is a second alternative to reductionism. It also recognizes that phenomena are complex, multifaceted, and heterogeneous. They are not reducible to single properties and processes. However, it postulates that these distinctive characteristics are related to others. They are not independent as in dualism.

The classic example of emergence is the relation of water to its elements, oxygen and hydrogen. Water is composed of these elements; it is not independent of them. Yet oxygen and hydrogen are gaseous molecules, whereas water is a liquid. Although water depends on its constituents, it has a qualitatively new property—liquid—that cannot be understood in terms of its gaseous components. A new field of study is necessary to study the distinctive emergent liquid quality of water.

In analogous fashion, an emergent conception of the mind argues that it is grounded in neurophysiological processes; however, it emerges from them and is a distinctive form of them with distinctive properties. The mind is capable of willing action, thinking, predicting, comprehending, and even controlling the brain and the body. These are acts that are qualitatively

different from their constituent neurons, just as water is qualitatively different from hydrogen and oxygen. A special field of psychology to study these emergent, distinctive mental qualities is warranted.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology overcomes the simplification of positivism by acknowledging that psychological phenomena are qualitatively different in different individuals and cultures. Shame, introversion, attachment, intelligence, depression, love, memory, self-concept, and reasoning are not single, simple, invariant quantitative dimensions.

Many different kinds of intelligence have been identified by Robert Sternberg. Abstract, syllogistic logical reasoning is different from reasoning based on empirical experience. In the latter, deductions are made from what one has personally experienced, not from abstract logical rules. Romantic love is different from puritanical love in colonial America.

Qualitative methodology includes complex procedures for investigating complex, variable qualitative characteristics of psychological phenomena. It avoids discounting or simplifying complexity, multiplicity, and variation. Of course, qualitative procedures organize complex data into meaningful categories. They also summarize trends in the data. However, these organizing procedures respect the complexity of phenomena. They simply categorize similar complex issues together and distinguish them from different complex issues. Organizing data does not necessitate reducing them to simple, singular, invariant quantitative dimensions.

Carl Ratner

See also Hermeneutics; Methodological Holism Versus Individualism; Objectivism; Phenomenology

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REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity can be broadly described as qualitative researchers' engagement of continuous examination and explanation of how they have influenced a research project. It plays a key role in many types of qualitative methodologies, including feminist research, participatory action research, ethnographies, and hermeneutic and poststructural approaches. However, the extent to which researchers engage in reflexivity depends on the methodological approach they have adopted for their study.

There are essentially four types of reflexivity adopted by qualitative researchers, and the form used is dependent on the methodology adopted. Reflexivity, therefore, can be viewed on a continuum. On the objectivist end of the reflexivity continuum is the approach of "bracketing" adopted in descriptive phenomenology. Similar to bracketing, "ethnomethodological indifference" adopted in ethnomethodology is also placed on the objectivist end of the reflexivity continuum. Both of these approaches to reflexivity reflect positivist influences. In achieving this type of reflexivity, researchers keep a diary of the thoughts and feelings that influenced their methodological decision making throughout a study.

A broader view of reflexivity is evident in epistemological reflexivity where researchers are required to ask questions of their methodological decision making and are encouraged to think about epistemological decisions regarding the research and its findings. This form of reflexivity is evident in philosophical hermeneutics and in grounded theory. Similar to the objectivist type of reflexivity, researchers adopting epistemological reflexivity can keep a journal to assist in their understanding of prior assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes.

The third type of reflexivity moves beyond the mere recording of a journal to one where the reflexivity is critical and embraces an examination of the political and social issues that inform the research process. This type of reflexivity is employed in, for instance, critical ethnography and critical hermeneutics.

The fourth type of reflexivity is that espoused by feminist researchers. This form of reflexivity embraces the reciprocal nature of the researcher-participant relationship and challenges the notion of neutrality in this relationship. The researchers and informants become partners in the researchers' endeavor, and

the researchers use their own experiences and reflections to illuminate important meaning. Both researchers and participants, therefore, undergo reflexivity. This view of reflexivity suggests an intimate reciprocity between researchers and participants and could be considered problematic. However, in the case of research investigating sensitive and private aspects of people's lives, the endeavor to create a successful interview can be compared with the processes employed by, for instance, counselors and therapists.

Achieving reflexivity is not a straightforward endeavor. It requires consideration and examination of decisions made at each stage of the research process, and the extent to which such examination is adopted depends on the methodology adopted. Current discussions on reflexivity reflect the need for qualitative researchers to be explicit in their actual practice of reflexivity so as to avoid it appearing to merely address the need to make a qualitative study appear more rigorous.

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See also Researcher as Instrument; Researcher–Participant Relationships

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RELATIONAL ETHICS

Relational ethics is a contemporary approach to ethics that situates ethical action explicitly in relationship. If ethics is about how we should live, then it is essentially about how we should live *together*. Acting ethically involves more than resolving ethical dilemmas through good moral reasoning; it demands attentiveness and responsiveness to our commitments to one another, to the earth, and to all living things. Ethics is

about our interdependency as well as our freedom, our emotions as well as our reason, and our unique situation as well as our human commonalities. It involves finding the fitting responses to our ethical questions.

A fitting response is one that is suitable, balanced, and harmonious and that takes into account the immediacy and complexity of the particular situation and our moral responsibility within it. The answer to “How should I act?” is discovered not solely by oneself but rather in dialogue with others. We cannot know ahead of time, and with great certainty, how we should act. This does not mean that “everything is relative” or that “anything goes.” Rather, it is acknowledged that we need to be sensitive to the whole of a given situation, to be inclusive in our dialogue about it, and to be aware of the effect of our contributions on it.

Interpersonal and societal relationships are influenced by the dynamics of power. It must be recognized that persons marginalized and/or stigmatized due to factors such as poverty, gender, and illness can be disadvantaged in serious ways. They may, for instance, have less opportunity to give voice to their concerns, or they may find that their concerns are not given priority by others. A relational ethics approach to ethical action underscores the need to address issues of power and vulnerability.

Relational ethics is informed by the work of philosophers and scholars such as Zygmunt Bauman, Robin Dillon, Han-Georg Gadamer, Sally Gadow, Raimund Gaita, Emmanuel Lévinas, Knut Løgstrup, John Macmurray, H. Richard Niebuhr, Charles Taylor, and Arne Vetlesen. Ethics, as espoused in their works (among others), is not based in a disengaged process of moral reasoning conceived as objective and existing outside the situated reality of human existence. There is instead acknowledgment of the primacy and ethical significance of our relationships to one another and of the need to understand humans as embodied beings situated within families and communities.

Relational Ethics Research

Research in relational ethics began during the early 1990s at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, as an interdisciplinary project in health ethics led by Vangie Bergum (a nurse) and John Dossetor (a physician) and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. This initial project evolved in response to the dominance of the notion of the autonomous person within North

American bioethics. Although respect for the autonomy of the individual is highly valued in Western societies and is important to the key concepts of rights and freedoms, the idea of the self-contained separate person, free from external constraint, does not capture the inherently social nature of human lives. Overemphasis on autonomy can create a false picture of a person's actual situation in everyday life. Although it acknowledges the value of independence, it ignores the way in which independence is an aspect of our *interdependence*.

The aim of this first project was to explore ethical action in health care from the perspective of relationship and responsibility, rather than autonomy, and to describe what this change in focus might look like as a foundation for health care. The interdisciplinary research team used interpretive inquiry to examine actual health care situations using testimonials from those involved, documentaries, or published descriptions. Artwork (e.g., photography, painting), poetry, and literature that captured aspects of caring for others were used to enhance the researchers' understanding of ethical relations. The core elements of relational ethics that emerged from this inquiry were mutual respect, engagement, embodied knowledge, attention to the interdependent environment, and uncertainty/vulnerability. These results, as well as the research process, are described in Vangie Bergum and John Dossetor's *Relational Ethics: The Full Meaning of Respect*. This initial project inspired other health ethics research, including studies in mental health care, genetic counseling, the moral distress and compassion fatigue of health professionals, and the challenges of establishing ethical relationships in forensic psychiatric settings.

Relational Ethics in Research

To ensure that research is conducted in an ethical way that minimizes risks and maximizes benefits to participants, international, national, and local guidelines have been developed. These guidelines, usually based strongly on the concept of informed autonomous consent, are crucial tools for researchers. From a relational ethics perspective, however, although these guidelines are necessary, they are insufficient. Some of the most serious violations in the past have occurred despite guidelines and laws governing research. A common factor in such violations has been the attitude of researchers toward their participants or

"subjects." Some researchers have acted on their subjects in ways that they would never contemplate or tolerate in relation to themselves or their own loved ones. Genuine respect for those enrolled in their studies has been absent. When research misconduct is conceptualized as fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, the significance of ethical relationships in research—with colleagues, assistants, and students as well as with participants—can be diminished. A relational ethics approach demands otherwise.

Criticisms of Relational Ethics

Attention to context and the recognition of embodied knowing in relational ethics incite criticisms of relativism and lack of impartiality and universality. In addition, the emphasis on relationship confuses some critics who wonder whether relational ethics means that it takes two to be ethical. This is not the case. There is, however, recognition that the individual learns to be ethical in relationships with others.

Wendy J. Austin

See also Embodied Knowledge; Ethics; Ethics Codes; Ethics Review Process

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RELATIVISM

Relativism does not refer to a unitary doctrine but rather announces a cluster of viewpoints. There are,

however, two deeply interrelated points central to all discussions of relativism. The first is the claim that our experiences, moral judgments, claims to knowledge, and so on can be understood only relative to something else such as particular languages and particular social and cultural practices. The second is the denial that there can be any universal or apodictic truths.

The Greek Sophist Protagoras generally is considered to be one of the first to broach the issue of relativism. Plato, in the *Theaetetus*, attributed to Protagoras the well-known and oft-cited phrase “Man is the measure of all things: of things that are that [how] they are and of things that are not that [how] they are not.” Since that time, relativism has been an ongoing major theme in Western thought and has posed a central problem in both moral philosophy (axiology) and the philosophy of science (epistemology). Over the past few decades, the discussions of moral relativism have become even more pronounced and expanded beyond philosophical discourse to public discussions in general because of what are referred to as the “culture wars.” In discussions in the philosophy of science, especially concerning the nature and purpose of social research, a similarly intensified debate has arisen over the implications of relativism. These discussions have centered on some of the concepts of greatest importance to social researchers, qualitative researchers in particular, such as the definitions to be accepted for objectivity, subjectivity, and truth as well as the criteria to be used for judging the quality of research.

Types of Relativism

In the philosophical literature on relativism, various terms are used to broadly denote two different types or categories of relativism. The first type, as introduced briefly in the introductory paragraphs, is most commonly described using the paired terms descriptive–normative, cognitive–ethical, and epistemological–moral, all of which refer to basically the same differentiation. Normative, ethical, and moral relativism state that what we accept as morally correct or incorrect varies from society to society and even within different segments of a society. There are no moral/ethical principles that are accepted by all people across societies or even by all members of any particular society. The validity and force of ethical and moral injunctions are context dependent, and there are not, and cannot be, any enduring universal ethical and moral strictures. This form of relativism does

not allow for the possibility of an objectivist basis for moral/ethical judgment. Moreover, moral relativism obviously stands in conflict with the moral absolutes associated with religious doctrines.

The second type of relativism, cognitive or epistemological relativism, holds that there are no universal truths or truths about the world that stand outside our use of language; that is, there are no extra-linguistic truths. This claim is based on the idea that although we may accept that there is a world out there independent of our interests and purposes, as per common sense, the languages we use to depict that world are not out there independent of us. Relativists argue that because truth can be understood only within a language, there are no inherent or given characteristics of the world and, as such, there can be no ultimate fact of the matter. All that can be said about the world is that there are different ways of interpreting it—interpretations that are time and place contingent or, put differently, are relative to time and place. Although epistemological relativism is less widely held than is moral relativism, it recently has gained increased attention from, most especially, social researchers. As the implications of the idea of no theory-free knowledge have been more fully realized, arguments over epistemological relativism have become far more common in the philosophy of social research literature.

Finally, very often when the concept of relativism is encountered in the literature where it is not the subject of direct philosophical analysis, such as in many of the discussions among both quantitative and qualitative social researchers about the quality of research, it is not formally defined. Almost always, however, the implicit definition is that of “anything goes” in the sense that relativism means that no moral stance can be judged as superior to any other moral stance and that no claim to knowledge can be defended as better than any other claim to knowledge. Those who define relativism in “anything goes” fashion further argue that relativism is a very serious problem because it undermines the idea of truth and, as such, it is a major step toward intellectual (and moral) nihilism or anarchy.

Relativism as Self-Refuting

Among numerous, often philosophically complex, objections to relativism, the most common one is that relativism is not a defensible position because it is logically self-contradictory. The argument can be summarized as follows. To say that all things are

relative is an absolute or nonrelative statement. Hence, relativism is logically self-refuting and, thus, falls before the very relativity that it seeks to defend. This line of argument, which has been widely accepted, again can be traced back to Plato's comments on Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*.

During recent years, various philosophers who have held, or who are claimed by others to hold, a position of relativism have responded to this charge of relativism as self-refuting. Although nearly everyone agrees that, given conventional logical canons, relativism is indeed self-refuting, philosophers such as Richard Rorty and Hans-Georg Gadamer have argued in one form or another that this makes no difference.

Rorty, adopting a pragmatist stance, began with the point that relativism generally refers to three views: an "anything goes" view that states that all beliefs are equally good, a view that there are as many meanings for truth as there are procedures for justification, and a view that there is little more to be said about truth than to describe the procedures employed by particular social groups to justify claims to knowledge in any particular area of inquiry. He stated that pragmatists adopt the third view in that they think we should drop the traditional view that truth is defined as the correspondence between language and reality and should realize that truth is best thought of as a compliment paid to people with whom we agree. He added that when truth is defined in this way, it is not a theory of truth in the conventional sense because there is no interest in attempting to ground knowledge claims. Put differently, Rorty concluded that because pragmatists do not have a theory of truth and are not interested in theories of truth, they cannot as such have a relativist theory of truth. Once one gives up on epistemology or theories of truth, the idea that relativism is self-refuting is of no particular concern.

Gadamer, in a very sophisticated elaboration of philosophical or ontological hermeneutics, likewise dismissed the importance of the idea of relativism as self-refuting. Gadamer argued that we must understand the historicity of our own understanding. Given that all human experience of the world is by nature verbal, it is apparent that people with a particular language and cultural tradition perceive the world in a way that is different from that perceived by people with a different language and cultural tradition. Although this does not mean that communication is impossible across languages and cultures or across time, it does mean that the idea of a "world in itself,"

or a world beyond language, is not possible. From this point, he added the idea that these different views of the world are not, or cannot, be relative to some sort of world in itself. The world is the same as the views in which it is presented. Although Gadamer agreed that the self-refuting argument is itself irrefutable, he argued that this point simply misses the main point in that it does not express any insight of consequence or achieve anything of interest. Moreover, the argument doubles back on the arguer because it calls into question the fundamental truth in the claim about the historicity of all understanding. In the end, one can interpret Gadamer as considering the self-refuting argument as a kind of "bowl you over" attempt to push back on those who argue that there can be privileged knowledge or knowledge that is over and above considerations of time and place.

A third response to the self-refuting argument is an extension of the positions taken by Rorty and Gadamer. John K. Smith stated that relativism should be redefined to mean nothing more than the fact that we, as humans, are finite. Once this redefinition is undertaken, it is clear that there is no point in thinking of relativism in terms of a theory of knowledge; relativism is nothing more than an acknowledgment of our finite condition of being in the world. We cannot see or understand the world from a "God's-eye" stance or from outside of a time- and place-contingent language and cultural practice. If this is so, the idea that relativism is self-refuting is of no consequence because relativism is not something that can be transcended; rather, it is a condition with which we, as finite humans, must learn to live.

When relativism is redefined as an acknowledgment of our presence in the world as finite beings, as opposed to "anything goes" or "all things are equal," two additional considerations are usually offered to justify this different understanding. First, there is the negative point that relativism as anything goes requires for its meaning a viable concept of the absolute. There is what is called a dyadic relationship between these concepts, meaning that if one term cannot be made sensible, the same is so for the other term. This is the case in this instance because we have no defensible prospect for making sense of the absolute; accordingly, we have no prospect for making sense of anything goes.

Second, in a more tangible sense, the reason that "anything goes" relativism is meaningless is because all of us already do make judgments and will continue to do so for a very long time so far as anyone can see.

It is impossible to conceive of how anyone could lead a life without preferring some things over other things. As such, the conventional definition of relativism in the “all things are equal” guise is at best an abstraction with no practical import.

Relativism and Criteria

The most important issue that discussions of relativism have brought to the forefront for social researchers, most especially qualitative researchers, is that of how to judge the quality of research and how to adjudicate among different claims to knowledge. For quantitative social researchers, given their empiricist and realist philosophical dispositions, there has been a general agreement that there is a two-stage process appropriate for judging the quality of research. First, judgments about good versus bad research are based on whether or not the researcher employed the proper methods; this judgment is then followed by a judgment as to the value of the findings in a practical and/or theoretical sense. The collapse of the logical empiricist theory of knowledge because of internal contradictions concerning verifiability, along with serious doubts about the viability of the correspondence theory of truth, an increasing understanding of the implications of no theory-free knowledge, and so on, has led most philosophers of social inquiry to hold that we can no longer think of researchers as able to have direct access to social reality and, with the proper use of certain methods, depict that reality as it really is.

In the wake of these philosophical changes, two different positions have developed on the issue of criteria for judging research. One perspective is referred to as neorealism. Neorealists, having accepted that there is no direct access to reality and no absolute methodical criteria by which to judge the quality of research, have elaborated a position based on a dual set of commitments. On the one hand, they argue for the idea of a real world that is independent of interests and purposes; on the other hand, they acknowledge that our knowledge of this world is fallible in the sense that we can never really know whether we know this world as it really is. They believe, in other words, in a realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. The main thrust by the neorealists has been to elaborate this dual commitment in a way that would prevent relativism, especially a relativism of “all things are equal” or “anything goes.” Their concern is that if

relativism is not prevented, all disputes over claims to knowledge can, and will, be resolved only through a resort to power.

Martyn Hammersley is one of the more prominent research philosophers who has attempted to elaborate criteria for judging qualitative research that are not method-bound and are not time and place contingent (relative to a particular set of social/cultural practices) and, thus, avoid the threat of relativism. Hammersley accepted what he called a modified correspondence of truth based on a subtle realism and stated that we can retain the empiricist concept of truth, but not in a naive sense. This led him to elaborate the criteria of plausibility and credibility. The former refers to a judgment as to whether a research result is likely to be true given our existing knowledge. The latter refers to whether a result can be deemed credible given the circumstances of the research and the nature of the phenomena under study. In the end, Hammersley argued that it is reality itself that must be called on, albeit in a subtle or indirect way, to judge the quality of research and to adjudicate among different claims to knowledge.

Most of the discussions about the validity of qualitative research also are undertaken from a neorealist philosophical perspective. The work of Joseph Maxwell on the different aspects of validity is another example of the neorealist approach to the issue of criteria. For Maxwell, as for others who have discussed the validity issue, descriptive validity is the key issue because it involves the basic issue of the factual accuracy of a research account. The validity question at this level is whether the researcher made it up, distorted things, missed things, or got it right. Although he recognized that description is not theory free or independent of a researcher’s effective history, any disagreement among researchers at the descriptive level can be resolved, at least in principle, by the data or the reality itself. Again, as with other neorealists such as Hammersley, although there is no direct access to reality, it is still claimed that reality itself can be called on to judge the quality of research and to adjudicate among claims to knowledge.

The relativists argue that the neorealists have not made good on their position, especially on the point that social reality itself can do the work they desire from it. Their main contention is that the implications of no theory-free knowledge, which has forced them to accept that one can never know, or know if one knows, reality as it really is, mean that there is no

possibility that reality itself can be an independent referent point for judging the quality of research and for adjudicating among different knowledge claims. Any criteria used for judgment can be contingent on time and place or on the familiar forms of justification only relative to particular times and places. This is relativism, but not a relativism of “anything goes” because, as noted, relativists argue that the concept means nothing more than the recognition that we, as humans, are finite beings.

For relativists, the issue of criteria should be thought of in terms of a list of characteristics that define what is considered good versus bad inquiry. Such a list of items is open-ended in the sense that it always can be added to and subtracted from. Moreover, any list of characteristics that is brought to a judgment of research can be only partially articulated, with some items being more or less specified and others resisting such specification. There always will be a surplus of meaning that stands beyond our grasp or beyond our language. Finally, the items on the lists are changed not through abstract discussion but rather in the continual application to actual inquiries. As new forms of inquiry come along, this opens up the possibility that our lists must be modified to accommodate the new or else the items on the list remain and the new is rejected as not even being research. Just such a dispute has occurred over the past few decades over whether to change/modify the criteria for judging research and accept qualitative research or to keep the traditional empiricist criteria and reject or devalue this approach to inquiry.

Finally, relativists add that although judgments cannot be grounded extra-linguistically, this does not allow that researchers are exempt from engaging each other in open and unconstrained conversation in the attempt to justify claims to knowledge. Relativists argue that researchers have a moral obligation, in their attempts to persuade others to accept their knowledge claims and define the quality of research the way they do, to be open to having themselves persuaded by others. The idea that researchers must learn to live with uncertainty and the absence of the possibility for final vindications does not mean that judgment is to be abandoned.

John K. Smith

See also Hermeneutics; Interpretive Inquiry; Value-Free Inquiry

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RELIABILITY

Reliability, in the field of research, is broadly described as the dependability, consistency, and/or repeatability of a project's data collection, interpretation, and/or analysis. Reliability is viewed very differently in qualitative research from how it is viewed in quantitative research. In the quantitative domain, reliability is specifically characterized as the extent to which multiple researchers arrive at similar results when they engage in the same study using identical procedures. In these conditions, differences in results are described as measurement error. Therefore, from a quantitative perspective, reliability is specifically defined, sought, and measured, and it is accepted as an essential indicator of a study's quality (along with measures of validity and generalizability).

In contrast, because of the paradigmatic and methodological diversity of approaches that comprise the field, reliability has not been described with such uniformity in qualitative research. Whereas many qualitative researchers describe parallel concepts such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and consistency as appropriate qualitative correlates to reliability, others avoid the purposeful quest for reliability altogether. Those who overtly seek credibility and dependability often assert that such aims support the rigor of qualitative work and ensure that studies avoid “haphazard” subjectivity. Three of the commonly cited indicators of credibility and dependability are methodological coherence (the appropriate and thorough

collection, analysis, and interpretation of data), researcher responsiveness (the early and ongoing verification of findings and analyses with study participants), and audit trails (a transparent description of all procedures and issues relative to the research project). Such strategies are commonly employed by qualitative researchers to demonstrate systematic attention to reliability-related issues.

On the other hand, some have asserted that purposeful attempts to demonstrate reliability are counterintuitive to much of the work that emanates from the qualitative domain. They point to the interpretive subjective nature of qualitative work as a defining hallmark of the field—one that can be undermined by rigid reliability concerns. At the heart of this position is the notion of reflexivity. Whereas quantitative researchers (and some qualitative researchers) attempt to minimize—indeed eliminate—researcher effects so as to maintain objectivity, most qualitative researchers embrace the notion of reflexivity—the idea that researchers' backgrounds, interests, skills, and biases necessarily play unique roles in the framing of studies and in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Researchers are seen as visible, biased integral players in the process. This depiction of "researcher as instrument" in the project flows naturally with the claim that the richness and meaningfulness of qualitative research is largely dependent on its creativity and originality. Rather than seeking to standardize interview/testing procedures so that any researcher (who is detached and neutral) might gain the same results, the unique identities of both researchers and research participants are transparently identified and purposefully centered. Repeatability, from this perspective, is neither desired nor possible.

Therefore, it is evident that reliability, like many other concepts in qualitative research, is best approached on a case-by-case basis. Although many specific steps can be taken to support the credibility of one's research, such efforts should not compromise the deeper methodological and paradigmatic meanings that underpin this work.

Peter Miller

See also Objectivity; Reflexivity; Validity

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REPLICATION

Replication refers to researchers conducting a repeated study of a project that typically has been published in a peer-reviewed journal or book. This is not the same, however, as duplication. All qualitative research hinges on the unique characteristics of people, locations, cultures, and genres. Consequently, no two qualitative studies ever will be identical. Nonetheless, researchers can, at times, locate participants with demographic variables similar to an original qualitative design, ask similar questions, and assess data for codes similar to an original data collection. This integrated process entails a research protocol called replication.

Ethical guidelines of research associations often require that researchers make available their data (without names or identities) to future researchers wishing to replicate findings. Consequently, researchers may access the very questions posed to participants (if documented) or may even review the recorded transcripts for how the participants replied to the questions (if ethics approval received during the initial study allows for such review). Codes are made available for later researchers to use in future research when samples are similar. When conducting a replication study, researchers give due credit and acknowledgments to the original researchers who made their design and/or data set available to the replicators. As such, scholars who replicate previous studies avoid plagiarism or otherwise simply rehashing previous researchers' work.

All research is context specific. For quantitative researchers, findings are based on sampling distribution theory. Namely, one may generalize the findings of a study to the degree that the sample appropriately matched the population from which it was drawn. Consequently, findings from a quantitative study may (in theory) be applied to others who possess relatively similar characteristics of the individuals in the original study.

Qualitative researchers, in contrast, typically use criterion sampling. This means that participants are selected based on a set of prescribed criteria established by researchers. Participants possess the variables of interest for study—and may or may not represent others in the population from which the sample was drawn. Due to this choice of sampling methodology, qualitative researchers likely will always have a weak case for external validity when focusing solely on one individual study.

From the preceding context, replication is the key to qualitative research external validity. A qualitative finding is reflective of its context in the sense that one knows for certain only that it represents the views of the participants. Few question the internal validity of qualitative research (as a whole). Consequently, if external validity will be established for a qualitative finding, then replication represents the most likely means of this to be manifested.

Replication is a cornerstone of quantitative research because it detects fraud or findings that lack internal validity. If a study cannot be replicated, then it is said to be an outlier or a fluke or to contain methodological flaws. Without replication, a study's findings can never be certain. Because the participants typically were drawn at random, representing the larger population in the characteristics of interest, future studies—using new random samples—should generate relatively similar results.

Qualitative research, despite its lack of random representation, can nonetheless show external validity. When researchers conduct future qualitative studies using participants who are generally similar to the original qualitative sample (i.e., same criterion used for participant selection), one logically could expect to find similar results. For example, suppose that a qualitative researcher in Canada shows findings that families of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) struggle mostly during the first hour after children come home for school. Further research studies in the United States, using participants similar in characteristics to the ones in the Canadian study, may yield similar results. When such replication occurs, it strengthens the external validity of the original study's findings.

Qualitative researchers will never possess the same sophisticated levels of generalizability to their findings as do quantitative researchers. Recall that findings are context specific. Consequently, the findings of one qualitative study will depend to a large measure on the context in which the participants reside and interviews were administered. A follow-up study, although using a similar sample, likely will not show duplicate results. All of the variables in qualitative research are not controlled, with only the independent variable being manipulated, as is true with quantitative research. The participants from the second study will be selected based on criterion variables, not random selection or random assignment. Consequently, the reality is that duplication simply is unlikely.

When findings are replicated, even with quantitative studies the results are never identical. There are

chance and random variables, fluctuating the results to varying degrees. If quantitative researchers show the probability of repeating results 95 of 100 times, this generally is considered to be successful replication in the social sciences.

Although qualitative research will never reach this level of sophistication, future replications of general findings do, nonetheless, strengthen an original study's external validity. Generalizability should not be viewed as an on or off button—something that either exists or does not exist for a research study. Rather, external validity should be understood as a volume button—something that exists on a continuum. In other words, it is not a question of whether or not a study possesses external validity but rather a matter of how much external validity it possesses. In short, when general qualitative findings are replicated by future qualitative studies—at least in overall principles—qualitative research can be stated to possess a measure of external validity.

An additional value of replication studies is that they may further illuminate previous qualitative studies. One finding can be viewed as a “dot” on a page. When another study is conducted, using a generally similar sample, and researchers show similar conclusions from the study, the two dots may form, connecting a line. When a third researcher conducts a similar study, showing similar results, even more confidence is placed in the original study because observers can (figuratively) connect three dots. The more qualitative studies that are conducted, showing relatively similar findings, external validity is increased proportionately.

In addition, patterns may become observed over time as qualitative studies are replicated. For example, after two studies show comparable findings, one may assume that the two dots form a straight line. However, after conducting, say, nine similar studies, observers may discover a pattern among the findings that previously was undetectable. For instance, the dots actually may form an arc rather than a straight line.

Michael W. Firmin

See also Accountability; Postpositivism; Verification

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REPRESENTATION

Representation refers to fully understanding and expressing the lived experience of research participants and including the multiple realities, interpretations, experiences, and voices emergent from all individuals and all angles. Michael Quinn Patton suggested that qualitative researchers should aim for balance, fairness, and completeness in their research in a way that reports the lived experience as it actually exists to the people being studied.

One challenge in ethnographic and narrative methods is to ensure that the people and context studied are adequately and sufficiently represented. Many researchers of vulnerable populations would argue that no one has the moral “right” to represent, or speak on behalf of, another person. Some would suggest that experiences must be written from the inside such as through autoethnography. Others contend that it is possible to represent study participants so long as rigorous attempts are made to include their own voices and interpretations.

Such attempts would include multiple, or mixed, methods to triangulate (or, as Laurel Richardson said, to crystallize) the data. Crystallization recognizes that reality is multidimensional, deep, and complex and that understanding is necessarily partial. Thus, multiple methods are used to find other ways of looking at the data—to find other interpretations and explanations. A multimethod design contributes to research rigor by enabling the researcher to more fully understand the lived experience of the people or context being studied.

Methods that directly include participants’ voices and interpretations might include interactive techniques such as interactive interviewing, interactive focus groups, and co-constructed narratives that allow study participants to give their own accounts of their own experiences. Ethnographic techniques such as close observation over a long period allow time for a relationship to develop between the researcher and the researched, giving the researcher additional empathy toward and understanding of the people being studied. In addition, methods that simultaneously let the

researcher investigate the system as a whole while studying the interplay between individuals within the system can allow the research to more fully represent both the people and the context under study. Conversely, more unstructured methods such as unstructured interviews and diaries let participants express their experiences in their own natural language and setting, thereby giving them full voice.

Qualitative researchers also ensure that they are representing the voice of their participants by conducting member checks at the conclusion of the study. Member checks involve a process of providing study participants with the research findings and giving them the opportunity to voice agreement or disagreement with the research as reported. All of these processes focus on the interpretive knowledge of the people, context, or culture being studied rather than that of the outside researcher.

Christine S. Davis

See also Member Check; Triangulation; Voice

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REPRESENTATIONAL FORMS OF DISSEMINATION

Representation, according to *Webster’s Online Dictionary*, can be defined as the act of representing or state of being represented or as something that represents as (a) an image or likeness of something, (b) an account or statement (as of facts), (c) an expostulation or protest, or (d) a presentation or production (as of a play). Dissemination can be defined as the act of dissemination or the state of being disseminated, diffusion for propagation and permanence, or a scattering or

spreading abroad (as of ideas, beliefs, etc.). This entry first reviews the history of qualitative research in terms of the eight stages identified by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Next, it describes four approaches to such work: thematic, narrative, performative, and visual. Finally, the entry explores some of the issues that arise in the evaluation of qualitative research.

Evolution of Qualitative Research

During earlier times of qualitative research, the ways in which researchers represented their work took the form of expository distanced texts where the researchers' stances, biases, and assumptions were masked in an authorial voice that presented "findings" posited as an unrefuted reality. This is typically no longer the case. The influences of postmodernism, feminism, and critical theory, among others, have dramatically changed qualitative research beliefs, values, and practices that evolved through what Denzin and Lincoln described as the eight moments of qualitative research. Although these phases are not totally discrete or absolute in terms of time, they do provide a useful context for thinking about how our notions of representation have expanded and changed over the years.

The first of these moments is known as the *traditional phase* (1900–1942), when ethnographies about others from distant lands were presented as objective depictions of reality. James Smith and Phil Hodgkinson suggested that this kind of research was predicated on a "spectator theory" of knowledge that resulted in a colonizing kind of research that presented a largely Western, and often misguided, understanding of other peoples and cultures. The *modernist phase* (1947–1970s) followed. During this time, qualitative researchers experimented with new interpretive approaches and attempted to formalize their methods so that qualitative work could match the rigor and legitimacy of quantitative methods. The phase that Denzin and Lincoln referred to as *blurred genres* (1970–1986) occurred as qualitative research was burgeoning and gaining in stature and acceptability. According to Jerome Bruner, narrative forms of doing, knowing, and representing were acknowledged as the natural way in which humans make sense of their lives and, therefore, as the most appropriate for describing human activity. These approaches took hold, and the relational aspects involved in this type of research brought questions of ethics to the forefront.

From the mid-1980s until 1990, a "rupture" occurred in the fabric of qualitative research. Known as the *crisis of representation*, a term that emerged from the work of George Marcus and Michael Fischer, it marked the realization that all aspects of the research process—from the inception of a study, through the creation of field texts, research texts, and interpretive working documents, to the creation of a public text—are a series of constructions made by the researcher and do not represent the actual lived experiences of the participants.

Questions arose about gender, class, and race given that these areas were frequently glossed over or omitted entirely. There was a strong call for researchers to be more reflexive about their work by questioning and accounting for their assumptions and biases and by clearly situating their own voices in their work. Denzin and Lincoln suggested that this resulted in a "*triple crisis*" of *representation, legitimation, and praxis* that called into question the notion of representation as a mirror of experience; the appropriateness of the traditional criteria of validity, reliability, and generalizability used to legitimate research; and whether it is possible to make change if society is really a text. The face of qualitative research changed forever.

The *postmodern phase* (1990–1995) marked a period of experimental writing during which new forms of ethnographies emerged, of engagement in participatory research and inquiry into local understandings and specific situations. During the era of *postexperimental inquiry* (1995–2000), the qualitative research field witnessed burgeoning arts-based/arts-informed ways of expressing lived experience. Denzin and Lincoln suggested that during the seventh moment, the *methodologically contested phase* (2000–2004), there was a period of methodological conflict and retrenchment. They suggested that during the eighth moment (2005–), now or the *fractured future* to come, the key issues are, and will be, around the need to confront the methodological backlash associated with evidenced-based research and to reconnect research to social purpose by making it accountable and responsive to those it serves. If proven to be accurate, this future will continue to contribute to the evolving discussions about the possible kinds and practices of representation.

Cultures of Inquiry

Some qualitative researchers, such as Carolyn Benz and Jeremy Shapiro, align themselves with a "culture

of inquiry.” These researchers use or adapt the research methods typically associated with a particular tradition. The principal cultures of inquiry vary according to different authors but tend to include phenomenology, ethnography, auto/biography, gender studies, cultural studies, historical research, action research, critical theory research, narrative inquiry, and arts-based/arts-informed research. More frequently, however, qualitative researchers choose their methods as a response to the kinds of questions they are posing, and they borrow and adapt approaches from various traditions to conduct their studies. The approaches chosen have implications for the kinds of representational forms present in their work and, ultimately, for where the work can be published or presented.

Interpretive Approaches and Representational Forms

The approaches used to analyze and represent research directly affect how it is understood, where it may be published, and what audiences it will attract. Although there is much overlap and blurring of boundaries among interpretive approaches and representational forms, for ease of discussion, qualitative methods can be clustered into four basic approaches: thematic, narrative, performative, and visual.

Thematic Approach

In the thematic approach, traditionally used in ethnographic and phenomenological work and carefully explained in the work of Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse, the field texts produced by the researcher are separated into units of meaning that are systematically compared and contrasted with each other and subsequently reconstructed into large themes that are woven together to tell the research “story.” The final representational forms tend to be written in the voice of the researcher interspersed with excerpts from field texts used to persuade readers that the proposed explanation is a plausible one. These forms still remain the most frequent type of representation in qualitative research and, as such, continue to dominate in journals and at conferences in spite of postmodern understandings.

Narrative Approach

As pointed out earlier, all qualitative research is story based, but there are different ways of

eliciting/constructing research stories. As Susan Chase suggested, these tend to take a variety of forms that center on understanding lives by those who live them. Narrative inquiry maintains the context in which a story is told or embedded, and it tells a short or extended story about something significant or relates a life story from its inception. Jerome Bruner, Jean Clandinin, and Michael Connelly argued that it is a distinctive way of thinking and understanding that is unique and embodied.

In narrative inquiry, researchers use different approaches to cull stories of their participants from their field texts, as seen in the work of Constance Fischer, Frederick Wertz, William Labov, and Carl Rhodes. These result in many and varied representational forms. Some products resemble the more traditional texts produced by phenomenological and ethnographic researchers. Others concerned with issues around voice and representation turn to various literary genres as ways of communicating their work to engage, evoke, and disrupt ways of thinking and knowing. These include different forms of fiction such as that of Tom Barone and Rishma Dunlop; found and autobiographical poetry such as that of Corinne Glesne, Carl Leggo, Lorri Neilsen, Monica Prendergast, Laurel Richardson, and Anne Sullivan; and scripts and textual collages, and combinations of these, as in the work of Carol Mullen, Patrick Diamond, Joe Norris, and Johnny Saldaña, to name a few.

There is, however, still resistance to these evocative narrative forms, although less so than there was a decade ago. Certain journals, such as *Qualitative Inquiry*, and special-interest groups at conferences, such as the arts-based special interest group at the American Educational Research Association, have done much to promote this type of work and make it visible.

Performative Approach

Performance texts/representations mirror many of the variations of narrative work just described. Saldaña pointed out that a good research story is needed to incorporate the art and craft of theater so as to perform a successful rendition of participant experiences. Furthermore, Norris suggested that the beauty of drama is that it integrates all aspects of meaning construction, including the use of word, number, image, gesture, and sound. Denzin concluded that because performance has so much potential, during the past

decade or so there has been increasing interest in this genre as a means to counteract criticisms of traditional representation, to exploit the integrative aspects of meaning, and to permit the engagement, accessibility, and participatory dimensions that drama or performance elicits. James Mieniczakowski showed the emancipatory potential in performative ethnography, and Saldaña's collection of performance works suggested how ethnodramas can give voice to previously silenced people and stories. Performances portrayed as readers theater and other similar forms that transform data into a script that is then read aloud to an audience, often using the participants as "actors" and/or involving the audience, have become more frequent at large research conferences and have shown the evocative and pedagogical potential of performative inquiry.

Visual Approach

Anthropologists have been using visual images in their research since before the turn of the 20th century. At first, still photographs were used. Then, with the advent of moving pictures, film was employed more extensively to provide greater detail and a "truer picture" of what transpires in other cultures. An entire field of visual anthropology was developed based on the use of visual images in research. In her work, Fadwa El Guindi has discussed how film and photographs were used as a means for recording and analysis, for elicitation and discovery, for reconstructing dimensions of culture, and for representing ethnographies. As mentioned earlier, when researchers became more critical of how others were being studied—in part because of the growth of cultural studies—and realized how subjective research really is, there was a growing awareness that visual texts (like all texts), although powerful and seductive, are socially constructed. Therefore, as Gillian Rose suggested, visual imagery is never innocent.

There has been a renewed interest in visual inquiry because of the increasingly visual nature of our society and because new technologies provide a wide variety of interesting representational possibilities. In addition, arts-based/arts-informed researchers such as Elliot Eisner have shown that we see and understand differently when we examine a phenomenon through a visual lens. A growing number of arts-based/arts-informed researchers are using photographs, films, collage, painting, sculpture, and combinations of these to understand their work and represent it to others.

More and more, researchers are using visual images as a means of reflexivity (to self-monitor and reflect on the research process), as a means of elicitation (to evoke responses from participants and/or elicit deeper understandings in the analyses), and as forms of representation that are disseminated publicly. Two approaches in particular have been gaining momentum.

Photo Elicitation

The first of these is photo elicitation, or "PhotoVoice," developed by Caroline Wang. It uses photographs taken by research participants to record and reflect on social needs, promote critical dialogue, and ultimately reach policymakers. It has been particularly successful in situations where people are marginalized because it is inherently participatory and collaborative and is used in action research endeavors to signal inequities and to initiate and promote social change.

Collage

The second visual approach is that of collage. The word *collage*, a term that refers to a genre of art derived from the French verb *coller* (meaning "to stick"), is the process of cutting and sticking found materials (often pictures from popular magazines) onto flat surfaces such as heavyweight paper (e.g., card stock). The roots of collage date back at least 1,000 years, but collage became acknowledged as an art form at the turn of the 20th century when artists such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque used this medium to challenge the traditional artistic conventions, the elitist nature of art, and the notion of a single reality. As Donna Davis has shown, working in this nonlinear and intuitive way, feelings are articulated before ideas and, as a result, implicit assumptions of the researcher and/or participants can be revealed. In addition, collage evokes embodied responses and uses the juxtaposition of fragments and the presence of metaphor and ambiguity to engage viewers in multiple avenues of interpretation. Besides these substantive aspects of collage, the use of cutting and sticking found images can produce a sophisticated product and, it can be argued, can do so with less technical skill than is required in other visual art forms. As a result, however, as with all of the arts-based/arts-informed modes of inquiry, it raises issues of quality. Resistance to arts-based/arts-informed inquiry is

about whether it can count as research and about who should be using these approaches in their work. In general, however, the dissemination of visual representational forms is far easier and less costly with the existing digital technologies, and possibilities for using varying representational forms are increasing with the growing number of online journals.

Representational Issues

When qualitative research got its “wings” during the 1980s, the issues that researchers faced were about validity, reliability, and generalizability—criteria that characteristically had been used to judge quantitative work. Critics of qualitative research, whose philosophical perspectives were based on positivist assumptions, questioned how qualitative research could be valid and/or reliable when the work typically involved single cases and/or a small number of participants and established no controls for variables to test a priori hypotheses. The usefulness of research was questioned if it could not be replicated so that results could be generalized. As qualitative research evolved, researchers spent less and less time countering these criticisms, arguing that in qualitative work, different criteria must be used for assessing the quality of the work. Largely because of the work of Eisner, it is now generally agreed that qualitative research is judged on its *credibility*, on its *plausibility* (whether or not what is represented provides a plausible explanation), on its *transparency* of process, on the apparent *reflexivity* of the researcher, and on its *utility* (how the work can be accessed and actually used to better the human condition). These criteria are demonstrated when the researcher spends extended time with participants in the field, develops and maintains a relational and ethical approach to the work, uses multiple forms of data for analysis, incorporates participant perspectives and voices, and addresses biases and assumptions that are brought to the work.

More recently, with the burgeoning interest in arts-based/arts-informed research, some other issues have surfaced. As mentioned earlier, these are about the quality of the art form and about who should use arts-based/arts-informed approaches and why or why not. This is a slippery slope. On the one hand, great strides have been made in legitimizing arts-based/arts-informed work during the past decade or so, and it would be a shame to diminish representational possibilities by condoning less than acceptable work. On the other hand,

gatekeeping can create elitism and privilege and can reverse the postmodern gains that have countered modernist ways of thinking and doing. Excellent discussions that merit examination have taken place. Richardson suggested that the criteria for judging arts-based/arts-informed research should include the quality of its contribution as well as its aesthetic merit, its reflexivity, and its emotional and intellectual impact. She also suggested that the notion of *crystallization*, or the combination of symmetry and substance seen through a series of “multiple refractions,” should replace any notion of validity. Other work, done by Anne Bamford as well as Eisner and Barone, reflects similar criteria that are nuanced according to the arts-based/arts-informed genre in which the research is situated. What is needed is more discussion and agreement about some basic criteria as well as more specificity and/or elaboration as to how these relate to the existing genres. These exchanges will no doubt carve out new and interesting notions about how to judge research quality as new territories and possibilities emerge.

Sources for Publications

Most journals (e.g., in education) are willing to publish qualitative research. Until recently, however, it has always been more difficult to find journals that are receptive to alternative representational forms or arts-based/arts-informed work. This situation is changing, partly because new technologies make publication of this research easier, particularly as it relates to visual work, but mostly because there is much more receptivity to these burgeoning genres. A few of a growing number of these journals include the *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, and the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.

Lynn Butler-Kisber

See also Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Autobiography; Connoisseurship; Credibility; Dance in Qualitative Research; Ethnodrama; Life Stories; Narrative Analysis; Narrative Inquiry; Performance Ethnography; Photographs in Qualitative Research; Poetry in Qualitative Research; Researcher as Artist

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RESEARCH DESIGN

Put simply, research design refers to the way in which a research idea is transformed into a research project or plan that can then be carried out in practice by a researcher or research team. However, research design is more than just the selection of methods or techniques to be used in collecting data for a particular study. Rather, the term refers to and encompasses decisions about how the research itself is conceptualized, the subsequent conduct of a specific research project, and ultimately the type of contribution the research is intended to make to the development of knowledge in a particular area. Importantly, the process of developing a research design combines three broadly connected and interdependent components: the theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations relevant to the specific project. This entry explores these in more detail.

The theoretical understandings and assumptions about research held by a researcher and/or research team provide an overarching frame that shapes and influences the research design at every point. For example, if a design is qualitative in nature, then one can assume that the researcher has a commitment to, and has identified the need for, some form of naturalistic interpretive approach to inquiry so as to explore or address the particular substantive focus or question. Such a commitment will influence all parts of the research design, from the way in which the aims and objectives of the research are thought about and articulated, to the methods/techniques/approaches used in collecting the data, to the analytic processes undertaken with respect to the types of theoretical lenses that are applied to the data collected.

However, qualitative designs vary with respect to how theory is explicitly used in a particular study. In some research designs, a specific theory may provide the organizing construct for the entire research design. For example, in a study design that is overtly Marxist in orientation, Marxist theory and traditions will shape and influence that design at every point. Other qualitative research designs may use theoretical concepts, as opposed to entire theories, to shape the design. These theoretical concepts may be derived from one or a number of theoretical traditions to provide the focus for the study and/or as a vehicle to explore a topic of interest. For example, the concept of power might be used as the overarching theoretical construct in a certain research design. The understanding of power in use may draw on one, two, or several theoretical traditions or variants thereof. In such a research design, power provides a theoretical lens or perspective to guide the study, which might be exploring, for example, the outworking or use of power in a particular substantive area. Similarly, gender or class as concepts can provide a theoretical lens or frame in qualitative research. In addition, some research designs may employ combinations of these concepts—for example, in a study looking at the effects of power in a group of women living in a particular social situation or setting.

Another type of research design is one in which the researcher collects and analyzes data with the goal of generating or deriving theory from the study undertaken. Thus, the generation of theory constitutes an endpoint to the research. Yet other study designs, such as (but not invariably) those that are submitted for funding, might not explicitly refer to theory at all in

“Alone in a Crowd”: A Study of Managing Loneliness

The aim of the research is to provide understandings of loneliness that can inform support and service provision targeting older Australians managing loneliness. Specific objectives related to this aim are the following:

- Identify and describe older people’s and service providers’ perceptions and understandings of loneliness;
- Use this in-depth knowledge to inform the development of solutions to assist older people to manage loneliness;
- Work with support/service providers and older people to implement, evaluate, and refine the identified solutions;
- Develop and disseminate recommendations designed to promote wide uptake of the identified solutions at the individual, organizational, professional, educational, and policy levels.

Source: Cheek, J., Moyle, W., Ballantyne, A., Stanley, M., Corlis, M., & Oxlade, D. (2007–2009). *Alone in a crowd: Supporting older Australians managing loneliness*. Funded by Australian Research Council Linkage Grant.

the proposals that outline the research designs to the funding bodies. However, as discussed, such studies do in fact draw on the theoretical traditions that inform qualitative research generally. Thus, there is a great deal of variation in the way theory is used in the design of qualitative studies. It is not a case of one way necessarily being better than another way of using theory. Rather, the key point is that theory does inform the design of all qualitative research, and it is important that this be taken into account and acknowledged in the research design.

Once the theoretical parameters of the research have been established, other parts of the design can be developed. The issue/question/problem that prompted the researcher to identify the need for the research in the first place must be refined into a clearly articulated succinct statement that is able to provide a precise focus for the research design. Part of this process of refinement must involve searching the research and other literature to identify previous studies that are relevant in terms of the substantive and/or methodological foci. This enables the researcher to ascertain what has already been undertaken in the area, and this knowledge can then be used to refine the focus of the

proposed study in terms of what has been found and how it was done. It also ensures that the proposed study has not already been conducted elsewhere.

When the focus of the study has been refined, it is then possible to develop clear aims and objectives for the study. Simplifying in the extreme, the aims and objectives of a study refer to what the study hopes to achieve. Often this information is presented as a series of related and sequential points pertaining to the proposed design. The accompanying sidebar, excerpted from the *Alone in a Crowd* study, is an example of the aims and objectives from a funded research project in the area of care for older persons.

In this example, the aim makes clear that the research design will provide understandings of loneliness and then use these understandings to influence practice in the area of support and service provision for older persons. The objectives then articulate the inter-related steps that will be achieved to meet this aim.

The aims and objectives of a study also provide a framework for choosing the specific methods and techniques for data collection. In a tight and refined research design, it should be possible to cross-link and relate every part of the study design, including the data collection techniques, back to what the research is attempting to achieve as expressed in the stated aims and objectives. For example, if the design involves the use of interviews, then why interviews are an appropriate method to use, what type of interview is being used, and who is being interviewed should be apparent from, and congruent with, the aims and objectives of the research. The following excerpt, taken from the grant application for the *Alone in a Crowd* study, demonstrates how the chosen methods, in this case interviews and focus groups, relate to the overall aim of the study and, more specifically, to the first objective:

In-depth interviews and focus groups will be used to build a comprehensive description of older people’s and service providers’ perceptions about loneliness (Objective 1). The interviews and focus groups will be semi-structured, and initial probes have been developed around six areas:

1. What the participants perceive and understand loneliness to be;
2. Important factors contributing to loneliness;
3. How older people manage loneliness;

4. The effect of loneliness on the health and well-being of the older person;
5. What assists or could assist older people to manage loneliness;
6. Perceived barriers to managing loneliness.

However, it is not enough simply to state the proposed methods; the way in which these methods will be used must be spelled out clearly in the research design. Regardless of the method being employed, clear descriptions of what will actually be done must be given. Depending on the actual design, this might be information about who the research participants are and the criteria that will be used to select them. Which sources of data (e.g., documents) will be investigated and why? Which technique (e.g., type of interview) will be employed to actually collect the data, and what probes will be used in such interviews? Similarly, the equivalent level of detail must be given for other forms of data collection. Methods are not simply techniques to be followed or applied prescriptively, acritically, and slavishly. They need to be used with care, and both their choice and the way they are used within the research design require a large degree of reflection and reflexivity on the part of the researcher.

How the analysis of the collected data will be conducted is another crucial part of the research design. Here the researcher must consider and be clear about what he or she is going to do with the data collected. How will they be organized, and why will they be organized in that way? Exactly how will the researcher go about doing the analysis? A particular theoretical and/or methodological tradition, such as some form of grounded theory or phenomenology, may have already established relatively clear principles of analysis that will provide the basis for an analytic framework within which to work. If not, or if the research design is more eclectic with respect to its underlying theoretical influences, then it is important that a clear and overt link be made between those theoretical influences that shape and influence the concept of the study and the mode of analysis adopted. Such synergy and connection between the theoretical frames shaping the research and the actual data collected enables the analysis to move beyond the descriptive (as useful and important as that may be in its own right) toward deeper and richer theoretically informed understandings that link with existing knowledge and can extend and develop that knowledge.

Furthermore, both influencing and embedded in the design and conduct of qualitative research at every point must be ethical considerations. Such considerations are integral to the research design and go beyond simply meeting the requirements of an ethics review board. Steinar Kvale identified three important ethical issues to consider in any research design: scientific responsibility on the part of the researcher, the relation of the researcher to the participants in the research, and the independence of the researcher when reporting and interpreting the results. Ethical issues also arise at a more practical level in the research design concerning the way in which data are actually collected. For example, if the design necessitates the involvement of people, then issues of confidentiality and anonymity for participants, informed consent, and the possible effects of the research on participants will need to be considered. In his book, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Kvale provided a useful overview of ethical questions to ask at the start of a research study, and although his focus was on interviews, these questions can be extrapolated to other types of qualitative research study design.

Research design, thus, is much more than simply identifying techniques that will be used to collect data. It involves theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations that shape both the design and what the research is aiming to achieve. Research design also involves a degree of reflexivity on the part of the researcher with respect to acknowledging the underlying theory and/or theoretical assumptions that have shaped his or her perspectives and understandings of the research focus and process.

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See also Ethics; Methods; Reflexivity; Researcher Roles; Theory

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RESEARCH DIARIES AND JOURNALS

Research diaries are documents written by individuals to keep a record of ongoing events in their lives and in their surrounding social environment. Andy Alaszewski argued that to constitute data for empirical research, diaries generally need to be contemporaneous, personal, and kept regularly and also must feature entries that include emotions, beliefs, interpretations, interactions, events, and activities. Different types of diaries exist. Logs contain records of activities and events, often in minute details, but feature no personal or intimate information. Journals are diaries written with a narrow audience in mind—the writer himself or herself. Memoirs are similar to journals in both content and form, but their intended audience encompasses both contemporaries of the author and posterity. The latter are often intended for publication and, therefore, may include artistic elements and fictional components. Distinctions between journals and memoirs are, however, difficult at times, and for that reason the words *diaries* and *journals* are used interchangeably in this entry.

Historically, research diaries and journals have developed as user-friendly technologies of recording have become more easily available. In today's society, diaries and journals have become somewhat omnipresent thanks to high levels of literacy; the cultural emphasis on self-disclosure, self-awareness, and introspection; and, of course, the ease of publicizing personal memoirs on new media of communication such as the internet (e.g., blogs, online diaries).

Qualitative researchers employ diaries and journals in two main fashions: as tools of data collection and as data. In other words, researchers may explicitly commission people to keep diaries and journals, or they may collect diaries and journals kept by people out of their volition. Regardless of their solicited or unsolicited origin, many different research strategies may employ diaries and journals. For example, they may be used as part of: fieldwork; unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviewing; action research; evaluation research; textual analysis; and case study research. In addition, diary- and journal-derived data are amenable to interpretation from a wide variety of analytic perspectives.

Research diaries and journals have been used predominantly in biographical and historical research. Diaries and journals serve well the purpose of providing researchers with documentary evidence in the form of

raw historical and biographical material because they are personal, situated, intimate, and capable of offering insight into the lives of marginalized oppressed people or groups otherwise neglected by traditional versions of objective political and cultural history. Diaries and journals are also commonly used in ethnographic research because they are known to offer vivid depictions of the flow of everyday life experiences and to work well as thickly descriptive chronicles rich with insights into taken-for-granted social interactions. Finally, research journals and diaries have been used to record mundane activities and experiences otherwise inaccessible by researchers. For example, diary entries solicited through structured open-ended survey questions have shed light on time management activities, division of household labor, frequency of sexual activity, and so forth. Similarly, researchers have used diaries and journals to benefit from the deeply reflexive nature of writing over time; compiling diaries allows individuals to ponder the meanings of routines, rituals, identity, and even sensory perceptions.

Recruiting writers for diaries and journals is a complex activity driven primarily by the research design and research objectives. Many issues pertaining to sampling are common to other qualitative research methods and, therefore, are not discussed here. Other issues are, however, idiosyncratic to diary research. The selection of research diarists must be done while taking into consideration issues such as basic competencies in record keeping and literacy, understanding of the context of interest to researchers, and motivation to begin and continue journaling activities.

Researchers who rely on archived or otherwise publicly available diaries, journals, and logs have different sampling dilemmas to consider. In these circumstances, literacy, understanding, and motivation are obviously irrelevant issues, but in cases where multiple choices among archived records exist, researchers must carefully interrogate themselves to determine what diaries are likely to provide the needed information and whether recent or historical diaries (or a mix) better satisfy research needs. Finding archives where diaries are kept, or finding groups of people more likely than the general population to keep journals, can also be a challenge.

Diary data collection varies primarily in relation to the desired degree of control researchers wish to achieve. On the one hand, unsolicited diaries are most desirable when intrusion is seen as problematic, but they offer the lowest degree of control. On the other

hand, structured questionnaire-type journals offer the highest amount of control, but considerable training and incentives may be required for their use to be effective. The diary–interview method offers an intermediate solution. In this approach to data collection, diaries are linked to both preliminary and follow-up interviews after diary completion. Analysis of diary data is highly variable across different research projects. Typical analytic strategies may include content analysis and grounded theory, narrative analysis, interpretive biography, and structural linguistic analysis.

The advantages of using research diaries are numerous. Diaries are extremely flexible in that they can be used within a variety of research designs and strategies, they can be used as data whether they are solicited or unsolicited, and they can be used together with other research methods of data collection. Furthermore, diaries and journals can allow researchers to reach groups otherwise difficult to access, they can aid in recording intimate or private behaviors, and as a form of record keeping they compensate well for problems arising from selective memory or limited recall. On the other hand, diary data may be costly to obtain—especially when diarists need to be trained—and they may be a source of bias due to sample selection limitations (e.g., the need to rely on literate and highly motivated samples). As for unsolicited diaries and journals, although researchers can benefit from being able to access personal information in respondents' own words without research intrusion, they need to deal with artificial elements such as diarists' needs for recording resources, the implicit conventions of the diary genre, and (once again) the requirement of basic skills such as literacy.

Phillip Vannini

See also Diaries and Journals; Memoirs

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RESEARCHER AS ARTIST

The characterization of the researcher as artist is based on the reconciliation between artistic practices

and scholarly research as a critical creative activity that employs modes of artistic expression both as methodological tools and as forms of representation. The researcher as artist is open to the experiences and lessons of artistic practices that provide fresh critical and experimental approaches that, among other things, empower research participants by offering alternative, more evocative, and nondominant modes of response to the process of data gathering. Thus, while employing established research techniques and methods, the researcher as artist may also use highly personalized autoethnographic accounts, poetry, storytelling, and nonverbal modes of artistic expression such as collage, dance, and drawing. For example, a researcher might ask informants to visualize responses as well as verbalize responses, a practice commonly used in the gestalt and art therapy context.

The tension in the co-existence of the notions of researcher and artist is resolved in the to and fro among the formation of hypotheses, the flashes of insight, and the operations of imagination in the indefinite nonlinear acts that can accompany the process of analysis. For the researcher as artist, modes of artistic expression become a constituent part of the analysis itself. By conceiving themselves as artists, researchers can avoid reification of consciousness and thinking. Artistic practices allow a higher degree of uncertainty, nonlinearity, and embracing the unpredictable. Thus, for the researcher as artist, the representations of research are not rigidly separated out into material objects or artifacts and the mental world of ideas and concepts; rather, conceptual elaboration is grasped in terms of perception and modes of representation that involve an emphasis on emotional knowledge as well as cognitive knowledge.

There is also the sense in which an artist is at the same time a researcher insofar as his or her research, very often in the form of journals, notebooks, and/or sketchbooks, fosters the production of works suitable for public performance or viewing.

The notion of the researcher as artist has its origins in the dissolution of a hierarchy among the arts, the use of the arts in the context of therapy, the multimodal nature of many works of art, and the postmodern relation of the artist to his or her work as only one reception among multiple interpretations. It is a notion that brings both artistic activity and research activity closer together as an expression of the essential tension between tradition and innovation whereby

established paradigms are revised or replaced and research becomes a transformative and practical productive force.

Derek Pigrum

See also Aesthetics; Arts-Based Research; Bricolage and Bricoleur; Collage; Dance in Qualitative Research; Dramaturgy; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Hypothesis; Imagination in Qualitative Research; Music in Qualitative Research

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RESEARCHER AS INSTRUMENT

Noted qualitative methodologist Norman Denzin described the social sciences as resulting largely from the “art of interpretation.” Perhaps the most important tool in the practice of this art is the researcher herself or himself. Qualitative methods rely much less than quantitative methods on “standardized” instruments and methods. Thus, the researcher is positioned quite closely to raw words and real life, and the researcher as “person” plays a more obvious, if not more profound, role in all stages of research. This does not mean that researcher characteristics are not also central to every stage of quantitative research, but whereas quantitative research attempts to minimize or even obscure these issues through standardized protocols and “objective” numerical outcomes, qualitative

research is more forthright concerning the ways in which all of research is a human endeavor.

Feminist standpoint theory explores and acknowledges that research is affected by researcher and other worldviews. Both the researcher and research participants are seen as present, and meaning is constructed and interpreted in the interaction between these two positionalities. Different qualitative researchers may look for, see, experience, and interpret data differently based on their experiences, skills, interests, and so on. As important as, if not more important than, researcher differences are the differences between the insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspectives. This is not a question of competing truths but rather a question of the multiple stories and truths that exist simultaneously and are co-created by research itself.

The researcher also becomes an instrument through the relationships she or he builds with research participants. Rather than attempting to minimize these, feminist work (among others) stresses the importance of these relationships. Patricia Adler and Peter Adler examined how three sociological traditions also define different roles, and thus different researcher instrumentalities, and how each of these in turn produces potentially unique, but equally authentic, findings. Prolific ethnographer Michael Agar also wrote of the ways in which the ethnographer’s personality matters in ethnography—another example of how the researcher is an instrument of qualitative research.

The researcher is also an instrument in the collection and analysis of data. In nonlaboratory research, one cannot attend to all of the data present in even the smallest interaction; thus, narrowing the field of concentration is a function of who the researcher is. As David Fetterman wrote, “perception is selective,” and the researcher, steeped in personal background as well as theoretical background, makes this selection. The final stages of research are also a highly individual human enterprise. Qualitative research has no data-crunching software to impart an equation representing results. Rather, analysis, interpretation, and meaning-making come from the researcher, using all of her or his personal and professional skills, training, knowledge, and experience as an instrument to produce a coherent authentic picture of the research as the researcher saw and experienced it.

Anne E. Brodsky

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Experiential Knowledge; Feminist Epistemology; Reflexivity

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RESEARCHER–PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIPS

A significant portion of qualitative research involves collecting data from research participants. The kinds of information that participants disclose in a research setting depend in part on the nature and quality of their relationship with the researcher. Researcher–participant relationships may fall anywhere along a continuum from distant, detached, and impersonal to close, collaborative, and friendly. The relationship between a researcher and participants may evolve and change over the course of a research project, especially if that research project progresses over an extended period of time, as is common in many forms of qualitative research. Important methodological and ethical considerations arise from the nature and quality of researcher–participant relationships.

Range of Researcher–Participant Relationships

In traditional positivist research, researchers present themselves as detached objective reporters and attempt to gather data that are standardized and narrowly constrained. Quantitative researchers strive to treat each participant identically as part of their attempts to maintain experimental control. Limited interactions between participants and researchers keep the research focused and reduce the chance of introducing confounding variables.

In contrast, in qualitative research traditions, researchers tend to gather wide-ranging and open-ended

data through personal interactions with research participants. In the process of data collection, qualitative researchers and research participants develop relationships that can shift and change over the life of a research project. Margaret Jane Pitts and Michelle Miller-Day investigated turning points in researchers' relationships with participants. Through open-ended surveys and detailed interviews with field researchers, they identified five possible phases in researcher–participant relationships. During the first phase, researchers emphasized their concerns with meeting the needs of participants with respect to the research, helping them to feel comfortable as research participants. During the second phase, researchers and participants began to consider their partnerships in the research and their interrelationships with each other. More personal relationships began to develop during the third phase, which involved connections in public or professional spheres outside of the research project. The fourth phase was characterized by close interpersonal relationships that were most often described as friendships. During the fifth phase, the personal relationships superseded the research relationships and there was a feeling of a true partnership. Researchers are not expected to progress through all five relationship phases in each research project or with every participant. The first phase is typically the only phase evident in research conducted over a short duration or involving few interactions with participants. Other research projects might involve movement toward increasingly closer relationships as evidenced by the other identified phases, but very few researcher–participant relationships ever achieve the level of true partnership evidenced during the fifth phase. A closer relationship is not a sign of a better research relationship or better research.

Researcher–Participant Relationships and Qualitative Research Traditions

To a certain extent, the nature and evolution of researcher–participant relationships are informed by the qualitative research traditions that inform the research.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic researchers often begin a research project by attempting to get a feel for a particular research setting by easing themselves into the situation, observing

from a distance, and getting to know some prospective research participants. A research project emerges and takes shape as the researchers gain familiarity with the research setting and interact with research participants over time. Ethnographic researchers establish close relationships with key informants who provide introductions to activities, events, and other people in the research setting. Over time, key informants become important confidants to, and often friends with, researchers. Ethnographic research is commonly associated with prolonged engagement in the field, which provides opportunities for researchers to develop close relationships with one or more members of the studied community. In community settings where ethnographic research is undertaken, a researcher's relationships with one participant may positively or negatively influence relationships with other participants. Lisa Russell provided an informative analysis of the challenges of establishing and maintaining relationships with both students and teachers in her ethnographic classroom research. To investigate student resistance to schooling, she needed to establish strong trusting relationships with students. At the same time, she also needed to establish collegial relationships with the teachers to secure their commitment to the research without negatively influencing the delicate relationships that she was building with the adolescent students.

Community-Based and Action Research

In community-based and action research, collaborative or participatory relationships are common. Research participants frequently contribute to defining the research project, including informing choices about the research questions, research methods, data sources, and data interpretations. Research participants in such projects may be seen as research partners or co-researchers. In these kinds of research, traditional power hierarchies between researchers and participants no longer prevail. Researchers and participants may be activists working together toward shared goals and are frequently seen as co-equal colleagues.

Interview-Based Research

In life history, narrative, and other interview-based research, researchers strive to document intricate details of research participants' lives. In these research approaches, researchers often attempt to give voice to participants such that the research reports are frequently

presented in participants' own words. These qualitative researchers attribute significant value and importance to the participants' experiences and perspectives, which often translates into respectful and engaged relationships that develop over repeated interviews.

Critical Scholarship

In critical scholarship, qualitative researchers question social structures and systems that promote inequity and injustice. Feminist or other critical scholars who are committed to social justice often undertake efforts intended to disrupt hierarchies and power relationships in society. These efforts may also carry over into the research process where researchers are critically conscious of the traditional power imbalances that favor social scientists over research participants. This critical consciousness may contribute to developing positive relationships with research participants because researchers are seen as advocates and allies.

Some forms of critical scholarship require researchers to engage with research participants who hold opinions that oppose the researchers' views. Researchers treat these research participants with respect but seldom develop close personal relationships with them. In some cases, maintaining distance from the participants may be necessary for researchers to adequately engage social and institutional critique.

Influences of Researcher–Participant Relationships

The different roles, positions, and relationships that researchers and participants adopt influence the data that are revealed in a research study. Whether close or distant, the relationship with the researcher affects what participants say. Some scholars have argued that close relationships between researchers and participants lead to "better" data, but this is not necessarily the case. There are different advantages and disadvantages associated with the different types of researcher–participant relationships in particular research settings. A tremendous amount of information can be learned through close personal relationships with participants, just as a great deal can be learned when researchers remain distant or even estranged from research participants.

Sumi Colligan became intimately involved with the women in the Karaite village where she conducted her dissertation research because she needed to rely on the women's assistance with showering and personal

grooming due to her physical disabilities. The necessary openness that Colligan displayed to these women led to reciprocal displays of openness from the women, which in turn allowed Colligan to explore the nature of openness in the Karaite religion. Colligan's close and intimate relationships with the women allowed her to learn about openness in the Karaite religion in a way that would not have been possible without her intimate relationships with the research participants. However, such positive benefits of intimacy are not always evident.

Intimacy and closeness may prevent researchers from challenging the status quo. Interviews conducted within the context of close relationships frequently rely on insider information and shared understandings that cannot easily be substantiated in research reports. Transcripts from such interviews are notoriously difficult to interpret because so much of the information is communicated without explicit verbal statements. It is impossible to gauge how much information is missed or misinterpreted because participants remain silent regarding issues about which they assume the researchers already know and because researchers fail to ask appropriate follow-up questions that would make this information explicit.

Scholars who have written about insider/outsider status frequently discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of various configurations of researcher–participant relationships. Closer researcher–participant relationships are associated with research conducted by insiders, whereas more distant researcher–participant relationships are associated with research conducted by outsiders. However, insider and outsider status and the corresponding relationships with participants resist simple binary classifications.

Furthermore, there are times when outsiders are more appropriately placed to conduct research than are insiders, and there are situations where the researcher–participant relationship needs to remain relatively distant. For example, David Gordon found that a distant relationship with the members of the religious proselytizing groups that he studied was critical for the success of his research. Some researchers in similar situations have tried to hide their personal beliefs through evasion, lies, and covert actions, but Gordon did not feel comfortable with those approaches. As a nonbeliever, he felt that it was important to display his open, honest disagreement with the group's beliefs and used this as a way to engage conversations with the group members. This strategy kept him at a remove from the research participants, but it had a positive influence on

the research in that it led to an increase in rapport and acceptance from the group and a simultaneous decrease in his own feelings of psychological distress as a researcher in the setting.

Factors Contributing to Close Researcher–Participant Relationships

Although a range of relationships can exist between researchers and participants, several key features of qualitative research tend to promote closer relationships rather than distanced relationships.

To gather data from research participants, researchers must first establish rapport and build trust. Few research participants are comfortable in telling a stranger about their opinions and experiences, so they may need to get to know the researcher and the motives behind the research before they will disclose sensitive information. Research participants may become more forthcoming as they come to accept the researcher's presence and involvement in the research setting and start to see the researcher as a real person rather than some detached or distant evaluator. Such transitions are clearly evident in the five relationship phases identified in the study conducted by Margaret Jane Pitts and Michelle Miller-Day.

Beyond establishing rapport with research participants, the rich and thick descriptions that are the heart of qualitative research demand engaged and prolonged data collection. Qualitative researchers may be involved in a field-site over an extended period of time, observing and interacting with research participants. They may reinterview the same person or people multiple times, seeking in-depth understandings from insider perspectives. Qualitative researchers also regularly engage in forms of participant observation where they take on participatory roles in the research setting. Frequently, the research itself occurs in a setting where researchers are already engaged as teachers, therapists, or other community members. Through ongoing interactions in the research site over time, researchers and participants can naturally develop close relationships, possibly even friendships or true partnerships.

In much qualitative research, data collection and data analysis proceed simultaneously. This is particularly common when data collection occurs over an extended period of time. In such situations, member checking (i.e., where participants are involved in reviewing transcripts or written accounts of research) occurs on an ongoing basis and there are continuing opportunities for

research participants to contribute to data analyses. Research participants may extend their involvement in the research beyond the data collection period and may become involved as research partners or co-researchers.

Efforts to provide reciprocity for research participants also influence the resulting relationships that develop between researchers and participants. Reciprocity is about the need to give something back to participants. Frequently this is interpreted as providing small gifts or tokens of appreciation in exchange for participation in research. More fundamentally, Patti Lather described reciprocity as mutual negotiations of meaning and power. This requires a collaborative approach to research where participants are invited to negotiate interpretations of the data and to contribute directly to data analyses. Researchers who are committed to reciprocity try to avoid imposing their own meanings on the research and strive to decenter their roles as “experts” in the process. Full reciprocity involves a conscious commitment by researchers to using the research to help participants understand and change their situations.

Researcher–participant relationships are also fostered by the commitments that some qualitative researchers make to a relational ethic, which is particularly evident in feminist or community-based research projects. Researchers who ascribe to a relational ethic strive for collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, friendly, and connected relationships with participants. This commitment demands that researchers engage self-awareness, reflexivity, and interactivity throughout the research. In such research approaches, it is common for researchers to engage in self-disclosure in research reports and sometimes directly to participants during data collection. The resulting shared intimacies lead to close and personal relationships.

Qualitative researchers often include reflexive elements in their research. Some qualitative research is distinctly autobiographical or autoethnographic, whereas other research includes a self-study component to complement the experiences of other research participants. This emphasis on reflexivity increases the chances of self-disclosure from researchers during data collection, creating a two-way relationship with research participants.

Ethical Challenges

As with any other research decision, close relationships with research participants raise ethical issues.

Research ethics review procedures address preexisting relationships with prospective research participants. Such relationships can influence the ability of prospective participants to make free choices about participation. In such situations, researchers must take great care to avoid any subtle pressure or coercion and to ensure that decisions about participation are not seen to affect the preexisting relationship in any way. Institutional ethics review boards devote particular attention to research involving clients and service providers (e.g., patients and doctors/nurses, clients and therapists, students and teachers, athletes and coaches, parishioners and spiritual leaders) or individuals and their supervisors (e.g., managers, employers). Research involving family members or close personal friends is also subject to scrutiny.

In addition to considerations about how to ensure free choice, preexisting relationships may require a researcher to juggle multiple roles throughout the research and make judgments about when to act as researcher and when to act as employer, doctor, teacher, friend, and/or whatever other roles may be possible. These overlapping roles and relationships provide the potential for mixed messages and boundary violations. In most cases, nonresearcher roles must take precedence over researcher roles.

Preexisting relationships are relatively easy to document, and there are strategies in place to counteract the related ethical issues. Relationships that develop over the course of a research project are less predictable, and ethics review boards tend to provide limited guidance about the relevant ethical issues associated with emerging relationships.

Not all research participants will want to fully engage and develop close relationships, so researchers must be careful not to impose unwanted expectations. On the other hand, some research participants may be overly enthusiastic about developing relationships with researchers and may even forget the research-based nature of such relationships. Researchers' friendliness may be misinterpreted as friendship, leading to social invitations from research participants that researchers may perceive as undesirable or inappropriate. Negotiating exit from the research field may be particularly challenging in such situations because former research participants may wish to maintain relationships that they perceived as true friendships.

There may be ethical challenges even when a friendship is an equal and reciprocal relationship between a researcher and a participant, whether that

relationship existed prior to the research or emerged in the midst of the research. Researchers may be aware of the need to balance their roles as researchers and friends, but research participants tend to be less cautious in this regard. During the research, friendships may prompt research participants to disclose information that they would have preferred to keep private, sometimes not even wanting to acknowledge the information to themselves. Research participants may share information as friends that may then become entangled as data in the research project and may appear in written reports, leading to possible feelings of betrayal or deception.

The ethical challenges of researcher–participant relationships of an intimate nature can be particularly profound. For example, the so-called Brad Trilogy, a series of articles that Harry Wolcott wrote about a school dropout who he found squatting on his property, has spawned considerable attention to the issues of intimate relations in research. Wolcott documented Brad's life history, with a particular focus on the ways in which the school system had failed him. The young man lived for several years in a shack that he had constructed on Wolcott's property and willingly participated in a series of interviews. Two years after leaving the property, the young man returned and attempted to murder Wolcott. In the ensuing court case and in Wolcott's subsequent reports about Brad, he admitted to a sexual relationship with the young man that preceded the research relationship. Wolcott's admission prompted extensive scholarly discussion about morality and the limits of qualitative research.

Dynamic Researcher–Participant Relationships

There is a dynamic range of possible researcher–participant relationships in qualitative research that lead to corresponding methodological and ethical considerations. The reflexivity demanded of qualitative researchers means that relationships with participants have been recognized as influential to the research process and the resulting interpretations. Researcher–participant relationships are considered a topic worthy of study.

Michelle K. McGinn

See also Insider/Outsider Status; Participant; Participants as Co-Researchers; Prolonged Engagement; Rapport; Reciprocity; Relational Ethics

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RESEARCHER ROLES

When undertaking qualitative research, the scholar/researcher has a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities, often enacted simultaneously. Many of these roles are so intuitive and commonly understood that they are rarely discussed in standard methods texts. However, other roles, particularly the role of the researcher in relation to study participants, have generated a great deal of controversy and angst and have been debated endlessly across all of the disciplines in which qualitative research has both epistemological and methodological acceptance. The goal of this entry, then, is to make visible the many roles of the

qualitative researcher and to provide a sense of the larger scholarly framework within which these roles are enacted and examined.

The researcher's roles are discussed in two sections. *Tacit roles* have to do with the knowledge and commonly understood practices that the researcher brings with him or her to the study concerning how scholarly research should proceed. In any of the tacit roles, the researcher is the recognized expert who must ensure that the research proceeds according to accepted standards and procedures. *Interactionist roles*, on the other hand, have to do with how the researcher conceptualizes and frames his or her role in relation to study participants and what effect the researcher's presence might have on the thoughts and actions of research participants and the knowledge that accrues from the study. The interactionist issues that arise are considered reflexively by the researcher, who then must make a decision about how best to proceed given the unfolding circumstances of the research.

Tacit Roles

The researcher's role begins at the stage of research conceptualization. At this point, the researcher takes on the role of an informed "ideas" person. The researcher uses his or her prior knowledge of an area of study within a discipline, or across more than one discipline, to propose a well-crafted and coherent project with clearly articulated research questions. The research project could be a stand-alone project for a limited time frame, or it could be part of a much larger program of study unfolding over a longer period of time, perhaps a decade or more. In either case, in the role of the "ideas" person, the researcher has a number of responsibilities, the understanding of which is internalized throughout the process of attaining a PhD and develops further as new research projects are undertaken. Because the vast majority of researchers do have a PhD, the responsibilities of the ideas person are well understood by all scholars but are rarely discussed. Some of them include the following:

- Keeping current and abreast of the scholarly literature (including philosophical discussions, theoretical developments, and research findings) related to the topic under consideration
- Maintaining a critical awareness of the issues/questions needing further examination
- Having a thorough understanding of the parameters of qualitative research

- Proposing a project that is manageable and can be completed successfully
- Ensuring that the research will be conducted according to accepted methodological and ethical standards
- Seeking appropriate funding so that an investigation can be done as fully and thoroughly as possible
- Ensuring that the research is meaningful in terms of its contribution both to the discipline in particular and to knowledge or society in general

The qualitative researcher maintains the role of ideas person throughout the study, constantly and reflectively blending the theoretical framework(s) of the study with the qualitative observations to provide new and/or unique interpretations of how participants come to develop certain meanings and practices within their social worlds.

Although the role of the ideas person is always present, once the research project begins, the researcher also may assume a number of other roles. Foremost among these are the rather overlooked, but very important, roles of research administrator and manager. All qualitative research projects, whether done as solo projects or by collaborative teams, have myriad administrative aspects such as keeping track of expenditures, hiring assistants and supervising them, paying attention to reporting requirements for grants, preparing survey instruments, organizing transportation, purchasing any necessary equipment and/or software, sending out advertisements or letters of contact and of thanks for participation, and a variety of other necessary paperwork. In some cases the researcher has a great deal of responsibility for these tasks, whereas in other cases a hired project director or another staff member looks after these details in consultation with the researcher. Nonetheless, even if not attending to all of these details himself or herself, the researcher needs to be cognizant of the progress made on administrative matters to ensure that the project moves forward satisfactorily.

Whereas there is some overlap with the administrative role, the managerial role is distinct and draws on slightly different knowledge and expertise. In the managerial role, the qualitative researcher must make ongoing and important decisions about the conduct and management of the research—decisions that could ultimately affect the legitimacy of the study's findings and contributions. Such decisions would include elements such as research location and timing, access to participants, supervision of research assistants,

daily problem solving, data analysis, and preparation of findings. In the managerial role, the researcher acts as the primary problem solver, perhaps needing to make a number of important decisions on a daily basis about the conduct of the research and the intellectual analysis/presentation of the resulting data. Without this crucial role, the research project could be adversely affected by a number of smaller or larger problems, such as a subtle drift away from the study objectives, errors in procedure, or the violation of ethical standards, any of which could have devastating consequences for the academic legitimacy of the study and the reliability of the findings.

Throughout the research project, from conceptualization to implementation to completion, the researcher also must take on the role of research ethicist. In qualitative research, ethical considerations are paramount and cannot be underestimated. The research must be conducted to ensure that human participants are informed and protected and that there generally will be no adverse affects from their participation (although it must be noted that this is not always completely controllable given that some study participants may feel various degrees of upset at recounting their experiences to the researcher). It is the researcher's responsibility to understand ethical issues and norms in qualitative research and to ensure that an appropriate ethics protocol has been approved by his or her institution and that the approved protocol is upheld throughout the research. The importance of ethical considerations must be communicated to research assistants, who must be trained to handle any ethical issues that might arise when working with human subjects.

Another important tacit role for the qualitative researcher is that of mentor. The most obvious mentoring role is with graduate students and other research assistants who are paid to work on the project. In such situations, the researcher may need to spend a certain amount of time instructing assistants in the best practices of the particular methodology being used, coaching them on a variety of issues (e.g., good interviewing or observational techniques, how to take good field notes, what to expect and what to observe in a given setting) and allowing them to participate in data-related activities such as the development of coding categories and the actual coding and analysis of the data collected. Graduate research assistants also may be involved in helping to prepare the results of the study for conference presentations and possibly for publication. Involving graduate students in the various

stages of research does take additional time, but the researcher who is working with graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level, usually does feel some obligation to enable the students to learn from the project so that they will have a better idea about managing and conducting their own research projects later on as their academic careers progress. Similarly, the researcher who is a principal or main investigator may do a certain amount of mentoring with co-investigators who are less experienced with the administrative requirements and problem solving that accompany larger qualitative research projects.

Interactionist Roles

Qualitative research encompasses a wide range of methodologies, including everything from analysis of visual media and document interpretation to interviewing and various types of ethnographic observation of humans in their environments. Despite this range, there is a strong association of qualitative research with the latter two methodologies, involving either direct one-on-one contact with individuals who have agreed to talk about their experiences or the incorporation of the researcher into a setting where the people being studied are going about the business of daily life. Accordingly, the researcher roles that receive by far the most attention in the scholarly literature have to do with the ways in which the researcher interacts with study participants and his or her own reflections on those interactions. Although every qualitative research project is unique in some way because of the questions asked and the type of people studied, there are nonetheless many common areas of concern related to interactionist roles across a variety of very different qualitative studies.

There have been a number of different typologies of, and terms for, researcher roles in relation to the people they study. Lynda Baker, writing about observation as a qualitative research methodology, provides a very good summary of both the ways in which researcher roles have been conceptualized over time and the problems associated with each, including roles such as the following:

Nonparticipant: The researcher has no involvement with individuals and observes from a distance, sometimes via software or other electronic means.

Complete Observer: The researcher is present in the setting but only listens and observes and does not interact. His or her role as a researcher might not be known.

Observer as Participant: The researcher is present in the setting and primarily observes, although some brief interactions with participants may occur.

Participant as Observer: The researcher actively participates in a number of activities with the group, to the point where he or she may be identified as a friend or colleague.

Complete Participant: The researcher studies a group in which he or she is already active as a member but does not reveal his or her research role.

Complete Member: The researcher studies a group in which he or she is or has been active and reveals his or her role as a researcher.

Although the roles noted are discussed in relation to ethnographic observation, versions of them also may be evident when doing a study based on interviewing. Regardless of which role the qualitative researcher assumes and whether or not the research is based on interviewing, observation, or some combination of the two, there are a number of skills and qualities that the researcher must bring to these roles to be effective. Renee Fox, reflecting on her five decades as an ethnographic researcher, suggested that the skills that are paramount for ethnographic fieldwork include skills in observation, interviewing, recording, and remembering; the ability to be self-reflexive without narcissism; the ability to recognize empathically the connection between the researcher and the researched; interpersonal skills and an ability not only to listen but also to really hear what is said and meant; awareness not only of language but also of gesture and silence; an appreciation for the importance of the routine aspects of social life; and an unwavering work ethic for the many hours that are necessary to perform the emotional and mental labor required for detailed fieldnotes.

A key issue that always arises and must be navigated by the researcher is that of the “insider” versus “outsider” role. Insiders are individuals who either have experienced or have knowledge about the issues being studied (e.g., domestic violence) or have membership in the group being studied (e.g., persons with AIDS, a particular ethnic group). As insiders, study participants know firsthand about the concerns, feelings, social norms/conventions, beliefs, daily activities, and/or cultural practices related to the issue or group. Researchers who have no personal experience with a particular issue or are not members of a particular group are outsiders.

The insider/outsider dichotomy raises a number of dilemmas regarding the role of the researcher having to do with issues such as acceptance, trustworthiness, and the impact of insider or outsider status on the perceptions of participants. Some authors believe that it is essential to maintain some element of the outsider role (i.e., academic or intellectual distance) throughout the study, whereas others insist that the qualitative researcher’s role as an objective and dispassionate observer is not always realistic, achievable, or even desirable. Arguments have been made that, particularly if researchers are insiders, claiming any sort of objectivity or distance can actually inhibit accurate perceptions and observations. In such cases, researchers are encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of the complexities of the situation, thereby increasing the integrity of the study and their findings. Most researchers come to an awareness and acceptance of their insider or outsider status and deal with the implications of that status (and possible shifts in it) throughout their research.

The role as an insider or outsider is only one of many possible interactionist roles that might confront the researcher during the course of a qualitative study. Some of these additional roles may be assumed by the researcher, whereas others may be assigned to the researcher by participants. In the latter case, the researcher may need to actively discourage participants from thinking of him or her in a particular role that could be potentially harmful to the study, to the participants, and/or to the researcher. Some of the most common roles include the following:

Friend. Much has been written about the difficulties of having friends as participants or informants in a study or of using a friend as an access mechanism into a group. Nonetheless, particularly with a long and in-depth study, the researcher may develop a bond with at least one participant that develops into a true friendship. Although some authors think that there is nothing inherently wrong with a friendship arising from research, it may complicate the study in that the researcher then must be aware of how a developing friendship may alter the situation and/or the accounts of participants. The researcher also must come to terms with the fact that he or she cannot freely share everything about the research with a participant who is, or has become, a friend.

Mentor. On occasion, the researcher may take on a mentoring role with study participants. For instance,

in his study of African American high school students, Marc Hill noted that his previous role as a teacher caused some of the students to seek him out for advice and a sympathetic ear, thereby giving rise to a mentoring role that he had not anticipated.

Negative Agent. There is always the risk that the researcher's mere presence will alter the behavior of participants or the conditions of their social setting in some way. This can be particularly true in an intimate setting such as the home. The term *negative agent* was coined by Amy Jordan, who noted in her study of media use in the home that her presence as a researcher seemed to escalate the tensions among family members and/or cause them to rethink their roles in the family. It is very possible that the researcher may unwittingly take on a role as a negative agent by causing participants to reflect on their beliefs or their social conditions.

Parent. Particularly in qualitative research involving children, researchers who are themselves parents may come to feel a great attachment to their participants. Deborah Ceglowski, for example, described how she fell in love with one particular child during her research at a Head Start program and how she struggled to separate her researcher self from her parent self. This struggle also affected her role as a participant observer staff member at the program in that she sometimes felt that the full-time staff members were not doing what was best for this child.

Professional. A researcher who has a previous professional identity may find that the other role as a professional can aid him or her in gaining access to a community where that professional role is recognized. Because of the researcher's prior work experience, he or she may be regarded as a knowledgeable professional who truly understands the issues within a particular environment, and so participants are willing to really open up about their experiences in that setting. On the other hand, a researcher's prior professional role may arouse suspicion. Will participants' thoughts and feelings be kept confidential, or will the researcher impart information to management? In such situations, the qualitative researcher may need to work extra hard to reassure participants that a prior professional role does not in any way compromise participants' personal situation.

Social Activist. Although there is general agreement that an interventionist role is to be avoided, there are some instances where taking a social or political activist stance is the only way to move the research forward or is the only morally appropriate course of action. In their work within a Navajo community, Bryan Brayboy and Donna Deyhle noted that naming the racism that they observed and that participants recounted to them was the only way to develop a complete understanding of the educational problems faced by Navajo youth. Although there were repercussions to their stance, the authors nonetheless believed that to take any other position would have been irresponsible and would have weakened the research findings. Similarly, some researchers have found themselves taking a socially active role when participants are in a dangerous or critical situation.

Therapist. Of all the roles thrust on the researchers by participants, the role of therapist is the one that is universally disavowed and deemed to be the most problematic. Particularly when using a one-on-one interview methodology, the researcher may be privy to painful memories and incidents that participants have never disclosed previously. Similarly, in an observational study, the researcher may feel a great desire to intervene in a situation to improve things for participants. Fox referred to this as the "therapeutic temptation." Being regarded as a therapist puts the researcher in a precarious position because he or she is not trained as a therapist and the purpose of the research is not to provide therapy even when participants clearly need assistance.

Also frequently discussed in the qualitative literature is how the researcher's role is a component of the differing power or social relations between the researcher and research participants. Power imbalances can arise because of demographic differences between the researcher and study participants, including social class, race, ethnicity, and level of education. Power differences also can be related to a perceived inequality between the researcher (who is the authoritative figure and is in control of the study) and participants (who provide the raw material for the study). The qualitative researcher needs to build a bridge to the study participants so that they will trust him or her and will reveal aspects of the issue being studied or allow the researcher to observe their regular practices. The researcher builds this bridge by a number of means,

including demonstrations of empathy, nonjudgmental interest, caring, honesty, and openness. However, no matter how empathetic the researcher or how trusting the participants, there is still an unequal balance of power. The researcher is responsible for the study, and the participants might not be entirely sure what the researcher is going to do with the information given or the observations made or how the researcher will interpret and describe their accounts. Participants also may feel that they are not getting enough back or are not being adequately compensated for the disclosure of their life experiences to the researcher.

In situations where participants have come to view the researcher as an insider and/or a friend, the power imbalance may be even more apparent when the researcher suddenly seems to revert to the researcher role. Numerous authors have commented that their participants have become uneasy or disappointed when, during mundane and friendly conversations, the researchers began to take notes or pulled out a tape recorder. In these cases, participants often comment that the researchers put on their "researcher hat." In such situations, participants can feel betrayed that the bond they feel is really not reciprocal and that it is only business as usual for the researchers. Similarly, the researchers may feel guilty that they have ruined critical moments in their developing relationships with participants. Many researchers have recounted that, having had this experience once, they ensure that they do not again revert to the researcher role during routine friendly encounters with participants. However, there are also just as many accounts of researchers running into the washroom or to another private place and writing down as much of those sorts of conversations as they can accurately recall. This illustrates the fine line in qualitative and ethnographic research between the researcher becoming so familiar to participants that they think of him or her as a normal part of their setting and the researcher using participants as a pathway into a particular worldview or set of practices.

Although much of the discussion about the researcher's role centers on the researcher's interactions with, and obligations to, participants, in some settings the researcher's role may actually be co-opted and used by participants themselves. Often this happens when the researcher also has a professional identity (e.g., health care professional, engineer, teacher) that is recognized by participants. For instance, Carol Haigh and her colleagues suggested that some participants in their study of postoperative epidural pain

management used the researcher to further their own agendas such as by asking the researcher to bring their concerns/grievances about their care to someone in a position of higher authority within the clinical setting or asking for clarification of medical information given to them. The researcher should always be aware that participants may have their own reasons for participating in the research and that they have the right to question the researcher's motives and practices.

Finally, it should be noted that the researcher has a reflexive role in conducting qualitative research. Reflexivity concerns the need for the researcher to reflect on his or her role(s) and on the general nature of the relationship between the researcher and the studied. Qualitative researchers understand that they need to think about the epistemological assumptions, theoretical frameworks, and personal values/beliefs that they bring to their research. This involves careful reflection on issues such as the way(s) in which researchers position themselves in relation to the study participants, the way(s) in which participants in turn position themselves in relation to the researcher, and the researcher's interpretations of participants' life experiences. Although a certain amount of reflexivity about the researcher's role has always been a component of qualitative research, within the past 15 years or so, qualitative research has taken an unprecedented reflexive turn during which a reflexive lens has been brought to bear on virtually every aspect of the qualitative research process.

Gloria Leckie

See also Document Analysis; Ethics; Ethnography; Insider/Outsider Status; Observational Research; Power; Project Management; Reflexivity; Researcher as Instrument; Researcher-Participant Relationships; Researcher Sensitivity; Visual Research

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RESEARCHER SAFETY

The gathering and processing of qualitative research data brings important safety considerations for researchers. Qualitative research encounters often require researchers to meet participants face to face and discuss personal aspects of their lives and can require them to work alone. From design through to analysis and writeup, ensuring the safety of researchers is a crucial consideration that cuts across the research process.

This entry begins with an overview of the three key dimensions of research safety: physical harms, emotional harms, and societal harms. It goes on to focus on some of the practical steps that individual researchers, their managers, and their employing organizations can take to help ensure that researchers work as safely as possible during fieldwork.

Dimensions of Researcher Safety

Risks in the research process are not mutually exclusive, and neither are they isolated to particular fields of study. Rather, they are ubiquitous features that pervade qualitative research.

When meeting research participants face to face, unwelcome touch, physical or sexual assault, and attack by pets are risks that are likely to be remote but remain real. It is important to recognize that researchers will face and respond to risks differently.

The risk of attack for men is different from that for women. For example, women tend to be more at risk for sexual advance and threat compared with men, and young men may be more at risk for physical attack.

Emotional harms can take a number of forms. Harm may arise as a consequence of, or as a threat of, physical attack. It may also be caused by forming friendships and experiencing the feelings of loss when leaving the field. Or, the content of what is reported during the research encounter can be upsetting for researchers. Or, researchers may dwell on issues in their own lives longer than they normally would. For example, researching palliative care topics can raise issues that all people face in their lives at some point.

Some of the risks faced in society, such as accidents, general infections and communicable disease, and the theft of (or damage to) personal possessions, may be increased in some areas of fieldwork. There may, for example, be increased risk of crime, including the theft of (or damage to) personal possessions such as cars, in particular geographical areas or at specific times of day. And working within some health care settings, such as hospitals and laboratories, may pose increased risk of infection or communicable disease.

Ensuring Researcher Safety

Employers have a duty of care toward their employees. This requires employers to undertake risk assessments and to provide sound operating policies and protocols. Also, it is important for researchers to adhere to the requirements set out by their employers and for managers to ensure compliance.

A culture and ethic of safety awareness is important in all organizations. This can be brought about via education and training to enable researchers to feel prepared for the risks they may face in the course of their work. Training initiatives, therefore, may focus on general awareness raising through to risk assessments, role-plays, and diffusing difficult situations or managing challenging behavior. In the United Kingdom, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust works to provide guidance and resources to help everyone keep safe. An organization that is aware of the risks faced by its employees will encourage open communication and the alerting of potential threats. This will enable management action with appropriate revisions to operational policies and protocols as required.

There needs to be sufficient resources to ensure that any threats to researchers' safety are minimized.

Good Practices to Ensure Researcher Safety

To ensure researcher safety, the following practices can be implemented while planning, traveling to the meeting, and conducting the meeting, and follow-up after the research meeting.

Planning

- Consider working in research pairs or with an escort.
- Always make appointments.
- Leave written details of whereabouts, including the names of participants, address, expected start and end times of meeting, location of meeting, and travel arrangements, with manager. Information about participants should remain confidential and subject to data protection in the same way as researchers hold such information. The same principles should apply to family or friends aware of the researcher's activities.
- Prearrange a time to call manager after each interview, including ways in which the researcher can alert of threat by telephone. If threat is alerted, or contact cannot be made at the arranged time, the manager should phone the police immediately.
- Create list of telephone contacts, both in the phone memory and on paper.
- Carry a phone card.
- Fully charge personal alarms and mobile phones.
- Arrange debriefing sessions with manager or supervisor.
- Arrange research meetings in public buildings, and during the day, where possible.
- If arranging an overnight stay, use a well-located and reputable hotel.
- Acquire local knowledge of the research area. For example, home care teams and security officials are good sources of information.
- Establish the best site for both the participant(s) and the researcher(s) to meet.
- Plan routes to and from research sites, including phone numbers of reputable taxi companies.
- Have sufficient funds, including cash, to cover travel, subsistence, and unexpected expenses.

- Dress appropriately for the situation and avoid wearing expensive jewelry or carrying expensive equipment.
- If using incentives to participate, such as cash or gifts, take these only when they are required.
- Create a checklist of these practices and other study-specific needs such as notebooks and recording equipment.

Traveling to the Meeting

- Ensure that all practices on the checklist are met.
- Use reputable taxis if the researcher feels unsure about the area or it is late at night.
- Carry interviewer identification.

Conducting the Research Meeting

- Show identification.
- Establish identities of participants.
- Be cognizant of exit points.
- Do not conduct research if participants are intoxicated or appear to be angry or violent.
- Abandon the interview if the researcher feels unsafe in any way.
- Leave contact details for the researcher and the independent contact.

Follow-Up After the Research Meeting

- Use reputable taxis to return if the researcher feels unsure about the area or it is late at night.
- Contact manager.
- Conduct debriefing (undertaken with manager) as soon as possible after the research encounter.
- Alert colleagues handling the data to any areas of sensitivity.
- Share fieldwork experiences.
- Reflect on researcher safety at the individual level and for the research project as a whole.

Research designs need to make any additional costs explicit, especially to ensure adequate funding. For example, during fieldwork, resources may be required for transportation by taxis to attend research meetings (especially when visiting participants in their own homes or at night), paired interviews or payment for an escort when necessary, personal alarms, mobile telephones, lone worker telephone systems (i.e., systems that allow a telephone to be tracked remotely and have automatic

links with emergency services when required), immunizations, and counseling. Organizations must also have adequate insurance coverage. For example, insurance should cover researchers' personal possessions and personal injury while undertaking fieldwork.

The ubiquitous nature of risk requires individuals and employing organizations to take joint responsibility for ensuring safety at work. Risk assessments provide researchers with one key mechanism for identifying

early the difficulties they may encounter in the field. Employing organizations and research funders need to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to ensure that these risks can be managed effectively.

Rhidian Hughes

See also Debriefing; Fieldwork; Harm; Peer Debriefing; Risk

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RESEARCHER SENSITIVITY

Using qualitative methods successfully requires researcher sensitivity. Researcher sensitivity refers to a host of skills that the qualitative researcher employs throughout all phases of the research cycle. For instance, the researcher needs to be sensitive to the impact that gender or class has on recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The researcher also needs to be sensitive to issues of cultural and language differences. For example, the researcher needs to be aware that Muslim women are unlikely to participate in interviews with a male researcher and that in research with Aboriginal students, sensitivity regarding issues of cultural assimilation is a necessity.

The qualitative researcher also needs to be sensitive to nonverbal cues, such as changes in body language in interview contexts, and to informant interaction in focus groups. Likewise, the researcher needs to develop theoretical sensitivity—the ability to know when theoretical saturation has been reached. Theoretical saturation is the point in qualitative research where no new insights are likely to result from continued data collection and where data analysis accounts for differences as well as commonalities in the research findings.

Research with informants with Parkinson's disease provides further illustration of the use of researcher sensitivity in qualitative research. For example, an informant with Parkinson's disease copes with a variety of symptoms that may include exhaustion, muscular rigidity, and communication difficulties, all of which the researcher must be sensitive to and must account for in recruitment, data collection, and analysis. For instance, the qualitative researcher must understand that low response rates may mean that potential informants decline to participate in a qualitative study because qualitative research typically requires more energy from informants than do other types of research designs. Furthermore, the researcher must pay attention to the fact that increasing fatigue or muscle rigidity brought on by an informant's medication wearing off means that shorter interview times need to be scheduled and more follow-up interviews need to be conducted.

In addition, the qualitative researcher needs to be prepared for possible communication problems and may need to include family members or caregivers as participants in the interview. As a consequence, the researcher also needs to be sensitive to the impact of a third-party presence in the interview. Furthermore, the researcher needs to deal with the consequences of indecipherable audiotape recordings, large chunks of missing data, and very brief informant responses in research where there are communication difficulties. Moreover, researcher sensitivity in this case means an understanding of the interview as an interactive event where both the researcher and the informant are jointly responsible for any communication problems that may arise. The informant's speech should not be characterized as a "problem" that the "expert" researcher fixes; rather, researcher sensitivity allows one to see that problematic communication is something that is mutually resolved through the use of the communication skills held by both the informant and the researcher.

In addition to being sensitive regarding communication problems, conducting research with people living with illness means that the qualitative researcher must be sensitive to the meaning of silences in interviewing. Kathy Charmaz, a major figure in the area of qualitative research into chronic illness and disability, reminded us that what people do not say is as important as what they do say. Silence might mean that a topic is too painful to discuss and that the interview needs to move in a different direction. Alternatively, silence might mean that an informant is getting tired and that the interview should be discontinued. A period

Research With Vulnerable or Marginalized Groups

The need for researcher sensitivity is particularly highlighted in the case of research with vulnerable or marginalized groups such as people living with chronic illness or disability. For instance, many qualitative researchers have cautioned that in research with people who are ill, the researcher must be sensitive to the possibility that informants may experience the interview as traumatic. Although this is an important issue, it needs to be understood that researchers must also use sensitivity in order to avoid paternalism in their efforts to prevent harm. Equally important, they must be sensitive to the influence of members of various helping and other professions who may be present, especially in cases of research with people with chronic illness or disability. For example, in our focus group research with women with multiple sclerosis commissioned by a regional home care organization, Mary O'Connor, Julia Shelley, and I (Jacqueline Low) were asked by nurses and social workers to identify any participants who happened to cry during the focus group meetings. Home care representatives would then intervene with treatment for depression. We declined to do what they asked, instead offering to provide a list of available support services to all of the women who participated in the focus groups. We did so for three reasons. First, it is normal for people to express emotion when discussing emotional issues such as the experience of chronic illness, and such expressions of emotion should not necessarily be taken as signs of depression. Second, as social scientists, we had no specialized training, making any attempt on our part to diagnose depression inappropriate. Third, we also felt strongly that reporting women to the home care organization would have compromised researcher/informant trust and would have been antithetical to the philosophy of equal researcher/informant relations that underpins participatory action research.

Source: Low, J., Shelley, J., & O'Connor, M. (2000). Problematic success: An account of "top down" participatory action research with women with multiple sclerosis. *Field Methods*, 12, 29–48.

of silence during the interview might even mean that it has become necessary to reconfirm informed consent before proceeding with the interview.

Jacqueline Low

See also Emotions in Qualitative Research; Ethics; Harm; Informed Consent; Marginalized Populations; Rapport; Recruiting Participants; Reflexivity; Researcher as Instrument; Researcher Roles; Theoretical Saturation; Trust; Vulnerability

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RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

Research justification refers to the rationale for the research, or the reason why the research is being conducted, including an explanation for the design and methods employed in the research.

Elements of Research Requiring Justification

Traditionally in research conducted within any paradigm, researchers have been expected to provide an explanation about why the research is necessary. To explain the overall purpose, aims, and objectives, a rationale is constructed and may illustrate how the research endeavor addresses gaps in the existing knowledge base, contributes a new dimension or perspective, or generates theory about a phenomenon that has not been explored previously.

Another aspect of research for which one might sometimes find justification in any description is the choice of methods employed to generate data; for example, the explanation for selecting interviews, focus groups, or participant observation. Such explanations might include the opportunity to orientate to the participant's perspective through in-depth responses, to

probe and clarify, and to ask for examples in the case of interviews.

However, it is less common in accounts of research to find an explicit rationale for the choice of research paradigm (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, postmodern, critical/subtle realist). This may be because authors are less critically reflexive about the overriding perspective they bring to their research endeavor or simply because this has not historically been expected or required in accounts of research. Certainly, the word limits imposed by editors and publishers on contributors to some journals often preclude detailed consideration of one's ontological position.

Another area within qualitative research where explanation or rationale may sometimes appear to be lacking is choice of approach or methodology (e.g., grounded theory, narrative approach, discourse analysis). This is sometimes because the explanation is implicitly woven into the description of the methodology. For example, in writing about one's choice of grounded theory as the theoretical underpinning in a research project, one is likely to allude to the lack of prior research or theorizing about the social process being explored and to cite the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in explaining how theory will be created and that it will be rooted in, or "grounded" in, the data generated. Thus, the implicit justification for the choice of grounded theory may be that no theory currently exists to explain a particular social phenomenon or that changing cultures and practices mean that existing theoretical explanations need to be tested and challenged with reference to new data.

Why Justification Is Considered Necessary

In posing the question "Why am I doing this research?," perhaps the most obvious response is "In order to answer a particular research question," and indeed the intellectual and/or practical problem prompting the research endeavor should feature prominently in any account of it.

In considering why qualitative research particularly is being carried out, the explanation is likely to include reference to a social phenomenon requiring in-depth investigation that will provide rich, complex, and detailed information about not only the object of inquiry but also the context in which it occurs. The justification may include an acknowledgment that the

exact form of the inquiry is likely to be flexible and at least partly dependent on emerging ideas and theories once the project has commenced.

Linda Finlay, for example, described how an interest in and a desire to learn more about the personal experiences of people with multiple sclerosis led her to adopt a phenomenological approach involving case studies with people diagnosed with this condition. The aim of the researcher working within an existential-phenomenological tradition is to ask "What is this kind of experience like?" Finlay carried out in-depth interviews with her participants. She believed that it was important to remain open to their stories as they emerged and used questions such as "Can you describe a typical day?" and "Can you describe that particular incident in more detail?" to elicit detailed personal accounts about how multiple sclerosis affects people's lives—their roles, their aspirations, their relationships, and ultimately their sense of self. Finlay showed how phenomenology can illuminate the depth of individual experience and provided a convincing justification for the use of qualitative research approaches in general and phenomenology in particular.

An important point here is that the way in which the research problem is described, the research question is framed, and the description of the subsequent methodology and methods is adopted to address the question should be ontologically coherent. For example, a discourse analyst is unlikely to be interested in exploring people's beliefs or attitudes but will be interested in how talk and text function in the social world to perform certain actions and the resources that inform how these texts are constituted.

In reality, the answer to the question of why someone is involved in a particular research project is likely to be complex. Jennifer Mason, for example, argued that it is important to include the sociopolitical context and moral/ethical dimensions in thinking about why research is being carried out. For example, research carried out as part of a master's or PhD program is undertaken in part to fulfill academic requirements and enable the researcher to gain the degree. Research carried out within a feminist or participatory framework is likely to have additional sociopolitical objectives around giving a voice to groups often disenfranchised in more traditional sorts of research. In acknowledging these additional motivations, Mason argued that one is more likely to recognize tensions and conflicts, to think reflexively about one's own role

in the research, to plan systematically, and to behave ethically.

How the Case for Research Is Made

The way in which research justification is provided depends to a large extent on the form of text in which it is required. One of the important considerations is the space or word length that one has available to create a rationale for research enterprise. However, there are different conventions about the sorts of material to include in constituting a rationale that are also contingent on the type of text being produced. This section addresses research justification in three types of documents: research proposals or plans submitted as part of funded grant applications, papers or articles, and dissertations or theses.

In each of these three types of documents, the literature review will play a key role in establishing the rationale for the research study to be undertaken. Shane Thomas identified a number of ways of achieving this. First, there is a need to demonstrate that the question the research project has been designed to answer has not been addressed previously. This can be achieved by demonstrating that one has carried out a systematic and thorough search of the literature, often using electronic resources. In this instance, it is usual to include the keywords used to search, the electronic databases included, and the years covered. Use of previous literature to demonstrate that other eminent researchers have considered the same area and topic to be worth investigating is also a compelling way to justify one's study. Researchers frequently identify areas for further research toward the conclusions of their studies, and these can be cited in support of one's own case.

A second form of justification used to support the case for research is to illustrate that a lot of people are affected by the problem to be investigated and that it consumes a lot of resources and/or has unfortunate consequences (e.g., creating a burden of disability, resulting in chronic pain). In research exploring older people's perceptions about falls, falling, and interventions to prevent falling, for example, most researchers in this area will cite the frequently quoted statistic that one in three people over 65 years of age falls every year. This may be accompanied by information about the potential consequences of a fall such as fractures, anxiety, and admission to a nursing home.

Another strategy that may be used in support of a particular research study is to show how, by addressing

this one specific research question, insight might be provided into other problems of a similar nature. For example, evidence-based guidelines have recently been published on the Prevention of Falls Network Europe (ProFaNE) website (www.propane.eu.org), suggesting ways of increasing older people's uptake of and adherence to fall-prevention strategies. In making a case to investigate how and why older people respond to these suggestions, for example, it would seem reasonable to argue that such research might shed light not only on perspectives in relation to fall prevention but also on other public health issues affecting older people such as cardiovascular fitness and the benefits of regular exercise.

In addition to the practical benefits to be accrued from undertaking research, one can argue that important insights will be gained in terms of theory development, which in turn might also have a broader impact. To pursue the previous example, one could argue that by further developing theory around adherence to fall prevention interventions by older people, such as the barriers and facilitators to adherence, one might develop theoretical insights that would be useful in relation to other health interventions for older people such as medication.

Finally, Thomas described the case for improved services or treatment as a strategy to provide a justification for research. Much research in the public domain is funded through government bodies or charities. For example, in considering health research in the United Kingdom, the Department of Health, through its research and development initiative, has funded a considerable amount of health-focused research, as have the medical charities such as the Parkinson's Disease Society and Action Medical Research. The usual process of applying for research funding is to submit a grant application, often accompanied by a research proposal, in response to a call for proposals issued by the funding body. These may have specific remits and objectives or, alternatively, may ask applicants to identify their own focus, but they identify general criteria that the applications should fulfill.

In writing a grant proposal, one of the primary considerations that the funding body will be checking is that the application expressly meets the aims of the call for proposals. This is usually considered both by considering the aims and objectives of the proposal and by reviewing the introduction, background, and literature review to ensure that a well-argued, well-evidenced,

and robust case has been made. The funding body will also scrutinize the proposed methods and funding details to ensure that the proposed process appears realistic, is likely to meet the objectives, and seems feasible. The experience of the researcher, particularly in managing previous funded research projects, is also pertinent.

The focus in applications for funded research, then, is on demonstrating that, as a researcher, one is familiar with the field of study, knows of relevant previous research and can see the potential to contribute a new and valuable perspective, has the capacity to successfully organize and conduct a research study, and is likely to disseminate findings effectively. These considerations will be closely linked with the funding organization's own mission and objectives. Because the reviewers might not have expertise in the specific methodology being proposed, the focus perhaps tends to fall on the practical use and application of the research and the capacity of the applicant rather than on more abstract theoretical concerns.

In written papers or articles, the researcher as author may be able to focus more on the justification for using a particular methodology to address a specific question and, depending on word length, may be able to expand on the previous literature in the field. Whereas experienced and well-resourced grant-awarding bodies may expect detailed critique and justification of the research approach to be adopted, editors of highly respected peer-reviewed journals will certainly expect these points to be addressed, albeit succinctly.

Research dissertations and theses clearly have longer maximum word limits, thereby permitting researchers/authors to write in depth. However, conventions surrounding how this is addressed in theses are also subtly different in comparison with the texts described previously. To clearly demonstrate to examiners that the authors/students clearly understand the nature of what they are doing and the traditions within which they are working, justification of all elements of the research is required, including the aim and purpose, paradigm, particular methodology adopted, methods used, and form of analysis. For students, therefore, the production of the literature review is a key opportunity to demonstrate a critical capacity and the ability to marshal one's arguments effectively.

Claire Ballinger

See also Social Sciences, Qualitative Research in;
Understanding

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RESEARCH LITERATURE

Research literature can be defined as written reports from research studies. There are many types of research literature, with published research articles representing the most common source for research literature. Other sources include dissertations, books, and internet websites.

Published research articles, for some, are considered the most trustworthy type of research literature. When identifying articles, it is most important to consider the origin of the work. For example, some published research literature articles have the added benefit of being peer reviewed. Peer review is a process whereby literature is read and reviewed by others, and the reviewers must deem the work to be worthy before it can be published. Typically, the reviewer does not know who the author(s) is and vice versa, a process known as a double-blind review that reduces undue reviewer bias. Another important aspect to consider in regard to the origin of the work is who the author(s) is. In most areas of research, there are existing research literature articles written by authors who have published repeatedly in the area. Knowing who these authors are for a given area that is being investigated can assist researchers in identifying relevant research literature.

Dissertations are another source of research literature. Dissertations typically are considered as published works and can be found in databases such as ERIC. Using dissertations as research literature can assist researchers in knowing what new researchers in the field are investigating. Also, dissertations often

contain studies that have not been published but contain helpful information. It is important to remember that the review process for dissertations can be inconsistent; there are no agreed-on standards across colleges or universities for quality of dissertations. Thus, faculty members who serve on the committee for the student who wrote the dissertation often are the only readers and the only ones who have judged the dissertation to be worthy.

Books, which represent another type of research literature, can be very helpful for researchers, especially when broad topics are being investigated because most books include general information. There are many books available that are conceptual in nature, thereby not reporting specific research findings. When using books as research literature, it is necessary to remember that, unlike some research articles, books are usually not peer reviewed and can include opinions of the author(s) that are not based on research findings.

Internet websites are another helpful source of research literature. Checking the internet for information regarding the topic under investigation can help researchers to identify other researchers' work. For example, by searching the internet for the topic of interest, one might find research literature based on studies. Furthermore, the internet is beneficial in helping to identify other sources of research literature (e.g., books).

There are many places to search for research literature. Library databases, such as ERIC and PsychInfo, include many published research articles. The internet website Google Scholar can help researchers to identify peer-reviewed articles, abstracts, books, dissertations, and theses.

Being careful readers and remembering that just because works are published or appear on the internet does not mean they represent reliable sources can assist researchers in locating relevant research literature.

Nancy L. Leech and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie

See also Literature in Qualitative Research; Literature Review

Further Readings

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RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

See PARTICIPANT

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem addresses what researchers perceive is wrong, missing, or puzzling, or what requires changing, in the world. Presentations of the research problem typically set the stage for the study that will be, or that was, conducted by offering evidence that the problem exists and for whom and by establishing the significance of the problem and why it requires formal inquiry. The research problem, the details of which are fleshed out in a literature review that critically addresses what is known and yet to be known about the problem and how it has been conceptualized and studied to date, leads directly to the research purpose(s) and research question(s).

The research problem may be a clinical/practice, theoretical/disciplinary, or methodological problem. An example of a clinical/practice problem is that virtually perfect medication adherence—as conventionally defined in the health sciences literature—is required to prevent the transmission, and development of resistant strains, of HIV. Although numerous studies have indicated that adherence is sporadic, few of them offer explanations for this state of affairs that are useful in practice. The research purpose, therefore, is to study adherence practices in a group of HIV-positive patients to explain the circumstances for taking or refusing medication. An example of a theoretical/disciplinary problem is that medication adherence has typically been treated in empirical health sciences research as a behavior characterizing individuals whereby they either take or do not take medications as physicians prescribe them. Because of this narrow view of adherence, the findings of empirical studies of medication adherence have been inconsistent, contradictory, and inconclusive. The research purpose, therefore, is to study medication adherence as located in a larger arena of patient work as this is conceived in the sociology of work. An example of a methodological problem is that researchers in the health sciences are increasingly calling for the incorporation of qualitative methods into systematic reviews, yet few methods have been

developed or tested to accomplish this. The research purpose, therefore, is to develop methods to synthesize qualitative and quantitative research findings in targeted domains of health sciences research.

Because of the fluid and emergent nature of qualitative research design, the research problem that set the stage for a study might not be the one, or might not be conceived in the same way, as the problem researchers come to see as the study proceeds. For example, the clinical problem initially conceived to be imperfect medication adherence may be reconceptualized as a theoretical problem as researchers question the validity of understanding adherence as located in the individual. Accordingly, one kind of problem may become another kind of problem, and the research problem may both set the beginning stage for and become a finding of a study. Like research purposes and questions, research problems in qualitative research are both the stimulus to and the outcomes of inquiry.

Margarete Sandelowski

See also Literature Review; Research Question

Further Readings

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Research proposals are documents prepared for two primary purposes: to help researchers articulate their plans for research and to convince others (e.g., funders, colleagues, supervisors) that the plan for a research study is sound. In essence, then, the research proposal is a plan for intended research.

Parts of a Research Proposal

Typically, there are several fundamental parts of any research proposal. One key piece is the justification for the research, which addresses the purpose of the research, answering the “so what?” question. This is where the researcher has the opportunity to make the

case for the research, whether resources are being requested or not. This case should be made as convincingly as possible, with reference to both short- and long-term potential interest and value. Justifying the importance of the research requires that the research questions be contextualized in terms of a larger research problem and tied to larger questions of theoretical and/or practical importance. That context includes reviewing the literature to indicate what has been researched in the area to date and to demonstrate a need for further research; that is, for the particular piece of research being proposed. Specific research objectives may or may not be expected; however, the proposal must articulate the specific research questions that the study will address. These questions should flow logically from the research problem or context. The overall research design articulates how the research questions will be addressed. In this section, the methodology or theoretical perspective to be taken should be explicated. Will the study take a constructionist or phenomenological approach? What is the theoretical lens through which the study is being conceived? What will be the theoretical basis for data analysis and interpretation?

In addition, specific data collection methods are also described, including addressing the questions relating to what, where, when, how, and about whom data will be collected. Will people be involved as research participants? If so, how will principles of ethical research conduct with people be upheld? The researcher should be aware of where formal ethics approval needs to be obtained and should either have that ethical approval included as part of the proposal or indicate an intention to obtain approval. Known limitations and parameters of the study, as well as assumptions on the part of the researcher, should be stated. Qualitative research proposals should address the methods being employed to ensure trustworthiness (e.g., triangulation of methods, member checking). Sometimes expected venues for dissemination of the research results are articulated in the proposal. A timeline for the study is a useful addition to help the researcher think realistically and ensure feasibility. The final logistical element is to make clear what other resources are needed to complete the work (e.g., funding, personnel, equipment, supplies). These logistical elements must be carefully considered and researched to ensure accuracy; this kind of precision is important to demonstrate competence on the part of the researcher. The role of the principal investigator

(presumably the author of the proposal) should be made clear, whether the researcher is conducting the study alone or with the assistance of others. Sometimes a proposal includes some description of the principal investigator's background, which provides assurance of the experience and skill set necessary to ensure success of the proposed study.

The relative emphasis on each of these aspects of the research proposal depends on the situation. For a doctoral student proposing his or her dissertation research, each aspect may be weighted relatively equally, and close scrutiny will be paid to each section. Often a more mature researcher exerts less effort articulating specific methods in a grant application, for example, if his or her research track record indicates experience with the methods proposed.

The different parts of the research proposal also must be conceptually and logically consistent. The research questions should flow plausibly from the research problem and the literature review. The methodological approach should be consistent with the way in which the research questions are posed, and the specific data collection methods should be consistent with the methodological approach. A clear and logical link between the research questions and the data to be collected should be evident; that is, the data should be expected to address the questions to be explored. The proposed methods for data analysis also should be logically consistent with the methodological approach.

The Written Document

A proposal may consist of only a few pages, or it may be extensively detailed; in all cases, however, a proposal should be written so that others may comprehend it. Research proposals require careful attention to detail and clear concise writing. A proposal must be organized logically and should be presented consistently both conceptually and in its presentation. Subheadings are a useful addition for the reader. Proposals outline plans for the future, so future tense is appropriate. Often proposals are written for an "educated audience" rather than experts in a particular field, especially for grant applications. Thus, jargon should be avoided, and concepts and language specific to the field must be carefully defined. Even concepts for which definitions are considered to be widely shared should be carefully defined both to ensure conceptual clarity for the researcher and to ensure mutual understanding by others. In general,

care should be taken to ensure that the writer makes as few assumptions as possible about the substantive background and knowledge of the intended reader. Most important, a proposal must be written and presented in such a way that the proposed study appears to have excellent potential for successful completion. Therefore, it is good practice to obtain feedback on draft versions to ensure completeness and accuracy.

A research proposal ultimately is judged on whether a sufficient and convincing argument has been made for the research study. That argument must be conceptually strong, the study plans must be feasible and logical, and the researcher must be judged as competent to carry out the specified plans.

Heidi Julien

See also Funding; Literature Review; Research Design; Research Problem; Research Question; Theoretical Frameworks

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RESEARCH QUESTION

Research questions designate what researchers want to understand about the research problem that led to their study. Research questions further specify the stated purpose of the study, which in turn addresses the stated research problem.

In contrast to quantitative studies, in which research questions are always specified prior to study, in qualitative research they may be the result of having entered the field of study and, thereby, arriving at the relevant questions to ask. Whereas research questions in quantitative research restrict, and commit researchers to, the variables that will be addressed, research questions in qualitative research are broad enough to permit the discovery of the specific experiences, events, artifacts, concepts, or other empirical and/or analytic subjects that will ultimately be the focus of study. In keeping with the interactive and

emergent nature of qualitative research design, and the cyclic and data-derived nature of qualitative analysis, research questions are ultimately the outcomes of the concerns, curiosities, and fascinations that first led investigators to enter a field of study and that they later developed while in the field.

Qualitative research questions often signal initial theoretical orientations toward a target experience or event even when such orientations are never explicitly stated. The very way in which research questions are posed reveals researchers' preconceptions and proclivities toward the target of study. For example, to ask why one group of people does not use hospice care is often to assume that the group should, and it is also not to ask why other groups of people do use hospice care and why they should not. Qualitative research questions also tend to signal initial methodological orientations toward the study of a target phenomenon even when they are not explicitly stated. When research questions are asked about the nature of experiences and events, how and why things came to be, and how sense or meaning is made of an event, a desire is being communicated phenomenologically, theoretically, narratively, or otherwise interpretively to describe or explain that event or experience. For example, phenomenological research questions tend to address what it is like to be, to have, or to live questions in the interest of developing feeling understandings of experiences, whereas grounded theory questions tend to address social (inter)action in the interest of theoretically modeling social processes.

Research questions are usually distinguished from the questions researchers actually ask participants in interviews or in the course of field observations or ask of data in the course of analyzing them. Although the questions participants answer and the constant questioning process that defines qualitative data collection and analysis are in the service of answering research questions, they are not equivalent to them. For example, the interview question asked of participants, "Tell me about your routine day," is in the service of the research question, "How do people with chronic illnesses manage their lives?"

Margarete Sandelowski

See also Research Problem

Further Readings

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Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

RESEARCH SETTING

The research setting can be seen as the physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study. In qualitative research, the focus is mainly on meaning-making, and the researcher studies the participants in their natural setting. The contrast with postpositivist, experimental, and quantitative research settings lies in the fact that here the investigator does not attempt to completely control the conditions of the study in a laboratory setting, instead focusing on situated activities that locate her or him in the context.

For example, in traditional ethnographic studies, the observer becomes immersed in the community that she or he is studying. Historically, through the colonial project, such settings were where the "natives" lived in the study of "other" cultures conducted by missionaries and state-sponsored researchers, a tradition continued later by Western anthropologists. However, Indigenous research practices are now framed against imperialist oppressive research, raising questions of power and privilege at the intersection of race, gender, caste, class, and sexuality. These play a significant role in determining the subject of study, the participants, and thereby the setting. Ethnographic research now emphasizes the embeddedness and reflexivity of the researcher in the cultural setting of the participants. In such studies, the influence of cultural behavior in the understanding of a phenomenon gets recognized and, therefore, is central in defining the setting.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, among others, has redefined research practices through challenging who studies whom and where. Research setting, then, can refer to a geographical site where the participants of a study reside. Or, it could be a group that is being studied. It could be the everyday lives that we live and study, the films that we watch, the texts that we analyze, the feelings that we interrogate, the bodies in which we reside, and the myriad interpretations and constructions of reality and the world that we, as researchers, are constantly trying to negotiate and "re-present." More recently, performance (auto)ethnography has introduced the idea of the self as the context and setting for

research. Through the use of “mystory” and other formats, researchers such as Norman Denzin have talked about their selves, turning points in their lives, their epiphanies, and their times of trouble in reflexive ways using various techniques of telling. They have situated their selves and their bodies as the sites of research and study.

Participatory collaborative research now considers the setting as beyond the group that is performing and conducting the research in dialogue with the researcher and has moved toward including the larger sociocultural field in which we lie embedded as researchers and participants with the goal of social change. Global ethnographies talk about how the global is embedded in the local; thus, when we talk of a specific local research setting, we also need to acknowledge that the setting is now truly global. These local–global studies, illustrated in the work of Michael Buroway and others, now emphasize the need for multiple sites and settings in understanding larger issues that challenge our world and remain the focus of qualitative research practices.

Himika Bhattacharya

See also Ethnography; Indigenous Research; Naturalistic Inquiry; Naturalistic Observation

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RESEARCH SUBJECTS

See PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCHTALK, INC.

ResearchTalk, Inc., provides consultation and professional development for qualitative researchers throughout the United States and Canada, with emphases in the areas of research plans, fieldwork, analysis strategies, results presentation, and software skills

integration. The company is based on Long Island, New York, and was founded in 1996 by Raymond C. Maietta, the company’s president.

Research Plans

ResearchTalk helps clients to design data collection and analysis strategies that provide insight about the processes that guide decision making and daily activities. By introducing more involved, open-ended discussions with respondents, researchers begin to understand better how and why people develop attitudes and engage in behaviors.

In the Field

Fieldwork should yield rich descriptions and explanations of behaviors and attitudes via thoughtful discussion and observation strategies with respondents. ResearchTalk works with clients to establish a window into the day-to-day lives of participants. In-person sessions, such as face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and on-site evaluations of a phenomenon typical of ethnographic fieldwork, can provide this window.

Analysis Strategies

Maietta created the “Sort and Sift, Think and Shift” qualitative analysis method. Sort and Sift emphasizes strategies to attain deep familiarization with data as an initial step in data analysis. This phase defines the creation of document and case profiles, codebooks, and memo-writing strategies. ResearchTalk works with clients from the beginning of, or deep into, a project to compare early project goals with emergent issues that arise during analysis. Some researchers apply techniques included in the Sort and Sift method, whereas others use methods familiar to qualitative researchers, including grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnographic methods.

Results Presentation

Communication of key findings presents unique challenges to qualitative researchers. Frequently researchers wait to “finish” analysis before working on final presentation of qualitative information. Alternatively, building memos and visual diagrams throughout the life of a qualitative analysis project can result in an evolving presentation of materials in sync with data analysis.

ResearchTalk works with clients to develop tools with qualitative software, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint that provide opportunities to think out loud and refine ideas that emerge throughout an analysis.

Software Skills Integration

ResearchTalk's software integration strategies introduce users to software via necessary components of any qualitative analysis project. This approach ensures that software does not redefine how analysis proceeds but instead serves as a complementary tool for data organization and access. The focus, then, remains on the substance of the data and the analyst's responses to it.

Raymond C. Maietta

See also Qualitative Research Summer Intensive

Websites

ResearchTalk, Inc.: <http://www.researchtalk.com>

RESEARCH TEAM

A research team involves all of the individuals who contribute directly to a research project. Research teams can vary in size from an individual researcher working one on one with a student assistant to large-scale projects involving multiple co-investigators, collaborators, student assistants, nonstudent assistants, and technicians working across numerous sites. In participatory research approaches, research participants themselves may be considered as co-researchers and, therefore, as members of the research team.

Research teams may work on a single time-limited research project, a parallel series of research projects, or a range of ongoing projects. Regardless of size, composition, and duration, research teams can function in collaborative, hierarchical, or distributed ways. Team members may include academics and nonacademics from similar or diverse employment situations, disciplinary backgrounds, and career stages. Consistent with the emphasis on reflexivity in qualitative research, some teams include distinct roles for team ethnographers to document the collaborative process, to facilitate team functioning, and to contribute to effective evaluation of the collaborative work.

As research teams increase in size and complexity, leadership within the team becomes increasingly important. Any member of the team may fulfill a leadership role on a temporary or continuing basis. Strong leadership is essential to the project management process, including coordinating team members' activities, monitoring progress toward research goals, redirecting efforts as the research plan evolves, and maintaining clear communication within the team. Leaders also play important roles in assuaging tensions or conflicts that may arise within the team.

Research teams are well advised to develop written policies about teamwork and authorship principles. As a general guideline, the order of authorship should reflect (so far as possible) relative contributions to a particular publication regardless of the authors' respective roles in the research project. In some cases, authorship credit may be granted to the research team as a collective such that the work is published under the research team name rather than under individual team members' names.

Research teams provide clear opportunities for mentorship. Experienced researchers are well placed to facilitate the learning and development of junior researchers, including community members and students, as they work together on a research team. More broadly, research teams provide space and opportunity for all team members to contribute to the learning of other team members regardless of status and experience. Researchers who appoint student research assistants to their research teams are ethically obliged to ensure that the research assistantships are educative. Student research assistants provide necessary labor that is needed to complete the research, and they typically receive some form of financial compensation, but they are also expected to learn new skills and aptitudes through the project and to receive appropriate credit for their intellectual contributions. Student assistants require appropriate task assignments and adequate supervision.

Michelle K. McGinn

See also Participants as Co-Researchers; Project Management; Reflexivity

Further Readings

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RESONANCE

Within an interpretive tradition of qualitative research, resonance refers to a researcher's posture of openness and receptivity toward potential meanings embedded in text. It serves as an important ontological and epistemological counterpoint to the postpositivist stance of objective analysis of data.

Texts as representations of human experience are assumed to be social constructions imbued with meaning—by the author of a text and those who resonate with it. As Elliot Eisner suggested with the concept of *connoisseurship*, it is a researcher's sensibilities that allow him or her to see the nuances of a text with an “enlightened eye.” Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, in formulating grounded theory, offered the term *theoretical sensitivity* to connote a similar capacity of researchers to engage insightfully with texts of a social phenomenon. Writing within a tradition of existential phenomenology, Hans-Georg Gadamer argued that “our sensitive-spiritual existence is an aesthetic resonance chamber that resonates with the voices that are constantly reaching us” (p. 8). As Gadamer's observation suggests, resonance is not an analytic technique. Rather, it stems from our very existence, our way of being and relating in the world. Thomas Schwandt, drawing on Deborah Kerdeman's interpretation of Gadamer, pointed to the relational nature of understanding and the transformative possibilities that arise when researchers are open to the “other.” The quality of openness to voices that are reaching the researcher's ear might be likened to a finely tuned musical instrument capable of picking up and reverberating with external vibrations. In extending this musical analogy, it is useful to consider resonance in concert with *dissonance* and *consonance*. As Maureen McCarthy Draper explained, “*dissonance* refers to intervals or chords that create tension because they are unstable and therefore generate the energy to move—the opposite of *consonance*, in which sounds are relatively stable and free of tension” (p. 46). Resonance connotes a capacity to hear both

consonance and dissonance—the harmonies and disharmonies. Reverberating with the consonance and dissonance within a text allows researchers to discern a multiplicity of potential meanings associated with the phenomenon under study. Through a richly nuanced representation of these meanings, an inquiry may strike a responsive chord in others, thereby allowing for what Robert Stake called *naturalistic generalization*. Vipassana Esbjorn-Hargens and Rosemarie Anderson, in describing intuitive inquiry in psychology, used the concept of *resonance validity* to describe this mode of extending meaning beyond the specific context of a study to a broader, more universal audience.

Maria Piantanida

See also Active Listening; Connoisseurship; Hermeneutics; Researcher as Instrument; Researcher Sensitivity; Text

Further Readings

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RESPONDENT

Respondents are those persons who have been invited to participate in a particular study and have actually taken part in the study. This definition applies to both qualitative and quantitative studies. However, respondents of a qualitative study have special roles in that not only are their answers in aggregate important to the study, but also their respective voices are essential to the study's evolution and findings.

Respondents are derived from the sample that is constructed for a qualitative study. In designing the sample, the researcher focuses on potential respondents who have some level of familiarity with the

phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, in recruiting individuals, the qualitative researcher must be keenly aware of what aspects of the study (e.g., subject matter, length of interviews, incentives) will encourage individuals to accept or decline the invitation to become respondents. These issues are important when considering which type of respondents are best suited for the study—adults, children, parents, men, women, cancer survivors, educators, prisoners, union members, and so on.

In most qualitative research, the aim is to give voice to the individuals or respondents who decide to participate in the study. When the study focuses on populations that are difficult to access or have special human subjects considerations or restrictions, the qualitative researcher must take all of these factors under consideration when developing a sample that will generate enough respondents to conduct an adequate analysis to explore the topic under investigation and address the research questions posed.

This concern raises the question of how many respondents are enough. For quantitative studies, statistical formulas typically dictate the minimum number of participants needed. In qualitative studies, there are no hard-and-fast rules to indicate when a qualitative researcher has reached the optimal number of respondents and may stop data collection at 10, 20, or 50 respondents. In addition, the number of respondents required is often dictated by the type of qualitative approach used for the study (e.g., 10 for phenomenology, 20–30 for grounded theory), timelines, resources, and the investigator's personal limitations and intuition regarding the costs and benefits with respect to recruiting more respondents. For a graduate student, the guiding factor may ultimately be the dissertation committee's recommendation or the student's defense date.

Although this may appear to be a real quandary, it is not. All respondents, whether their involvement comes by way of formal or informal interviews, observations, journal writing, email exchanges, or chat rooms, add to the wealth of data so that new knowledge is gained. When new knowledge declines with each additional respondent, the researcher has most likely reached the appropriate point at which data collection may cease.

Finally, *respondent*, *participant*, and *informant* are terms used to characterize individuals who participated in a qualitative study. All three terms convey a very sterile, impersonal, and distant relationship with

individuals who give of their time and voice to the researcher who wishes to better understand and learn something new about a particular human experience. As such, the term *respondent* falls short of communicating this very important aspect of qualitative research. The term *participant* comes much closer to capturing the true meaning and aims of qualitative inquiry. Nevertheless, in the end, the investigator must determine which term best suits the study.

Denise O'Neil Green

See also Informant; Participant

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RESPONSE GROUPS

Response groups are a research and pedagogical tool that can be useful in a wide range of contexts, including peer debriefing and interpretation of data. Response groups have derived from the work of literacy researchers and educators in relation to reading, writing, and oral communication. Response groups enable a community of researchers/participants to share perspectives and also support the notion of research and writing as a collaborative venture. Through participation in response groups, researchers both provide and seek oral feedback to their data or their formulating ideas and analysis. Development of a community fosters awareness of audience for researchers, and knowledge of audience enables researchers to become more aware of possible strategies for interpretation and response to interview and document data. Effective data analysis and interpretation is enhanced through anticipation of an audience, and response groups provide a real audience and genuine reactions from a community of researchers/participants.

Writing response groups encourage writing as an activity of social and communicative nature, and they provide not only a genuine audience but also a real

purpose for which to write. The writing of research findings becomes a purposeful activity that is located within a research community and provokes action. Response groups enable researchers to have their writing responded to in a constructive processual manner through participant or peer debriefing.

Writing and research writing in particular are interactive activities and should be purposeful and meaningful; researchers need to continually remember who they are interacting with and the purpose of their research. Hence, response groups have, until recently, been conceptualized as face-to-face encounters, with members of the group being close together in such a way that all voices can be heard and shared. Writing is shared in a variety of ways, including reading aloud, distributing printed copies prior to the response group meeting, and sharing copies at the time of the meeting. Response group members read or listen to the text being discussed before responding.

Since the more recent developments of technological tools, computers have provided an alternative way to conceptualize response groups. A new social organization via online interaction has enabled a variety of peer collaborations and communities of researchers and participants to develop.

Literature response groups involve communities of learners in exploring issues and genuine questions related to common research interests in relation to their own lives. Through response groups, readers are invited to extend and revise their thinking about concepts or theories. Response groups as part of a process of learning from literature encourage prolonged involvement with a concept or theory.

Response groups have provided an approach for encountering data in process rather than only as a product. Response groups can, by virtue of the existence of real and meaningful interaction, encourage development and revision of ideas and of ongoing interpretation and depth of understanding of findings so as to best reach the intended audience in the most engaging ways possible.

Kathy Sanford

See also Interpretation; Peer Debriefing

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RESULTS

See FINDINGS

RHETORIC

Rhetoric is the “art” of persuasion, of convincing the hearer or reader of a particular line of argumentation. Handbooks of classical rhetoric constitute a codification of practically any expression possible in words. At the same time, classical rhetoric is based on an engagement with the audience as recipient and recognizes that the situatedness of communication includes the writer/speaker, the audience, and text.

Together with grammar and dialectic, rhetoric formed part of the ancient *trivium* that was the basis of education from ancient times until well into the 19th century. However, as early as the 16th century, rhetoric began a period of progressive narrowing and decline until it fell into complete abeyance. During recent times, the power, complexity, and subtlety of rhetoric as a feature of all discourse and of persuading a particularly constituted audience has produced, among other things, a view of all texts as representations that are the product of the reworkings of other texts and an understanding of the research practices of human inquiry as essentially rhetorical.

An approach to data in terms of genre, difference, definition, division of an assertion into its parts, etymology, and comparison corresponds to the “places” or “topics” of rhetoric that operate as potential guides to choices, possibilities, and alternative ways of thinking about data. When, for example, a qualitative researcher thinks about the kind of questions that will obtain “rich” data, he or she is engaging with the first step of rhetoric—invention. Integral to further steps of rhetoric are models of organization, arrangement, contiguity, and amplification. The latter, for example can take several modes such as providing examples, the use of icons, visual devices (e.g., diagrams), concordant authorities and theories, cause and effect, and detailed description and repetition with modifications.

Much of the data of qualitative research is in the form of partial situated knowledge from which the researcher, in the process of analysis, moves from the known to the unknown, abstracting some distinguishing mark or

governing metaphor. Metaphor is one of the main figures or tropes of rhetoric. However, this is not to say that rhetoric can be mapped directly onto qualitative method; rather, it serves to deepen the researcher's thinking about the possibilities of representation in terms of style, the articulation of knowledge, and the production of rational modes of inquiry based on different argumentative structures.

Derek Pigrum

See also Autoethnography; Creative Writing; Metaphor.

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RHYTHMANALYSIS

Rhythmanalysis is based on a conception of people, places, and things as having rhythms in relation to our minds and bodies. This places an emphasis on repetition, measure, and the way things are linked—their rhythm—rather than their fragmentation, the way individuals and groups create “moments” as part of social relationships and individual consciousness, and how the repetition of these moments creates situations. It is useful to think of rhythmanalysis in terms of the metaphor of wave patterns of the social, spatial, and temporal and how they mutually shape one another, absorb each other, fade, return, and travel through each other unhindered, producing a polyrhythmic field at the center of which are the rhythms of the body and mind in place. The body

itself is conceived of as polyrhythmic and subject to both normal and disruptive rhythms in its physiological, psychological, and mnemonic functioning that, unlike the overt rhythms of gesture and expression, are often concealed.

Thus, rhythmanalysis is of particular relevance for the analysis of the disjuncture between biological and natural or cosmic rhythms and the imposed rhythms of technology and of socioeconomic organization and production. Another area of particular relevance for rhythmanalysis is knowledge founded in a conflation of the body–mind duality, knowledge that is embodied and is, in part, engendered by the situatedness of practices and the production of space. Thus, rhythmanalysis attempts to uncover the ways in which, for example, the production of place mobilizes the rhythms of interiority and action and changes social relations. An example of this would be the way in which the workplaces of artists, architects, designers, and writers involve the construction of a set of configurations and rhythms of activity that exceeds the traditional view of creative activity as place independent in favor of one that emphasizes the relations between the inside and the outside, the internal world and the external world. The way in which artists produce the space of their practices, the linear nature of their daily routines, the cyclic nature of their processes, and the detailed investigation of processes of idea generation, modification, and development is sometimes described as a drafting process.

From this, it will be understood that rhythmanalysis is often practice related. The diversity of rhythms in practices is concealed, and the efficacy of rhythmanalysis hinges on the way the hidden aspects of the multiple strands of the social, temporal, and spatial are unraveled and grasped. This requires a close study of the details of everyday life that raises questions as to the nature of change and repetition. The analysis of repetition with modifications, but also returns that reintegrate at another level what has been surpassed, is one of the key activities of rhythmanalysis.

Thus, rhythmanalysis involves a notion of repetition that produces difference in a cyclical notion of time rather than a linear one. The cyclical is manifest in social organization, and the linear is manifest in daily routines. In cyclical time, new cycles are produced from completed ones.

The notion of internal and external measure is also important in rhythmanalysis. External measure would be the time of the clock that is imposed on internal

measure as the differentiated sense of lived time that is present in the way we repeat actions but with a qualitative difference. In general, rhythmanalysis involves a differentiated conception of time that is interwoven with the production of space in which we act and react to objects and people.

Research itself has its rituals that create their own particular rhythmic repetition of acts in a certain sequence that initiates, sustains, or brings things to a close. A good way to start rhythmanalysis is to examine one's own rhythms of intellectual and creative activity and how they are interwoven with place and the way repetition supervenes on them as a source of difference and renewal, thereby constituting rhythmanalysis in its reflexive dimension as an exploration of the researcher's relationship to place and things and of the rhythmic passage through mediations and changes as self-knowledge.

The diversity of rhythms in places and practices is concealed, and the efficacy of rhythmanalysis hinges on the way the multiple strands of the social, temporal, and spatial are unraveled and grasped. The difficulty is one of comprehending the role of each rhythm in the whole rather than in isolation. This does not preclude the identification of a determining or co-coordinating rhythm that may indeed be expressed as a governing metaphor or trope. Thus, rhythmanalysis by definition adopts a multidisciplinary approach, often one that engages with philosophical perspectives on the nature of time and space or place. A difficulty in rhythmanalysis is that, on the one hand, repetition enables the analyst to grasp a given state of things in a prospective and retrospective way because they are repeated with modifications but that, on the other hand, materials, actions, texts, and other data must during the process of analysis be elevated qua presentation to a state of simultaneity. This makes simultaneity not so much a temporal category as a function of presentation that can be approached in many ways; for example, collage and microcomputer applications such as hypertext.

Rhythmanalysis has a sound philosophical basis in phenomenological perspectives that allow consciousness to become reflective and reveal the interwoven nature of the substrata of human activity, the imbrication of the subject in the "other," and the situated nature of practices. Nevertheless, since its inception, and partly because of its combination of poetry and science, rhythmanalysis has produced theoretical, conceptual, and procedural difficulties. However, in the light of more recent developments in the area of

qualitative research methods, Henri Lefebvre's fragment, "Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities," provides an outline of a potentially powerful approach to arts-based research worth revisiting.

Derek Pigrum

See also Arts-Based Research; Chaos and Complexity Theories; Collage; Context and Contextuality; Discourse Analysis; Embodied Knowledge; Heuristic Inquiry; Interdisciplinary Research; Researcher as Artist; Rhetoric; Tacit Knowledge

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RICH DATA

The term *rich data* describes the notion that qualitative data and their subsequent representation in text should reveal the complexities and the richness of what is being studied. Although it is never possible to comprehend all dimensions of a phenomenon, the qualitative researcher seeks to understand what is being investigated as deeply as possible and to situate it within the context of time and space rather than in isolation. As a result, time is an important investment in qualitative research. Prolonged engagement with research participants and sites enables the researcher to get a sense of the multifacetedness of what is being examined. The amount of time actually spent in the field depends on the specific project. Some qualitative projects can be completed in months, whereas traditional ethnographies require at least a year

in the field. However, the amount of time required to fully understand a phenomenon can be infinite.

Equally important to qualitative research are the kinds of data being collected. The qualitative researcher typically triangulates data by collecting multiple kinds of data that usually, but not exclusively, include interviews, observational fieldnotes, researcher journals, documents, and other kinds of artifacts. Interviews tend to be open-ended so that participants can share their thoughts and perspectives as fully as possible. Observations and artifact collection lend to better understanding of a phenomenon in the moment, over time, and through various perspectives. Examining different types of data regarding the same phenomenon enables the researcher to better understand the complexity of what is being studied and increases the trustworthiness of the data as well as the interpretations of the researcher. Various kinds of data also help the researcher to understand the richness of the phenomenon being examined.

Collecting rich data, however, is for naught unless the rich data are subsequently interpreted and represented. Quality qualitative research is often described as having rich “thick description,” in the words of Clifford Geertz. Rather than merely recording events, people, and places, thick description seeks to present and explore the multifaceted complexities of the situation being studied, the intentions and motivations of the actors involved, and the context of the situation. By doing this, rich thick description engages readers. It should also give readers a sense of the complexity of the reality about which they are reading only a partial representation. This kind of description is achieved in numerous ways, including the telling of rich involved stories, the use of lengthy quotations from participants and written documents, and the inclusion of researcher fieldnotes and journal entries. In short, rich thick description builds on rich data to grab readers, giving them a sense that they are there, experiencing what the researcher is representing.

Sherry Marx

See also Prolonged Engagement; Thick Description; Triangulation

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RIGOR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As a concept, rigor is perhaps best thought of in terms of the quality of the research process. In essence, a more rigorous research process will result in more trustworthy findings. A number of features are thought to define rigorous qualitative research: transparency, maximal validity or credibility, maximal reliability or dependability, comparativeness, and reflexivity.

Transparency, as its name suggests, refers to clarity in describing the research process. Here researchers are providing their audience with a thorough description of the steps taken in conducting their research. They are, in effect, providing an audit trail. This accomplishes two main things. First, if others want to replicate the research to see whether they achieve similar results, they can. Second, it enables readers to assess whether the method chosen was the most appropriate for answering the chosen research question.

Because a valid or credible study requires that the data be represented fairly and accurately, the representation of the data also affects the rigor of a study. Various means can be used to help enhance credibility. First, looking for and citing negative cases is important because doing so illustrates that researchers are not just looking for cases that support their theory. Second, member checks can also add to the credibility of qualitative research because they indicate that researchers have confirmed their findings with the individuals from whom they have collected the data (i.e., the people whose ideas are being represented).

When a study is reliable or dependable, similar participants and research methods should generally lead to similar results. One way to attend to this issue is to use more than one coder to see whether the same kinds of themes result from their analyses. Furthermore, regular discussions of coding results with colleagues can also be a means for improving dependability. This helps to assess whether researchers' interpretations are in line with what others are thinking.

Comparability is yet another criterion that helps to denote the rigor of a qualitative study. In essence, researchers should be comparing the various cases with one another so that they can build a theory that represents all of the voices present in their findings. Furthermore, it is also of value to compare findings with the findings of other research scientists so as to relate what has been found back to the broader research context.

Finally, a rigorous qualitative study is built on the notion of reflexivity. Here researchers must account for the fact that their presence has some influence on the research findings, and they should attempt to report how they, as the primary research instrument, may have influenced the study's results.

Using these criteria for building a rigorous research study will enable qualitative researchers to report results that are considered as both useful and credible by their peers.

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Credibility; Dependability; Member Check; Reflexivity; Transparency; Trustworthiness

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Risk

Risk is a value-laden concept that can be viewed positively or negatively. Risk-averse scientists will postpone a space shuttle launch when weather conditions threaten human life, whereas successful entrepreneurs are often praised for risk taking. In qualitative research, risk refers to the chance or probability that harm or injury may occur either in the course of the research or as a consequence of the research. Therefore, risk is a consideration for researchers, participants, and research ethics boards. Risk in qualitative research is a controversial and often misunderstood concept, particularly because the hypothetical *chance* of harm is frequently seen as an *actual* harm.

Researchers should consider risk during the design of research protocols, and they should attempt to determine whether a methodology presents real unwanted harm or injury to participants. Harms may include invasion of privacy, violation of confidentiality, damage to reputation, and physical injury. Researchers and ethics boards should be aware that their perceptions of risk may vary from those of research participants. It is prudent to understand risk from the perspective of those

who participate in research based on comprehensive information about foreseeable harms.

The type of research presents different capacities to weigh risk against actual harms. For example, in experimental research, the harms caused by applying force to a person's body can be measured in terms of pain as well as tissue and bone damage. In qualitative research, however, risk is much more difficult to assess and often involves looking to future harms for which there is little or no evidence. Anthony Giddens called this "manufactured risk"—that is, "new risk environments for which history provides us with very little previous experience" (p. 3). Although we live in a risk society, researchers have not dedicated research to measuring the risk of actual harm in social science research. Instead, institutions such as research ethics boards focus on managing and avoiding manufactured risk.

Many research ethics codes outline a two-level standard for risk assessment: minimal risk and greater than minimal risk. Minimal risk is defined as the degree of harm or discomfort that research participants would encounter in their routine daily lives relative to the research design. Minimal risk research demands a lesser degree of ethical scrutiny than does research that exceeds the minimal risk standard. Research in the greater than minimal risk category should be evaluated on the basis of the actual harms that may arise from the research against the benefits of the research. Benefits include immediate benefits for research participants and prospective benefits to scientific knowledge and society.

A challenge in any risk-benefit analysis in qualitative research is that all risks and potential benefits cannot be known at the outset. Therefore, research participants should be advised of reasonably foreseeable harms and benefits. In general, most qualitative research presents little or no risk to participants, and in most cases risk can be managed effectively through appropriate methodologies.

Russel Ogden

See also Benefit; Confidentiality; Harm; Privacy; Sensitive Topics

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S

SAMPLE

A sample is the set of actual data sources that are drawn from a larger *population* of potential data sources. Within the broad process of *sampling*, choosing the actual sample is the second step in a two-step process, which begins with defining the population that is eligible for inclusion in the sample. Approaches to selecting samples are typically divided between *probability sampling* and *nonprobability sampling*, where the former uses a group's size in the population as the sole influence on how many of its members will be included in the sample, while the latter concentrates on selecting sample members according to their ability to meet specific criteria.

Issues With Terminology

The prominence of survey sampling as a technique for defining samples has created a tendency to identify the entire concept of sampling with this one approach to selecting data sources, but discussing qualitative research within the framework created by survey sampling can easily be misleading. In particular, describing a set of data sources as a “sample” seems to invoke an implicit image of random sampling as a gold standard for assessing all approaches to sample selection. Yet random sampling is primarily of value for creating statistical generalizability, which is far more relevant in quantitative rather than qualitative research.

A different source of confusion in sampling terminology is the tendency to attach the words *sample* or *sampling* to every aspect of the process, including

issues that involve the definition of the relevant population rather than the selection of a sample from that population. This confusion is most obvious in misguided comparisons between *random sampling* in quantitative research and *purposive sampling* in qualitative research. In that case, the parallel phrasing of the two labels makes it difficult to recognize that random sampling is about selecting a sample from a population, while purposive sampling is about defining the population of eligible data sources, prior to selecting the actual sample.

Uses for Samples in Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Although it is undoubtedly too late to modify the overly broad use of the words *sample* and *sampling*, it is important to avoid using them in ways that obscure the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. In particular, qualitative and quantitative research emphasize different sample selection procedures that are specifically adapted to the purposes and goals that guide each kind of research. Because the goals of quantitative research typically include generalizing estimates to populations and conducting statistical tests, this leads to an emphasis on probability-based sampling with large *sample sizes*. In contrast, qualitative research emphasizes inductive theory building, subjective understanding, and detailed, holistic data, and these goals are often best met through intense investigations of small, systematically selected samples. Overall, samples in qualitative research need to be judged according to how well they serve the purposes of a specific study,

rather than being judged by criteria that apply to other goals.

David L. Morgan

See also Generalizability; Nonprobability Sampling; Population; Probability Sampling; Purposive Sampling; Random Sampling; Sample Size; Sampling

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SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size is the number of data sources that are actually selected from the total population. Basic principles of statistical sampling demonstrate that the accuracy of an estimate from a *probability sample* is strongly influenced by the size of the sample itself. The importance of sample size in determining the accuracy of the results is the reason that larger samples generate more precise estimates and smaller samples produce less accurate estimates—regardless of the size of the larger population.

Table 1 illustrates how sample size affects accuracy in the case of estimating a simple percentage (e.g., percent male) with *random sampling* in a population where the actual proportion is 50%.

Thus, for a population that is divided 50–50 between men and women, 95% of all the samples of size 10 would produce an estimate that fell somewhere between 19% and 81%, while 95% of all estimates from samples of 25 would fall between 30% and 70%, and so on. This table makes it easy to see why surveys typically rely on samples of 500 and over, because it takes that many observations to produce estimates that are accurate within the desired range of 3–4%. In contrast, the table also shows why random sampling is seldom of much practical value with small samples, since even a random sample of 100 is only accurate to 10 percentage points either way.

Table 1 How Sample Size Affects Accuracy in the Case of Estimating a Simple Percentage

Sample Size	95% Confidence Interval
10	19%–81%
25	30%–70%
50	36%–64%
100	40%–60%
250	44%–56%
500	46%–54%
1,000	47%–53%

Although qualitative researchers are seldom interested in results that can be expressed as percentages, the real point is not whether it makes sense to estimate simple percentages, but whether it makes sense to try to estimate *anything* with a small sample—regardless of whether it is a random sample. In particular, it is common to hear criticisms of the lack of *generalizability* in qualitative studies because they do not use *probability samples*, but this argument overlooks the fact that small samples seldom have any practical value for generalizability—regardless of whether they are random samples.

In most qualitative studies, the goals of the research emphasize an in-depth and highly contextualized understanding of specific phenomena, and such goals are well-suited to small sample sizes. For these purposes, qualitative researchers are well justified in using criteria such as *saturation* or redundancy in the data collection, rather than statistical criteria, as a standard for determining sample size—especially when the alternative is to be “drowning” in more data than it is possible to analyze.

David L. Morgan

See also Context and Contextuality; Generalizability; Probability Sampling; Random Sampling; Sampling; Theoretical Saturation

Further Readings

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SAMPLING

Sampling is the process of choosing actual data sources from a larger set of possibilities. This overall process actually consists of two related elements: (1) defining the full set of possible data sources—which is generally termed the *population*, and (2) selecting a specific *sample* of data sources from that population. Note that this definition is stated in general terms that apply to both qualitative and quantitative research, because it is nearly always necessary to work with a sample of data sources rather than attempting to collect data from the entire population. Beyond that similarity, however, the very different goals of qualitative and quantitative research lead to equally different procedures for selecting data sources from a larger population. It is thus important to understand the differences between the logic of purposively selecting a small number of sources for intense analysis in qualitative research, as opposed to the emphasis on randomly selecting large samples for statistical analysis in quantitative research.

Defining the Population

All samples must be drawn from some larger population, and that requires a prior definition of the population. In practical terms, every research project has to consider which kinds of data sources will be eligible for the study, regardless of whether those data sources consist of people to be interviewed, sites to be observed, or texts and other media to be examined. Stating the eligibility criteria that determine whether a given data source is included in the total population is technically known as defining a *sampling frame*. For example, a study examining “inner-city schools” must begin by defining which schools belong in that population, and this outlines a sampling frame that determines whether any given school is eligible for inclusion in the study.

In qualitative research, issues related to defining the overall populations are generally treated as part of *purposive sampling*, which inherently requires an explicit definition of the kinds of data sources that are of interest. In essence, determining which data sources met the goal of purposive sampling for a qualitative study is equivalent to defining a set of eligibility requirements for the population (i.e., creating a

sampling frame). Hence, the concept of purposive sampling falls within the broad process of defining the population of potential data sources.

Qualitative researchers have also developed a number of more specific techniques for defining eligible populations through purposive sampling. Among these are *theoretical sampling*, which selects cases according to their ability to advance research goals such as theory development; *maximum variation sampling*, which examines a wide range of different cases within the population of interest; and *stratified sampling*, which divides the overall sample into specified subsets for comparative purposes. Each of these techniques amounts to a strategy for implementing the goal of purposive sampling, in order to meet a specific set of research purposes. Taken together, these strategies facilitate the in-depth interpretation of a systematically selected set of data sources, which is one of the hallmarks of qualitative research.

Selecting the Sample

Once a population has been defined, the next task is to select the members of the population that will be included in the sample. The most basic division between different procedures for selecting samples is based on producing either a *probability sample* or a *nonprobability sample*. For a probability sample, each member of the population has a known chance of being included in the sample, and *random sampling* is the best-known means for accomplishing this. Probability samples are required for statements about either the accuracy of sample estimates or the statistical significance of results.

When there are problems with counting all the members of the original population, or giving every member of that population a known probability of being included in the sample, then it may not be practical or even possible to generate a probability sample. These kinds of problems are obvious for what are known as “hidden populations” where the members do not want to be recognizable because they violate some legal or cultural standards (e.g., undocumented immigrants). But it can be just as difficult to draw probability samples in many non-hidden populations (such as cancer patients, non-governmental organizations, or media stories on crime, and so on). In those cases, the only option is to use a nonprobability sample.

Among the most common ways of selecting nonprobability samples are *convenience sampling*, which accepts any eligible case that can be found; *quota sampling*, which specifies categories within the sample and states how many people should be included in each category; and *snowball sampling*, which uses an initial set of data sources as the basis for locating additional data sources. It is important to note that this list does *not* include purposive sampling because, as stated above, that is properly part of the process of defining the population rather than the process of selecting a sample from that population. In practice, almost all qualitative research does rely on nonprobability samples, but this has little connection to the use of purposive sampling. Instead, this reliance on nonprobability samples is often due to the difficulty of even locating data sources that meet eligibility criteria, let alone counting the total size of the population from which that sample is drawn. In addition, the need to collect detailed, in-depth data typically leads to small *sample sizes* where there would be no point to doing statistical analysis. Thus, the common use of nonprobability samples in qualitative research matches an approach to data collection and analysis strategy that typically relies on the careful interpretation of a small number of very rich data sources.

David L. Morgan

See also Convenience Sample; Nonprobability Sampling; Population; Probability Sampling; Purposive Sampling; Quota Sampling; Random Sampling; Sample; Sample Size; Sampling Frame; Snowball Sampling; Stratified Sampling; Theoretical Sampling

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SAMPLING FRAME

A sampling frame defines the members of the *population* who are eligible to be included in a given *sample*—in the sense of drawing a boundary or frame

around those cases that are acceptable for inclusion in the sample. This terminology is most common in survey sampling, where it is associated with a countable listing of all the data sources in the population that are accessible for *sampling*. For example, a sampling frame might be all the registered voters in a state or all the public schools in a local district. The actual sample would then be drawn from the population defined by this frame.

Survey sampling thus involves a two-step process that begins by defining a set of inclusion criteria for the overall population (i.e., the sampling frame), typically followed by drawing a *random sample* of respondents who meet that definition. For example, the footnotes that accompany most “random samples” of the U.S. population often show that they are actually limited to something like the English-speaking, noninstitutionalized, civilian residents of the U.S. who are over the age of eighteen. This means that almost all *generalizable* surveys explicitly exclude several categories of potential respondents, and thus the sample only represents the population defined by that frame.

In qualitative research, the process of *purposive sampling* is logically similar to defining a sampling frame in survey research. In both cases, the key goal is to specify the set of data sources within the general population that will be eligible for inclusion in the study. In particular, both of these procedures are included in defining the population of potential data source, prior to selecting the sample of cases that will be studied. Although purposive sampling typically defines a narrow set specific of cases, it is also the case that many quantitative studies are aimed at very specific populations, and thus use equally restrictive sampling frames. In other words, when surveys target specific populations, they also use a process of purposive definition that only includes the data sources that are of interest to that particular study. Thus, to revisit the earlier examples of sampling frames, a survey that was interested in the long-term voting habits of people who did not belong to a major party might start with all the registered voters, and then reduce that list to independent voters who participated in at least three of the last four major elections. Or a survey that was interested in students who had above-average school performance despite a below-average socioeconomic background might use both of those factors to define a sampling frame of potential respondents. By comparison, a qualitative researcher who wanted to pursue either of

those topics would follow a similar process of “purposive sampling” in order to define the set of people who were eligible for that study.

David L. Morgan

See also Generalizability; Population; Purposive Sampling; Random Sampling; Sample; Sampling

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SECONDARY ANALYSIS

Archived qualitative data are a rich source of research material that offer researchers, teachers, and learners opportunities to revisit, rework, and verify data—both their own and those created by others—and also to compare with other data materials. They provide opportunities to study the raw materials of recent or earlier research to gain both methodological and substantive insights. New data are typically expensive to collect, so using already collected sources can save costs as well as avoiding duplication of research effort and investment. But unlike secondary analysis of questionnaire data, the practice for qualitative data is far less well-established. What can older data offer the secondary analyst, and are there specific problems to overcome? This entry introduces some of the key issues.

Qualitative data are collected across a range of academic disciplines, often with varying techniques or emphasis. Typically, qualitative studies aim to capture lived experiences of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences. Often a range of methods and tools are utilized in the field and the kinds of data collected vary with the aims of the study and the nature of the sample. Data that could potentially be reused from a study include interviews, in-depth or unstructured; group discussions or focus groups; fieldwork diaries and observation notes; diaries; personal documents; and photographs. These data may also be created in a variety of formats: digital, paper (typed or hand-written), audio, video, and photographic.

To some extent the scope and format of data determine their potential for secondary analysis. A large collection of recorded and transcribed in-depth interviews with detailed fieldnotes may offer greater potential for reanalysis than a more focused set of semi-structured interviews. Audiovisual materials are possibly the least reexploited resources in the social sciences.

The ways that qualitative data can be reused are similar to those used for the secondary analysis of questionnaire data, yet there are different and more challenging theoretical, epistemological, methodological, ethical, and practical problems for the potential user to consider. While there is a well-established tradition in social science of reanalyzing quantitative data, for qualitative data this is not the case.

Approaches to Secondary Analysis

Louise Corti and Paul Thompson identify six approaches to secondary analysis that are based that on anticipation of the original data creators and experiences of users.

Description

The possibilities for using data descriptively are extensive—contemporary and historical attitudes and behaviors can be gleaned from data—at the individual, organizational, or societal level. Transcribed interviews with selective samples of the population can complement official sources of information such as newspapers and public documents. Significant data created now will in time become a valuable potential historical resource—methods of secondary analysis thus become historical research methods. The latter are better practiced and documented, requiring the new investigator to examine the provenance of the material and assess the veracity of the sources. This may be an unfamiliar practice for contemporary social researchers.

Comparative Research, Restudy, or Follow-Up Study

Qualitative data can be compared with other data sources or be used to provide comparison with other contexts, over other periods of time, and across other social groups and cultures. In Britain the original returns of the population census have been preserved

as public records and have proved an invaluable resource for measuring trends. Classic UK restudies include Seebom Rowntree's repeated surveys of poverty in York and Llewellyn Smith's (1930–1935) repeat of Charles Booth's (1891–1902) poverty survey in London. Comparison brings greater power to answer research questions; for example, when a data set can be combined with data beyond its own sample or geographical limitations. Equally, respondents in original studies that have been preserved can be followed up to form a longitudinal study, sometimes with the involvement of the original investigators and typically requiring new ethical approval. An example of a prospective follow-up study is Glen Elder's Children of the Great Depression (1974), based on both new fieldwork and a reorganization of the earlier interviews and participant observant of the Berkeley and Oakland cohorts interviewed on a regular basis since the 1920s.

Reanalysis

Reanalysis of qualitative data allows both for new interpretation and new questions to be asked of data. New perspectives can be applied and new analytical methods and tools employed. Typically, the "richer" the original research material, the more potential there is for further exploitation. Secondary analysis is particularly valuable for studying sensitive topics or hard to reach populations, where access may have been difficult to negotiate or data hard to collect.

Research Design and Methodological Advancement

A study of the research methods of an original qualitative investigation can help in the design of a new study or the development of a methodology or research tool. While description of a study's methods are often included in books or journal articles based on a study, the details tend to be brief. Consulting documentation and notes of the original sampling methods, data collection, fieldwork strategies, interview guides, and analyses notes can offer insight into the history and development of the research.

Verification

Archived data can be scrutinized with scientific rigor to support or challenge a set of findings or to

appraise the method. The practice of opening data for inspection is becoming increasingly important in the natural sciences, with the aim of encouraging more transparent research. While "replication" can be used to check findings, true scientific replication is not possible with qualitative research as studies are not controlled in the same way as in experiments.

Teaching and Learning

The use of authentic data in teaching substantive or methodological perspectives across the social sciences adds interest and relevance to a program. Students who gain their experiences of qualitative data analysis from the use of archived data from a well-known published study can gain a good understanding of the complexity of data analysis, and develop critical appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the data collection strategies or analytic approaches used by the principal investigators.

Difficulties in Reusing Data

The seven key issues that present themselves as difficulties in both reusing and sharing data, as identified by Corti and Thompson are:

1. ethical and consent considerations and constraints;
2. representation, coverage, and context of the research and fieldwork—a problem with the reflexive and implicit nature of qualitative data collection and analysis;
3. unfamiliarity with the methods of secondary qualitative analysis;
4. lack of time to get fully acquainted with research materials created by others;
5. lack of infrastructure for accessing data sets in area of interest;
6. misinterpretation of data and exposure of one's own research practice through sharing data that might bring unwelcomed critique;
7. threat to intellectual property rights in data and methods.

The most significant issue currently being debated in the consideration of secondary analysis is of that data and original context. The basic argument lies with the belief that qualitative data cannot be used

sensibly without the accumulated background knowledge and tacit understanding that the original investigator had acquired in “being there.”

But the loss of context in archived data should not be viewed as an insurmountable barrier to reuse. Indeed, there are very common and accepted instances where research data is used in a “secondhand” sense by investigators themselves: principal investigators writing up their final analyses and reports may not have been directly engaged in data collection. Similarly, researchers working in teams rely on sharing their own experiences of fieldwork and its context. In both instances, the analyzers or authors must rely on fieldworkers and co-workers documenting detailed notes about the project and communicating them—through text, audio, and video. But documentation of the complete research process can help recover the original fieldwork and analysis experience. Representation of audiorecorded interviews are affected by the method of transcription, which can vary between disciplines and individuals: while sociologists typically want to capture the words, conversation analysts and sociolinguists are more concerned with documenting the paralinguistic features of speech, such as pauses or laughter.

However, the views of qualitative researchers themselves on these matters are by no means homogeneous. While a minority are opposed to sharing what they see as personal “possession” and a means for their own future publication opportunities, many view further exploitation of data as offering significant added value and as a right, through public investment in funding the original study.

Louise Corti

See also Data Analysis; Data Archive; Data Management; Ethics; Reflexivity

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Websites

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SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data are preexisting data that have been collected for a different purpose or by someone other than the researcher. These data may have been gathered originally for another research study or for administrative purposes. Secondary data may be available through government agencies, researcher-contributed databases, public or private archives, institutional records, or arrangements with individual researchers. Researchers may use secondary data to investigate new research questions, corroborate or extend the original analyses, or compare to other (primary or secondary) data sources.

The practice of using secondary data is well established in quantitative research traditions where large-scale databases and data depositories provide ready access to censuses, national and international educational assessments, and other numeric data on a multitude of topics. In contrast, secondary data has a more recent history in qualitative research traditions, with the first methodological publications about secondary analyses of qualitative data appearing in the mid-1990s.

Technological advances, interdisciplinary opportunities, pressures for increased research productivity, and encouragement for large-scale projects may all contribute to researchers' decisions to use secondary data. Public funding agencies have developed policies to explicitly encourage data archiving and data sharing as part of their mandates toward openness, accountability, and public ownership of data.

Conducting research using secondary data can entail considerable savings in time, money, and labor compared to gathering firsthand data. Reliance upon secondary data can also reduce intrusions into

research participants' lives because the data that they supply in a single research study could inform a broad range of research projects, thereby maximizing potential societal benefits and scholarly contributions.

There are, however, considerable ethical and methodological issues that researchers must consider before using secondary data. A major challenge of secondary data is the potential to undermine the autonomy of the individuals who provided the original data by limiting opportunities for those individuals to provide informed consent to participate in this secondary research. Privacy legislation and ethics review board procedures consider the extent to which the data are identifiable, the potential harms that research participants could face, the relationship between the purposes for the original data collection and the current research project, the expectations that the participating individuals would consent or object to the research, and the potential social good of the research. To the extent possible, individuals engaged in data collection for research or administrative purposes should consider possible secondary uses of those data and seek permission at the data collection stage.

Another challenge for qualitative researchers using secondary data is the limited relationship with the participants and context for the data. Secondary research conducted by a different researcher undermines the close relationships between researchers and participants that are a key feature of qualitative research. A new researcher who was not involved in the original research study will not know what information the original respondents considered sensitive and will therefore be unable to calculate risks involved in divulging sensitive information. This may explain why qualitative research undertaken with secondary data typically involves researchers who have some firsthand knowledge of the original research.

Michelle K. McGinn

See also Ethics; Informed Consent; Researcher–Participant Relationships

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SECONDARY PARTICIPANTS

A *human participant* is a living individual whom a researcher obtains data about through interaction with that individual or with private information that identifies that person. A *secondary participant* is someone who was not initially designated as a primary participant in a study, but about whom information is gathered from persons who are primary participants. Secondary participants are created when individuals provide information about other people whom they know or to whom they are related. Because secondary participants were not initially recruited for the study, they have not given consent to be studied.

Secondary participants are routinely created when social scientists and educators ask questions about the behavior and beliefs of participants' family members and associates. Ethnographers learn information about members of communities where participants live, interact, or work. Epidemiologists studying communicable diseases or infection risks request the identity of all persons with whom participants interact over specific issues, such as sharing of needles or drugs, eating similar foods, or engaging in risky sex or similar recreational activities.

Crucial is whether or not secondary participants are human participants from whom researchers must obtain informed consent for use of data about them. If a person "about whom" information is sought cannot be identified, even by the researcher, then the person is *not* a secondary participant and informed consent is not required. However, if the secondary participant reasonably can be identified, researchers may have to obtain their informed consent, especially if the information about them is private, sensitive, or significant. Since no worldwide consensus exists regarding how to handle issues of consent, researchers should check on the regulations governing ethics issues in the country granting approval.

When researchers use network, reputational, or snowball sampling to identify potential research participants, individuals may become unconsented secondary participants because such sampling gathers information "about" individuals, and renders them "identifiable." In addition, since ethnographers and qualitative researchers usually can identify their primary participants, if primary participants name specific people in their network, researchers will have information about those people relative to the reasons for their participation in

specific activities. They are, therefore, secondary participants. Their consent may need to be obtained before data about them are recorded and used in the research, unless an ethics review board has granted a waiver of informed consent.

Researchers must exercise particular care if they have access to private, sensitive, or significant information—anything a potential participant might not want, or expect, to be disclosed or that could put them at risk if disclosed to others. Risks include experiencing emotional, financial, legal, political or physical harm, or embarrassment for violating social or cultural norms or taboos. It derives from disclosure of

- Abusive treatment of the participant by parents or relatives
- Abusive treatment the participant has inflicted upon others
- Participation in illegal or unethical acts
- Illegal, antisocial, or nonsocial behavior
- Drug use and sexual behavior
- Communicable diseases or stigmas
- Interactions with people whom participants are forbidden to contact
- Engaging in tabooed activities

Risks are especially likely when the culture of the researcher differs from that of the participants, since risks and what constitutes normative or even legal behavior differ across societies. Thus, consent may need to be obtained from secondary participants

- when they are identifiable;
- when private, significant, or sensitive information is obtained about them—such information is not if a participant's mother likes or dislikes comedy movies, but could involve data from the mother's medical records, if the participant's mother were involved in antiwar protests, or if she used recreational drugs; and
- when the researcher plans to use the information as data for his or her study.

To avoid creating secondary participants, researchers can avoid asking participants for names and direct relationships. When using network sampling, they can ask existing participants to give potential participants information about the study; those individuals can then contact the researchers themselves if interested in participating. This can be difficult in nonliterate societies; where finding key

members of social networks is crucial to solving a social problem, whether or not they give consent; or where taboos forbid such contacts. Procedures for obtaining informed consent from secondary subjects are identical with those used for consenting primary subjects. If the potential secondary subject does not provide consent, then the researcher cannot use any information collected about them.

Margaret D. LeCompte

See also Ethics; Informed Consent; Participant

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SELECTIVE CODING

Selective coding is a late phase of analysis in the grounded theory approach to qualitative data as presented by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, when explanations of phenomena (e.g., events, actions, processes) are emergent. Open coding, the earliest phase of identifying and labeling concepts in raw data (e.g., interviews, fieldnotes, art), sets the stage for axial coding, where the dissected data is reassembled as the researcher develops and relates categories. Axial coding is succeeded by selective coding where the analyst selects a central (core) category as a vehicle for the integration of the other major categories thereby developing and refining theoretical claims.

Linking (integrating) categories is essential to developing a story about “what is happening” in the data (explaining phenomena) and relies on the choice of a central category that represents the major theme or “essence” of the research. The central category should be highly frequent and salient, and it should be possible to relate all the major categories uncovered in

the data to it. For example, a central category that might emerge from a study of children of incarcerated offenders is heightened deviant behavior. Other major categories uncovered might be types of deviance, seriousness of the act, and childhood phase. These (and many others) would be linked to the central category in an attempt to develop a theoretical scheme to better understand and explain the deviant activity. The choice of the core category and the explanation provided is the researcher's interpretation of what is happening. It is almost certainly not the only possible interpretation of the data, but one of several different, equally logical possibilities.

Techniques are offered to help researchers commit to a central category (often said to be difficult but key to theory development) and relate other major categories to it. These include writing an initial sketch of the main story concerning what is at issue in the data, using diagrams, and making use of notes kept throughout data analysis (memos). Through the process of category integration, a theoretical scheme emerges.

In refining the theory, the researcher aims to insure that the major categories' properties and dimensions have been adequately uncovered—that *density* has been achieved. For example, in studying children of incarcerated offenders, if the researcher notices that female delinquent children have been more sparsely coded than males, more data concerning this category would need to be gathered. Also, in addition to weeding out less relevant concepts, the researcher is advised to make sure the derived theory is both logical and consistent with the raw data analyzed, checking to see how well it “fits the data” in terms of explaining the central phenomenon.

In generating theory grounded in data, it can be difficult to determine when to stop searching for more detail. The guideline for when to stop collecting and analyzing data is when new aspects of categories no longer emerge and no new relationships are discovered in analysis (theoretical saturation).

There is some disagreement among grounded theorists about when selective coding should occur. However, seeking a central, organizing category as the core of a storyline (one that integrates major categories) seems to be a generally agreed upon approach to theoretical development.

Lucia Benaquisto

See also Codes and Coding; Data Saturation; Grounded Theory; Open Coding; Axial Coding; Theoretical Saturation

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SEMIOTICS

Semiotics is the doctrine, or general science, of signs. Simply put, a sign is anything that can stand for some other thing. Just about anything that we can perceive somehow can act as a sign, so long as it can point away from itself and toward something else. Therefore, most of the time when we are doing semiotic research, we are not collecting signs per se. Instead, we are looking at how things stand in relation to other things, and how those mediated relationships help us understand things better. These points will become clearer as we gain further understanding of semiotics itself. To that end, we will start with its history. This entry will then explore semiotics as language and as logic, closing with a specific section on the role of semiotics in qualitative research.

Semiotics in History

Semiotics, although a fairly new field, nonetheless has quite a substantial history. The Stoics were the first to explore sign relations. While little is known of their logic per se, it is known that they were interested in mediated and unmediated relationships, and how they varied.

There was also an extensive semiotic presence in Christendom, from its earliest roots through the Middle Ages. St. Augustine in particular was quite interested in the action of signs. He is one of the first thinkers to draw a distinction between natural signs and conventional signs. Natural signs, for Augustine, were those signs that occurred in the world. Such things as footprints (signs of someone walking around) and smoke (as a sign of fire) are natural signs. Conventional signs are those things that are signs because they function as such within culture. Words are conventional signs, and so are red octagons on poles telling people to STOP.

Language and other conventional signs were important topics of inquiry among many medieval thinkers. One important debate was over the nature of names. Did names indicate the presence of universal properties, or were they merely labels? Also, there

was quite an extended discussion over what sort of system constituted a language. Human speech was accepted as a language, of course, but what about the barking of dogs? Did a language have to do more than just communicate to be a language? These debates helped form some of the most important questions in contemporary semiotic theory and research.

It is not until we reach the 20th century, however, that we have an explicit formal doctrine of semiotics. Interestingly enough, though, it turns out that there were two independent doctrines of semiotics formed at roughly the same time. The first branch, which we also sometimes call *semiology*, was born in the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. The second branch was formed in the United States by logician and philosopher Charles Peirce. We will look at each approach in turn.

Semiotics as Language

Saussure was a revolutionary linguist who died in 1913 at an early age. Because of his early demise, he left no systematic treatise of his work. Therefore, his students, in tribute to him, pooled together their class notes to create his *Course in General Linguistics*. This work served as the basis for the development of his model of semiotics.

Before Saussure, the main emphasis of linguistics was historical. That is, linguists were interested in tracing the origins, migrations, and evolutions of various language families. Saussure took a completely different approach. Suppose, he said, we set aside the historical nature of language and just look at language as a complete and self-contained system. Furthermore, he said, suppose we look at not just any particular language, but language itself as an abstract system. He called this abstract system *langue*, to distinguish it from speech, which he called *parole*. He envisioned *langue* as the universal abstract core around which all actual languages are built. Linguistics, he argued, needed to understand *langue* before it could understand languages *per se*.

In order to build a theory of *langue*, Saussure needed a set of ideas more basic than those of language. He set aside the notion that words, phrases, and sentences were the basic units of language. Instead, he argued, all these forms depended upon a single, more abstract form. That single abstract form he called the *sign*.

For Saussure, the sign was a single entity with two necessary and complementary parts. Every sign

consisted of a *signifier* and a *signified*. The signified is the object of the sign. For Saussure, it was not the actual object itself in the world, but a concept of the object in a person's mind. For instance, the object of the sign "tree" is not an actual tree somewhere, but the concept of a tree that the perceiver of the sign summons forth when presented with the sign. The signifier is that thing that causes the person to summon up the concept in the first place. In our example above, the signifier is the word *tree*. According to Saussure, every sign consists of a signifier and a signified, and these cannot be separated. So, a signifier without a signified is not a sign—for example, a random string of letters is not a word, and therefore not a sign *per se*.

Language is a privileged sign system according to Saussure. While it is not the only sign system, it is the model and ideal form of all other sign systems. Saussure went on to say that all links between words and objects are arbitrary. This means that meaning in language is always a matter of convention, or knowing the proper codes. This notion of code and language pervades the Saussurean model of semiotics, which is also known as *semiology*. Followers of Saussure often look for the presence of codes, and hence a "language," among various sorts of phenomena.

Semiologists are semioticians who use the basic ideas of Saussure to discover and decode various systems of signs in both nature and culture. There are a number of famous and important semiologists in a variety of fields. Roman Jakobson explored the codes of the formal properties of language and meaning, and Kenneth Pike did the same for phonetics and phonology. Claude Lévi-Strauss uncovered patterns of kinship and behavior in anthropology. Jacques Lacan took a semiological approach to psychology and psychotherapy, and Roland Barthes used semiological codes and patterns to explore popular culture.

Currently, most semiologists practice in such areas as comparative literature and cultural studies. Finland, France, Estonia, Italy, and other Continental areas continue to embrace and expand semiological thought. Perhaps the most important contemporary semiotician with at least a semiological bent is Umberto Eco.

Semiotics as Logic

Within the Anglo-American world, semiotics is most often characterized by the work of the American logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce, who died in 1914 at the age of 75, was the founder of

both Pragmatism and the American version of semiotics. For clarity, we will call Peircean semiotics “semiotics” and Saussurean semiotics “semiology.”

Peirce was an original but often daunting thinker. Part of the difficulty in understanding Peirce lies in grasping his basic points and assumptions. Peirce was first and foremost a logician. But logic was not just a tool for thinking for Peirce. Logic was a fundamental property of nature, and the glue that holds together reality. This power of logic is best seen in Peirce’s work in his model of signs.

For Peirce, a sign is a triadic entity whose nature is based on logical concepts. The three irreducible components of a sign are the *sign*, the *object*, and the *interpretant*. But before we can discuss them, we need to review a few basic concepts.

One of the key relations in logic, especially logic as applied to the empirical world, is the notion of *contingency*. A contingent relation describes how one thing might lead to another thing. We can describe a contingent relationship in the following formal manner:

If A, then C

“A” stands for the *antecedent*, or literally, that which comes before. “C” stands for the *consequent*, or that which comes after. Consider the following simple example: If “you drop a 1,000-pound weight upon your toe,” then “you will smash your toe.” The dropping of the weight is the antecedent, and the smashing of the toe is the consequent.

Peirce would call this simple sort of relationship an unmediated relationship. These sorts of relationships happen all the time, and they are the basis for, among other things, simple Newtonian physics. But not all relationships in the world are unmediated. There are any number of relationships that are not only mediated, but are necessarily mediated. By that, Peirce means that they cannot be reduced to some more basic subset of unmediated relationships. For these sorts of relationships, we need a different (although related) formal model:

If *O*, by *S*, then *I*

Here, *O* stands for the object, *S* for the sign, and *I* for the interpretant. Each of these terms has their own unique properties. We can see these properties by comparing them to the antecedent and the consequent from the unmediated relationship.

Let us start with the sign. In all semiotic situations, the sign is that part of the relationship that is manifest. In the case of humans and other animals, it is the part of the relationship that is actually present and perceived (it is important to note that, for Peirce, semiotic relationships do not necessarily depend on perceivers, but this part of semiotics is well beyond the scope of this entry). That is, it is the part of the relationship we directly attend to. But we do not just attend to it for its own sake. It also directs us in some fashion to the object.

Unlike the sign, the object is never present. If it were, then there would be no need for the sign. The object would just stand as an antecedent in its own right. For our example, let us suppose that our sign is a piece of paper with the words *a 1,000-pound rock* written upon it. Because we understand English, these words direct us to the absent object, namely the 1,000-pound rock. Unlike Saussure, Peirce had no problem with the actual object being a real existing rock and not just a concept of a rock. Of course, it could be a concept of a rock as well. There are also a number of systematic ways that a sign directs us to an object, but those details can be found elsewhere. The important thing to remember is that the sign is acting as an antecedent, but only as a stand-in for the object.

The interpretant, therefore, is the mediated consequent. That is, it is the consequent we get when we let the sign stand in for the object, instead of letting the object stand as an antecedent on its own terms. We can clarify this with a simple and trivial example. Suppose we drop the sign, or the piece of paper with the words written on it, on our bare foot. The consequences will be much different than if we had dropped the actual object on our foot!

For many circumstances, especially when dealing with human beings, the mediation involved becomes a matter of making sense of how to deal with the object as represented by the sign. That is, the act of mediation very often deals with making or discerning meaning. In these cases, the interpretant is most often characterized by an act of interpretation. But it is a mistake to simply equate the interpretant with interpretation (Peirce’s choice of terms here does not help matters, by the way). Sometimes we have to make meaning out of a mediated relationship, but other times, we need to discern meaning that was not immediately apparent but is nonetheless important. In that case, the interpretant is much more of a discovery than an interpretation.

Semiotics takes a very sophisticated stance to the topic of meaning in research and theory. Unlike, say, radical constructivism, semiotics does not assume that the world is meaning-poor. It acknowledges that there is much meaning already in the world, waiting for us to discover it. It also acknowledges that we are constantly engaging in a process called *semiosis*. Semiosis is the act of working with signs to make sure that we understand the world as completely as we possibly can. Whether we find meaning or make meaning, the goal is the same—to live in a world that makes perfectly good sense. Therefore, semiotics also acknowledges that meaning is not just a pleasant or comfortable part of our lives. To the contrary, the drive to meaning is compulsive and consuming. We cannot live in a state that Peirce called *genuine doubt*, where we are not sure of what something or some circumstance means. Our very survival may depend on getting from genuine doubt to true understanding as quickly as we can. When applied to research, this means that researchers can never be casual about the topic of meaning. Our efforts to try to live in a world free of genuine doubt colors everything we do, and it can affect our research efforts if we are not careful. In fact, one of the most important things a semiotic researcher can do, if need be, is to purposely suspend the need to resolve genuine doubt in order to get at deeper and more subtle issues.

There are not as many practicing semioticians as there are semiologists, but there is important work here nonetheless. Thomas Sebeok was the most important semiotician of our era. His work on expanding semiotics into work especially with animal behavior was very important. Ireneus Eibl-Eibesfeldt combined the ideas of ethology with semiotics in his research of human behavior. John Deely has contributed important theoretical and historical research contributions. John Josephson has systematized and extended much of the current work on abductive reasoning, particularly into the realms of expert systems and artificial intelligence. In education, there is the lively Special Interest Group in Semiotics and Education that has been part of the American Educational Research Association for over 20 years.

Semiotics and Qualitative Research

Before we talk about semiotics in qualitative research, we need to make a few distinctions about research directions in semiotics per se. Most important, there

are important research differences between semiology and semiotics. Semiology assumes that signs are a vehicle of communication, and that in semiological research we engage in a conversation with the world. Semiotics focuses on the logical relations inherent in signs, and in semiotic research we use signs to reveal and discern the world. Both aspects are important in the overall project of semiotic research.

How do we use semiotics in qualitative research? There are few specifically semiotic research tools. Instead, semiotic research is motivated by a set of fundamental assumptions about research and the world. Note that these assumptions move back and forth between semiology and semiotics:

The world can be read just like a text. One of the great legacies of medieval Christendom is the notion that God was the author of two books. The first book, obviously enough, was the Bible. The second book was the World. Medieval thinkers often assumed that the world was full of lessons for our edification. Actually, this notion can be found as far back as the fables of Aesop. Today, we are not just looking for morals and lessons. We are interested in how the world can come together as a coherent and meaningful whole and in the implicit and explicit codes that allow this to happen.

The world is always talking to us. Peirce once insisted that the world was perfused with signs. Since we are always searching for meaning in order to avoid genuine doubt, we are always drawing guidance and affirmation from the world. Therefore, there is usually a meditative or even contemplative dimension to semiotic research, where we allow the order of the world to come to us on its own terms.

The world is rich in meaning. Semioticians go beyond the notion that we make all the meaning we find, either singly or collectively. We share Peirce's sense that there is some form of logical order to the world, and that there are things in the world that are meaningful on their own terms, and not necessarily on ours. Stepping outside our own personal or cultural frames of meaning can be one of the most exciting forms of semiotic research.

The presence or absence of specific things often serve as clues to the nature of reality. One good way to think of semiotic researchers is to compare them to detectives. Signs are often clues and symptoms and

omens of things. Our job is to find them in intelligent and creative ways. Numerous semioticians have argued on the semiotic nature of the work of Sherlock Holmes. Eco also created the archetypal semiotic detective in William of Baskerville, the hero of his best-selling book (and movie) *The Name of the Rose*.

Although semioticians assume the world can be understood, we do not necessarily assume that it can always be understood easily in human terms. This awareness is a summary of all the points above. Simply put, semioticians try not to impose order on things, unless they are things we are supposed to impose order upon. Most of the time, we watch, learn, synthesize, and organize. If we are patient, we are often rewarded with startling, and even beautiful, insights.

At this time, semiotics is important to qualitative research mainly as a related discipline. Should qualitative researchers choose to employ some of the perspectives listed above, the links between semiotics and qualitative research might become more explicit over time. In the meantime, there are important periodicals that can keep the interested qualitative researcher informed on the latest ideas within semiotics. The flagship semiotic journal is *Semiotica*, the official journal of the International Association of Semiotic Studies. *The American Journal of Semiotics* is the journal of the Semiotic Society of America. The Special Interest Group in Semiotics and Education publishes the *International Journal of Applied Semiotics*. Finally, Toronto, Canada, has been a hotbed of semiotics in North America, and the Toronto Semiotic Circle publishes a number of important source journals, including the long-running *Semiotic Review of Books*.

Gary Shank

See also Abduction; Metaphor; Postmodernism; Poststructuralism

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SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. The researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews, but in contrast to structured interviews or questionnaires that use closed questions, there is no fixed range of responses to each question.

Researchers who use semi-structured interviewing develop a written interview guide in advance. The interview guide may be very specific, with carefully worded questions, or it may be a list of topics to be covered. The interviewer may follow the guide to the letter, asking the questions in the order they are given, or the researcher may move back and forth through the topic list based on the informant's responses. In either case, the topics of the interview guide are based on the research question and the tentative conceptual model of the phenomenon that underlies the research.

Semi-structured interviews use many kinds of open-ended questions. Some questions may ask for relatively concrete information such as, "What did the doctor tell you about your mother's diagnosis?" Or they may ask for more narrative information such as, "How did you come to be the person who is taking care of your mother?" In addition to questions directly related to the concepts under investigation, semi-structured interviews also use a variety of probes that elicit further information or build rapport through the researcher's use of active listening skills. For example, the question, "What did the doctor tell you about your mother's illness?" might be followed up by a paraphrase such as, "So the doctor never used the word *dementia*?" or by a reflection such as, "It sounds like you were pretty upset." Similarly, the question, "How did you come to be the person taking care of your mother?" could be followed up by a neutral probe such as, "Can you tell me more about what that was like?" Or if the response was lengthy, by a brief summary statement.

Semi-structured interviews are especially useful in research questions where the concepts and relationships among them are relatively well understood, such as in typological analysis; in contrast, unstructured interviews are more useful when the identification of important concepts is one of the research aims, such as in phenomenology. Because of the degree of structure in this interview format, the resulting text is a collaboration of investigator and informant. In order to ensure interpretive validity, the interviewer must avoid leading questions such as, "What was the main benefit of your mother's stay in the respite unit?" A better question would be, "How would you evaluate your mother's stay in the respite unit?" The latter question does not lead the informant into providing only one kind of evaluation. For both unstructured and semi-structured interviews, the development of rich, relevant data rests on the interviewer's ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information provided by the informant.

Lioness Ayres

See also Active Listening; Closed Question; Interview Guide; Open-Ended Question; Structured Interview; Typological Analysis; Unstructured Interview

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SENSITIVE TOPICS

In qualitative research a sensitive topic presents a threat to the researcher, the participants, or the community to whom the participants belong. This threat is sufficient to create significant problems for doing the research and/or disseminating the data.

Topics that are typically regarded as sensitive include studies on sexual health or deviant or illegal conduct, as well as studies where the population under research is in a significant power imbalance with the wider population. It is important that researchers recognize that individual topics are not inherently sensitive, but that their social contexts make them so.

The sensitivity of a research topic may arise in several ways. Research may intrude into the private sphere

of a participant's life, as in the case of exploring sexual intimacy or religious beliefs. Depending on the cultural context, such intrusions may or may not be perceived by participants as threatening. For example, questions about homosexual behavior may not be viewed as particularly sensitive in some liberal communities, whereas they may be highly intrusive within communities that proscribe homosexuality. In other words, conduct that is considered acceptable in one community may be defined as disreputable in another community, and thus cause participants to fear that they will be judged or that harm may even be brought to the reputations of their community. A consequence of this fear may be a reporting bias, which has implications for data collection as well as reliability and validity.

There are a number of strategies available for managing and reducing the sensitivity of a topic. Participants should receive appropriate information to properly give informed consent. Such information should anticipate potential harms and explain how they will be prevented or minimized. Researchers should also build trust with participants and relevant communities by explaining the value of a study and showing that its purpose is not to bring judgment or stigma. Participants need to believe that a researcher has their interests in mind as well as the search for knowledge. To this end, researchers have a responsibility to consider in advance how they will report and disseminate findings.

Some research topics are so sensitive that researchers may have to give unconditional promises of confidentiality to participants in order to gain their trust. On occasion, researchers have faced legal threats to force disclosure of confidential data, which can have a chilling effect on the ability to conduct research as well as place participants and researchers at risk. In such situations, researchers need to anticipate the threat to themselves and participants and must know in advance what they will do to manage such threats.

Researchers need to be sensitive to the culture and values of their participants in order to build trust and understand whether or not they will perceive a topic as sensitive. This need requires diligence in all stages of research design, from problem identification, to data collection, to the reporting of findings. Researching sensitive topics demands careful consideration and management of ethical issues in order to maximize data quality while minimizing harm.

Russel Ogden

See also Confidentiality; Harm; Risk

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SENSITIZING CONCEPTS

Sensitizing concepts are constructs that are derived from the research participants' perspective, using their language or expressions, and that sensitize the researcher to possible lines of inquiry. Sensitizing concepts are distinctive, natural terms used within a researched population that the researcher can also use to develop more generic, social constructs that are useful in studying other social settings. For example, a researcher might adopt the concept *detective work* to describe the process by which a medical professional might interpret clues about a patient's illness and will then use that concept to characterize other professional–client interactions (such as a university counselor trying to gain insight about a student's stated intention for dropping a course).

Historical Lineage

Symbolic interactionism provides the essential epistemological source of sensitizing concepts. Herbert G. Blumer's *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* deals with sensitizing concepts. Based on approaches by pragmatist philosophers, such as James Dewey, symbolic interactionism highlights experience and interaction in particular. In understanding this experience, the researcher must grasp the meaning with which the social actors infuse their understandings and actions. Sensitizing concepts are a logical and even an essential methodological consequence of this premise.

However, it was not until the early 1950s that Blumer coined the term *sensitizing concept* to bridge the prevailing gap (or grave shortcomings) in the then-current theories' all-too-evident separation from the empirical world.

Sensitizing concepts offer three important benefits in qualitative research. First, they are an important methodological device with which to enter the world of meanings of a researched population. Second, they offer the means to transcend the seemingly inherent problem of accumulating unique case-specific data.

Third, they allow the researcher to pay attention to developing concepts that are empirically grounded.

Usefulness in Approaching Empirical Instances

According to Blumer, sensitizing concepts give the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances, suggesting helpful directions along which to look. Sensitizing concepts are starting points in thinking about a class of data about which the social researcher has no definite idea. A concept is usually provisional and may be dropped as a more viable and definite concept emerges in the course of research. According to this approach, meanings are best captured by using sensitizing concepts that contain the words and thoughts that research subjects use to explain their world. As a case in point, a study of northwest Icelandic fishermen shows that they regularly spoke of “going South.” This expression sensitizes the researcher to the practice employed by fishermen to negotiate policy changes in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital in the south of the country. “Going South” captures local initiatives to effect changes, the need to travel to Reykjavik—that is, from the periphery to the center—and the importance of engaging politicians and marine biologists when lobbying for change.

Potential to Transcend Unique Data

Blumer's 4,300-word essay, “What Is Wrong with Social Theory?” decries the aridity of contemporary social theory removed many times from the empirical world, treating social actors as irrelevant.

Blumer, however, had not intended sensitizing concepts to be definitive in the manner of offering a clear-cut identification of a particular class of data. For him there is an advantage in using sensitizing concepts rather than definitive ones. Because sensitizing concepts do not create closure during one's research, he thought they would be most useful in studying empirical instances. Such an inductive approach to the study of micro phenomena allows one to derive generic statements from what constitute unique data from unique settings.

Some Illustrative Examples

Every researcher will have come across sensitizing concepts that allow him or her to enter the realm of the studied population, shedding light on meanings distinctive

"How I Learned What a Crock Was" by Howard S. Becker (1993)

Howard S. Becker reports on a segment of research on medical students that led him to discover "crock" as a viable sensitizing concept.

As I've already said, my discovery of what the word "crock" meant was not a lightning bolt of intuition. On the contrary, it was guided by sociological theorizing every step of the way. Like this. When I heard Chet call the patient a crock, I engaged in a quick but deep theoretical analysis. I had a piece of theory ready to put to work here. . . .

So, when Chet called the patient a crock, I made this theoretical analysis in a flash and then came up with a profoundly theoretical question: "What's a crock?" He looked at me as if to say that any damn fool would know that. So I said, "Seriously, when you called her a crock, what did you mean?" He looked a little confused. He had known what he meant when he said it, but wasn't sure he could explain it. After fumbling for a while, he said it referred to someone with psychosomatic illness. . . .

But, as a good scientist, I wanted to check my finding out further, so I held my tongue. The next patient we saw, as it turned out, had a gastric ulcer, and the attending physician made him the occasion for a short lecture on psychosomatic illness, with ulcer the example at hand. It was quite interesting and, when we left the room, I tried out my new knowledge and said to Chet, "Crock, huh?" He looked at me as though I were a fool, and said, "No, he's not a crock." I said, "Why not?" He has

psychosomatic disease, doesn't he? Didn't you just tell me that's what a crock is? Didn't we just spend ten minutes discussing it?" He looked more confused than before and another student, eavesdropping on our discussion, undertook to clear it up: "No, he's not a crock. He really has an ulcer."

. . . we ended up defining a crock as a patient who had multiple complaints but no discernible physical pathology. That definition was robust, and held up under many further tests.

But my problem was only half solved. I still had to find out why students thought crocks were bad. What interest of theirs was compromised by a patient with many complaints and no pathology? When I asked them, students said that you couldn't learn anything from crocks that would be useful in your future medical practice. That told me that what students wanted to maximize in school, not surprisingly, was the chance to learn things that would be useful when they entered practice. . . . A crock presented no medical puzzles to be solved.

. . . Learning what a crock is was thus a matter of carefully unraveling the multiple meanings built into that simple word, rather than the Big Ah-Ha . . . This little ah-ha may have a lesson for us when we experience the Big Ah-Ha. Intuitions are great but they don't do much for us unless we follow them up with the detailed work that shows us what they really mean, what they can really account for.

Source: Retrieved January 2, 2007, from <http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/index.html>

to that world. Dan and Cheryl Albas have made use of the term *aces* as used by students, opening up fruitful lines of inquiry and analysis. The term *desk science* in research by Will C. van den Hoonaard offers insights into how fishermen view the work of marine biologists. One of the better known examples of a sensitizing concept is Howard S. Becker's discovery of the use of *crock* by medical students. Becker followed a team of medical students in a teaching hospital, and when he heard one student say that a patient was "a crock," Becker followed through on the usage of this term and asked that student, "What's a crock?" Through successive visits to other patients and talking with more students, he realized that students were defining a *crock* as a patient with many health-related complaints but no discernible physical pathology. Crocks were, according to the medical students, not useful for their training in medicine. These patients had no apparent pathologies.

Thus, the medical students rated patients according to their usefulness in training. Nothing medical could be learned from these crocks. Medical students need only to talk to them (patients) to make them feel better. What is more, crocks took a lot more time than students had at their disposal. The patients often had a long medical history with multiple diagnoses, or surgeries: it just took a lot of precious time to get the patients' full accounts. Becker's cluing in to the off-the-cuff usage of a particular term revealed the wider aspects of the education of medical students, establishing what patients were deemed useful to their training, the problem of time, and what constituted healing.

Current Appeal and Use

Sensitizing concepts are experiencing a rebirth of sorts. A wide variety of disciplines are invoking them,

such as nursing, recreation and leisure studies, sociology, demography, social work, communication, and adult education, although virtually no introductory textbook in sociology makes an explicit reference to sensitizing concepts. Even textbooks that explicitly adopt the qualitative-research approach also ignore sensitizing concepts. Nevertheless, the use of sensitizing concepts is now so widespread and commonplace that many social scientists today no longer feel the need to articulate their indebtedness to Blumer.

Will C. van den Hoonaard

See also Analytic Induction; Data Analysis; Emergent Themes; Induction

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SERENDIPITY

Serendipity is a distinctive type of inductive discovery. Robert Stebbins defines it as the quintessential form of informal experimentation, accidental discovery, and spontaneous invention. Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber observe that serendipity can either refer to finding something of value while searching for something else or to finding something sought after in an unexpected place or manner. Serendipity contrasts sharply with a neighboring type of discovery with which it is sometimes confused; namely, exploration. The second is a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking. And whereas serendipity is

highly democratic—at least in principle anyone can experience it—exploration is more narrowly select, the province of those creative people who are trained to routinely produce new ideas. In certain fields of serious leisure and professional work, artists, scientists, and entertainers, for example, routinely explore while, in some forms of casual leisure, people at play (both children and adults), sociable conversationalists, and seekers of sensory stimulation never do this. This observation holds equally well for many nonprofessional fields of work. For this second group, discovery can only come by way of serendipity. For the routinely creative group, however, discovery, though occasionally serendipitous, is nonetheless far more likely to flow from exploration.

Merton, one of a small number of social scientists to discuss serendipity in detail, first ran onto its sociological manifestation during his research on the social organization of Crafttown, his pseudonym for a suburban housing community composed of over 700 families. In this largely working-class community, he observed that a sizeable proportion of its residents were affiliated with more civic, political, and other voluntary organizations than in their previous places of residence. Serendipitously, he noted further that this increase in group participation had occurred also among the parents of infants and young children. This finding contradicted commonsense knowledge, for it is well known that, particularly on the lower socioeconomic levels, youngsters commonly tie parents down. In turn, this situation prevents them from actively participating in organized group life outside the home. This anomalous fact emerged well beyond Merton's original program of observation.

Recently, in a far more detailed examination of serendipity than found in Merton's earlier study, Merton and Barber explore its nature, history, and application in the humanities and social sciences. They observe that serendipity as a term first appeared in a letter written in 1754 by Horace Walpole to Horace Mann. Walpole coined *serendipity* based on his familiarity with the fairy tale *The Travels and Adventures of Three Princes of Serendip*. Serendip is the ancient name of Ceylon (today, Sri Lanka), and the three princes were sons of Jafer, at the time philosopher and king of that country. Serendipitous discovery is evident in places in the tale.

Robert Alan Stebbins

See also Discovery; Exploratory Research; Induction

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SITUATEDNESS

Situatedness refers to involvement within a context. There are two types of situatedness. The first type refers to the involvement of the researcher within a research site. Qualitative researchers should be aware of the situated nature of the contexts in which they collect data. The word *situated* refers, therefore, to the researcher's physically being on site and consequently to research shaped by personal relationships and by linguistic, biographical, historical, political, economic, cultural, ideological, material, and spatial dimensions. A researcher who is keenly aware of the situated nature of researchers can be said to be reflexive.

The second instance of situatedness refers to exactly the same phenomenon, but to a different subject: not only are researchers situated in the contexts they study, but so are the social agents whose lives are being investigated. Thus, situatedness means involvement of social beings with symbolic and material dimensions of sites and with the various social processes occurring in those domains. In sum, situatedness refers to the quality of contingency of all social interaction. As such, it stands in sharp opposition to the universal, determinist, atomistic, and absolute pretensions of classical positivism.

Situatedness is a tricky affair because of the diverse, contradicting, dynamic, uncertain, and constantly shifting ways of being involved in social domains. Different individuals are situated within contexts in different ways—depending on their definition of the situation. For example, teachers and students may share a common understanding of their context (the classroom), but their different perspectives, values, goals, identities, or biographies may make their conduct, experiences, or feelings different. Furthermore, regardless of their role as students, different pupils are oriented toward different classroom situations in different ways: for some, learning may be fun; for others, it may be but a family

imposition; and for others, a physical struggle. As their situatedness in the classroom context and in the various situations typical of this context varies, so do students' and teachers' interactions in relation to grading, attendance, effort, and so on. Because multiple ways of being situated in a context always exist, researchers need to be aware of the multiplicity of voices, possibilities, and interpretations existent within a research site. Since researchers are also situated, they need to reflect on how their observations and interpretations are outcomes of their interaction with that environment.

Over recent years, researchers have engaged in numerous debates over the nature of knowledge. According to some scholars, reflexivity of one's situatedness is unnecessary, difficult, or even impossible, and as long as the researcher's conduct in the research site is made predictable by following precise procedures for gathering and interpreting data, no problems occur. Others believe that reflexivity of one's situatedness as researchers is necessary to avoid bias. For them, the situatedness of knowledge works as a limitation of research based on its contingency. Finally, for a third group, research-derived knowledge is so inevitably embodied, so clearly positioned by such markers as race, gender, class, identity, time, and space that writing about knowledge can be nothing but a modest, relative, partial, relational, standpoint-based narrative—a story with no claim of authority higher than the stories that research participants may tell about themselves.

Phillip Vannini

See also Context and Contextuality; Context-Centered Knowledge; Reflexivity

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SNOWBALL SAMPLING

Snowball sampling uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study. The name reflects an analogy to a snowball increasing in size as it rolls downhill.

This approach to locating research participants is almost always used as a form of nonprobability sampling (although some epidemiological research

applies techniques from social network analysis to variations on snowball sampling as a way to estimate the total size of populations). Snowball sampling is a useful way to pursue the goals of purposive sampling in many situations where there are no lists or other obvious sources for locating members of the population of interest, but it does require that the participants are likely to know others who share the characteristics that make them eligible for inclusion in the study. This method is particularly useful for locating hidden populations, where there is no way to know the total size of the overall population, such as samples of the homeless or users of illegal drugs.

The typical process for a snowball sample begins with interviewing an initial set of research participants who serve as informants about not only the research topic but also about other potential participants. In some cases, the process of snowballing that follows the initial interviews is indirect in the sense that these original sources mostly supply information about how to locate others like themselves; that is, where such people are likely to congregate, how to recognize them, and so on. In classic snowball sampling, however, the initial informant often assists in recruiting additional participants into the study. Depending on the number of people sought, this process of using earlier informants to locate new informants may go through several rounds. For example, a single initial informant might put the researcher in touch with three other sources who might assist in locating seven more new sources, and so on.

In practice, snowball sampling poses a distinct risk of capturing a biased subset of the total population of potential participants because any eligible participants who are not linked to the original set of informants will not be accessible for inclusion in the study. The best defense against this problem is to begin with a set of initial informants that are as diverse as possible. This variation on maximum diversity sampling increases the likelihood that the subsequent links in the snowballing process will reach different segments of the total set of eligible participants.

David L. Morgan

See also Nonprobability Sampling; Population; Purposive Sampling; Sampling

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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

The phrase *social construction* typically refers to a tradition of scholarship that traces the origin of knowledge and meaning and the nature of reality to processes generated within human relationships. The term *constructivism* is sometimes used interchangeably, but much scholarship associated with constructivism considers meaning-making as taking place in the individual mind, as opposed to a product of human relationships. Social constructionism has grown from three separate movements: a critical or ideological critique of dominating discourse, a literary-rhetorical critique of realism, and a social critique that emphasizes the communal origins of knowledge claims. The social constructionist position has significant implications for traditional research methods, both in questioning their authority and in opening up new possibilities, especially in the domain of qualitative inquiry. In qualitative research, social construction brings into specific focus three significant relationships: the researcher's relationships with the subjects of research, with the audience, and with society more generally.

Origins

Although one may trace the roots of social constructionism to early philosophers, such as Giambattista Vico, scholars often view *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter Berger and Thomas Lukmann in 1966 as the landmark volume. Yet, because of its theoretical origins in social phenomenology, this work has largely been eclipsed by more recent scholarly developments, particularly three quite independent movements. In effect, the convergence of these movements provides the basis for social constructionist inquiry today.

The first movement may be viewed as critical and refers to the mounting ideological critique of all authoritative accounts of the world, including those of empirical science. Such critique can be traced to the Frankfurt School, as well as to other Marxist enclaves, but today is more fully embodied in movements associated with feminist, multicultural, anticolonial, gay

and lesbian, and antipsychiatry groups. The second significant movement, the literary-rhetorical, demonstrates the extent to which scientific theories, explanations, and descriptions of the world are not so much dependent on the world in itself as on discursive conventions. Traditions of language use construct what one takes to be the world. The third context of ferment, the social, may be traced to the collective scholarship in the history of science, the sociology of knowledge, and social studies of science. Here the major focus is on the social processes giving rise to knowledge, both scientific and otherwise.

Basic Tenets

The aim in this entry is not to review the emergence of these three movements. Rather, what follows is a brief outline of several of the most widely shared agreements to emerge from these various movements. To be sure, there is active disagreement among participants in these various traditions. However, there are at least three major lines of argument that tend to link these traditions and to form the basis of contemporary social constructionism. This discussion will prepare the way for a brief account of the relationship between social construction and movements in qualitative methods.

The Social Origins of Knowledge

Perhaps the most generative idea emerging from the constructionist dialogues is that what one takes to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in human relationships. What one takes to be true as opposed to false, objective as opposed to subjective, scientific as opposed to mythological, rational as opposed to irrational, moral as opposed to immoral is brought into being through historically and culturally situated social processes. This view stands in dramatic contrast to two of the most important intellectual and cultural traditions of the West. First is the tradition of the individual knower, the rational, self-directing, morally centered, and knowledgeable agent of action. Within the constructionist dialogues, one finds that it is not the individual mind in which knowledge, reason, emotion, and morality reside, but in relationships.

The communal view of knowledge also represents a major challenge to the presumption of truth, or the possibility that the accounts of scientists, or any other group, reveal or approach the objective truth about what is the case. In effect, propose the constructionists,

no one arrangement of words is necessarily more objective or accurate in its depiction of the world than any other. To be sure, accuracy may be achieved within a given community or tradition—according to its rules and practices. Physics and chemistry generate useful truths from within their communal traditions, just as psychologists, sociologists, and priests do from within theirs. But from these often competing traditions there is no means by which one can locate a transcendent truth, a “truly true.” Any attempt to establish the superior account would itself be the product of a given community of agreement.

To be sure, these arguments have provoked antagonistic reactions among scientific communities. There remain substantial numbers in the scientific community, including the social sciences, which still cling to a vision of science as generating “truth beyond community.” In contrast, scientists who see themselves as generating pragmatic or instrumental truths find constructionist arguments quite congenial. Thus, for example, both would agree that while Western medical science does succeed in generating what might commonly be called “cures” for that which is termed “illness,” these advances are dependent on culturally and historically specific constructions of what constitutes an impairment, health and illness, life and death, the boundaries of the body, the nature of pain, and so on. When these assumptions are treated as universal—true for all cultures and times—alternative conceptions are undermined and destroyed. To understand death, for example, as merely the termination of biological functioning would be an enormous impoverishment of human existence. If a nourishing life is of value, there is much to be said of those who believe in reincarnation, the Christian dogma of “a life hereafter,” or the Japanese, Mexican, or African tribal views of living ancestor spirits. The constructionist does not abandon medical science, but attempts to understand it as a cultural tradition—one among many.

The Centrality of Language

Central to the constructionist account of the social origins of knowledge is a concern with language. If accounts of the world are not demanded by what there is, then the traditional view of language as a mapping device ceases to compel. Rather, a Wittgensteinian view of language is invited, in which meaning is understood as a derivative of language use within

relationships. Given that games of language are essentially conducted in a rule-like fashion, accounts of the world are governed in significant degree by conventions of language use. Empirical research could not reveal, for example, that motives are oblong. The utterance is grammatically correct, but there is no way one could empirically verify or falsify such a proposition. Rather, while it is perfectly satisfactory to speak of motives as varying in intensity or content, discursive conventions for constructing motivation in the 21st century do not happen to include the adjective oblong.

Social constructionists also tend to accept the view of language games as embedded within broader forms of life. Thus, for example, the language conventions for communicating about human motivation are linked to certain activities, objects, and settings. For the empirical researcher there may be assessment devices for motivation (e.g., questionnaires, thematic analysis of discourse, controlled observations of behavior) and statistical technologies to assess differences between groups. Given broad agreement within a field of study about the way the game is played, conclusions can be reached about the nature of human motivation. As constructionists also suggest, playing by the rules of a given community is enormously important to sustaining these relationships. Not only does conformity to the rules affirm the reality, rationality, and values of the research community, but also the central purpose of the profession itself is sustained. To abandon the discourse would render the accompanying practices unintelligible. Without conventions of construction, action loses value.

The Politics of Knowledge

Social constructionism is closely allied with a pragmatic conception of knowledge. That is, traditional issues of truth and objectivity are replaced by concerns with that which research brings forth. It is not whether an account is true from a god's-eye view that matters, but rather, the implications for cultural life that follow from taking any truth claim seriously. This concern with consequences essentially eradicates the long-standing distinction between *fact* and *value*, between *is* and *ought*. The forms of life within any knowledge-making community represent and sustain the values of that community. In establishing "what is the case," the research community also places value on its particular metatheory of knowledge, constructions

of the world, and practices of research. When others embrace such knowledge, they wittingly or unwittingly extend the reach of these values.

Thus, for example, the scientist may use the most rigorous methods of testing intelligence and amass files of data that indicate differences in such capacities. However, the presumptions that there is something called individual intelligence, that a series of question and answer games reveal this capacity, and that some people are superior to others in this regard, are all specific to a given tradition or paradigm. Such concepts and measures are not required by "the way the world is." Most important, to accept the paradigm and extend its implications into daily practices may be advantageous or injurious to various people, depending on how they are classified.

This line of reasoning has had enormous repercussions in the academic community and beyond. This effect is so especially for scholars and practitioners concerned with social injustice, oppression, and the marginalization of minority groups in society. Drawing sustenance in particular from Michel Foucault's power-knowledge formulations, a strong critical movement has emerged across the social sciences, a movement that gives expression to the discontent and resistance shared within the broad spectrum of minorities. In what sense do the taken-for-granted realities of the scientist sustain ideologies inimical to a particular group (e.g., women, people of color, gays and lesbians, the working class, environmentalists, communalists, the colonized) or to human well-being more generally? Traditional research methods have also fallen prey to such critique. For example, experimental research is taken to task not only for its manipulative character and its value-neutral stance, but for its obliteration of the concept of human agency.

These three themes—centering on the social construction of the real and the good, the pivotal function of language in creating intelligible worlds, and the political and pragmatic nature of discourse—have rippled across the academic disciplines and throughout many domains of human practice. To be sure, there has been substantial controversy, and interested readers may wish to explore the various critiques and their rejoinders. However, such ideas also possess enormous potential. They have the capacity to challenge oppressive organizations, broaden the dialogues of human interchange, sharpen sensitivity to the limits of traditions, and incite the collaborative creation of

more viable futures. Such is the case in qualitative research as it is in the global context.

The Liberation of Methodology

Given these themes in social constructionist scholarship, what are the major implications for research methods in the social sciences? There are two broadly resounding challenges: First, no authoritative statement about the nature of things stands on any foundation other than its own network of presumptions. All attempts to credit (or discredit) a given research practice rely on historically and culturally situated agreements within a given community. In terms of research methodology, nothing is required by the nature of things because all methods are born out of presumptions about such matters. In effect, it is the presumptive base, generated within a given community, that makes requirements on methodology. What is learned about the world through employment of a given method will necessarily construct the world in terms of its base. Thus, within the social sciences the subject-object dualism embedded within much logical empiricist metatheory is congenial with a concept of persons as responsive to causal inputs (e.g., behaviorism). Both the positivist metatheory and the associated theories (i.e., behaviorist, cognitivist) give rise to methods of experimentation. In contrast, the humanist assumption of personal agency is more congenial with phenomenological research methods. If persons are defined as harboring unconscious motives, as in psychoanalytic theory, then practices of interpreting dreams and fantasies are upheld.

In effect, the constructionist dialogues serve a profoundly liberating function. They remove the privilege of any group to establish the necessary and desirable in methods of research. In broader terms, they relinquish the grip of methodology as the royal road to truth. Methods themselves do not provide guarantees of objective knowledge, so much as they attest to one's commitment to the realities, values, and practices of a particular community.

Yet, there is a second major outcome of social constructionist ideas for research methods. It is not simply the demise of authority that is hastened by constructionism, but the creation of an open field of possibility. Thus, to understand all knowledge claims as socially constructed is not to render them false or insignificant. Again, it is to recognize that each tradition, while limited, may offer us options for living together. In this

way constructionism invites a posture of curiosity, where new methodological amalgams are invited. In recognizing that the realities of today depend on the agreements of today, researchers realize enormous possibilities for methodological innovation.

These two outcomes of the constructionist dialogues have incited intense and broad-ranging controversy within the social sciences and have added force to an enormous creative surge in research methods. At present there are a myriad of questions, dilemmas, and possible trajectories that remain open. In the following section, several more specific implications for qualitative methodology are sketched.

Qualitative Research as Social Construction

Although constructionism makes no necessary demands on either theory or method, many researchers are drawn to the possibility of developing methods congenial with its premises. In particular, the constructionist emphasis on the relational genesis of intelligibility and action stands as a dramatic alternative to the individualist worldview dominating traditional social science. If methods are used to create a conception of the real and the good, is the world community not better served by methods that bring the importance of relationship into prominence as opposed to separation? In this context, there are three significant relationships: the researcher's relationships with the subjects of research, with the audience, and with society more generally. In each case, concerns with relationships lend themselves to particular innovations in qualitative methodology.

Relationship With the Subjects of Research

In traditional research, a strong distinction is drawn between the researcher and the subject matter under study. On the individualist account, the researcher should remain distant and dispassionate, and any relationship with the subject should be standardized and impersonal. In this way, an objective stance can be maintained, and the researcher's theoretical orientation will not bias the research outcome. Yet, as many see it, such relationships can be both alienated and exploitative in character. They also eliminate the subject's voice from determining the conclusions of the research. These concerns with relationships are highly congenial with a variety of innovations in qualitative

methods. At the outset, the narrative movement in qualitative research was highly significant in opening a space for the voice of the subject to be heard. Removing the researcher's mediation altogether, autoethnographic methods enable researchers to use their personal experience to illuminate various life-worlds. In action research, it is largely the voices of those to whom the researcher offers services that determine its outcome.

Relationship With the Audience

Traditionally the relationship between researcher and audience is that of teachers to their colleagues. Researchers enlighten their colleagues through reports on their theories and findings. Although this tradition does build viable communities of practice, it is also problematic in its creation of boundaries between communities and in its discouragement of communication with the society at large. Further, the concerns of those under study are typically sacrificed to the conventions and values of the field. In effect, the professional guild uses its observations of society primarily to strengthen itself, with little offered to the society from which the research was taken. Such critique has fueled a variety of methodological developments. For example, some researchers have sought ways of writing collaboratively with their subjects. Others have turned to visual methods of expression, using photographs taken by participants. An active international research group now pursues performance modes of representation, live and on the internet, not only to enrich the rhetorical capacities of the sciences, but also to create forms that appeal to a broad general audience.

Relationship With Society

In traditional, truth-seeking research, the relationship of the science to society tends to be both distant and inconsequential. The researcher's task is to establish what is the case; applications are left to others (i.e., not creators, but users). In effect, communication with the outside world is minimal, as the concerns of the scientific community are not necessarily those of the society. Further, the traditional search for universal principles of human functioning carries with it a conservative politics. The focus is on what must endure as opposed to what can be changed. From a constructionist perspective all research serves the ends of those cultures or subcultures

in which it is spawned. And, to the extent that intelligibilities can be transformed, so may patterns of societal life. Thus, for the researcher, the pressing concerns of the society may be prime stimulators of inquiry, and the methods may be tailored to achieve social change. For example, critical discourse methodology is exemplary of research growing from societal concerns and liberatory in its ultimate political goals. Similarly, the myriad methodologies of participatory action research (PAR) are tailored to the specific, change-oriented investments of various, often marginalized groups in society.

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See also Autoethnography; Discourse Analysis; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Phenomenology; Politics of Qualitative Research; Power

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SOCIAL CONTEXT

Social context refers to the specific setting in which social interaction takes place. Social context includes specific, often unique meanings and interpretations assigned by people within the given group. Understanding the social context of a particular setting demands that researchers seek to understand and interpret meaning according to those in the setting, rather than meaning according to the researcher.

Researchers face important considerations related to social context. First, researchers must understand that meaning and knowledge are socially defined. That is to say that the people in a particular group or population collectively define the meanings and significance assigned to symbols, words, objects, and actions. Thus, researchers must seek to understand what particular actions, words, and objects mean to people in a particular setting, as opposed to what these may mean to the researcher.

For example, a wave or wink in a particular culture or setting may communicate a warm greeting or friendly joke by one definition. In a different social context, however, these actions might signify a completely different message. In other words, the meaning of a particular action or behavior must be understood in relation to the setting and system of which it is a part.

Understanding of meaning in a particular social context requires that researchers understand that it may be impossible to separate this socially constructed knowledge from the specific setting. This impossibility leads to two issues of interest. First, making comparisons or generalizations across groups may be difficult or inappropriate and presents a much-discussed problem. Second, both qualitative research and social context demand that researchers report findings in the language used by the participants. Hence, social context is directly related to the language and descriptions used to report findings, which has been criticized in quantitative circles.

As researchers are themselves a part of a particular social context, they must be aware of their own experiences and perspectives and how this may influence their conclusions and interpretations of meaning. This situation has raised questions about the role of bias, which stems from the realization that there is no theory-free knowledge. The general thinking is that these points of view (or biases) cannot be eliminated completely; researchers should actively ask themselves questions such as, "What does this (action, word, symbol) mean to them?" Such a focus, while not eliminating bias, maintains the researcher's focus on the meanings defined by the participants, rather than on the researcher.

For example, researchers must be careful not to assign their own meanings to practices such as working, teaching, marrying, or sport. Rather, they must remember that understanding these actions requires an understanding of the meaning that individuals, not the researcher, assign to them. Only through the particular social context that is locally defined can meaning be understood.

The social context, including the researcher as part of that context, is an important consideration for all qualitative researchers. Most particularly is the realization that the interpretation of data must be contextualized if it is to be meaningful and understood by others.

Nicholas J. Pace

See also Context and Contextuality; Context-Centered Knowledge; Cultural Context; Observer Bias

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice, broadly defined, refers to a condition whereby all people are afforded fair opportunities to enjoy the benefits of society. Although many different specific conceptualizations of social justice have been posited, most agree that it is directly related to and influenced by the larger social, political, economic, and educational schema of a society and that it exists in varying degrees in each given context. When arbitrary distinctions are made between individuals and groups in the assigning of basic rights, responsibilities, and opportunities, conditions of social justice are greatly diminished; when all members of society are given equal freedom to pursue their desired ends, social justice can potentially flourish.

Instances of oppression have severely infringed upon the development of socially just societies. Although effectively meeting the needs of some, inequitable and historically entrenched policies, rituals, customs, and habits disproportionately and pervasively punish others. Without consideration of merit, the chances that people have to achieve educationally, advance economically, and function socially are significantly dependent upon where, how, and/or to whom they are born. These drastic discrepancies are widespread and can be witnessed across the diversity of society's sectors. Conditions of social justice (those that maximize the fundamental rights and liberties of all people), then, are formidably contested by the injustices of the past and present.

Contested Territories

The inequalities and injustices that counter conditions of social justice are often identified in relation to specific issues of diversity. Among these are issues related to race or ethnicity, social class (socioeconomics), gender, religion, sexuality, and ability. Some common considerations in each of these contested territories are briefly described below.

Race or Ethnicity

Instances of racism at individual, institutional, and societal levels have long inhibited people from non-dominant racial and/or ethnic groups from achieving comparable social standing as members of dominant groups. The effects of racism can be seen in many areas, including education (e.g., students of color may be placed in less rigorous courses, score lower on standardized tests, and graduate from high school and college at lower rates), business (e.g., people of color may be drastically underrepresented in positions that pay the most and wield the most influence), and politics (e.g., especially at state and federal levels, politicians of color may struggle to gain necessary support and/or attention to get elected). In addition, broader indicators of social advancement adamantly confirm that people of color suffer the brunt of unjust systems. For example, people of color are incarcerated at exceedingly high rates, own homes at extremely low rates, and are often labeled—both overtly and covertly—as being deficient in comparison with the dominant White “norm.”

Social Class

The historical permanence of issues of poverty can, like those of racism, be witnessed throughout the various spectrums of society. Children who are born into low-income households may receive inadequate early-childhood intervention (related to health, nutrition, and psychosocial support), may attend schools that are significantly underresourced, may be exposed more frequently to violence, and may be stigmatized with predesigned places on the lower rungs of the social ladder.

Gender

In the midst of legislation and policies that call for equal opportunity in the educational, professional, and social sectors, many women continue to be treated unequally. In comparison with men, women are less represented in educational fields of math, science, and engineering; paid less for similar work; and are less represented in top-level corporate, civic, religious, and political positions. Among countless other indicators of injustice, these conditions demonstrate the continued centrality of gender oppression in contemporary society.

Religion

Social injustices related to religion have been particularly evident in recent years. Deep-seated historical and philosophical differences between members of different faiths have been played out visibly and violently on the world stage. Additionally, in conjunction with the violent actions of extremists who perversely purport affiliation with given religions, those who legitimately and peacefully practice certain faiths may be subjected to widespread distrust and religious profiling by others—including members of more socially accepted faith denominations.

Sexuality

Issues of injustice related to sexuality or sexual orientation have also been notably prevalent recently. From debates between national political actors, to seminars in college classrooms, to discussions at school board meetings, an emergent mainstream engagement with issues of discrimination based on sexual orientation has proved necessary due to the continued individual and societal-level demonstrations of heterosexism.

Ability

Inequities based on ability also continue to be problematic. These inequities are evident both in the way that those who have disabilities are treated (placed on the fringes of relevance in educational, professional, and social circles) and by whom is labeled as having a disability (with disproportionate frequency, students of color, those who are poor, and those whose first language is not English).

With acknowledgment that problems exist in each of these issue areas, a common perception remains that individual instances of overt disparagement and disrespect—microaggressions—are the primary manifestations of oppression and that society, as a whole, is basically fair. Such positions, which overlook powerful statistics of oppression such as those alluded to above, often point to significant legal advances in civil rights (such as *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title IX) in describing a level playing field that is only incidentally disturbed by distorted individuals. Although it is true that foundational civil rights legislation has helped establish environments of possibility (where there once

appeared to be no hope), it can be seen, upon honest examination, that the oppression that limits the emergence of a socially just society is much deeper and complex than what is written in law. Social justice can be approached only when such changes in writing are accompanied by fundamental transformations to institutional structures and societal rhythms. For although people from nondominant groups certainly continue to suffer from and are limited by microaggressions, they are most dehumanized by their still-extraneous role in the writing of society's master narrative. Until those of diverse races, ethnicities, social classes, religions, sexual orientations, and abilities are comprehensively included in this public conceptualizing of truth, it has been suggested that social justice might remain an abstraction that is theorized rather than a reality that is concretized.

Qualitative Research: Moving Toward Social Justice

Social justice, then, is an idealized condition that is contested on multiple fronts. The influence of historical oppression continues to hold a strong grip on all societies—even those who progressively seek the maximization of personal liberties for all.

Efforts to bring about greater social justice have certainly been witnessed in various political and activist movements throughout history (such as the multiple civil rights movements), but in the field of research, work directed toward social research has emerged with regularity only in recent years. Of particular note has been the mainstream development and wider dissemination of qualitative research (in its diverse forms) from alternative paradigms. It is evident that such work, when informed by critical theories and employing emancipatory methods, can become a key instrument in the purposeful pursuit of social justice.

Alternative Research Paradigms

Until recent years, mainstream acceptance and legitimization of much qualitative research was minimal. Quantitative research tenets such as validity, reliability, and objectivity—ones that are differently defined or altogether irrelevant in qualitative work—were labeled as rigid standards of empirical work, and any study that did not embody such tenets was quickly

disregarded as subjective fluff. Such evaluative standards were indicators of the dominance of positivist or postpositivist paradigms of inquiry—perspectives that seek to prove or disprove universal truths that apply to all people, regardless of their place in society. However, as scholars and activists escalated their analyses of social ills, alternative paradigms (which had long been placed on the periphery of academic discussions) have emerged as appropriate lenses through which mainstream social conditions can be viewed. These constructivist, critical, and postmodern perspectives investigate truth as a context-specific, fluid construction—one that varies and has unique meaning by time and place. They call for deep, qualitative investigations into the complex experiences of individuals and in that they center alternative views of social reality, naturally gravitate toward revealing conditions of oppression and advocating for social justice. Exceptional instances of such work can be seen in the corpuses of writing of Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Michael Dantley, and Joel Spring, among others. Therefore, although quantitative work is still identified as the gold standard by many central power brokers (in politics, education, and research), the burgeoning qualitative niche that is informed by alternative paradigms has made notable efforts to increase equity and justice.

Critical Theory

Tenets of critical theory have guided much of this qualitative research that explicitly seeks the liberation and empowerment of oppressed groups. Housing a broad range of more specifically focused frameworks (such as feminism, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, and critical race theory), critical theory, broadly conceived, is usually distinguishable from traditional positivistic or postpositivistic perspectives in several ways: (a) it questions issues of power, (b) it is political in nature, (c) it centers the voices of those who have traditionally been silenced, and (d) it necessarily stimulates action.

Power: Critical theory questions systems and structures of power that perpetuate injustice. It is rooted in the core assumption that power is disproportionately distributed in most social schema and that those who are not from the dominant race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and/or ability groups suffer from this reality. Critical theory seeks to reveal these power structures and to redistribute power more equitably.

Politics. Unlike quantitative research studies that espouse researcher detachment and neutrality, qualitative research projects that are informed by critical theory are forthrightly political. Activist researchers openly seek the transformation of oppressive political, economic, educational, and/or social institutions, systems, and norms that perpetuate injustice. From critical perspectives, the changes that are sought are radical ones that address the core causes of oppression. Rather than discussing superficial solutions to deal with the symptoms of injustice, critical theory investigates the overhaul of resource allocation and disposition formation. Critical theory, then, is oppositional by nature and serves as a guide in the public discussion of political transformation.

Voice. In its emancipatory work, critical qualitative research centers the voices of people from traditionally silenced and/or oppressed groups. Their voices are contextualized without being normalized in reference to dominant group standards. In other words, the voices of the oppressed are presented in authentic communion with each other as dimensions of an oppressive totality, rather than being focalized in comparison to the mainstream discourse on reality. The counterstories (depictions of reality that differ from those that are typically perpetuated by dominant groups) of social injustice victims are presented as true, insightful, and meaningful on their own accord. The centering of these words can bring awareness to those who remain unaware of the widespread, pervasive nature of systemic oppression and, as described by Paulo Freire, it often helps elevate the consciousnesses of the oppressed themselves—many of whom have been systematically denied visions of different futures. By uniting their words with others who are oppressed, they can forge a solidarity which might lead to transformative action.

Action. Whereas the purpose of quantitative research is usually to explain, predict, and/or control, critically oriented qualitative research seeks to critique and transform. Inferred here is a fundamental value in critical theory for both awareness and action. Critical research is not distinct from movements of social activism—it is a contributing element of them. The quality of critical research is indeed largely dependent upon its effectiveness in stimulating change.

Although critical theories have informally guided change movements for many years, it is certainly

apparent that the increased presence of critically oriented works in qualitative research has contributed to a wider escalation of social justice advances by many members of the academy in recent years. These theories of resistance have served to not only broaden societal understandings of issues of equity and justice, but also to inspire creative methodological alternatives for conducting research.

Methodology

Inferred in the discussion of critical theory is the relevance of procedural considerations in the social justice quest. Specifically, the means must be consistent with the desired ends. Research that seeks to free the oppressed must first vocalize the oppressed. Those who were systemically quieted must be strategically amplified. Accordingly, critical qualitative data are collected and analyzed through dialogue, dialectics, hermeneutics, and/or participatory methods. It employs research designs such as ethnographies, autoethnographies, case studies, phenomenologies, narrative analyses, and action research, which are reflective of the very purposes of critical work. Indeed, critical qualitative research has ethical and moral commitments in that it moves the broader research conversation toward social justice by being necessarily rooted in the creative, authentic participation of the oppressed themselves. This differs from quantitative research that relies upon detached experimentation, manipulation, or verification of hypotheses.

The Context of the Social Justice Movement

Efforts to bring about social justice, including critical qualitative studies, have not been carried out uncontested. In the broader society, social justice is conceptualized in highly diverse ways, and many of these conceptualizations are reflective of deeply entrenched, widely accepted, and often unconscious systems, mind-sets, and mores. It is difficult for members of dominant groups to critically reflect upon and ultimately admit to the extents to which they have benefited from privilege. Such admissions to the fundamental influence of oppression and inequality, which occupy important spaces in the greater societal turn toward social justice, can threaten fundamental conceptions of societies as genuinely democratic and

meritocratic. Indeed, those who are relatively comfortable with the status quo often see social justice movements as unnecessary, risky, or even dangerous, and they dispute policies and movements that might alter entrenched power structures. As a result, many people who do not suffer the brunt of institutional and societal injustice are often more likely to contribute to the social good through acts of charity—those that can provide temporary relief within the established social framework—than through acts of social justice—those that seek the transformation of the very framework itself.

Despite the discomfort that some of the established elite might feel about altering social structures so that all people might have equal opportunities to enjoy the economic, educational, and social benefits of society, many critical scholars and activists suggest that each person, regardless of his or her current position in life, can only be fully humanized (the actualizing of human potential) when all people are able to write their futures unencumbered by the weight of oppression. This perspective is one of dialectics and confluences. The burdens of the oppressed are seen as the burdens of all and the emancipation of the oppressed is the advancement of all. The destinies of all people, no matter how different in their current states, are seen as shared. In this light, a socially just society, one where all people have fair opportunities to thrive, is a complex tapestry of mutual economic, educational, and social interdependence.

Peter Miller

See also Critical Race Theory; Critical Theory; Diversity Issues; Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

Social network refers to the pattern of partnerships that channel social interaction. Social network analysis addresses how such ties are patterned and how these patterns influence ongoing bonds.

Relations have patterns whether those relations are absent or present. This concept is effectively universal, outside of very small groups, because social interaction takes time. As time is scarce, individuals tend to specialize with relatively few interaction partners to the exclusion of nearly all others. Exclusion is more severe for specialized kinds of interactions or bonds and is more prevalent in larger populations. Exclusion engenders texture in networks because gaps ensure that “who is in touch with whom” is variable, not uniform.

Social network can be understood in terms of a metaphor where persons (including corporate persons such as states) are nodes, and relations among persons are lines that link those nodes. The metaphor is highly adaptable since nodes can be any kind of interaction partners, such as firms, congregations, or computers, while relations can variously refer to assorted modes of exchange, interaction, or social bonds. Networks are studied in many disciplines, from computer science to anthropology, by methods ranging from mathematical modeling to ethnographic observation.

The graphic device of a network map has considerable appeal. But to create such a map empirically, it is usually necessary to abstract bonds to a limited number of alternatives—for example, as absent versus present—without distinctions of degree.

Jacob Moreno’s sociometry is widely considered to be the pioneering application of the social network idea. Typical studies began with small populations confined by shared circumstances such as a classroom, dormitory floor, or correctional facility. Every individual could be asked about sentiments or attachments toward each of the others. These responses yielded patterns for which labels were devised. Individuals, termed egos, could be *isolates* with no ties or few ties, while *stars* had many ties. Multiindividual patterns were also apparent. Some nodes were connected to others by paths of varying

numbers of steps while others were disconnected and could not be reached, for example, by gossip. A set of nodes, each of whose members had ties to every other, was termed a *clique*. In many settings, multiple cliques were apparent, where two or more distinctive subsets were united by a thick knit of bonds, but where bonds were few (or absent) between different cliques and isolates were excluded from all cliques.

Georg Simmel's accounts of how triads differed from dyads sparked interest in how bonds are affected by surrounding bonds. Many roles, such as in-law or referee, are defined by joint relations to a bonded pair. Transactions, between marriage partners or contestants in a match, are influenced by mutual awareness of how third parties might intervene.

Such concerns help motivate studies of ego-centered networks of focal persons and the others to whom they are tied by frequent interactions and/or formal bonds. When different types of ties—such as kinship, coworkers, and friendship—are distinguished, bonds can be classified as single-stranded versus multiplex. Another concern is whether ego's alters (i.e., the others tied to some focal individual) are tied to each other or not. In turn, such patterns are examined as potential determinants of cohesion, individuality, and social support.

Steven Rytina

See also Ethnography; Snowball Sampling

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SOCIAL SCIENCES, QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN

When one thinks of the social sciences, one typically envisions a group of academic disciplines that study various human aspects of the social world. The social sciences are distinguishable from the arts and humanities chiefly because social scientists employ the use of the scientific method in their studies of human groups, societies, and humanity.

Qualitative research in the social sciences involves the use of a variety of available qualitative methodologies.

Qualitative research, however, is a bit amorphous to define; the most obvious definition is that it is research that uses methods that are not primarily quantitative (numerical) in nature. Qualitative research may also be viewed as using various methods that embrace the quality or essence of something, some phenomenon, or even some event. Some people believe qualitative methods are largely subjective, where the researcher is used as the instrument of data collection or at least as a filter for capturing information on some subject. Other people suggest that qualitative research in the social sciences involves historical tracing or at least some sort of historical contextualization of whatever the researcher is investigating. Those with a more theoretical stance claim that qualitative research in the social sciences is guided by the orientations set forth in symbolic interaction.

Symbolic interaction is one of several theoretical schools of thought available in the social sciences. This orientation maintains that what humans do and say are the result of how they interpret their social world to have meaning; in effect, what people do and say has specific meanings communicated through mutually shared understandings of symbols, the most common of which being language. One reason for these various nuances in meaning for qualitative research in the social sciences is that various disciplines and fields commonly thought of as comprising the social sciences have sought to incorporate their own interpretations and perspectives on the methodological frameworks by which they plan and organize their research endeavors. In this manner, they seek to capture their own discipline's theoretical perspectives and epistemological orientations while using a qualitative methodological paradigm.

The Qualitative Methodological Paradigm

The design of any research study begins with an idea for the study and selection of a methodological paradigm. A paradigm is essentially a worldview, a whole framework of beliefs, values, and methods within which research will take place. Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and interactions, and traces or records created by people. Qualitative research examines the patterns of meaning that emerge from systematic observations of people's words, actions and interactions, and traces or records. The task of the qualitative researcher, then, is to locate

these patterns in the words and actions of people and to offer interpretations of these patterns while staying as close as possible to the social constructions of the participants who originally experienced these words and actions. Thus, following a qualitative paradigm in the social sciences means seeking to allow patterns to emerge in the data in order to discover and better understand how the participants under investigation come to give meaning to things, what these meanings are, and to place into a contextual understanding what people say and do under certain circumstances or in specific situations, given the meanings attached to various objects, events, and phenomena.

What Are the Social Science Disciplines?

When one thinks of traditional social scientific disciplines, one is likely to consider anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, and economics. During the past several decades, however, other fields and disciplines have begun to see themselves as part of the social sciences, slowly giving rise to recognizing other disciplines as part of the social sciences. These include criminology, nursing, public health, social work, education, English, history, women's studies, and even business and marketing. The lines of demarcation between fields of study and disciplines, then, have become blurred, but among the several linchpins that seem to hold them together as the social sciences, are their research methods. All of the new social sciences have incorporated the qualitative paradigm into their primary research strategies and offer discipline specific qualitative methods courses as part of their curriculums.

In truth, there are many ways to actually conduct qualitative research in the social sciences, depending on whether one considers discipline traditions or methodological orientations. For example, one can assert at least five major qualitative research traditions that are discipline related, which include cognitive anthropology, ecological psychology, ethnographic communication used in English and linguistics, holistic or naturalistic ethnography in education, and symbolic interactionism, commonly associated with sociology.

Cognitive Anthropology

The field of cognitive anthropology focuses on the study of the relation between human culture and human thought, rather than with material, artifacts, or phenomena. Cognitive anthropologists study how

people understand and organize the material objects, events, and experiences that make up their world as the people they study perceive it. Consequently, cognitive anthropologists explore how people make sense of reality according to their own Indigenous cognitive categories, not the analytic creations or interpretations of the researcher.

Ecological Psychology

Ecological psychology views the world as divided into two distinct domains: the environment and the person. This perspective offers a picture of the world as consisting of matter and material objects in motion, in the environment, and as distinct from a second separate dynamic cognitive realm. One can envision this second realm as that of mental phenomenon, a realm where materialistic accounts and natural law do not apply. What one might consider phenomena of psychological interest—such as perceptual experiences, thoughts, and emotions—are located in this realm of the person, yet the causes of these psychological phenomena should be understood as occurring in the material domain—the environment. Ecological psychology is sometimes described as an analytic framework that seeks to reveal functional relationships in the ongoing reciprocal interactions between the realms of the person and the environment.

Ethnographic Communication

Ethnographic communication examines language and its use. At the societal level, ethnographic communication examines what functions language serves. For example, many languages contain terms that serve a social identification function in society by providing linguistic indicators that may be used to reinforce social stratification or to maintain differential power relationships between groups. Linguistic features are often employed by people consciously or unconsciously to identify themselves and others and thus serve to mark and maintain various social categories and divisions. At the level of the individual and the group, then, ethnographic communication examines groups interacting with one another to understand how the function of communication may be directly related to the participants' purposes and needs. These may include categories of functions such as *expressive terms* (conveying feelings, sentiment, or emotion), *directive terms* (requesting or demanding), *referential*

terms (true or false statements, with propositional content), *poetic terms* (connoting a sense of aesthetics), *phatic terms* (offering notions of empathy and solidarity), and *metalinguistics* (referring to language use itself).

Holistic or Naturalistic Ethnography

Holistic or naturalistic ethnography has commonly become part of the research repertoire in the study of schools and education. This ethnographic process seeks to provide holistic and scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts (as applied to educational research). It is loosely based on classical ethnography that tends to focus on an entire social group or organization; the goal of a holistic ethnography is the description of an entire cultural system, or in the case of its use in education, an entire educational process, school, or a classroom experience.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, or interactionism for short, as mentioned above, is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. Interactionists focus on the subjective aspects of social life rather than on objective, macrostructural aspects of social systems. This forms the substantive basis for symbolic interactionism as a theoretical approach whose orientation is generally acknowledged to derive from the works of John Dewey, Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, and Herbert Blumer, the last often considered the primary founder of symbolic interactionism. Interactionists base their theoretical perspective on the idea that humans account for meaning in two basic ways. First, meaning may be seen as intrinsically attached to an object, event, phenomenon, and so forth. Second, meaning may be understood as a psychological accretion imposed on objects, events, and the like by people. Thus, meanings are attached to objects, events, phenomenon, and so forth as part of the social process in which these items take place.

For interactionists, humans are pragmatic actors who continually adjust their behavior to the actions and reactions of other actors. People can adjust to these actions only because humans are able to interpret the actions of others; that is, humans are capable of denoting actions symbolically and treating these actions, and those who perform them, as symbolic

objects. This process of adjustment is aided by humans' ability to imaginatively rehearse alternative lines of action before acting—as if performing before an imaginary audience. The process is further aided by the ability to think about and to react to one's own actions and even oneself as a symbolic object. Thus, the interactionist sees humans as active, creative participants who construct their social world, not as passive, conforming objects of socialization.

Methodological Considerations

Methodologically, one can suggest a variety of traditional data collection technologies used by an assortment of social science disciplines; among the more common are biographical and autobiographical methods, case studies, participant observation, interviewing, oral histories and historical tracing, grounded theory approaches, and phenomenological discovery. Today, a number of innovative data collection strategies that once were considered splinter or off the mainstream have begun to appear in greater frequency; these include action research, photo-voice, visual ethnography and other photographic and visual recording techniques, and e-interviewing. Given the breadth and depth of qualitative research in the social sciences, it would be inappropriate to explain in detail all of these techniques here or try to associate any of them with a particular discipline or field of study in the social science. However, it would seem appropriate to at minimum briefly define each of the traditional strategies, and these definitions are offered below.

Biographical and Autobiographical Methods

Autobiography is perhaps the most widely accepted form of personal document in the social sciences. Most sources will suggest there are actually three major types of autobiography: comprehensive, topical, and edited. The comprehensive autobiography spans the entire life of an individual and includes detailed descriptions of one's life experiences, personal insights, and anecdotal reminiscences. Topical autobiographies, unlike the more well-rounded and complete description of experiences offered in a comprehensive autobiography, provide a more fragmented picture of an individual's life. The typical topical autobiography is more of an excision from the life of a subject than is the full life description. The edited autobiography involves the researcher serving as a kind of editor and

commentator who eliminates any repetition in descriptions, shortens lengthy discourse to more direct and crisper statements, and amplifies selected portions of the biography while deleting others.

Case Studies

Case studies can be defined in a number of ways. Some sources will define case studies as attempts to systematically investigate an event or set of related events with the specific aim of describing and explaining the phenomenon. Other sources may suggest case studies seek to examine a single setting, single subject, single event, or even a single depository of documents. Regardless of one's personal favorite, most definitions will indicate it is a method that involves systematically gathering enough information about some particular individual, social setting, event, group, or organization sufficient to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject of the study experiences things as he, she, or they operate and function in their group or setting.

Participant Observation

In general, participant observation involves the process of immersing oneself into the natural setting of some group of people from whom the researcher is not too different or from which the researcher may already be a member. Research is undertaken either covertly (where the researcher's identity as an investigator is kept secret) or overtly (where the group is informed that the researcher is undertaking a study of the group). The goal of participant observation is to gain an understanding of the various activities and experiences of those being observed in their natural setting. The research methods literature frequently describes includes at least three roles a researcher may take when undertaking observational research:

1. *Complete participation*, where the researcher is an active member of the group and participates in the full gamut of activities and social relationships available to him or her in the group being studied. Frequently, this orientation is undertaken covertly.

2. *Partial participant or participant as observer*, where the researcher may or may not be a full member of the group and where he or she may participate in many or even all activities of the group under study, but need not

participate in any. In most cases, the researcher's presence and identity as a researcher is known by the group (an identified researcher), and thus the researcher can bow out of certain activities if he or she chooses.

3. *Nonparticipant observation* involves an identified researcher intentionally not taking part in any of the usual activities of the group under investigation, maintaining instead a kind of watchful and professionally distant role and relationship with members of the group during observations.

Interviewing

This method may involve one-on-one or face-to-face type endeavors or groups of individuals simultaneously being interviewed by a single researcher or facilitator. Such groups are sometimes referred to as focus group interviews, whereas the face-to-face interviews are frequently described as in-depth interviews. Face-to-face interviews are sometimes placed along an imaginary continuum of rigidity of structure and are described as unstructured, semi-structured, and structured, where the least amount of formal structure is required of the unstructured interview and the greatest amount of formal structure is found in the structured interview format. Although face-to-face interviews encourage individuals to speak about their personal experiences and understandings of their social lives, the group interview makes use of the synergistic energy of the group to encourage people to talk about and to discuss their views and experiences, sometimes negotiating different understandings than some may have held prior to the group interview.

Oral Histories and Historical Tracing

Oral histories are literally the stories and eyewitness descriptions of individuals who have personal life experiences with certain events, phenomena, settings, and so forth. Although the ideal way to learn about this information is by listening to an oral historian, many researchers have recorded and/or transcribed the words of oral historians and created more permanent records of these oral histories. Given the growing accessibility of oral history archives on the internet, a kind of revitalization of this orientation has begun to occur in the social sciences during the past 10 years. It is now possible to locate and actually listen to—via the internet, for example—archived interviews with jazz musicians,

fishermen, townsfolk, and an assortment of other individuals making up a vast variety of social roles one might be interested in researching. Historical tracings tend to draw out their research investigation by examining various types of data typically classified as either primary or secondary.

Primary data are derived from sources such as oral historians, or their transcribed statements, or written testimony of other types of eyewitnesses. These tend to be the original artifacts, documents, and items related to some direct event, or outcome of an event, or some experience of an individual.

Secondary data are sources that include oral or written statements from people who may not have been immediately present during the event or phenomenon being described, but they convey information provided by others who were present or have knowledge about some specific research interest or subject.

Grounded Theory Approaches

Grounded theory is frequently described as a method where the theory emerges from the data itself rather than a priori. Grounded theory is sometimes described as a method that separates theory and data, but in fact, it should be more accurately described as a method that combines the two. Data collection, analysis, and theory formulation are intricately and reciprocally related, and the grounded theory approach incorporates explicit procedures to guide and ensure this. Thus, theory literally springs from and is anchored to the data.

Phenomenological Discovery

Phenomenology is generally understood as designating a philosophical movement that arose during the turn of the 20th century that proposed a radically different grounding for scientific study and theoretical construction. Originally applied to psychology, phenomenology has been adapted to most other disciplines of the contemporary social sciences. The original work on phenomenology is generally attributed to the writings of Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, all of whom wrote at the turn of the 20th century. Methodologically, phenomenological discovery is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view of those experiencing some activity, event, or phenomena. Phenomenological discovery, then, literally can be

described as the study of phenomena—the appearance of things, or things as they appear, in one's own experiences, or even the way one experiences things. Thus, phenomenological discovery seeks to examine the meanings things have in one's personal experience and how these meanings may be shaped and/or used.

Future Directions for Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences

There are several fairly conspicuous similarities in all of the methodological technologies described in this entry, which tend to bind together all of these procedures under the qualitative paradigm. First, all of them tend to examine experiences of individuals under study—regardless of what specific data they seek to collect. Second, all of these orientations and methods seek to explain meanings. And third, none of these orientations or methodological strategies is restricted to any particular social scientific field of study or discipline. Rather, these orientations are extremely flexible and provide a means for being adapted and applied not only in different disciplines, but also over time as technology expands the horizons of qualitative research.

Although most people tend to associate computer technology and the internet with more quantitative number-crunching activities, in fact, qualitative research in the social sciences has reached out to embrace technology as well. Self-administered interviews, laptop computers, or e-interviews conducted entirely in real time and over the internet are fast becoming more common. Explorations of blogs permit investigators to conduct phenomenological explorations of the social worlds of people involved in a wide assortment of areas, fields, and occupations. Even participant observation can be undertaken in a high-tech fashion through the use of digital cameras either attached to a computer or connected by way of wireless transmissions to monitor a particular setting, individual, or group. As qualitative researchers in the various social sciences continue to move forward through the current millennium, it seems clear that they not only will continue to expand their orientations and strategies for data collection, but also will remain tied to the overall qualitative paradigm.

Bruce L. Berg

See also Conversation Analysis; Ethnography; Naturalistic Inquiry; Phenomenology; Symbolic Interactionism

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STATISTICS

Statistics is divided into two categories: descriptive and inferential. The objective of descriptive statistics is to describe or summarize the properties of data that a researcher has collected. Inferential statistics is for inferring from a sample to a population.

In general, the goals of qualitative research (i.e., to identify key trends or patterns and transferable findings and to study in-depth phenomena within small populations) are quite different from the goals of quantitative research (i.e., to discover generalizable results and to study across broad populations); therefore, the use of statistics is not the same in the two approaches. As with descriptive statistics, inferential statistics allow researchers using a multi or mixed method approach to provide another context, a richer picture or enhanced representation, in which to examine the phenomenon of interest. The inclusion of quantitative data can also enhance legitimacy (i.e., validity, credibility, trustworthiness, or transferability), although this may not be appropriate for some qualitative studies. Not all researchers agree with the mixed method approach.

Qualitative and quantitative researchers use three inference modes: abduction, induction, and deduction. Abduction occurs when one studies the facts, hunches, and data and develops general propositions from specific observations to devise a working hypothesis. Inductive reasoning occurs when one tests the working hypothesis. Deductive reasoning occurs when the

researcher begins with a premise (hypothesis testing) typically from a theory and makes inferences after testing that premise. In statistics, researchers deduce that two groups are not the same after observing a statistically significant difference test. Depending on the research being conducted, the three inference modes occur at different temporal locations during a research study. Traditionally, abduction and induction are associated with qualitative research, while deduction is associated with quantitative research.

Because making good inferences is paramount in research, the correct use of inferential statistics is important, when this appropriate. In many qualitative projects, trustworthiness of data is key to quality results; however, statistics may or may not play a role in this process. Therefore, it is imperative to understand a few key components of inferential statistics, such as sample, sampling error, and null hypothesis as related to statistical significance.

Statistical rigor begins with the sample of participants. The sample of participants is a representation of the whole population. Therefore, how the gathered sample relates to the larger population of interest is important. Political exit polling is a good example where a large number of participants answer a question, and an inference about the larger population of individuals occurs. Who was sampled and how they were chosen affects the quality of the results and inferences from those results.

The exit poll data collected, in quantitative terms, are variables. For example, individuals' votes (yes or no) on a legislative bill would be one variable—that is, how they voted. The proportion who voted yes is a descriptive or sample statistic. If every voter were asked how he or she voted, then that proportion is a parameter or population parameter because it concerns the whole population. The values typically calculated from a sample are termed statistics because the complete set of values for a variable from a population is rare. If the sample is representative of the population, then inferences made from those proportions would be considered valid and generalizable to the larger population.

Due to the issues of obtaining a representative sample, the concept of sampling error developed. The sampling error provides an estimate of the calculated statistic. This is why random sampling from the population is desired. If the sample is truly random, there is a reduction in sampling error. Increasing the number of participants will also reduce sampling error risk.

Similar to descriptive statistics, the types of data collected has an appropriate type of inferential statistic

to use. Data that are interval or ratio and normally distributed use parametric tests (e.g., a *t*-test). If these conditions are not met, nonparametric analysis is appropriate (e.g., Mann-Whitney *U* test, the nonparametric version of the *t*-test).

The test of statistical significance is a procedure for determining the probability of a particular result with specific caveats (e.g., that the null hypothesis, no difference between group A and B on phenomenon Y, is true, and random sampling and random assignment of participants occurs). A statistical test does not indicate the probability that the null hypothesis is true or false, does not give the probability that an alternative hypothesis is true or false, and does not indicate if the observed results will be replicated. A statistically significant test could be discussed in the results as plausible in relation to the null hypothesis. The tradition of rejecting the null hypothesis, a statistically significant observation, is too absolute in its conclusion.

Finally, sample size affects statistical significance; that is, the larger the sample, the more likely a statistically significant difference between groups or association between variables will be observed.

Integrating inferential statistics into a qualitative design can be categorized in two ways: sequential and parallel. In the first, sequential approach, a researcher conducts a qualitative study to identify theoretical issues and to develop hypotheses. Next, the researcher conducts a quantitative study with inferential statistical tests to test those hypotheses with a larger sample. Essentially, the qualitative study is performed to identify research problem areas and to determine which research questions should be investigated quantitatively. A second approach is where a researcher completes a quantitative study, first, because the domain is so large (e.g., community characteristics and student achievement across a whole state or province); quantitative information from that study can be used to refine the sample and identify potential research questions for a qualitative study. A parallel approach occurs when a researcher simultaneously conducts a qualitative and quantitative study. This approach has the potential to determine measurement problems and to identify unique aspects of both methods because data are gathered from participants with two methods.

James B. Schreiber

See also Abduction; Deduction; Descriptive Statistics; Induction; Mixed Methods Research; Rigor in Qualitative Research

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STORYTELLING

The universe is made of stories,
not of atoms.

These two brief lines from Muriel Rukeyser's poem, "The Speed of Darkness," offer a succinct affirmation of the significance of storytelling for any discipline of the arts, humanities, and natural and social sciences. In effect, the so-called narrative turn in scholarly inquiry invites researchers to recognize how their particular forms of discourse are ordered as narratives; that is, to think of all discourse as taking the form of a story. Rukeyser reminds us that the worlds we inhabit (perceptual, existential, phenomenal, imagined, virtual, etc.) can for many purposes be understood as being composed of stories. The idea that the universe is made of atoms is just one of those stories.

Within the social sciences, the literature of historical inquiry took an explicit narrative turn in the 1970s, with representative works including Louis Mink's appraisal of history and fiction as modes of comprehension. However, during the same period, historians such as Lawrence Stone referred to the revival of

narrative as a new old history, thereby indicating the durability of storytelling in the historiography of Western societies. Other social scientists who added significant momentum to the narrative turn around this time include Richard Rorty, with his call to see the social sciences as continuous with literature; that is, as genres of storytelling that interpret other people to us and thus enlarge and deepen our sense of community with them. Donald Polkinghorne's book *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, and Laurel Richardson's work on narrative and sociology were similarly generative.

Alasdair MacIntyre provides an ethical imperative for disciplined storytelling in his influential study in moral theory, *After Virtue: A Study of Moral Theory*: "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?' . . . Mythology, in its original sense, is at the heart of things" (1984, p. 216). Some of the most powerful and practical examples of the relationship between ethics and storytelling can be found in the literature that deals with the place of storytelling and narrative structures in finding meaning in illness. For example, Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* examines the ways in which illness can be the beginning of a journey in which the teller calls others into a transformative narrative relationship: personal ethics become social ethics as the suffering individual brings others into caring relationships, which in turn draw attention to social structures and systems that might support such morally responsible relationships.

Some critics of narrative methods argue that sociologists should be story analysts rather than storytellers. For example, Paul Atkinson repudiates the narrative turn in the social sciences and argues that personal narratives, especially illness narratives, misconstrue the essential nature of narrative by substituting a therapeutic for a sociological view of the person. Responding to Atkinson and others, Arthur Bochner defends what he calls "narrative's virtues" and argues that critics who see narratives of suffering as privileged, romantic, and/or solipsistic cling to an idealized (and certainly contested) theory of social inquiry, a monolithic conception of ethnography, a masculine characterization of sociology, and an implicit resistance to the moral, political, existential, and therapeutic goals of deploying narrative methods in seeking deeper understandings of social problems and issues.

Donna Haraway demonstrates the generativity of the narrative turn for the natural sciences in her

critical history of primatology, *Primate Visions*. She argues that biologists observe the performances of organisms and that their testimonies to their experiences of these performances are the "facts" they transform into "truths" that are attested by their disciplined experience and made meaningful within their traditions of social relationships and organization. Thus, in the production of biological truth-claims, she insists that both biologists and organisms are actors in a storytelling practice.

French literary critic Gerard Genette suggests a tripartite framework for analyzing distinctions among literary works that can also be used for distinguishing between various aspects of storytelling: (1) rhetorical moves that create a particular narrative statement; (2) the events and situations that are being described, (that is, the larger story that is being told, given that the same events can be told in different ways); and (3) the act of narrating. In the field of educational inquiry, Carola Conle has demonstrated the utility of applying Genette's schema to the analysis of curriculum discourses-practices. Among other educational researchers who have embraced narrative approaches, Tom Barone's work on critical storytelling follows Rorty in connecting educational inquiry with other storytelling genres, including literary fiction and journalism.

Noel Gough

See also Critical Discourse Analysis; Discourse; Discourse Analysis; Discursive Practice; Fictional Writing; Narrative Inquiry

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STRATIFIED SAMPLING

Stratified sampling is a process that first divides the overall population into separate subgroups and then creates a sample by drawing subsamples from each of those subgroups. Within the overall process of sampling, stratification is related to the definition of the population because it requires a prior definition of categories within the population before it is possible to draw samples from those subgroups. This general process can apply to both qualitative and quantitative research. For survey sampling, stratification ensures the degree to which pre-selected subgroups in the population are represented in the sample—otherwise, a process of random sampling always includes the possibility that one of these groups will be substantially over or underrepresented, simply by the luck of the draw. For example, a survey of a city where the population is evenly split between three major ethnic groups might divide the sample into thirds, with each subsample drawn from a different ethnic group to ensure that the size of each group in the sample reflects its size in the population.

In qualitative research, stratified sampling is a specific strategy for implementing the broader goal of purposive sampling. In this case, dividing the larger population into subcategories that are relevant for the research goals ensures that the data will include cases from each of these categories. The simplest kind of stratification divides the overall sample into two distinct groups, but it is also possible to create more than two groups or to draw the subsamples from different points along a continuum.

The most common reason for using a stratified approach to purposive sampling is to do systematic comparisons between the categories that define the basis for stratification. For example, an interview project might examine how parents from the lower, middle, and upper socioeconomic sectors interacted with their children's teachers, while a participant observation project might compare schools where students from low-income families had either above- or below-average performance on standardized tests, or a media analysis project might examine written work from students whose teachers had either less than 2 or more than 5 years of experience. In each of these cases, the overall goal of purposive sampling includes the need to determine the similarities and/or differences between carefully selected subsets of the larger population, and the stratification of the sample makes this comparison possible.

For qualitative research, stratification has a distinct link to quota sampling as a means of selecting cases. Thus, when the purposive selection process calls for data from subgroups in the population, the next step is to select the members of those subgroups that will make up the corresponding subsamples, which amounts to setting a quota for the size of each subsample. For example, if the research design calls for a total of 20 men and women to be interviewed on some topic, then the research design implies a quota of more or less 10 men and 10 women in each subgroup. Of course, the emergent data from those interviews may point toward something other than an even split between the original categories, but the key goal is still to ensure that there are a sufficient number of data sources in each subcategory.

David L. Morgan

See also Purposive Sampling; Quota Sampling; Random Sampling; Sampling

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STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism is a theoretical concept that gained particular currency in the 1960s. It has been interpreted in

a number of different ways, but a common theme is the prioritization of the explanatory power of linguistic, social, and economic structures over individual agency and meaning. Emphasis is also placed on underlying processes and systems that determine individual action.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In order to review the contribution of structuralism to research, it is useful to briefly review theoretical understandings of this concept. Two key examples in relation to language and social relations can be taken from the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis Althusser.

Saussure (1916/1974) focused on the structure of language. He maintained that there is a pre-given structuring of language prior to its realization in speech or writing. He viewed language as comprising a set of signs, with each sign being made up of a signifier (a sound or written image) and a signified (meaning). He maintained that the connection between the two is arbitrary, rather than natural, and that each sign obtains its meaning from its difference from all other signs in the language chain. However, he made it clear that although both the signified and the signifier have no connections when considered separately, when combined, the connection is ratified, resulting in the production of an established fact. Structuralism in language for Saussure was associated with the combining of signifier and signified and with the concomitant fixing of meaning. He regarded this as a product of the conventions of a speech community.

With regard to social relations, structuralism is concerned with determining the real or essential structures that underlie social interaction. In this, the individual or the individual subject is decentered. Althusser (1971) argued, in his interpretation of Marxism, that individual agency and social life is predominantly determined by social structure. He used the term *ideological state apparatuses* to refer to the complex correlation of ideological and political forces within the economy. He maintained that ideological state apparatuses contribute to the reproduction of capitalist relations of exploitation and that language is the means by which the various ideological state apparatuses determine dominant meanings. Accordingly, Althusser argued that individuals are governed by ideological state apparatuses in the interests of the ruling class and by language in the form of

ideology in general. Ideology functions for the individual by interpellating; that is, recruiting or transforming individuals into subjects and agents. He put forward the view that ideology has the effect of making an individual unthinkingly accept their constituted subjectivity. As a result, individuals would perceive themselves to be in control of their own actions and the formulation of meanings, although, according to Althusser's structural analysis, this would be predetermined and inflexible.

Other key figures who have utilized structuralist perspectives include Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lacan used this orientation to explore the unconscious, and he concentrated on producing theoretical accounts relating to the identification of deeper, underlying psychological structures. Barthes, in turn, looked at ways of deconstructing and reconstructing objects in order to reveal the underpinning rules of functioning, and Lévi-Strauss sought to identify the structures that informed cultural systems and myths across societies. As part of this process, he claimed that the universal codes that he identified had an objective validity.

A predominant and deterministic emphasis on the discovery of underlying structures has been subject to considerable critique. Many have sought to emphasize a duality of both agency and structure, and Anthony Giddens, perhaps, provides the most famous example. Giddens promoted structuration theory as a way of not privileging either agency or structure in sociological analyses. In relation to the duality of structure, Giddens points to the interrelationship of both action and structure. He argues that individual actions are guided by social interaction and by an awareness of the overarching structural context. As a result, individual agency remains possible within a structural context where the interaction between the two determines both process and outcome. Michel Foucault conceptualized the relationship between agency and structure in a different way. He looked at how things came to be as they are. He focused on *how* questions, such as how relations between agency and structure have been discursively constituted, how agency is denied to some and given to others, and how structures could be said to have determined some things and not others. He sought by means of genealogy to explore how particular social practices achieved dominance at particular historical junctures. Foucault developed a social relational understanding of power that conceptualized social practices as those "places where what is said

and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect” (Foucault, 1981, p. 5). He maintained that everyday social practices have to be viewed in relation to their discursive contexts to ascertain the historically located relationship between power, language, knowledge, and institutional practices.

The Practice of Research

In relation to the practice of research, structuralism can be associated with positivism, which focuses on the methodology utilized by physical science applied to the social field, and to critical realism, which concentrates on a more qualitative engagement between conceptual deconstruction and reconstruction in the social arena. These connections will now be briefly explored, although it has to be borne in mind that these can be contested and have to be viewed flexibly.

Associations between structuralism and positivism can take a number of different forms, but commonalities include an emphasis on rational inquiry and on uncovering cause and effect, the achievement of objectivity, and the production of value-free knowledge, which is regarded as factual and incontrovertible.

Structuralist and positivist research methodologies predominantly utilize quantitative orientations. These orientations clearly have a different emphasis on qualitative approaches, but they can be used alongside qualitative data collection methods and data analysis techniques to interrogate research questions in different ways. The use of both qualitative and quantitative orientations has been referred to as mixed method or multistrategy research. In the social sciences, there are two main quantitative methodological approaches that predominate. These are social experimental approaches and surveys. With regard to social experimental approaches, there is a concentration on the testing out of hypotheses, the identification of independent and dependent variables, and the production of frameworks for the measurement and control of these variables. With regard to surveys, there are many different types. A questionnaire adopting a quantitative orientation is concerned with systematically collecting quantifiable data relating to a number of variables. The purpose is to statistically examine the data to discover associations and possible patterns or trends.

Qualitative researchers have critiqued structuralist and positivist forms of research for assuming that bias in the social arena can be eliminated. The uncritical

adoption of a particular ontological and epistemological position has also been disputed. The view that it is possible to achieve, by means of rational inquiry, the uncovering of underlying truths or indisputable facts has been interrogated critically. Qualitative researchers, particularly those who have drawn from the many strands of feminism, emphasize that ontological and epistemological positions and research frameworks have to be analyzed critically and that all knowledge claims have to be regarded as partial. Those who adopt a qualitative orientation have also highlighted how individual and group values influence not only what is researched but also how the findings are interpreted and applied. In this, attention has been drawn to unacknowledged power imbalances and to the gendered constructions of social relations. Objectivity is therefore regarded as a particular form of subjectivity dressed up in an unacknowledged universalizing disguise.

The ethical implications of structuralist and positivistic methods of inquiry have similarly been subject to criticism from researchers who adopt qualitative positions. It has been highlighted that as those taking part in positivist research projects are regarded as subjects and not as participants, there is the possibility that the subjects will not be treated with dignity and respect. It has also been contended that sample groups denied choice could be exposed to possible distressing experiences; that self-determination is, by implication, limited; and that subjects may not be fully informed about the purpose of the research. Ethics committees have been established to guard against questionable or unethical practices, but discussion continues between quantitatively and qualitatively orientated researchers about acceptable and unacceptable ways of operating. However, it has to be pointed out that the issues are not as clear-cut as they are sometimes presented. Qualitative researchers have argued that qualitative research has to emphasize factors such as rigor, range, depth, and progression to maintain credibility as well as ensuring an ongoing interaction with moral, social, and political agendas.

The association of structuralism with critical realism results in a very different form of research. Rather than attention being paid to discovering laws that govern human behavior, emphasis is placed on deconstructing or taking apart social phenomena to uncover essential underlying structures. These underpinning mechanisms cannot be revealed by empirical methodology alone, but by constant backwards and forwards

movement between the empirical data and the generation of theory. An example that can be given for illustrative purposes is critical social research as developed by Lee Harvey.

The main tenet of critical social research is that it is antiphenomenalist so that understandings of the real world cannot be formed on the basis of surface appearance. It is also totalistic, and it is contended that the social world cannot be understood independently of the wider social and historical context. Emphasis is placed on the importance of deconstructing existing social relationships to reconstruct alternatives that identify and critique oppressive social mechanisms.

Harvey distinguishes between research methodology, which describes techniques of data collection, and critical social research methodology, which is the point at which method, theory, and epistemology come together as part of the process of directly investigating specific concerns within the social world. According to Harvey, critical social research is concerned with an intrinsic critique of interpretative frameworks. In line with many qualitative orientations, Harvey rejects that knowledge is objective and fixed. Knowledge is viewed as not only dynamic and deconstructive, but also dialectical. Like Foucault, Harvey is concerned with exploring and critiquing taken-for-granted concepts, with placing events in historical context, and with making links between accepted knowledge claims and pervasive social structures. However, unlike Foucault, Harvey's approach has a clear political dimension. His view of power is hierarchical and top-down and is concerned with revealing oppressive structural mechanisms and what is really going on. This approach is designed to cut through ideological legitimations and to mount a political struggle against oppressive social structures.

In conclusion, structuralism, both theoretically and practically, provides a framework that can be used in a number of different ways. It can be allied with the differing perspectives of positivism and critical idealism and both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be utilized. However, structuralism is predominantly defined by an acceptance of underlying structures and rules which in a variety of ways determine individual agency. It also provides a clear point of reference for poststructuralist understandings.

Barbara Fawcett

See also Bias; Empirical Research; Empiricism; Epistemology; Ethics; Evidence; Positivism; Poststructuralism; Quantitative Research; Survey Research

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STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Structured interviews involve administering relatively standardized interview questions to all participants in a research study. This structure ensures that all persons are given equal opportunities to provide data across the same research constructs. Interviews are designed to draw from the interviewee constructs embedded in one's thinking and rationale for decision making. The researcher uses an inductive method in data gathering, regardless of whether the interview method is open, structured, or semi-structured. In all cases, inductively, the researcher wishes to understand what presently exists within the participants, helping them to articulate precepts such that they will be understood clearly by the journal reader.

Qualitative researchers often view interviews on a continuum. One extreme involves open interviews that utilize minimal structure. There is no direction given or hints as to what the researcher might suspect to find. The participant is encouraged to speak freely, taking the interview in whatever direction(s) he or she desires to go.

Structured interviews exist at the other end of the method pendulum. When using this method, the researcher typically has garnered tentative hypotheses regarding what the participant might contribute to the interview. These hypotheses might be generated via previous research, literature reviews, pilot studies, or a priori reasoning. It is important to note, however, that the researcher is not attempting to superimpose his or her own viewpoint onto the research participant or to

fish out perspectives that the participant does not innately possess.

Rather, structured interviews begin with some type of tentative hunch, targeting interview questions in that direction. For example, research studies may show that elementary school girls typically engage in verbal aggression in given circumstances. Does this aggression also hold true for, say, seventh graders? A qualitative researcher might employ structured interview techniques, following up on previous studies from elementary school children. Having some basis of comparison between the two groups may best be accomplished by asking both groups of individuals the same (or similar) questions in this example.

Among others, there are four occasions when qualitative researchers may choose to employ structured research methods. One includes comparison among groups (as previously mentioned). Second, structured interviews can be useful when conducting interview waves. Initiating contact with a participant, using structured questions can be followed up by open or semi-structured interviews later. Third, structured interviews are often used when the primary design of the project is quantitative research, but the researcher wishes to supplement the findings with an open-ended component. In such circumstances, quantitative researchers might be more comfortable with a structured approach to data collection, and interpretations may be more easily integrated into the quantitative findings. Fourth, structured interviews can be the method of choice when interviewing low-functioning individuals such as persons with developmental disabilities or homeless individuals who may have tendencies to ramble or otherwise deviate from the topic at hand. Structured interviews might help these participants focus on the subject and provide some security relating to why he or she is providing audiorecorded data to the researcher.

Michael W. Firmin

See also Closed Question; Data Collection; In-Person Interview; Unstructured Interview

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STRUCTURED OBSERVATION

Structured observation entails the collection of data according to a set of predefined rules and procedures. The structure of the observation and the predefined variables and their values are derived from the purpose of the study. Structured observation is a type of nonparticipant observation in that it involves direct observation of a setting without interaction with participants. More quantitative in nature, it is also referred to as systematic observation.

Structured observation uses observation schedules or checklists in which data are recorded according to predefined criteria as values of variables that have been explicitly defined to ensure consistency in data collection. It emphasizes factual measures (e.g., whether or not a particular behavior has occurred) over those requiring judgment or interpretation (e.g., application of a scale related to the intensity of a particular behavior). As observations are collected in real time, they have a temporal dimension and yield information about the duration, frequency, and sequence of events. Tests of interobserver agreement are conducted to ensure the reliability of data. Structured observation typically involves a strong investment in the development and the pretesting of variables as well as the training and monitoring of observers.

Because of the rigorous quantitative nature of the variables and data collection processes, structured observation is regarded as having the potential to yield results with high validity, making replication and generalization possible. If the same observation schedules and coding schemes are used, it enables comparison across two or more sites.

Structured observation allows for the collection of data (e.g., frequency of particular types of behavior, actions of very young children) that are not readily captured by other methods such as surveys or interviews. Structured observation is appropriate for data collection in both laboratory and natural settings. When combined with interviews, structured observation allows researchers to compare what people say with what they actually do. It is very useful for understanding processes and frequencies of behaviors within a given time period.

Structured observation is not appropriate for a research topic about which little is known, as it requires prior knowledge of the setting for the development of observation schedules. Unlike more flexible

forms of observation such as participant or unstructured observation, structured observation, with its predefined variables and processes, is not effective in capturing behaviors or other features of a research context that are unexpected. Reactivity can be a major problem and should be addressed through purposeful habituation and monitoring. Structured observation is difficult to implement in busy, complex settings where it may be hard for observers to focus on particular behaviors. This challenge can be overcome somewhat through the use of multiple observers, who may increase reactivity, and the strategy of focusing on one participant at a time, which may result in the loss of other data. Structured observation requires highly skilled, well-trained observers who are familiar with and can understand what they are observing.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Nonparticipant Observation; Observational Research; Observation Schedule; Unstructured Observation

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SUBJECTIVISM

Subjectivism is a certain way of conceptualizing subjectivity. Subjectivity is what makes us subjects rather than objects. Subjectivity includes processes denoted by the terms *mental*, *mind*, *conscious*, *experience*, *agency*, *will*, *intentionality*, *thinking*, *feeling*, *remembering*, *interpreting*, *understanding*, *learning*, and *psyche*. These subjective processes comprise the activity of subjects. Without subjectivity, we would only be physical objects devoid of activity.

Subjectivity and Subjectivism

Subjectivity is understandable if we see how it develops over the phylogenetic scale. Lower animals' behavior is devoid of subjectivity. It is a direct, immediate association of a response with a stimulus. The response is determined by a biological program known as an instinct. More advanced animals progressively

develop subjective processes that mediate between stimuli and responses and increasingly determine the animal's response to stimuli. Subjectivity reaches its highest form in humans who think, plan, remember, feel, dream, imagine, anticipate, symbolize, decide, understand, learn, and initiate action on a level that is far more sophisticated, complex, and active than any other animals. Subjective functions determine how humans react to stimuli. Stimuli do not directly determine human reaction as they do in lower organisms.

For subjectivity to mediate stimuli it must be different from them. This difference justifies examining it as a particular order of things, a distinctive phenomenon. This examination is what subjectivism does. It examines the interiority of subjectivity, the active processes that are subjectivity and that determine behavior.

Subjectivism is one conception of subjectivity. Subjectivism construes subjectivity as the product of the subject, or individual. In this view, what we think, imagine, feel, remember, expect, understand, and strive for is entirely the product of ourselves. Subjectivity may utilize worldly things, but always on its own terms, for its own purposes, according to its own processes and laws.

Subjectivism in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Subjectivism has been the dominant view of subjectivity in many fields of scholarship.

Rene Descartes and Bishop Berkeley expressed the core notion of subjectivism. Descartes proposed that mind is distinct from body and world and is a realm of its own. Berkeley expressed this in his classic statement that the world is as one sees it. One's perception does not represent the world. Rather, the world is an expression of one's subjectivity. The processes and principles of one's subjectivity determine how one sees the world; the world does not influence one's perception of it. The direction is entirely from inside one's mind to the outside world.

Immanuel Kant similarly proposed that subjectivity cannot know the world because the two are separate domains. Subjectivity contains its own intrinsic laws, such as ethical principles, that structure one's perception of the world.

Historical discussions, especially intellectual history, often present events as the unfolding of ideas that

are freely decided by people. One hears that the prevailing outlook changed from a focus on national construction to a more international outlook. Philosophies, legal concepts, and marriage customs are thought of as exclusively rooted in thinking, perception, desires, motivation, and reasoning apart from conditions, structures, and resources.

Subjectivism is also a strong tendency in a branch of sociology known as microsociology. Erving Goffman proclaimed his work to be microsociological because it studied face-to-face social interactions. These he defined as interpersonal, face-to-face environments. His work is not about social organization and social structure that are the traditional concerns of sociologists. Anthony Giddens perceptively explains that Goffman's main concern throughout his writings involves individuals directly attending to what each other are saying and doing for a particular segment of time. Even when individuals are group members, their interactions are to be understood in terms of an immediate interpersonal encounter, not in terms of their membership of the group.

Goffman is not interested, for example, in the role of a doctor in relation to the wider medical community. His focus on face-to-face encounters leads him to concentrate on such interpersonal dynamics as mutual eye contact, body space, and details of the conversation acts (i.e., moves) such as turn-taking (timing), silences, and volume of speaking. This conversation analysis lacks a relation to the existence of social institutions including the power relations of who owns and controls them.

Subjectivism is also characteristic of many spiritual doctrines. Hindu yoga, for example, is a systematic method of physical postures and breathing exercises to help concentrate thoughts on a single object to systematically reduce the diversity and rate of flow of thoughts until it comes to a near stop. At this stage, a practitioner of yogic techniques is said to withdraw attention from the object of thoughts to thought itself and further onto the self-as-subject at the center of the universe of experience. Drawing attention completely to the self-as-subject epitomizes subjectivism.

Subjectivism in Psychology

Subjectivism takes various forms in the discipline of psychology.

Jerome Bruner believes that culture is symbolic meanings. He says that social realities are not bricks that we trip over or bruise ourselves on when we kick

at them, but that they are the meanings that we achieve by the sharing of human cognitions. In Bruner's world, we do not encounter and are not bruised by armies, wars, inequality, abuse, exploitation, pollution, global warming, power, poverty, wealth, disease, the world bank, congress, the CIA immigration quotas, emigration restrictions, or prisons. These are not real things out there in the world that directly affect us. They are simply meanings that become negotiated through interpersonal communication. We can readily change these concepts by simply renegotiating them with our colleagues.

Reducing social reality to symbolic meanings is subjectivism because it construes subjective experience as a self-contained realm.

Jaen Valsiner espouses a subjectivist view of agency. Formerly an advocate of Lev Vygotsky's sociohistorical psychology, he now asserts that culture is a set of suggestions that individuals can freely accept, reject, or modify as they wish. Valsiner replaces sociohistorical psychology with a new formulation called *co-constructionism*. In contrast to sociohistorical psychology, which construes the individual as profoundly affected by culture, co-constructionism grants primacy to the individual's decision about how to deal with culture. Acknowledging that his new position is a wholesale rejection of sociocultural psychology, Valsiner says that the logic of the argument supporting the relevance of the social environment in human development is reversed in the co-constructionist paradigm. According to the new paradigm, "most of human development takes place through *active ignoring and neutralization of most of the social suggestions* to which the person is subjected in everyday life" (Valsiner, 1998, p. 393, emphasis in original).

Valsiner even contends that babies construct their own personal goals. They utilize culture as an instrumental means for achieving their own goals; they do not adapt themselves to established culture as social scientists formerly believed.

Subjectivism in Qualitative Methodology

Subjectivism dominates qualitative methodology. It construes interactions between researcher and subjects (through interviews in particular) and the active interpretation of data—which are central features of qualitative research—as a license for the free exercise of subjective processes. The subject is free to express

whatever subjective idea he or she desires, and the researcher is free to subjectively interpret data.

The subjectivistic tendency in qualitative research (which is contradicted by an objectivistic tendency that is described in the entry on objectivism) claims that the world, including the psychological world of subjects, is unknowable. Consequently, the researcher constructs an impression of the world as he or she sees it, without regard for whether this subjective impression corresponds to any reality beyond. The researcher's subjectivity is a world unto itself, which is the classic definition of subjectivism. Validity and objectivity are irrelevant issues here, as is methodology. There is no point developing a rigorous methodology to apprehend and measure a singular psychological reality because it simply does not exist. Qualitative research, in this view, consists of researchers developing and comparing their own accounts of psychology.

This subjectivist approach to qualitative research is expressed by Ken Gergen's (2001) statement of social constructionism—postmodernism: "There is no means of declaring that the world is either out there or reflected objectively by an 'in here'" (p. 805).

The constructionist is not, then, interested in truth as a scientific outcome—or at least truth with a capital *T*—a universal or transcendent propositional network. There may be local truths, established within various scientific fields, within the various communities of humankind, and these must surely be honored from within the traditions of these communities. However, the future well-being of the world community depends on facilitating dialogue among these local traditions. Declarations of truth beyond tradition are, in this sense, a step toward tyranny and, ultimately, the end of communication (Gergen, 2004).

Gergen makes the following points on this issue: "To tell the truth, on this account, is not to furnish an accurate picture of what actually happened, but to participate in a set of social conventions. . . . To be objective is to play by the rules within a given tradition of social practices. . . . To do science is not to hold a mirror to nature but to participate actively in the interpretive conventions and practices of a particular culture. The major question that must be asked of scientific accounts, then, is not whether they are true to nature but what these accounts. . . . offer to the culture more generally" (Gergen, 2001, p. 806). "A postmodern empiricism would replace the 'truth game' with a search for culturally useful theories and findings with significant cultural meaning" (p. 808). "Arguments about what is really real are futile" (p. 806).

A strand of feminism amplifies this idea by repudiating the notion of a real world of phenomena that can and should be objectively apprehended. Instead, science is equated with the subjectivity of researchers. These feminists denounce scientific objectivity as nothing more than a political ideology that is promoted by men to oppress women. For instance, Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983) assert that objectivity is "an excuse for a power relationship every bit as obscene as the power relationship that leads women to be sexually assaulted, murdered and otherwise treated as mere objects. The assault on our minds, the removal from existence of our experiences as valid and true, is every bit as questionable" (p. 169). Stanley and Wise agree with Gergen's position that "there are many (often competing) versions of truth. Which, if any, is 'the' truth is irrelevant. And even if such a thing as 'truth' exists, this is undemonstrable" (p. 169). This position is subjectivistic because it places the subjectivity of researchers at the center of things and denies worldly phenomena apart from the researcher's subjectivity.

Subjectivism in qualitative research additionally accepts subjective accounts of subjects about their psychology as the object of research. The objective is to validate subjective interpretations, meanings, and understandings. This line of research does not seek to explain subjects' subjective accounts in terms of external influences, for this would deny originality and agency to subjects' subjectivity. Nor does this line of research seek to evaluate subjects' subjective accounts by comparing them to other sources of information—such as other people's accounts of the same psychological phenomenon. Subjectivistic research would not compare a child's account of her or his experience with her or his parents' account of her or his experience—for example, a daughter says she was unhappy five years ago and resented her parents, while the parents show photographs of her appearing very happy with them. For this kind of comparison too would challenge the originality and agency of the subject's subjective account. It might prove that the subject misinterpreted her experience or some other event. External data are eschewed by subjectivistic research because it transcends the pure subjectivity of the agent.

Howard Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, for example, abstains from judging peoples' statements as to their accuracy, adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success, or consequences. It only refers to conditions outside individuals when they do. If subjects do not mention social conditions, they are

not introduced by the researcher. Thus, even if people objectively fit the category of lower class (because of their education, occupation, income, family background), they may be discussed as middle class if this is how they subjectively see themselves.

These features of subjectivistic research are illustrated in a study by Dorothy Holland and colleagues on the ways in which college girls experience romantic love. From interviews, she reports that some girls pursue romantic love enthusiastically while others are ambivalent and others reject it. One girl, Sandy, sought romantic love, but had trouble establishing the kind of relationships she wanted with men. She also learned that a potential boyfriend from back home was involved with someone else. So she took a stronger interest in friendships and developed a special friendship with one person. Another girl, Karen, tried to make herself more attractive by suggesting to her boyfriend that she had many other suitors. Holland explained these strategies as based on personal decision-making processes that the subjects employed: These strategies were ones the women themselves had improvised or decided to use. Holland explains the subjects' approaches to love as stemming from personal traits such as their identification of themselves as romantically inclined and skillful. She does not indicate social reasons, models, values, or practices that might have influenced the subjects to adopt these strategies for dealing with love.

Discursive psychology, is another approach to research that is strongly subjectivistic. It typically treats speech acts as spontaneous constructions that reflect individual agency and constitute subjectivity. This treatment is subjectivistic because it construes subjectivity and discourse as spontaneously created worlds in themselves, uninfluenced by external events. Indeed, social phenomena are treated as discursive products; speech is not regarded as denoting worldly events. Culture and psychology are created by people as they speak; they do not stand over people and influence them. Although certain discourse analysts do link discourse to cultural influences, many treat discourse as an entirely subjective process free from external influences or evaluation.

Evaluation of Subjectivism

Subjectivism contributes to our understanding of human subjectivity and psychology because it emphasizes the active role that these play in generating behavior. Subjectivism prevents us from regarding people as mechanical, empty responders to stimuli—as behaviorism, positivism, and artificial intelligence

presume. Subjectivism corrects the widespread tendency in psychology to mechanically associate independent and dependent variables, with no consideration for subjects' active interpretation, comprehension, and/or anticipation. It also corrects social reductionism—discussed in the entry on objectivism—which reduces psychology to social structures.

Yet this contribution of subjectivism comes at a price. Emphasizing subjective activity so strongly and exclusively overlooks social and natural influences on subjectivity and psychology.

A balance can be achieved by acknowledging the activity of subjectivity along with social constraints that shape it. For example, in forming personal identity, individuals are highly active in the process of self-making; however, the materials available for writing one's own story are a function of one's public and shared notions of personhood. For example, American accounts of the self involve a set of culture-confirming ideas and images of success, competence, ability, and the need to feel good. Although making a self appears to be an individual and individualizing pursuit, it is also a collective and collectivizing one.

Cultural influences, content, and function can be seen in psychological phenomena. They can be seen in Karen's approach to love that Holland recounted earlier. Karen's strategy of enhancing her attractiveness by exaggerating her appeal to numerous men bears striking resemblance to a principle of free market economics—namely, that increased demand drives up the value of a commodity. Businesses often exaggerate the demand for a product in order to enhance its attractiveness and increase its price. Employees often exaggerate the number of job offers they have, or could have, in order to raise the value of their salaries. From Holland's brief description, Karen evidently imported this common business practice into her personal world of romantic love.

Subjectivity is permeated by cultural content; it is not a self-contained realm because subjectivity is oriented toward the world and laden with worldly content. Subjectivity enhances the organism's comprehension of the world and its ability to plan effective action within it. A self-contained subjectivity that created itself ex nihilo without any basis in or regard for the world would be of little service to the organism.

Carl Ratner

See also Methodological Holism Versus Individualism; Objectivism; Social Constructionism

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SUBJECTIVITY

Subjectivity refers to an individual's feelings, opinions, or preferences. It has traditionally been seen as the opposite of objectivity, which refers to dispassionate analysis and coolheaded reason. Therefore, a conventional view is to eliminate, or at the least avoid and constrain, subjectivity during the conduct of scientific inquiry. The presence of subjectivity can only

confound and muddle the analysis of data. Qualitative research increasingly challenges this conventional wisdom.

Qualitative researchers have aggressively examined the question of subjectivity and have suggested its positive contributions to the process of inquiry. Many frame the objectivity–subjectivity debate as conflict between Enlightenment and postmodern values. However, there are advocates for the positive influences of subjectivity in research in early Greek philosophy, among the Enlightenment philosophers (e.g., Immanuel Kant and Johann Wolfgang Goethe), as well as eminent 20th-century scientists. For example, in 1918, Albert Einstein claimed that if science was limited by objectivity, then it would not be capable of fresh thinking or producing original insights.

Since the 1990s, technological advances in the area of cognitive neuroscience have allowed researchers to use neural brain imaging to identify objective thinking as deeply contextualized within subjective thought. These findings suggest that subjectivity allows an individual to properly situate an objective problem and coherently apply the analysis to a real-world situation. The conventional conception of subjectivity diminishing objectivity is not an accurate representation of higher-order thinking. Instead, these new research findings support John Dewey's claim that thinking in terms of the relationships of sensory qualities requires more rigorous thinking than the dispassionate manipulation of symbols.

Alan Peshkin championed the positive role of subjectivity in qualitative research. He argued that the subjective lenses of the researcher were a powerful and useful means for shaping data. The challenge to the researcher was to become aware, through self-reflection, how his or her personal subjectivity was driving the collection and analysis of data. Elliot Eisner extended this idea in his concept of connoisseurship and through his arts-based research methodology of educational criticism. Other arts-based research methodologies that regard positive subjectivity as foundational to inquiry include narrative storytelling and a/r/tography.

Recently, Tom Barone has argued for an abandonment of the terms *objectivity* and *subjectivity*. In light of current philosophical and scientific understandings, he argues for critical persuasiveness as a standard for research. According to Barone, whether research is objective or subjective misses the point. Research, whether it is rigorously objective or subjective, needs

to be evaluated on its capacity to provide useful insights into addressing practical problems.

Richard Siegesmund

See also A/r/tography; Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Connoisseurship; Objectivity

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SUBJECTIVITY STATEMENT

A subjectivity statement is a summary of who researchers are in relation to what and whom they are studying. Researchers develop these from their personal histories, their cultural worldviews, and their professional experiences. The purpose of a subjectivity statement is (1) to help researchers identify how their personal features, experiences, beliefs, feelings, cultural standpoints, and professional predispositions may affect their research and (2) to convey this material to other scholars for their consideration of the study's credibility, authenticity, and overall quality or validity. Researcher subjectivities may bias, unbalance, and limit endeavors, but they may also motivate and illuminate inquiry. Although subjectivity statements may make audiences unfamiliar with qualitative design more skeptical of a research report, their absence makes knowledgeable audiences suspicious about what has been omitted.

A subjectivity statement is not the same as an autobiography, although it is built from autobiographical material. The emphasis is not the individual researcher per se, but the researcher in relationship to others, especially the research participants. Reflexivity, or researchers' contemplation of their

influences on their research, can be considered the process for which subjectivity statements are the product. For example, researchers studying fantasy gamers might summarize their experiences with games of all kinds, but especially those most similar to the games the participants are playing. A subjectivity statement may be a sentence or two in a journal article or several pages in a book. Subjectivity statements may be offered as separate or even appended sections in a manuscript. In contrast, many feminists and other qualitative researchers thread information about their participation and standpoints throughout their research reports. Researchers frequently, however, discuss their relationships with participants in publications separate from their substantive research reports, and anthologies of such material have been common.

Researchers develop subjectivity statements in different ways. One approach is the story of the research relationship from introduction to withdrawal from interaction. Another is more autobiographical, focusing on who researchers believe themselves to be as individuals, their backgrounds, and how these are related to those they study.

Researchers' subjectivity statements change over time as people accumulate new experiences and become transformed by their own inquiries. The content of subjectivity statements varies, but often includes researchers' ascribed characteristics such as sex or gender, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and age and achieved characteristics such as education and occupation. Experiences relevant to the research and standpoints pertinent to those studied are those most important to specify. Statements may also include how researchers believe these characteristics and experiences delimit, enhance, or constrain the results of the study.

Judith Preissle

See also Emotions in Qualitative Research; Observer Bias; Reflexivity; Researcher–Participant Relationships; Subjectivity

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SUPERHYPERQUAL (SOFTWARE)

SuperHyperQual (SHQ) is a computer program that is used for qualitative data analysis, especially during the coding and conceptualizing phase of qualitative research. SHQ evolved from HyperQual, which was originally developed in 1989 for the Apple Macintosh computer using HyperCard. SHQ includes versions for both Windows and Macintosh computers. SHQ is an example of specialized computer programs dedicated to computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) that began to appear in the early 1980s when personal computers became widely available.

Programs such as SHQ typically have a number of common features. They provide a means to manage the data after the data have been collected from the field. Text data usually can be entered directly into the program; otherwise, the data are imported into the program from external text files. After the text data are edited and documented, the resulting data set is ready for analysis. From this point forward, all manipulation of the data is done electronically. Another common feature is qualitative data coding. CAQDA programs help the researcher perform the often tedious process of sorting a large volume of text data into collections (or categories) of small chunks of text that have some likeness in meaning as interpreted by the analyst. Because the categories are developed inductively and it may take

several revisions before the identification of the categories becomes stable, data coding with the assistance of a computer becomes essential for quality analysis. A third common feature is data output. CAQDA programs provide the user with formatted text data that can be easily incorporated into a research report. At a minimum, the user gets output (in either print or electronic form) of all the categories and their corresponding chunks of text, otherwise known as exemplars (of the category).

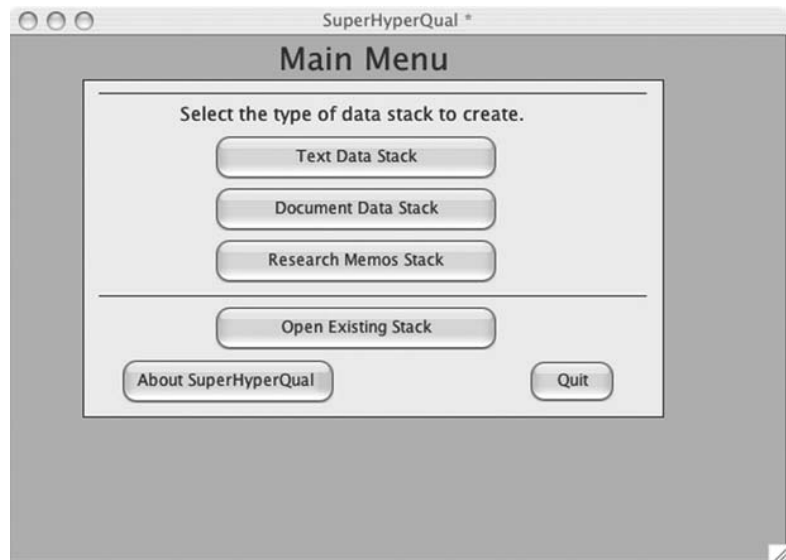
SHQ has all of these basic features. It allows the user to create a text database, to code the data using the mouse to highlight chunks of text, to manipulate the evolving coding scheme, to sort the codes, and to produce output text files that contain categories and their corresponding chunks of text. The program handles interview data, observations, and research memos.

Raymond V. Padilla

See also Categorization; Codes and Coding; Computer-Assisted Data Analysis

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SuperHyperQual Main Menu

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SURVEY RESEARCH

Survey research is one of the most commonly used methodologies in the social sciences. Survey research refers to the set of methods used to gather data in a systematic way from a range of individuals, organizations, or other units of interest. Specific methods may include questionnaires (on paper or online), interviews (conducted by any method; e.g., individual interviews done face to face or via telephone), focus groups, or observation (e.g., structured observations of people using internet access stations at a public library). This entry focuses on methods most commonly associated with survey research: questionnaires (often used in quantitative research designs) and interviews (often used in qualitative research designs).

Many studies using more than one data collection method will include a survey method. For example, a quantitatively oriented questionnaire could be used to generate general understanding of a set of related questions, to identify interview questions for deeper qualitative investigation, and to identify possible interview participants. Alternatively, a questionnaire could be used to confirm the generalizability of results from a small interview study to a larger, more statistically representative sample. Timing of survey research is relevant to the data produced. For example a cross-section approach collects data at one point in time. Longitudinal survey research can sample data at different periods over a length of time to examine long-term trends.

Although some researchers believe survey research to be a wholly quantitative approach, this opinion is not universally shared. Data gathered from any survey method may be entirely quantitative, may be largely qualitative, or may be a mixture. For example, open-ended questions on a questionnaire or asked in an interview will produce text that may be analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative data gathered in survey methods tends to be in text form, such as narrative responses to open-ended questions posed in an interview or written responses to a “comments” item on a questionnaire. There are many ways in which open-ended text or commentary is analyzed, although content analysis (either quantitative or qualitative) would be a commonly applied analytic method. The value of this qualitative data collected during the course of a questionnaire can be particularly important to contextualize more quantitative responses and to add depth and richness to the data set. For example, a questionnaire

seeking data about service delivery in a nonprofit setting may include space for open-ended comments where respondents can indicate why they responded in certain ways or provide details not otherwise captured by closed response items. Responses to open-ended questions can provide detail about perceptions, opinions, personal experiences, and deeply held beliefs. Of course, written responses assume basic literacy on the part of respondents, as well as motivation to take the time required to write comments.

Open-ended questions provide greater freedom to the researcher in terms of how to frame the question, as well as granting greater freedom to respondents in the ways they choose to answer. Open-ended questions are often used in qualitative research to explore an issue or concept, to obtain natural wording, to add variety to a questionnaire, to obtain exact numerical data, and to provide respondents with opportunities for self-expression or elaboration. Open-ended questions may challenge respondents because they are more demanding and time-consuming to answer; however, the data obtained are typically richer than that generated from closed questions. Researchers often find that responses to open-ended questions require greater effort to record, code, analyze, and interpret than is the case for responses to closed questions. However, closed questions are easier and faster for respondents to answer, and responses to closed questions are easier for researchers to code and analyze, and they provide consistent response categories. Closed questions have many disadvantages including eliciting responses where no knowledge or opinion actually exists, oversimplifying issues, and forcing answers into possibly unnatural categories. It is important to ensure that response categories to closed questions are inclusive of all reasonably possible responses and are nonoverlapping.

Wording of Survey Questions

Wording of survey questions, whether these are posed on a written questionnaire or posed during an interview, is challenging and is one of the significant reasons why piloting drafts of questions is wise. Questions should use language that is meaningful to respondents, with an emphasis on simple, direct, jargon-free language. Ensuring that language is appropriate for respondents is critical to obtaining respondent cooperation and interest, as well as key to obtaining valid research data. Questions should be

clear and specific as well as applicable to all respondents (e.g., asking how old one's spouse is will not be applicable to respondents with no spouse). A question asking "What is your income?" appears simple, but is open to interpretation: Does this mean individual or family or household income? What is the time reference (last week, last month, last year)? And, should "income" include wages only, or tips and bonuses? Leading or loaded questions and abbreviations should be avoided. Asking "Do you believe there should be an amendment to the Constitution protecting the life of the unborn child?" uses loaded language that may bias responses. If questions have been translated from one language to another, that translation should be double-checked for unintended errors. Double-barreled questions are also to be avoided: "Do you plan to leave your car at home and take the bus to work during the coming year?" is asking two separate questions. Questions that include an implied alternative should be avoided; for example, "Do you think most manufacturing companies that lay off workers during slack periods could arrange things to avoid layoffs and give steady work right through the year?" implies the alternative that layoffs are unavoidable. Bias is also evident in questions that may entail social responsibility, such as "Did you vote in the last election?" It is better to start with a more neutral question such as "Were you able to get to the polls in the last election?" Researchers should be aware of order bias, since respondents will incline toward the middle in a list of numbers, extremes in a list of ideas, and the second alternative in a list of two ideas. It is also wise to rotate the order of questions in case order influences responses.

Question Sequencing

When structuring a survey, question sequencing must be considered. Survey instruments, whether questionnaires or interview schedules, should open with an introduction that provides a title or subject of the survey, identify the sponsor or organization conducting the survey, establish legitimacy of purpose, request cooperation and identify any benefits for respondents, and indicate the degree of confidentiality. In mail surveys, a return address and date for return should be provided. Opening questions should be pleasant, easy, interesting, broadly applicable, and relate to the introduction and study objectives. Sensitive items should be introduced at a point where respondents are likely

to have developed trust and confidence and should be introduced gradually by warm-up items that are less threatening. All items should be located in context; that is, a section where they are most meaningful in the context of other questions. Classificatory data, such as demographic data, is best placed at the end of a questionnaire. This type of data can be used to stratify respondents, to determine if respondents represent a cross section of the population, and to analyze the relationships, if any, between these demographic variables and the other variables. Question sequencing refers to the flow of items, which should follow the logic of respondents. Group questions similar in content together, aid respondents' memories with chronological lead-ins, and use transitions for continuity. For example, Part A: "Let's talk about your work experience. . . ." Follow this with Part B: "Now let's talk about your feelings about your job. . . ." Filter questions are used to select relevant respondents for the survey: for example, "Are you a resident or a visitor?" These questions will help eliminate a category of respondent not intended to be included in the study. Funneling questions is done by asking broad questions first, and then proceeding to more specific questions in the same area, while an inverted funnel sequence asks narrower questions first, followed by broader ones.

Appearance

Printed or online questionnaires need to consider layout. The general appearance should be interesting and easy to complete, with consideration for paper quality (if relevant), size, font, and color. Any front matter should create a positive first impression. Instructions should facilitate proper answering of questions, and illustrations, symbols, and mechanical devices should attract attention and guide respondents. The final section should provide opportunity for additional comments and include an expression of appreciation.

Online Surveys

Online surveys are increasingly popular because they can be logistically easier to handle for both the researcher and the respondent. This makes online survey research more cost-effective when balancing investment against the potential number of respondents who are not bound by geographical barriers. Online surveys can be more convenient for respondents,

although obviously access to a networked computer is required. Thus, online surveys may be practical for certain populations but not so for others; that is, those without digital access. Analysis of data gathered from an online survey may be greatly facilitated by moving electronic responses directly into analysis software.

Survey Sampling

Regardless of the specific survey method used, sampling (i.e., identifying potential respondents) is critical. A census refers to sampling an entire population or universe; that is, all members of a particular group, regardless of the size of the group. Populations do not have to be people, but may be organizations or pieces of text. The most important thing about samples is the degree to which they are representative; a sample must reflect the population that it purports to stand for. A random sample is a probability sample, where each case has an equal chance of being selected. Random samples are used when the intention is to seek external validity. A stratified sample is based on studying a certain attribute in a population. For example, individuals are categorized as to whether or not they possess that attribute, which may be based on gender, ethnicity, educational level, and so on. Proportional sampling is based on the proportion or percentage each group contributes to the entire population (e.g., to look at a group of people in relation to the proportion of their representation in a population). Cluster sampling usually refers to selection on the basis of geography; in this case, the sample is usually then structured in other ways, such as stratified, or random, or both. Nonprobability sampling, which is typical for qualitative research, includes convenience sampling (e.g., approach the first x number of people who appear in the grocery store). A quota sample is used when the researcher wants to be sure that the sample includes individuals with a number of characteristics. A sequential sampling approach involves choosing every n th item in a group.

Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability are important aspects of survey research. Internal validity is achieved when the survey's questions and answers accurately measure or reflect what the investigators want to know and are not distorted by some other factor. External validity refers to how representative a sample of the population is. In survey research, it is important to factor in the return

rate as well as the proportion of nonrespondents to know if there is a statistically significant difference between respondents and nonrespondents with regard to certain characteristics. Reliability refers to the consistency of data gathering in measuring whatever the survey purports to measure. To ensure reliability, the researcher looks at question wording to ask whether the questions really ask for the information in the best possible way or to ask if people from different groups understand the questions in the same way. Reliability can be improved by asking the same question twice on a questionnaire or by following up to check on similarity of response in an interview. Trustworthiness is equally important when using methods such as observation; for example, recording observations in multiple ways (e.g., using photography as well as individuals' visual observations) and using more than one observer are ways to increase trustworthiness.

Survey research is common because it is so flexible, open to researchers taking quantitative as well as qualitative approaches. Survey methods can answer a wide range of research questions, from the "who" and "what" to the "how" and "why." Because of this flexibility, survey research is appealing to inexperienced researchers and is, therefore, open to careless design and data collection practices. However, trustworthy survey research requires careful consideration of design and research conduct.

Heidi Julien

See also Content Analysis; Empirical Research; Reliability; Sampling; Validity

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SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism (SI) is a sociological and social-psychological perspective grounded in the

study of the meanings that people learn and assign to the objects and actions that surround their everyday experiences. It is a theoretical perspective that was originally developed in the early half of the 20th century by scholars at the University of Chicago. SI is the most sociological of a range of social psychology traditions (others include cognitive sociology, discursive psychology, ethnomethodology, and rational choice-exchange theory) and was originally conceptualized by the philosopher George Herbert Mead, although he never used the term. The perspective was first given coherence by Mead's students from Chicago, who collected and, in 1934, published their notes from his social psychology courses in a book titled *Mind, Self, and Society*. In 1937, Herbert Blumer, one of Mead's students, coined the term *symbolic interactionism* and subsequently consolidated much of Mead's work into a distinct sociological perspective. Blumer's 1969 book, *Symbolic Interactionism*, is a collection of his own essays and is still widely acknowledged as a major statement on the perspective.

The term *symbolic interactionism* is comprised of two concepts: symbol and interaction. Symbol refers to any social object (e.g., a physical object, a gesture, or a word) that stands in place of or represents something else. Symbols are a uniquely human creation. No other animal has the ability to arbitrarily assign meaning; that is, make something into a social object. Interaction highlights the significance of interpersonal communication in transmitting the meaning of symbols. Through interaction, culture arises. Interactionists understand culture to be the ideas, objects, and practices that constitute everyday life. Howard Becker has noted that, on the one hand, culture preexists individuals' births and therefore, structures their lives. On the other hand, people are autonomous, interpretive beings who have the ability to negotiate, modify, or reject the meanings they learn, thus actively shaping culture. From a symbolic interactionist perspective then, human beings are active creators of symbols and culture. As one example, consider the symbolic meaning of communism. The word means very different things to different people in different places at different times. As a symbol, communism signifies an emancipatory political-economic model to some people, while to others it represents repression, collective poverty, and aggression. Each of these meanings, and many more, is learned by people through their interactions with other people, various media, and so on. Communism is not a tangible thing—it cannot be seen or touched—yet it is

a social object because it refers to a set of processes (ideological, political, economic) that occur in the world. Through symbolic interaction, human beings construct, share, resist, modify, or reject various aspects of the social world.

SI offered a radical conceptualization of sociological theory compared to the macro, structural, positivist sociology that dominated American sociology at its emergence in the 1930s. Rather than rely on quantitatively derived data that were collected through representative survey research and analyzed using statistics, symbolic interactionists primarily collect and analyze qualitative data from people's experiences in naturalistic settings (though some practitioners of the perspective, often called structural interactionists, use quantitative methods and experimental designs). SI has tended to be labeled as distinctly micro-oriented, rather than macro-oriented, although this label has changed in recent decades with the explicit push among some SI scholars toward meso-level theorizing. Another difference between SI and dominant sociology relates to epistemology. Dominant mid-century sociology was aligned with positivism, the epistemological assumption that the social sciences could be modeled after the biological and physical sciences to produce verifiable "facts" that explain social behavior and predict future behavior. SI, in contrast, is an interpretive perspective that allows for the agency inherent in human behavior and supports a methodology to study social behavior without demanding that it be definitively explained or predicted. One final contrast relates to the role of the researcher. Whereas positivist sociology believed in a value-neutral perspective—the social scientist's ability to separate values, beliefs, and interests from data collection and analysis—SI rejects the idea of a disembodied researcher and instead supports the idea that all science is done from a particular standpoint. The interactionist's job is to identify how bias, values, interests, and other intersubjective phenomena impact the research process and to acknowledge (if not highlight) that impact in her or his research questions, data collection and analysis techniques, and writing.

Pragmatist Roots of the Perspective

SI's theoretical paradigm owes much to pragmatist philosophers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries,

notably John Dewey, William James, and Charles Peirce. Pragmatism differed from classical rationalism, the dominant philosophy of that time, in a number of important ways, and understanding pragmatist epistemology and ontology provides an important step toward understanding the basic premises of SI. First, classical rationalism conceptualized reality in static, fixed terms. René Descartes argued that conscious, sense-based experiences were not to be trusted when studying reality. Rather, reality exists in an objective form that could be understood through deductive reasoning, separate of any sensory experience. Pragmatism, in contrast, conceptualized reality in terms of potentiality. Reality may be “out there,” but human beings can only understand its existence through sensory experience. Further, human beings are selective in what they notice about the world, thus different people may apprehend the same reality differently. For pragmatists, reality is what people make of it. Second and related to its conceptualization of reality, classical rationalism approached knowledge as separate from the knower. Some rationalists have argued that, given a basic set of scientific axioms, a person could deductively derive the rest of all possible knowledge in the world. In other words, rationalists believed that knowledge could be gained through reasoning alone. In contrast, pragmatists believe that reasoning cannot be separated from a person’s bodily experiences in the world. For pragmatists, knowledge is not a thing, but rather a process. From this, pragmatists argued against the rationalist assumption that an ultimate truth exists. Rather, pragmatists see the world as comprised of many truths that are carved out of reality by human activity. From this perspective, the role of science itself comes into question. For rationalists, science seeks to apprehend a static, objective reality and to comprehend it through its identifiable components. For pragmatists, however, science is value laden. If reality and truth are relative, then all scientists come to their research with beliefs, values, and morals that cannot simply be ignored or set aside. Science, for pragmatists, is a moral endeavor through which the human condition can be changed for better or worse. Scientists should not study the world for the sake of knowledge, but rather for the sake of improving the world in which people live. Scientists must also remain cognizant of the consequences of their research—this point is particularly germane to the fields of social scientific research.

Guiding Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

The scholar primarily responsible for translating the philosophical ideas of pragmatism into a workable social science was George Herbert Mead. Mead developed a social psychology that held crucial insights for the development of SI. First, human beings are the only animals capable of using language, understood as a complex system of symbols, and thus, are uniquely capable of manipulating, negotiating, and even transcending their physical environment through its use. Second, Mead argued that the human mind is as much an active, ongoing process as it is a mental structure. Human beings not only communicate with other people, but also communicate with themselves (i.e., self-reflexivity). The human ability to see oneself as an object of communication gives rise to the mind, which is not intrinsic and psychic, but processual and social in nature. This argument is a very different social psychology than behaviorism, for example, which sees human behaviors as reactions to environmental stimuli. The human ability for symbol use and the process-oriented nature of human action also highlights human agency. Human beings do not simply react to stimuli (although some human actions have instinctual roots), but instead assign meaning to objects in the world and then, based on the meanings assigned, act toward those objects in specific ways.

Herbert Blumer used Mead’s work, along with that of other social scientists such as William Isaac Thomas and Charles Horton Cooley, to develop SI into a distinctly sociological perspective. Blumer highlighted three premises that are foundational to the perspective. First, human beings act toward things based on the meaning they attribute to those things. Nothing has inherent meaning; rather, all meaning is assigned. When a female student walking on campus hears footsteps behind her, she must attribute meaning to the footsteps, and to the larger social situation, before acting toward those footsteps. If she is in the middle of a crowded student center in the middle of the day, she may likely dismiss the footsteps as normal or unimportant. But if she is in a secluded part of campus at night and alone, she might attribute a menacing or dangerous meaning to the footsteps. Second, the meanings people attribute to things arise out of social interaction. The potential meanings a person assigns are not arbitrary, but are learned. People learn

the meanings of things through face-to-face interaction with other people or with the thing itself or through various forms of mediated interaction, such as television, magazines, music, or the internet. Elijah Anderson's research on interracial interaction, for example, highlights how White people's fear of Black males is socially learned and oftentimes unjustified. Many Whites learn to fear Black males (often, through mediated interaction) without having any significant contact with them. Third, the meanings people attribute to things are handled through an interpretive process used by a person in specific situations. When a female student hears footsteps behind her at night or when a White woman sees several Black males walking toward her on an otherwise empty sidewalk, she will decide how to respond to them based on her own experiences and/or knowledge of similar situations. Reading about recent assaults or muggings may give her reason to feel afraid enough to cry for help. Or she may decide to ignore the what she has read or heard surrounding such alleged threats and treat the footsteps or men as nonthreatening.

In addition to Blumer's three premises, interactionists have subsequently discussed a larger set of guiding principles for the perspective. One is the idea that all social life is intersubjective. Human experiences are inextricably social in nature. Symbolic interactionist research has studied how even a person's most private thoughts are learned and given meaning through group life. A similar idea highlights the centrality of emotions to social life. Symbolic interactionists do not define emotions solely in biological terms. Instead, they understand that people's bodies are comprised of biological and physiological processes that are shaped by, and in turn shape, social action. Social action is itself another key term for interactionists; Blumer called it the fundamental unit of sociological analysis. Symbolic interactionists do not study individuals; they study the social actions in which individuals engage. Social actions are actions that take other people into account and include visible behaviors, as well as inner actions such as thoughts and emotions. Because most human actions take account of other people, SI provides an inductive explanation of the creation, maintenance, and change in society. Through the alignment of social action, society is created on a moment-by-moment basis by people acting socially. In short, symbolic interactionists see society as interaction. It is this emphasis on social action that most obviously highlights SI as a sociological perspective.

Finally, because symbolic interactionists study social action, they support the development of sociological methods that enable researchers to grasp the meanings that people come to attach to such action.

Methodological Traditions

Most interactionists do not believe that conventional scientific methods such as large-scale surveys or experimental designs yield sufficient insight into the intersubjective construction of reality, the self, or society, preferring naturalistic inquiry—research that focuses on people's behaviors in natural social settings. According to Blumer, naturalistic inquiry consists of two phases: exploration and inspection. During the exploration phase, interactionists work to familiarize themselves with the topic at hand, generally by becoming an "insider" of a particular social world. Exploration is a flexible process that allows the research to progress inductively. In order to understand pregnancy, for example, an interactionist would explore the social world of pregnancy in great detail. The researcher might observe and interact with pregnant women or couples, as well as examine literature, television shows, films, or other popular sources of portrayals of pregnancy. The researcher might attend parenthood classes, interview expecting parents, or even record the process of pregnancy autoethnographically, either as a pregnant woman or through a significant other. Throughout the exploration phase, the goal is to learn to understand the topic being studied from the perspective of the people who are active participants of that world. What is sociologically significant about the data recorded becomes clearer in Blumer's second phase, inspection, which refers to the process of analyzing the data collected during exploration. Fieldnotes, interview transcripts, documents and other data sources are all scrutinized as the interactionist engages in the creative process of establishing sensitizing concepts: concepts that are grounded in what the interactionist thinks is most significant or relevant about the data and which offer an analytic frame for understanding the social phenomena being studied. Exploration and inspection are not temporally ordered, but overlap as the researcher continuously inspects collected data and modifies the exploration process as necessary.

The findings of such a study are usually written and disseminated as an ethnographic text. Ethnography was developed by sociologists such as Thomas and Robert Park, who worked at the University of Chicago during

the same time as Mead. The so-called Chicago School of sociology, referred to either as the spark behind SI or as the incarnation of SI itself, is best known for its legacy of ethnographic research on everyday urban life. Although Mead's and Thomas's work offered a coherent interpretivist approach to sociological research, Park turned his training in journalism and philosophy into a methodology for describing lived experience. Often-cited examples of this tradition include Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's (1918–1920) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Frederick Thrasher's (1927) *The Delinquent Gang*, Paul Cressey's (1932) *The Taxi-Dance Hall*, and William Foote Whyte's (1943) *Street Corner Society*.

Another important qualitative tradition that emerged from SI is grounded theory. Developed originally by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their 1967 book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, grounded theory emphasizes the development of theory through method. Grounded theory is a more robust approach than Blumer's exploration and inspection because it moves beyond developing sensitizing concepts to generating inductively derived meso or macrolevel theories of the social world. Grounded theory consists of the researcher exploring and analyzing data from cases, coming up with provisional concepts to explain what is going on, then studying new cases to see whether the provisional concepts remain satisfactory. The researcher continues to study new cases until the point of saturation, at which point the concepts become valid and a theory may be constructed.

Theoretical Extensions

Using the methods cited above, and others, symbolic interactionists have engaged in many types of sociologically informed scholarship, from theoretical to applied, from apolitical to critical and action-oriented. The following stand as a sample of the variety of ways in which interactionist-informed research has developed over the past half-century. First, the sociological study of the self and identity took a new direction under the influence of Erving Goffman, whose dramaturgical perspective studies social interaction through theatrical metaphor. Goffman's work highlights the contingent and situational aspects of the self by studying how identities are strategically presented and manipulated by people in order to accomplish collective action. Second, the ethnographic study of delinquency, developed in the Chicago School, received a more critical

interactionist eye by Howard Becker, who developed labeling theory to illustrate the social roots and functions of deviance. In line with traditional SI tenets, Becker highlights how deviant behavior is culturally and situationally defined by people who collectively agree on social rules and then apply deviant labels to those who do not conform. A third example is Arlie Hochschild's theory of emotions and emotion management. Furthering Goffman's metaphor of people "acting" in situations, Hochschild studies the emotional work in which people engage as they go through everyday life. Making oneself feel sad at a funeral or smiling when one would like to scream are but two examples of how individuals modify their behaviors to conform to the larger social structure.

Each of these theoretical strands has led to new fields of sociological scholarship that are often populated by scholars who do not self-identify as symbolic interactionists, though their work is implicitly informed by interactionist theory. In recent years, some scholars have been more explicit in identifying the symbolic interactionist roots of their work. One example is the intersection of SI and feminism, which results in a feminist interactionism as practiced by scholars such as Sherry Kleinman. Other interactionists such as Michael Schwalbe have drawn on neo-Marxian theory to develop a more critical interactionism that focuses explicitly on the social processes through which inequalities are constructed. A final example is Norman Denzin's interpretive interactionism, which blends SI and critical social theory (i.e., neo-Marxist, feminist, antirace) with postmodernist preoccupations including an emphasis on people's interactions with(in) mass, communication, and new media technologies.

SI is a perspective with broad sociological significance. It theorizes the self and identity, socialization and culture, community and collective behavior, deviance and inequality, and more generally society-as-process by studying the creation and communication of meaning. With the increasingly blurred boundaries between traditional social science disciplines, SI has the potential to make an even greater impact on fields such as education, gender and minority studies, cultural studies, psychology, and communication and new media studies, among others.

J. Patrick Williams

See also Autoethnography; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Ethnography, Grounded Theory; Interpretive Inquiry; Pragmatism

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SYSTEMATIC SOCIOLOGICAL INTROSPECTION

Systematic sociological introspection refers to the process of thinking about thinking and feeling about feeling in a focused way in order to examine the lived experiences of the self. It is the primary method connected with autoethnographic writing, where researchers write about their bodies, thoughts, and feelings in evocative narratives that invite readers to experience their experiences. Systematic sociological introspection relies on ethnographic guidelines for recording and writing about experience and on phenomenological and sociological understanding for contextualizing and interpreting what that experience means. This entry focuses on the history of introspection in sociology and on the development and application of systematic sociological introspection in autoethnographic research.

Sociological insight has been built on the introspective methods of its forebears in philosophy and psychology. Yet modern theorists often have neglected Charles H. Cooley's affective orientation and introspective

method for George H. Mead's more cognitive emphasis and technique of understanding humans by studying what they do. The rejection of introspection as a technique, along with the neglect of introspection as an object of study in the form of thoughts and feelings, came from the idea that sociology should define as its territory rational action and social facts that exist outside of individual consciousness.

Sociologists also reacted against introspection because they viewed it as a psychological process that implied self-contained internal events. But the psychological approach ignored the socially constructed, processual nature of thoughts, feelings, and introspection. Viewed as process, introspection, like any thinking, is covert communicative behavior. As private, inner dialogue, it is enabled by publicly shared significant symbols and thus is inherently social. Psychologists who used introspection presented it as an inward activity, a way to investigate how an individual mind had constructed the world. Psychology deemphasized the self-dialogue inherent in introspection, underplayed the impact of shared symbols on people's response to their selves in inner conversation, and excluded the role of external norms and social structure.

Nevertheless, the gate in sociology never has been closed entirely to introspection. Some sociological traditions have maintained that understanding the meaning of one's own experience and empathically interpreting meaning in the experience of others constitute bases for inquiry. For example, Charles H. Cooley advocated sympathetic introspection, a process by which one comes to understand others by sympathetically ascribing to them one's own response in similar situations. Ethnographic, feminist, hermeneutic, and social constructionist approaches continue laying the groundwork for investigating emotions, thoughts, and subjective meaning.

In the past two decades, interpretive social scientists, such as Arthur Bochner, Norman Denzin, Carolyn Ellis, H. L. Goodall, Ronald Peltas, and Laurel Richardson more openly and passionately have embraced subjectivity as both a subject of study and a vital part of the methods for studying self and social life. Carolyn Ellis, for example, argues that introspection is a social process as well as a psychological one. Introspection is actively thinking about one's thoughts and feelings; it emerges from social interaction; it occurs in response to bodily sensations, mental processes, and external stimuli as well as affecting

these same processes. It is not just listening to one's voice arising alone in one's head; usually, it consists of interacting voices, which are products of social forces and roles.

Autoethnographers, in particular, call on introspection in writing their self stories. Though not everyone who writes autoethnography advocates a systematic or sociological methodological approach, many autoethnographers were educated and claim identities as ethnographers. Though their goal is to write evocative narratives, they often follow a process akin to steps taken in qualitative research. Thus, introspection, like autoethnography, intersects social science and humanities.

The following is a brief description of how to engage in systematic sociological introspection to write autoethnographic stories. Autoethnographers first write fieldnotes on the relevant aspects of their experiences. They include all the details they can recall, organizing their writing chronologically and using main events to structure the tale. Authors concentrate on emotions and dialogue, but they also describe places, colors, sounds, and movements. The first draft stays as close to the reconstructed events, fieldnotes, and emotional memory as possible. Embracing the multiplicity of selves that all human beings harbor, autoethnographers engage in recording the many competing voices in their heads and bring to consciousness their contradictory and ambiguous thoughts and feelings.

Using a process of emotional recall similar to the method acting of Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio, writers imagine being back in the scene emotionally and physically. Revisiting the scene emotionally leads to remembering other details. The advantage of writing close to the time of the event is that it does not take much effort to access lived emotions; they are often there whether one wants them to be or not. The disadvantage is that being so involved in the scene emotionally can make it difficult to analyze from a more distanced cultural perspective. Yet both of these processes, moving in and moving out, are necessary to produce an effective introspective autoethnography.

In the next draft, writers develop a plotline that focuses more specifically on the topic of the project. Literary tropes of dialogue, scenes, and characters are important as are conveying thoughts and emotions constructed in the initial notes. These thoughts and emotions are further developed in the process of writing, which continues to stimulate memory and reexperience of the experience as well as provide context and meaning.

The stories, written as evocative narratives, invite readers into experience, and let them move with authors though their defenses and toward deeper levels of examination. Readers can move back and forth between being in the story of the author and returning to their own, where they might fill in or compare their experiences and provide their own sensitivities about what is going on. Readers should be able to feel the specificity of the author's situation, yet sense the unity of human experience as well as they connect to what happened to the author, remember what happened to them, or anticipate what might happen in the future.

An introspective autoethnography should not only probe thoughts and feelings but also provide details that help make sense of the experience in terms of the situational or historical context in which these events occurred. A successful autoethnography should stimulate conversations among those who write and read the text, which then act back on the text, making the interpretation and understanding ongoing with each conversation that takes place. The end result is narrative truth, which means that the experiences these narratives depict become believable, lifelike, and possible.

Carolyn S. Ellis

See also Autoethnography; Co-Constructed Narrative; Creative Writing; Interactive Interview; Intersubjectivity; Life Stories; Phenomenology; Researcher as Instrument; Storytelling; Subjectivity; Writing Process

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SYSTEMIC INQUIRY

Systemic inquiry is inquiry, research, or evaluation that is based on systems concepts or systems principles.

Systemic inquiry covers a wide range of methodologies, methods, and techniques with a strong focus on the behaviors of complex situations and the meanings we draw from those situations. It spans both the qualitative and quantitative research method domains but also includes approaches that fit neither category and both categories.

Origins

Although elements of systemic inquiry can be identified in writings since the Greek philosophers, systemic inquiry as we know it today derives from traditions established by people such as Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Warren Weaver, Norbert Wiener, and Gregory Bateson in the late 1930s and 1940s. Von Bertalanffy was a biologist who was interested in the extent to which biological concepts such as metabolism, isomorphism, growth, equifinality, nested systems, and steady state could be applied to other scientific domains. His interest developed into general system theory (GST) first promoted during the late 1940s. Around the same time, Weaver, a mathematician and engineer, was suggesting that science should distinguish between simplicity and what he termed organized and disorganized complexity. Also Wiener, Bateson, and others became interested in the idea of cybernetics—a more mechanistic version of GST that explores how feedback disrupts normal linear understandings of cause and effect.

By the 1960s these ideas, blended with parallel thinking from the organizational research and action research fields, had developed into a series of methodologies for assessing, problem solving, and intervening in complex, real-world situations.

Once established within the problem-solving and organizational research arenas, the ideas spread further into environmental, planning, social work, futurist, group dynamic, and other domains. By 2001, Eric Schwartz was able to identify 1,000 streams of systemic thought.

What Is Systemic Inquiry?

Any attempt to summarize a transdiscipline like systemic inquiry is fraught with difficulties. Despite its relatively simple origins, the field has sprawled into many directions so that no single, universally accepted theory has emerged, and neither are there universally agreed definitions of basic concepts such

as what is and what is not a system. Although we will find many definitions in the systems literature, many authors argue that single fixed definitions promote the kind of reductionist thinking that runs counter to systemic principles. Instead, they argue, the field should promote debates around methodological principles to create learning rather than fixed definitions—what Kurt Richardson calls “critical pluralism.”

None of this, of course, helps those entering the systems field to get a firm grip on the core elements. One way of understanding systems inquiry is through a series of historical perspectives of its development and application.

Gerald Midgley suggests that systems thinking and systems practice has evolved through a series of waves, or phases of research. Each wave related to a particular focus of the systems field and brought with it a new set of methods. Each wave emerged in response to critical evaluations of the logic and methods of previous waves. However, unlike real waves crashing on a beach, the foci and methods developed during the different waves of systems thinking did not disappear when a new wave came along. Rather, they continued to be developed in parallel with new ideas. Therefore, it is appropriate to talk about all the waves in the present tense.

In the first wave, based on methods developed directly from GST and cybernetics, the focus is on systems “out there” in the world. Improvements come about from changes in the components and relationships within those systems. Methods developed during the first wave are characterized by models of real-world interrelationships and interconnections. These models are validated by how closely they match patterns observed in the situation being studied. System dynamics is one of the best-known methodologies to emerge during this phase, and the influential sociological theories of Talcott Parsons are also associated with the first wave.

During the 1970s, the focus shifted toward using systems concepts to analyze situations from a variety of different perspectives. In this second wave, it became less important to model behavior and more important to understand the different meanings that can be drawn by taking account of multiple systems, each a logical consequences of a particular perspective on the situation. Proposals to improve a situation are based on debates, from the perspectives of these different systems, about desirable and feasible changes. An example of an approach to emerge during

this second wave is Peter Checkland's soft systems methodology.

The third wave, developed during the 1980s, embraced the idea that differences between people's perspectives about a situation are often tied up with power relations. Perspectives affect the boundaries we draw around a situation. Boundaries demarcate who or what is included in or excluded from an assessment of a situation and, thus, the necessary interventions. In other words, boundaries can reflect power dynamics within a situation. From this emerged the notion of boundary critique. The effects of power in defining the boundaries of an intervention need to be accounted for, and multiple options for setting boundaries should be considered. An example of a third-wave approach is Werner Ulrich's critical systems heuristics.

So the first wave tended to focus on interrelationships, the second wave promoted a focus on perspectives, and the third wave promoted a focus on boundaries. However, the third wave was also characterized by an interest in methodological pluralism. Thus, it is not unusual these days for inquiries to use simultaneously methods and concepts developed during all three phases.

Benyamin Lichtenstein provides another historical thread by focusing on the ideas associated with complex systems. He identifies over a dozen semidistinct conceptual strands that contributed to our understanding of complex systems. These strands include fractals, deterministic chaos, and catastrophe theory from mathematics; synergetics, self-organized criticality, and simulated annealing from physics and engineering; human systems dynamics from the social sciences; NK landscapes, autopoiesis, and emergent evolution from biology; dissipative structures from chemistry and thermodynamics; agent-based modeling, cellular automata, and game theory from computer and information science; and systems dynamics. Each of these fields developed models and methods to explore patterns of behavior that belonged to a collection of interdependent parts rather than any individual part of a system working in isolation.

Yet another way to understand the methodological richness of the systems field is by making a distinction between *system* and *situation*.

Some systems practitioners consider a system as a self evident concrete entity—the filing system, the health system, simple systems, complex systems. These systems possess certain properties and behave according to specific rules. Methodologies associated

with cybernetics, system dynamics, and complex adaptive systems (CAS) tend to use this systems perspective to describe patterns of behavior.

Other systems practitioners argue that systems are not self evident objects, but are human constructs we apply to a situation in order to make it comprehensible to us. We use systems constructs essentially as lenses through which we gain insights into the behavior of situations. Thus, systems are not viewed as real world entities, but as mental constructs that help us understand the world. It is similar to distinguishing the glasses we use to view a landscape from the landscape itself. When we can put on different glasses and test them out, we know that by doing so we have not changed the landscape itself but have allowed ourselves the possibility of experiencing the landscape in a different way. Methodologies associated with soft and critical systems methodologies tend to reflect this focus.

Today many systems practitioners have a foot in both camps. They recognize that making a distinction between system and situation allows them access to a wide range of systems methodologies and the ability to investigate their most deeply held views of how the world operates.

Systemic Inquiry and Qualitative Research

Systemic inquiry tends to frame the research process and provides questions for the research process. With a few exceptions, it does not concern itself in theory or in practice with the kind of data used in the research process. If an inquiry needs quantitative data, then that is what will be used. If an inquiry needs qualitative data, then that is what will be used. In many cases, both forms of data will be used in a single inquiry.

Examples of Methodologies Based on Systems Concepts

System Dynamics

System dynamics provides researchers with the ability to explore the interrelationships between components of a situation, especially the consequences of feedback and delay. It thus provides insights into the behavior of a situation from the perspective of its dynamics.

The approach was developed by Jay Forrester in the 1950s and has been one of the highest-profile

systems methodologies. Essentially system dynamics does three things:

1. helps us explore rigorously the implications of feedback and delay on the accumulation of stocks (egg resources) and flows between them,
2. maps the possible relationships among parts of the situation that is being explored, and
3. allows researchers to play “what if” games with the way in which these relationships interact—often using computer simulation.

System dynamics focuses primarily on identifying the main components of a system (often called *stocks*), what flows between them, and exploring rigorously the effect stocks and flows have on each other over time. It, therefore, emphasizes the dynamics of a situation rather than seeks a single snapshot of it.

System dynamics depends more on the use of quantitative data than most systems approaches, although being interested in patterns rather than prediction, the conclusions drawn from system dynamics are often qualitative in nature.

Viable Systems

Stafford Beer conceived his viable systems model (VSM) as a biological cell analogy to explore the necessary relationships between five distinct management functions (or systems) in order to allow an organization to be viable within its environment:

System 1 is what the organization does;

System 2 is what glues the System 1s together (egg coordination);

System 3 is how it does it what it does (i.e., management);

System 4 is about gathering intelligence from the environment and dealing with environmental factors; and

System 5 is about strategy and, together with System 4, ensures that the organization continues to do what it is supposed to do, or needs to do.

VSM has been widely used in the knowledge management area because it promotes a focus on what information each system needs (and does not need) from the other in order for the whole organizational system to operate effectively.

Soft Systems Methodology

Soft systems methodology (SSM) provides researchers a means of drawing deep insights by looking rigorously at a situation from a variety of different systems perspectives. In particular, it provides a means by which these multiple viewpoints can be unpacked, reassembled, and assessed in a rigorous fashion. Given that these viewpoints will be present within the situation and will be informing people’s motivations and behavior, soft systems is a means of understanding and anticipating so-called unanticipated consequences.

SSM was developed by Peter Checkland in the late 1960s at the University of Lancaster in the United Kingdom. It was one of the first systems approaches to consider the importance of understanding how people draw meaning from what they observed.

At the heart of SSM is the notion that it is unhelpful to think of a particular situation as comprising actual systems. Most situations are complex messes that mostly do not adhere to any useful set of systems rules. Even when they do, different systems can be identified within a single situation depending on our perspective.

SSM essentially compares the real situation with understandings of what the situation might look like if it were only operating using systems concepts from a single perspective. What would a basketball game look like if it was only concerned with team skill? What would it look like if it were only about promoting a team’s sponsor’s product? This ideal system has six building blocks—the system’s purpose (transformation), what gives that purpose meaning (worldview), those who will benefit from this meaning (customers), those who provide the expertise to bring it about (actors), those who have the power to control the system (owners), and the environment that influences but does not control the system.

Considerable insights can be gained from comparing these different ideal systems with the real situation. Thus, systemicity is a property of people’s thinking about the situation rather than a property of the “mess” that is the starting point of an analysis.

Critical Systems Heuristics

Critical systems heuristics (CSH) draws researchers’ attentions to ethical issues, marginalization of people and ideas, and ideas of power and coercion in a situation. It helps researchers identify and critique the

consequences of boundaries set by those with power or expertise. Who or what is positively or negatively affected by those boundary decisions is a major part of any research undertaken from a CSH perspective. Of course the boundaries set by research itself are also subject to investigation and critique.

CSH was developed from the ideas of C. West Churchman, who felt that just looking at a situation from different perspectives was not enough. A mixture of coercion, homogeneity of view, and other factors will mean not all relevant perspectives will be considered or have equal value. Thus, the full consequences, both positive and negative, of taking a perspective may not be assessed. Churchman argued that those conducting an inquiry need to “sweep in” and consider issues that challenge any emerging consensus.

Werner Ulrich further developed Churchman’s ideas so that a critical systems inquiry will generate debates or dialectics along three dimensions:

- within each of 12 major components of a perspective (purpose, beneficiaries, measures of success, resources, decision makers, environmental opportunities and constraints, expertise, experts, assumptions, the systems “victims,” safeguards for those victims, and worldview),
- between these 12 components (especially between the first nine that generally take a positive view of the system and the last 3 that take a negative view), and
- between the actual state of each component in real life and what ought to be the state of each component.

Clearly the tensions between the *is* and the *ought*, and also the positive and negative views, and indeed between these two dimensions themselves, provide a

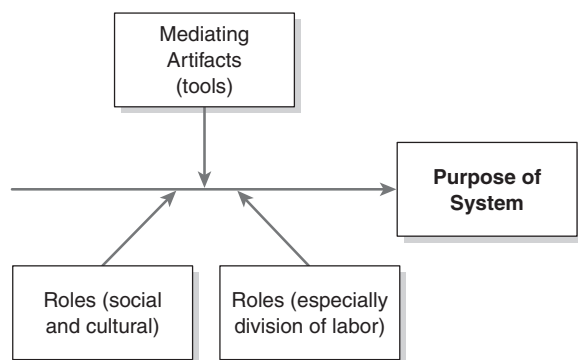


Figure 1 Elements Shaping the Purpose of a System

powerful analytical tool that strongly emphasizes the ethical boundaries of a research endeavor or planning exercise.

Activity Systems

Activity systems (often known as cultural–historical activity theory) draws its primary inspiration from cognitive rather than cybernetic concepts—especially Vygotskian learning theory. Vygotsky’s ideas were taken up by Leont’ev (both based in the USSR), and introduced to the wider systems world during the 1980s by Yrjö Engeström. It is extensively used in teaching, knowledge management, and innovation research.

Activity systems is based on five key notions:

1. The starting point is a social situation with a defined purpose. This purpose is affected by a range of elements, in particular mediating artifacts (e.g., tools) used, which include language plus the rules and the roles people have that mediate and are mediated by the use of those tools diagrammatically (see Figure 1).
2. There are always multiple points of view, traditions, and interests that provide potential sources of trouble and sites for innovation.
3. A situation’s current features and dynamics can only be understood by exploring the impacts of past features and dynamics.
4. Changes in a situation are primarily driven by contradictions. These contradictions generate tensions within the system and can result in conflicts, problems, disturbances, or innovations.
5. These contradictions provide primary sites for learning and development. Consequently, there is the ever-present possibility of the situation being transformed by these contradictions. These transformations create further historical contradictions that provide further learning opportunities. In fact, the process is cyclical.

Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS)

CAS is the name for both a description of a particular systems behavior as well as the springboard for a wide range of systems methodologies and methods designed to bring insights into situations that display complex adaptive behaviors. A complex

adaptive system comprises independent, interconnected elements (or agents) that adapt their behavior according to the behavior of other elements within the system. Consequently, our understanding of situations requires research tools that allow us to explore patterns of behavior rather than predetermined fixed results.

These patterns are determined primarily by fixed rules that determine how an agent responds to another agent's behavior (as distinct from the potential more flexible rules in activity systems). Clearly the starting conditions affect the result. Consequently, the focus in CAS based research is to study the patterns and starting conditions to understand who the key agents are, what rules are applying to them and what affects the nature of their response.

Many methodologies and heuristics have been developed how to recognize and how to intervene in complex situations. For example:

- Agent-based modeling uses computer simulations to model rule-based behavior between agents (i.e., system components). Like system dynamics, agent-based modeling will often use quantitative data to draw qualitative conclusions.
- Cynefin developed by David Snowden uses cognitive theory and network theory's notions of centrality and connectedness to understand simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic patterns of behavior.
- Human systems dynamics developed by Glenda Eoyang seeks to understand patterns of self-adaptive behavior using three aspects of a system; containers that hold the agents, differences between the agents, and exchanges between the agents to explain complex behavior. A combination of small container, small difference, and limited exchanges results in simple, predictable behaviors. The opposite will result in complex, unpredictable behavior. In between lies possibilities of self-adapting, recognizable patterns of behaviors.
- Mapping a situation along two dimensions—certainty of cause and effect and agreement between agents—was developed by Ralph Stacey to understand complex patterns of leadership.
- A four-stage cycle of systems behaviors (birth–exploitation, maturity–conservation, creative destruction, and renewal–mobilization) was developed by Brenda Zimmerman.

Bob Williams

See also Chaos and Complexity Theories; Concept Mapping; Critical Theory; Social Network Analysis

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TACIT KNOWLEDGE

Tacit knowledge is a construct associated with the thinking and writing of philosopher Michael Polanyi. Polanyi noted that we inevitably know more than we can say; he labeled this nonlinguistic, intuitive, and even at times unconscious form of knowledge *tacit knowledge*.

Tacit Knowledge and Qualitative Research

In the final quarter of the 20th century, certain advocates for using qualitative methods in social science research employed Polanyi's tacit knowledge construct to help make their case. In particular, they used the construct to argue that a perceived problem with qualitative research was, in fact, an asset. Transforming perceived liabilities into assets is a classic marketing strategy, of course. The slogan, "With a name like Smuckers, it has to be good," is an example of the marketing field's use of the strategy. Here, the markets have taken a name that could be seen as a liability and have turned it into an asset by creating a slogan that makes the name synonymous with "goodness."

For academics, the problem of "marketing" qualitative methods to skeptical social science communities in the final quarter of the 20th century was not in a name. Rather, the problem was that qualitative researchers' emergent designs and their normally informal research strategies (e.g., participant observation, the researcher as instrument, conversational

interviewing) were highly subjective, and traditional social scientists—who had been socialized to use supposedly objective procedures in the interest of minimizing error—viewed open-ended designs and subjective methods as problematic.

Qualitative researchers at times referenced Polanyi's notion of tacit knowledge to transform this perceived problem into a solution for a different problem that even many traditional social scientists had begun to recognize.

That problem was the complexity of social phenomena. Traditional researchers had become aware of the complexity problem when their traditional approaches to research failed to provide the sort of generalizable knowledge that traditional researchers had expected—and had promised—to produce. In the early 1970s, for example, evaluators who employed experimental and control groups to assess the effectiveness of programs began to understand that their a priori lists of independent and intervening variables did not capture a host of interaction effects and that their predefined dependent variables sometimes were less important than the unintended outcomes a program produced (and that their a priori designs, of course, did not address).

Qualitative research advocates argued that the complexity of social phenomena requires that researchers employ open-ended research designs and use research methods that allowed researchers to tap their tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, in other words, is needed to make sense of a level of complexity that prespecified designs and standardized—that is, quantitative researchers' so-called objective—methods will never be able to accommodate.

Minimizing and Managing Subjectivity

Of course, there is still a potential downside to relying on knowledge that is tacit and, hence, unavailable for public scrutiny and critique. Thus, qualitative researchers developed a number of procedures—for example, member checking, various forms of triangulation, peer debriefing, and audits—to move qualitative researchers' findings and interpretations beyond the tacit and subjective levels. In addition, a seminal article by Alan Peshkin, "In Search of Subjectivity—One's Own," suggested ways to manage one's subjectivity so it contributed to rather than interfered with a study's validity.

Robert Donmoyer

See also Arts-Based Research; Embodied Knowledge; Emotions in Qualitative Research; Subjectivity

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TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Telephone interviews were first used in large-scale quantitative surveys. More recently the method has been applied to qualitative interviewing. As with any method, the use of telephone interviews is determined by the practical advantages and pitfalls associated with the method and with regard to the research topics and participants involved.

Free flowing conversations can be held and rich data obtained from telephone interviews. However, participants tend to answer briefly compared with face-to-face interviews. Researchers, therefore, need to probe to ensure questions and topics are fully addressed. There is an important and unresolved issue about social desirability bias generated through telephone interviews. On the one hand, use of the telephone can offer anonymity to participants, enabling them to talk freely, openly, and honestly. On the other hand, during interviews on the telephone it can be difficult to build up trust and rapport, as well as gain the full attention of the participant.

Some participant groups may be more difficult to engage on the telephone; they may be distrustful of using the telephone, especially when discussing potentially sensitive topics (e.g., illegal activities, health behavior). Telephone interviews may not be appropriate for participants when researcher–interviewee rapport is important and trust needs to be established. Once rapport and trust have been built up, telephone interviews may be used in follow-up work. Similar issues are raised with cold calling—referring to telephoning people for interviews with no prior warning—where it can prove difficult to recruit participants and obtain rich qualitative data.

The use of visual information and aids during telephone interviews (e.g., prompt cards, vignettes) and requests for participants to write or draw need to be carefully planned for. Materials should be sent in advance, researchers have to ensure participants have these available at the time of interview, and the discussion should be carefully managed to ensure the correct materials are being used.

The nuances of body language and other nonverbal cues associated with face-to-face interaction may be lost over the telephone, although voice and intonation remain important cues. It is important to recognize researchers' personal characteristics that may influence responses (e.g., age, ethnicity) are minimized over the telephone.

Telephone interviews can be a difficult method to implement with people with verbal communication difficulties, people who tire easily, or where third parties (e.g., translators) need to be involved. However, researchers can ensure participants set the style and pace of the telephone interview.

Researchers have less opportunity in telephone interviews to create good interview ambience, such as ensuring participants are comfortable and interview distractions are kept to a minimum. However, should participants be distracted, interviews can be rescheduled relatively quickly and easily.

Low administration costs are associated with telephone interviews compared to face-to-face interviews, which incur travel time and expenses. The method is widely recognized as cost effective, especially when interviewing participants across geographically dispersed areas.

Rhidian Hughes

See also In-Depth Interview; Interview Guide; Structured Interview

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TEXT

Text, which in its broadest sense is anything in written form, constitutes the basic medium through which most qualitative analysis is carried out. Texts for research purposes are generated in many different ways; some are naturally occurring (e.g., newspaper reports, minutes of meetings, or policy documents); some are created following the use of research methods such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups (through audiorecording and transcription) or produced by the researcher (such as fieldnotes within participant observation); and others are the consequence of a process of “translation” whereby a social phenomenon that is the object of study is turned into text. In this latter category, Ian Parker and colleagues include television programs, cities, film, gardens, bodies, and silence.

The epistemological status of a text is contingent on the set of assumptions and tenets underpinning the research endeavor for which it has been generated. In considering a transcription of a research interview, for example, researchers working within a critical realist paradigm (e.g., perhaps using grounded theory principles) might accept the transcript as a reflection of the research participant's perspectives or views. Those adopting a narrative methodology will view the product of the interview as a story and will be interested in sequencing and form. Researchers of postmodern persuasion (e.g., discourse analysts) will treat the text as constitutive in its own right and reject it as a neutral representation of research participants' cognitive processes (such as their beliefs or attitudes).

The processes whereby the social phenomena that are the objects of study are transformed into text are also largely determined by the assumptions

underpinning what the text represents. If one views text as the means of transmitting the spoken word, which itself is a transparent representation of views, beliefs, or experiences, then the process of transcribing audiorecorded material is largely a technical issue in terms of ensuring that an interview is audible and thus captured on a recording and then accurately word-processed. However, within a research methodology such as conversation analysis, talk and text are viewed as active and performative. In order to carry out the fine-grained analysis required for conversation analysis, many nonverbal elements of talk also need to be represented within text, including volume, inflection, pauses, and overlapping speech. A text prepared for a conversation analysis appears very detailed and may be virtually incomprehensible to a novice researcher in comparison to a transcription of an interview generated for a grounded theory study. With the challenge to the authorial voice of the researcher that accompanies a postmodern or post-structural position, it is incumbent on the investigator to foreground his or her own role and interaction with the process of creating the text, as it will be for the process of interpretation.

Traditionally, the process and findings of research have been represented as scholarly texts such as academic papers, books, or theses. However, the critical turn within social research means that more researchers are exploring different ways of presenting their research products, such as alternative textual forms (poems, stories, web-based material), visual forms (such as photographs and pictures), or performative media (such as drama).

Claire Ballinger

See also Representational Forms of Disseminations; Textual Analysis; Transcript; Visual Data

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TEXTQUEST (SOFTWARE)

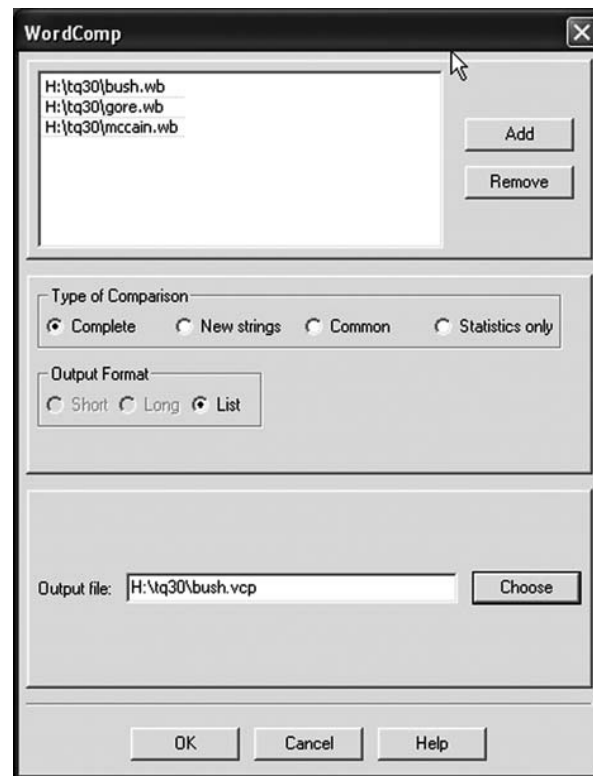
TextQuest is a language-independent program that supports quantitative and qualitative analyses of texts: wordlists, lists of phrases, and co-occurrences of words. All of these are sorted, ascending by alphabet and containing the character strings and their frequencies. Exclusion lists, selection by frequency, and selection by length are possible. Sort order tables for non-English languages are implemented.

TextQuest can also be used in qualitative analysis to examine the context of a search pattern and its display on a single line. The definition of a search pattern is not restricted to single words. One can define any part of a word, phrase, or co-occurrences of words as a search pattern. Also, the use of wildcards such as using a question mark or an asterisk is allowed. The context can be either the whole text unit or a selected part of displayed on a line. The length of the line is variable; for example, 60, 80, or 113 characters, per line.

The comparison of vocabularies is another module of TextQuest. A vocabulary can be a wordlist, a phrase list, or a list of co-occurrences. With version 3.0 or later, one can compare multiple vocabularies; for example, the speeches of 5 speakers on the same subject in one comparison instead of 10 one-by-one comparisons. Statistics include common entries of all vocabularies and exclusive entries related to the first vocabulary specified.

One form of a content analysis is a readability analysis based on mathematical formulas called readability indices. TextQuest offers 68 formulas for seven different languages. The results of these formulas can either be the reading class, the reading age, or an index value often between 0 (very difficult) and 100 (very easy). However, these formulas only measure syntactic variables like sentence and word length, number of syllables, or the occurrence of unknown words by comparing the text with entries of given word lists. The content of the text is not taken into account. All the formulas have implications regarding the language of the text and its genre.

The content analysis is very powerful. The search patterns can be defined as described above, and ambiguous or negated search patterns can be handled by interactive coding. The numeric results and the log files give complete control of the coding process. For statistical analyses, syntax files for SAS, SimStat, and SPSS are written.



A Screen View of the Word Comparison Module. In this module it is possible to compare many wordlists at one time; e.g. to compare speeches of different authors on the same subjects, or changes in the word use over time on newspaper articles. This example shows the module configured to compare three files.

Source: Copyright Harald Klein, Social Science Consulting, Osnabrück, Germany; used by permission.

The author of TextQuest is Harald Klein, who started the development of TextQuest in 1981 as a student at the University of Münster, Germany. The first version, called Intext, ran on an IBM mainframe. Later versions for MS-DOS and MS-Windows followed. TextQuest is available in English and German. There is also a free test version that includes the manual on the TextQuest website.

Harald Klein

See also Computer-Assisted Data Analysis

Websites

TextQuest: <http://www.textquest.de>

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Textual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse. Texts, which can range from newspapers, television programs, and blogs to architecture, fashion, and furniture, are deconstructed to examine how they operate, the manner in which they are constructed, the ways in which meanings are produced, and the nature of those meanings. Sociologists, geographers, historians, linguists, communications and media studies researchers, and film researchers use textual analysis to assess texts from a range of cultural settings.

Textual analysis is a term used to refer to a variety of primarily qualitative methodologies or models. Research that focuses on the analysis of textual content will adopt either content analysis (both quantitative and qualitative approaches), semiotics, phenomenology, or hermeneutics. Research on textual structure and discourse employs different methodologies, including genre analysis, *mise-en-scène* analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, structural analysis, poststructural analysis, or postmodern textual analysis. Each methodology has its own nuances, inflections, strengths, and weaknesses. A number of theoretical frameworks are available to researchers when interpreting any text. The framework adopted will depend on the researcher's preferences. Some researchers explore texts, their conventions and their relationship to realism, whereas others assess the construction and reinforcement of cultural myths.

The Glasgow University Group (1976, 1980) used a combination of textual analysis methodologies, including content analysis and semiotic analysis, to explore the ideology at work in the presentation of television news surrounding industrial reporting. Their textual analyses identified systematic biases against the working classes. More recently, textual analysis has been broadened to consider the ideological implications of both factual and fictional texts and their hybrid forms.

All texts, including this encyclopedia entry, have their own narrative structures and persuasive qualities and are designed to convey a preferred meaning. Textual analysis does not attempt to identify the "correct" interpretation of a text, but is used to identify what interpretations are possible and likely. Texts are polysemic—they have multiple and varied meanings. However, this semantic instability does not mean that readers can make a text mean whatever they wish it to

mean. Meaning is derived from the codes, conventions, and genre of the text and its social, cultural, historical, and ideological context—which can work together to convey a preferred reading of the text. Some textual analyses examine the interconnections of meanings both inside and outside the text. Thus, questions asked during textual analysis refer to the rhetorical context of the text (Who created the text? What are the authors' intentions? Who is the intended audience?), the specific textual characteristics (What topic or issue is being addressed? How is the audience addressed? What is the central theme or claim made? Is there evidence or explanation to support the theme or claim? What is the nature of this evidence or explanation?), and the wider context of the text (How does the text relate to other texts in the same genre or format?).

Textual analysis is a fruitful methodology that has increased understanding of the construction of textual meaning in variety of cultural texts. Through close and detailed scrutiny, textual analysis can provide rich discussion of presentational and structural specifics and subtleties that would remain unidentified if a cursory analysis was conducted. Textual analysis also benefits from that naturally occurring status of its data source. Texts exist in society before the researcher decides to analyze them. Therefore, insights into meaning construction and the ideological implications of texts are not subject to the biases that are evident when data sources are created for, or around, the research project. Texts are also readily available, which can quicken the research process and prevent ethical difficulties surrounding access (although some ethical considerations still apply; for example, regarding anonymity). Further, as textual approaches provide close analyses of texts, often only a small number of texts is required to create an adequate data set (with the exception of quantitative content analysis).

Critics of textual analysis have questioned the validity of the approach, arguing that a reading of a text echoes the perspective of the researcher and that the specific approaches used to analyze texts are as ideological as the texts themselves. Recognizing this, Paula Saukko proposes that textual analysts should highlight that a text can never be completely understood because all readings of texts are socially situated. Further, researchers should critically reflect on their own perspectives by subjecting them to the political and social inspection that would be conducted for all texts. This process involves being self-reflexive about favoring certain approaches to textual

analysis over others and about referring to other textual approaches as inferior. Alternatively, Saukko suggests that in order to highlight the political dimensions of interpretations of texts, researchers could adopt multiperspectival textual analysis by combining different textual analysis approaches, such as semiotics and postmodern approaches.

Texts are diverse in form, and this diversity is sometimes overlooked in textual analysis. Even within the same family of texts there will be wide variation. For example, media texts range from front covers of magazines to the latest blog entry, each with their own production and stylistic conventions. This variety should be taken into account when examining the production of meaning in texts and their likely interpretations.

A further criticism of textual analysis is that it is conducted in isolation—the text is all that matters, and it is the central, or the only, focus of analysis. This self-contained approach to analysis neglects the importance of the producer and reader in the construction of meaning. Combining textual analysis with methods that explore the institutional constraints on the production of the text (such as in-depth interviews or participant observation) and how audiences read the text (focus groups and in-depth interviews) prevents the risk textualizing the world—perceiving the world specifically in terms of texts—and acknowledges the world that exists outside of texts.

Sharon Lockyer

See also Content Analysis; Narrative Analysis; Postmodernism; Semiotics; Structuralism; Text

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THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) generally refers to a collection of unique improvisational and theatrical

forms developed by Brazilian theater artist and activist Augusto Boal. TO is a participatory and democratic approach to theater that critically examines social, political, and personal oppressions to develop emancipatory strategies. Selected qualitative researchers employ TO for such purposes as participant diagnostics, data-gathering methods, stimuli for participant reflection and dialogue, action research to create positive social change within communities, and therapeutic modalities with selected populations.

Forms of Theatre of the Oppressed

Boal's most well-known and widely used TO forms include games, Image Theatre, and Forum Theatre.

Boal's unique games function as physical warm-ups for more advanced work and serve as metaphors for the dynamics and inequity of power between individuals and social groups.

Image Theatre is based on Boal's theory that language sometimes obfuscates what people truly think and feel. Therefore, the participant's body is used as an expressive instrument to articulate his or her innermost attitudes, values, and beliefs through still and fluid images. An example is a group of incarcerated youth sculpting themselves into their representative image of justice.

Forum Theatre is an improvisational, participatory form in which a brief, prepared scenario is presented to an audience that illustrates an oppressive conflict, such as a teacher (the antagonist) unfairly accusing a student (the protagonist) of cheating on an exam. The scene ends unresolved so that audience members (called *spect-actors*) can replace the protagonist and replay the scenario several times with different tactics to overcome the oppression. The Forum Theatre event is facilitated by a *joker* who, like the playing card, can assume multiple roles as needed—facilitator, devil's advocate, discussion moderator, and so on.

Other forms of Boal's TO include: Invisible Theatre, the Rainbow of Desire, Legislative Theatre, and Aesthetics of the Oppressed.

Applications in Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers, primarily from the fields of education, social work, and theater, have applied TO techniques with diverse groups of participants ranging

from Latina youth to inner-city secondary school students. Audio- and videorecordings of TO experiences can generate such data as the visual-symbolic representations of concepts produced through Image Theatre and the transcripts of Forum Theatre's spectator dialogue and debate.

Johnny Saldaña

See also Arts-Based Research; Community-Based Research; Critical Arts-Based Inquiry; Dramaturgy; Social Justice

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THEMATIC CODING AND ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set. Thematic analysis is primarily a descriptive strategy that facilitates the search for patterns of experience within a qualitative data set; the product of a thematic analysis is a description of those patterns and the overarching design that unites them. Thematic coding is the strategy by which data are segmented and categorized for thematic analysis. Thematic coding is a strategy of data reduction, in contrast to the axial and open coding strategies characteristic of grounded theory research, which enrich and complicate data through the inclusion of analytic insights and inquiries used.

In thematic coding, the analyst frequently begins with a list of themes known (or at least anticipated) to be found in the data. When data for thematic analysis

are collected through semi-structured interviews, some themes will be anticipated in the data set because those concepts were explicitly included in data collection. Codes may also come from a beginning conceptual model, the review of the literature, or professional experience. At this stage of the analysis, coding categories are more heuristic than analytic; that is, coding categories serve as a receptacle for promising ideas. Promising ideas become coding categories through a rigorous process of analytic induction that includes both within- and across-case comparisons. First, an idea must show importance within an individual account. For example, in a study of family caregivers, one female informant may live in a house in which all of the bedrooms are on the second floor where she cares for her mother, who recently had a stroke and can no longer manage the stairs. The informant may tell stories about her mother's early life as a women's softball player, their lifelong close relationship, and her mother's current inability to remember names or faces. The stairs, the softball, and the stroke are key ingredients in this informant's account. Stairways and softball are unique to this participant, but environmental barriers to caregiving and the image of the care receiver are ideas likely to recur in other interviews. If they do recur, then environmental barriers and image of the care receiver become themes. Similarly, although not every informant may be caring for a family member with cognitive changes after a stroke, many caregivers may contrast the condition of their family member now and before the illness event, leading to a theme of change.

Coding facilitates the development of themes, and the development of themes facilitates coding. In coding, portions of data are separated from their original context and labeled in some way so that all data bearing the same label can be retrieved and inspected together. As noted by Renata Tesch, these data are decontextualized from their original interview and recontextualized into a theme. Coding categories are reconceptualized, renamed, reorganized, merged, or separated as the analysis progresses; categories are seldom static and never inviolate, as they are subject throughout the analysis to the search for alternative interpretations or disconfirming evidence. Data management strategies are needed that can handle coded data in ways that are both flexible and robust; that is, codes and categories must be easily reorganized, and search and retrieval capacities must be capable of managing large amounts of information. For these reasons, many qualitative researchers now use some form of qualitative data management software.

Although it is convenient to discuss coding, data management, the development and refinement of themes, and the identification of patterns across the data as though they occur sequentially, like steps in a process, in practice this is not the case. Rather, all of these activities occur throughout the project, although with more emphasis on coding and data management at the beginning of a project and more emphasis on identification of patterns as data collection winds down and the investigator's focus turns to analysis. For this reason, it is difficult to identify the point in the analysis at which thematic coding becomes thematic analysis. Throughout the analysis, the investigator considers the relevance of each theme to the research question and to the data set as a whole, thus keeping the developing analysis integrated. At the same time, as identification of themes progresses, the investigator also considers the relationship among categories. In this way, data that have been decontextualized through coding retain their connection to their sources and thus can lead to the ideographic (that is, case-based) generalizations characteristic of qualitative research. The processes of reintegration and connection to the source distinguish thematic analysis from qualitative content analysis. In the latter, coded data segments are analyzed without relation to the account from which they were drawn.

In order to develop useful generalizations from thematic coding, themes must be synthesized. The product of a thematic analysis is more than a list of themes and their descriptions. The product of a thematic analysis, like any qualitative analysis, includes both the important concepts and processes identified in the study and the overarching patterns of experience by which those concepts and processes are manifested. Ideally, a thematic analysis takes into account both patterns of commonality across all cases and the contextual aspects of the phenomenon that account for differences among participants; for example, a thematic analysis might include both the important concepts in a study of family caregivers and those concepts that influence the way care is provided. Although thematic analysis remains descriptive and is not designed to uncover an essential structure or develop a grounded theory, nevertheless, investigators are challenged to present findings that are both meaningful and useful.

Lioness Ayres

See also Analytic Induction; Codes and Coding; Content Analysis; Data Analysis; Data Management; Generalizability; Grounded Theory; Semi-Structured Interview

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THEMES

In qualitative research, data collection typically occurs to the point of saturation. Essentially, this means that researchers continue interviews to the point where little new information is shared by participants. In other words, people continue reporting essentially the same ideas and the law of diminishing returns is at work in the information-gathering procedure. Collecting more data, at that point, does not produce novel results.

Thematic analysis is one of many methods used to assess whether or not saturation has occurred in the data collecting process. Typically, reoccurrence is a prime means of analyzing data for themes. That is, researchers assess the interview transcripts for repeated statements, phrases, and words.

However, themes are not generated simply by counting words. Rather, themes are assessed by examining constructs that occur in the data. For example, the terms *anger*, *upset*, *frustrated*, or *mad* may be used by various participants, but all refer essentially to the same overarching construct. Computer-assisted software often can be helpful to qualitative researchers when assessing data for related ideas, using different words or phrases.

Themes typically are derived from codes generated by the qualitative researcher. Reading the material presented by the participants multiple times, using constant comparison among the ideas presented throughout the interviews, can become overwhelming to the researcher. Consequently, experienced qualitative inquiries involve researchers making memos to themselves as the data collection process occurs. These memos may involve hunches, impressions, or ideas for further exploration. Tracing through one's memos often prompts the researcher for potential reoccurring ideas.

These potential reoccurring ideas are coded, simply meaning that the constructs are physically noted (handwritten or in a software database). Sometimes what originally appeared to be a theme does not turn out to be aptly supported by the data. Those codes eventually are ignored or discarded. Other codes, however, occur repeatedly—both in terms of breadth, and, when appropriate, depth of occurrences. These reoccurring coded phrases, terms, and expressions (and the like) formulate constructs that seem to be shared by most or many of the participants of the study. When sufficiently grounded in the data collected, they become the study's themes.

Quantitative researchers sometimes overlook the inductive method of qualitative themes. As a hallmark, qualitative researchers use an inductive method of analysis. Most quantitative researchers begin with hypotheses that they attempt to prove or disprove statistically. Essentially, it is a deductive method. The researcher begins with a conclusion (null hypothesis) and goes to data for its support. Qualitative researchers, in contrast, are inductively driven. They begin with the data, and from it, develop hypotheses or conclusions. Most often, the themes generated from the data are the study's conclusions.

Finally, themes are assessed by qualitative researchers in more than just transcribed interviews. Triangulation involves sifting through documents, websites, test results, public relations materials—anything that might substantiate or negate the stability of themes found from participant interview transcripts. In other words, information from related documents should support the overall themes generated from the coded transcript data.

Michael W. Firmin

See also Categories; Essence; Interpretive Research; Methods

Further Readings

Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., & Delamont, S. (2003). *Key themes in qualitative research*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels (e.g., grand, mid-range, and explanatory), that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena. Qualitative research has often been criticized for not being guided by theory in its development and conduct. Additionally, students as well as experienced researchers who employ qualitative methods frequently have trouble identifying and using theoretical frameworks in their research (i.e., understanding how and what it affects in the process of conducting the research).

The confusion related to understanding and using theoretical frameworks stems from a wide variety of treatments of this topic by leading writers in the field. Many of the prominent writers on qualitative methods provide neither the depth of understanding nor the specificity needed to explicate the topic. In an attempt to address this confusion, this entry focuses on what has been written about the role of theory and theoretical frameworks in qualitative research, defining what a theoretical framework is, looking at how one finds and utilizes a theoretical framework in qualitative research, and addressing the effects of a theoretical framework on the research process.

What the Literature Says

While there is little disagreement about the role and place of theory in quantitative research, such is not the case regarding qualitative research. There is consensus neither about its role in qualitative research nor about its definition. Theory, though, has an unavoidable place for all but a few of the authors reviewed, and it plays a substantive role in the research process. An examination of the literature on this topic reveals three different understandings: (1) that theory has little relationship to qualitative research, (2) that theory in qualitative research relates to the methodology the researcher chooses to use and the epistemologies underlying that methodology, and (3) that theory in qualitative research has a pervasive role that affects all aspects of the research process. These categories of understandings are not exclusive, but help highlight the confusion that exists in the literature. Authors may lean toward more than one position. For example, an author may situate the role of theory within methodological paradigms, yet hint at the notion that theory has a much wider role to play. A brief review of each of these categories follows.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Although the term does not have a clear and consistent definition, *theoretical framework* is defined as any

Theory Has Little Relationship

Some widely used textbooks do not discuss, nor even mention, theory in relation to qualitative research. Others mention theory, but confine the discussion to defining it as an attempt to develop a general explanation for some phenomenon or as primarily concerned with explanation. Several authors give short shrift to discussions of theory in qualitative research while acknowledging its relevance to a particular methodology. For example, in discussions of grounded theory, they hold that qualitative studies are done to discover theory because the researcher starts by collecting data and then searches for theoretical constructs, themes, and patterns that are “grounded” in the theory.

Theory as Related to Methodology

In sharp contrast to these works, where theory in relation to qualitative research is nonexistent or relatively modest, there is a substantive body of work that equates theory in qualitative research with the methodologies used in the conduct of the research and the epistemologies underlying these methods. These works are well known and are largely written about qualitative research specifically, rather than about research in general. Some authors in this category speak about theories emerging from naturalistic inquiry, not framing it.

Some researchers equate paradigms with theory and argue that these paradigms contain the researchers’ epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises that guide the researcher’s actions. These paradigms are identified as positivism and postpositivism; interpretivism, constructivism, and hermeneutics; feminism(s); racialized discourses; critical theory and Marxist models; cultural studies models; and queer theory. These paradigms clearly link theory to methodologies; however, it is also suggested that the study is widely affected by the linkage. Some writers of qualitative methods argue that case study research, in contrast to other qualitative research designs such as ethnography, requires identifying the theoretical perspective at the outset of the inquiry since it affects the research questions, analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Other writers of qualitative methods acknowledge that researchers bring paradigmatic assumptions (ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological) to the design of their studies, and may, in addition, bring ideological perspectives (postmodernism, critical theory, and feminism) that might guide a study. It is believed that with ethnography and

phenomenology, the researcher brings a strong orienting framework to the research, while in grounded theory, one collects and analyzes data before using theory. With biography and case study, a theoretical lens might or might not play a part, depending on the nature of the study and the disposition of the researcher.

Theory as More

As compelling as the work relating theory in qualitative research to methodologies and their underlying epistemologies, a body of work that, while not denying the influence of methodologies and their underlying epistemologies, suggests that the role of theory in qualitative research is more pervasive and influential than suggested by those who situate it methodologically. They contend that it plays a key role in framing and conducting almost every aspect of the study (e.g., development of purpose statement, research questions, data collection protocols and approaches, and analysis).

From this perspective, it would be difficult to imagine a study without a theoretical (sometimes called a conceptual) framework. We would not know what to do in conducting our research without some theoretical framework to guide us, whether it is made explicit or not. Researchers who hold this perspective call the theoretical framework the structure, the scaffolding, or the frame of the study. For some authors, the theoretical framework affects every aspect of the study, from determining how to frame the purpose and problem, to what to look at and for, to how they make sense of the data that are collected. In short, the entire process is theory-laden.

This position holds that without at least some rudimentary theoretical framework there would be no way to make reasoned decisions about what data to gather or to determine what is important from among the wealth of data and possibilities of approaches to analysis that exist. The theoretical framework can be rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive or causal, but it delineates the main things to be studied and the presumed relationships among them. The theoretical framework is constructed from the theories and experiences the researcher brings to and draws upon in conceptualizing the study. These theories, implicit and explicit, include grand theories such as symbolic interactionism and middle-range concepts such as culture, as well as preconceptions, biases, values, frames, and rhetorical habits.

Few of us can claim that we enter the field *tabula rasa*, unencumbered by notions of the phenomena we seek to understand. Theory (i.e., a theoretical framework), then, includes any general set of ideas that guide action, and that theory profoundly affects the conduct of qualitative research. Theory is pragmatically linked with the activities of planning a study, gaining entry into the field, recording observations, conducting interviews, sifting through documents, and writing up research.

Definition of a Theoretical Framework

As noted above, the term *theoretical framework* does not have a clear and consistent definition; in this entry, it is defined as any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels (e.g., grand, mid-range, and explanatory), that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena. This definition of theoretical frameworks excludes what some writers have called paradigms of social research (e.g., postpositivist, constructivist, critical, feminist). It also does not consider methodological issues or approaches to be synonymous with theoretical frameworks (e.g., narrative analysis, systems analysis, symbolic interactionism).

Examples of what is meant by theories that can be applied as “lenses” to study phenomena might include Vygotskian learning theory, micropolitical theory, class reproduction theory, job choice theory, social capital, cultural capital, liminality, transformational learning theory, the arena model of policy innovation, and grief theory, to name only a few.

There are a wide variety of theoretical frameworks available for qualitative researchers to consider. These frameworks originate in the many different fields of study and disciplines in the social and natural sciences. Thus, the well-read qualitative researcher is alert to theoretical frameworks in economics, sociology, political science, psychology, biology, physics, and anthropology, to name but a few. Researchers should be open to considering the applicability of these frameworks to the research problem they seek to study. It is, indeed, this diversity and richness of theoretical frameworks that allow us to see in new and different ways what seems to be ordinary and familiar.

In defining theoretical frameworks, we must be cognizant that any framework or theory allows the researcher to “see” and understand certain aspects of

the phenomenon being studied while concealing other aspects. No theory, or theoretical framework, provides a perfect explanation of what is being studied.

How Do I Find a Theoretical Framework?

The problem of finding a theoretical framework is not confined to students or neophyte researchers. Even seasoned qualitative researchers have been known to have manuscripts returned to them with questions about the theoretical framework that guided their study. Students of qualitative research as well as experienced researchers sometimes find themselves at a loss in the process of selecting a theoretical framework. They often expect it to appear or to magically drop into their laps. Admittedly, finding a theoretical framework, especially one that works well for the phenomenon being studied, is not always an easy process. Although students or researchers may be lucky and find a theoretical framework quickly and painlessly, having one handed to them by a professor for their thesis or dissertation, by a colleague, or by co-researchers, the fact remains that in all likelihood students or researchers will have to actively search for a theoretical framework. No doubt, this pursuit will be characterized by much reading (e.g., in the fields of economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and even the physical and biological sciences); possible discussion with colleagues; and finding, reflecting upon, and discarding several potential theoretical frameworks before one is finally chosen. Although some researchers use a particular theoretical framework for an extended period of time, others change frameworks with each study undertaken.

A good approach to beginning to find a theoretical framework might be to study a scholarly journal that requires its authors to identify the theoretical framework used. Typically, one will see a heading or subheading that is actually labeled as a theoretical or conceptual framework. Qualitative researchers are encouraged to spend some time looking at published research and identifying the theoretical frameworks used as a way to stimulate thinking about theories and their relationship to research projects. Additionally, qualitative researchers are encouraged to be persistent in the search for theoretical frameworks and to think beyond the confines of their disciplinary focus.

What Effect Does the Theoretical Framework Have on My Research?

A theoretical framework has the ability to (a) focus a study, (b) reveal and conceal meaning and understanding, (c) situate the research in a scholarly conversation and provide a vernacular, and (d) reveal its strengths and weaknesses.

Focus a Study

The ability of a theoretical framework to focus a study involves four issues. First, qualitative researchers often feel overwhelmed by the mountains of data (e.g., interview transcripts, documents, observation notes, and fieldnotes) that can be collected. By acting as a “sieve” or a “lens,” the theoretical framework assists the researcher in the process of sorting through these data. Second, the theoretical framework frames every aspect of a study from the questions asked, to the sample selected, to the analysis derived. The concepts, constructs, and propositions that are part and parcel of a theory help the researcher in formulating these component parts of the research process. Third, qualitative researchers are keenly aware of the existence of subjectivity and bias in their research. The theoretical framework helps the researcher to control this subjectivity by the self-conscious revisiting of the theory and a concomitant awareness that one is using a particular perspective. Fourth, the theoretical framework provides powerful concepts that may be used in the coding and the analysis of the data. In short, the theoretical framework forces the researcher to be accountable to ensure that the methodology, the data, and the analysis are consistent with the theory.

Reveal and Conceal Meaning and Understanding

The theoretical framework has the ability to reveal and conceal meaning and understanding. Theories can allow us to see familiar phenomena in novel ways, but they can also blind us to aspects of the phenomena that are not part of the theory. As part of theory’s ability to reveal and conceal, we should be cognizant that a theoretical framework can distort the phenomena being studied by filtering out critical pieces of data.

Researchers need to recognize this characteristic of a theoretical framework and give serious thought to what is being concealed. This ability to reveal and conceal makes it all the more important for researchers to tell their readers, if possible, what is concealed. This

concealment is, after all, the essence of a study’s delimitations. Although the choice of a theoretical framework clearly delimits a study, little recognition of this fact is found in theses, dissertations, or in journal articles.

Situate the Research in a Scholarly Conversation and Provide a Vernacular

In the process of advancing knowledge, the theoretical framework allows researchers to situate their research and knowledge contributions in a scholarly conversation. It allows them to talk across disciplines using the known and accepted language of the theory. It is this established language that assists in making meanings of the phenomena being studied explicit. The theoretical framework also provides convenient labels and categories that help in explaining and developing thick descriptions and a coherent analysis.

In reflecting upon this effect of the theoretical framework, it is important for qualitative researchers to learn the language of the theory being used and to use it precisely and clearly. It is also necessary to make every attempt to state their contributions to the scholarly conversation without overreaching appropriate parameters—parameters that will be dictated by the data they have collected and the analysis they have formulated. Part of participating in this scholarly conversation and documenting their contribution involves looking carefully at the relationship between their study and the theory they have used. Does their research support the existing theory, does it advance the theory in some meaningful and important way, or does it refute the theory? These are important questions that should not be avoided in this discussion.

Reveals Its Strengths and Weaknesses

No theoretical framework can completely and adequately describe or explain any phenomena. Researchers should be concerned about the power of a theoretical framework to be too reductionistic, stripping the phenomenon of its complexity and interest, or too deterministic, forcing the researcher to “fit” the data into predetermined categories. Other researchers have been concerned about the power of the existing literature on a topic to be ideologically hegemonic, making it difficult to see phenomena in ways that are different from those that are prevalent in the literature. Some have discussed the fact that strengths and weaknesses provide sufficient reason to employ multiple frameworks in one study.

Researchers need to be prepared for the strengths and weaknesses of a theoretical framework being revealed during the process of conducting a research project. Questions will be raised that need to be addressed. Whereas the “fit” of the theoretical framework for a study may become evident, it may in fact become necessary to discard the theoretical framework and start the process of searching for a new one. Researchers need to be wary of dropping data in light of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of any theory. It could be these data that help in the advancement of the theory or in its being refuted.

The relationship between theory and qualitative research remains complicated. The question remains, “Is it possible to observe and describe what happens in natural settings without some theory to guide the researcher in what is relevant to observe and to assist in naming what is happening?” Qualitative forms of inquiry demand that theory (i.e., theoretical frameworks) be used with imagination and flexibility. As John Dewey noted, it is part of our need to reeducate our perceptions.

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.

See also Theory

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THEORETICAL MEMOING

Memoing refers to the informal written records kept by qualitative researchers that reference ideas, hunches, hypotheses, research literature, and sundry observations about research questions, research design and methods, and theory as they arise in the process of a research project. *Theoretical memoing* refers to a specific subset of memoing that focuses on the theorizing aspect of research. Although memoing is described as an essential step throughout the process of conducting studies using grounded theory, it is also described by other qualitative researchers as a useful means to trace one’s development of theory from initial conception of a research project to publication of the findings. Given that theoretical assumptions underlie every aspect of a research project, theoretical memos provide an important record that researchers may use as a source of information, impetus for reflection, and record of analytic decision making.

Various descriptions of memo writing provide guidelines for how researchers can use theoretical memoing in their work, as well as exemplars of various types of memos. First, qualitative researchers can use multiple techniques to illustrate their developing understandings of how evidence may be generated, understood, analyzed, and represented. These include freewriting and drawing diagrams and concept maps. Second, qualitative researchers are advised to begin recording theoretical memos early—throughout the research design process, while conducting fieldwork, and throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

Advocates of theoretical memoing affirm that this technique assists researchers to develop researcher reflexivity, to make decisions with respect to data generation and research design, to make connections between the concrete details of evidence to abstract ideas and concepts, to support assertions and develop analyses and interpretations, to record the development of theory building, and to write and report findings. Although some scholars describe writing, coding, and filing theoretical memos on index cards, the introduction of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software packages (CAQDAS) to the field of qualitative inquiry has facilitated quick and easy access to systematic forms of memo writing in the form of annotated texts, linked memo documents, and hypertext links among electronic documents.

The focus of theoretical memoing is on reflection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as how researchers

relate evidence to abstract concepts. Proponents of theoretical memoing recommend that researchers write with a focus on jotting thoughts down, rather than writing accurately. Researchers are advised to keep records systematically and include the date of memo writing and references to specific data and/or analyses, along with excerpts of relevant transcriptions and fieldnotes. Each theoretical memo is seen as a step in the generation of theory, and researchers are advised to be flexible, developing ideas further in later memo writing and using memos as a springboard for revising manuscripts for publication.

Kathryn J. Roulston

See also Grounded Theory; Memos and Memoing; Reflexivity; Research Diaries and Journals

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THEORETICAL SAMPLING

Theoretical sampling is a tool that allows the researcher to generate theoretical insights by drawing on comparisons among samples of data. The data can include population, events, activities, or even time periods. Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss first significantly explained the term in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967).

Data remain opaque if the researcher develops no sensitivity among the potential differences and similarities among a variety of classes or samples of data. More important, the choice of data samples allows the researcher to impute the theoretical aspects of the research. For instance, data generated in a study of horseback riding by the disabled might lack depth and understanding if the researcher chooses to ignore the kinds of participants involved in the many aspects of this form of

horseback riding such as the disabled person (and this by age or gender), the parents or guardian of that person, the organizers of horseback riding events, and those responsible for dressing the horses. The researcher might also find it fruitful to conduct a theoretical sample of subgroups; namely, horseback riding of the disabled in rural, semirural, and urban settings. A theoretical sample would bring into relief a variety of experiences that can be compared to generate concepts and theory.

The typical basic research process often does not allow a researcher initially to set out the samples. Rather, as the researcher first deepens him- or herself in the field setting, the potentiality of creating theoretical samples becomes more obvious. The question, "How can I differentiate or compare data that would allow me to move my research to a more conceptual stage?" resembles a refinement of how a researcher can use data to advance conceptual thinking. Taking an example from thinking theoretically about research on a Florida retirement community, one would offhand think of interviewing active and inactive members of the community. However, within the cadre of active members, members of the entertainment committee constitute the hyperactive ones, while on the inactive side, one would be forced to collect data from "snowbirds" and "snowflakes" who are intermittent visitors from the north. Without such dimensionalizing of the data, it would be hard to theoretically advance the data about the retirement community.

The two above examples also illustrate the timing of introducing theoretical samples in one's research. In some cases, theoretical sampling involves further differentiations among classes of data whether they pertain to activities, events, documents, or time periods. Observing street-level activities in a village, a researcher might feel compelled to derive a theoretical sample based on times of day. This type of theorizing can yield clues about the shape of public life in that village and lead the researcher to generate insights about "compact" time and "diffuse" time.

The theoretical sample is a simple, but highly effective tool that can spark further insights because it can save time. Moreover, the use of theoretical sampling forces the researcher into new directions, stretching the diversity of data gathered for the purpose of developing concepts and theories.

Will C. van den Hoonaard

See also Conceptual Ordering; Constant Comparison; Grounded Theory; Theoretical Memoing; Theoretical Saturation

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THEORETICAL SATURATION

Theoretical saturation signals the point in grounded theory studies at which theorizing the events under investigation is considered to have come to a sufficiently comprehensive end. At this point, researchers are comfortable that the properties and dimensions of the concepts and conceptual relationships selected to render the target event are fully described and that they have captured its complexity and variation. Theoretical saturation is the endpoint of theoretical sampling and is achieved via constant comparison analysis, the signature sampling and analysis strategy in grounded theory inquiry.

Although related to each other, theoretical saturation is different from data saturation (also called informational redundancy). Informational redundancy refers to data and occurs when researchers sense they have seen or heard something so repeatedly that they can anticipate it. Collecting more data is deemed to have no further interpretive value. In contrast, theoretical saturation refers to interpretations of data and occurs when researchers are satisfied their theoretical renderings of a target event will fit any other data about it that might still be collected.

The achievement of theoretical saturation is a function of the theoretical sensitivities researchers developed prior to and in the course of their studies and based on the judgments of other researchers. Theoretical saturation is, therefore, a process idiosyncratic to the researcher and study, and a product of communal evaluation as the audiences to whom a theoretical rendering is directed decide whether it has been achieved. When theoretical saturation is reached depends on such factors as sample variation, length of time in the field of study, and researcher experience. Moreover, because theories are always subject to revision, theoretical saturation represents what Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss described as a pause in the never-ending process of theory development.

Illustration of Theoretical Saturation

What follows is a necessarily simplified illustration of theoretical saturation intended to clarify its defining

features. A researcher conducting a study to understand how HIV-positive women handle the stigmatization associated with HIV infection begins to theorize, from the interview data collected from HIV-positive women, two types of disclosure: managed and mismanaged disclosure. In managed disclosure, women stay in control of whether their HIV status will be revealed and what about it will be revealed and to whom. The researcher discerns what she or he initially takes to be four analytically distinct strategies women use in managed disclosure: (a) full disclosure, whereby women withhold nothing about their disease from anyone; (b) partial disclosure, whereby they reveal only some things about their disease; (c) selective disclosure, whereby they reveal information about their disease to some but not to other people; and (d) full concealment, whereby they reveal nothing about their disease to anyone. In mismanaged disclosure, women lose control of whether their HIV status is revealed, what is revealed, and to whom. These women are “outed” accidentally, as when they are seen entering a clinic serving only HIV-positive patients, or deliberately, as when a person to whom a woman has revealed her disease subsequently tells other people.

Theoretical saturation will have been achieved when this researcher—using theoretical sampling and constant comparison analysis—is able to answer a number of questions, only a few of which are featured here. For example, do the concepts *managed* and *mismanaged disclosure*, and *full disclosure* and *concealment*, and *partial* and *selective disclosure*, exhaust the variation in types and strategies of disclosure? Should the categorization of disclosure be refined to encompass additional types and strategies or to eliminate one or more of them? No matter the number of categories, are they both exhaustive and mutually exclusive? If the researcher decides to use a conditional matrix framework for analysis—one of a number of grounded theory coding families—does she or he have the data to describe the causes and conditions for, and consequences of, using these disclosure strategies? For example, do certain HIV-positive women (e. g., White versus African American, women in general versus just mothers, women diagnosed with HIV infection for more versus less than a specified period of time) prefer one strategy over another? Under what circumstances would a woman decide to disclose or conceal fully, partially, or selectively? Alternatively, if the researcher decided a process coding framework was a better fit to the data, can the

researcher show how women moved from one strategy to another, or cycled between strategies?

Theoretical saturation is achieved to the extent that this researcher's theoretical rendering is sufficiently developed to answer these and the many other questions that might be raised in analyzing such a dynamic process. Moreover, the achievement of theoretical saturation does not necessarily require that additional data be collected as the researcher, by virtue of engaging in the process of constant comparison analysis, will have developed the theoretical sensitivity to see in the data already collected what was not seen before. The researcher may come to see an incident a woman shared about telling others about her disease, not simply as yet another story about telling (i.e., as simply informationally redundant), but rather as an empirical example of the theoretical proposition that whenever a woman judges a person as having a right to know, selective disclosure of at least partial information ensues. The researcher might seek to "test" this proposition by theoretically sampling the data already obtained or data newly acquired for this purpose and, thereby, determine whether this proposition continues to hold or whether any negative cases exist to undermine it (e.g., an empirical example of managed disclosure when no right to know was deemed to exist). Theoretical saturation, thus, serves as a key criterion for validity in grounded theory studies.

Margarete Sandelowski

See also Constant Comparison; Grounded Theory; Negative Case Analysis; Theoretical Sampling

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THEORY

Theory is a term that is widely used in both everyday language and academic discourse, but its

precise meaning is vague and contested. A theory, in both everyday and scientific use, is normally used to denote a model or set of concepts and propositions that pertains to some actual phenomena; a theory can provide understanding of these phenomena or form the basis for action with respect to them.

Following Thomas Kuhn, qualitative researchers have generally accepted the view that all observation is theory-laden—that our understanding of the world is inherently shaped by our prior ideas and assumptions about the world and that there is no possibility of purely objective or theory-neutral description independent of some particular perspective. Thus, theory is an inescapable component of all research, whether or not it is explicitly acknowledged.

However, the explicit use of theory in qualitative research is quite different from that in the physical sciences and in much quantitative research. Qualitative researchers do not usually design their research primarily to apply or test formally constructed theories about the topics and settings they study. Instead, they normally seek to better understand these topics and settings through their investigations and to inductively develop theory about these from their data. Qualitative researchers generally acknowledge, and often explicitly analyze, the influence of their prior assumptions about these topics and settings, and they typically use insights or concepts taken from existing theories and relate their findings to these theories, but their research normally draws on these theories selectively and eclectically, rather than deliberately seeking to contribute to a particular theory.

An apparent exception to this understanding is the widespread use of critical theory, queer theory, and other such approaches in qualitative research. Although these approaches contain some premises about the nature of the phenomena being investigated, they function more as normative frameworks than as theories in the traditional sense, emphasizing particular goals for research and assumptions about appropriate methods for achieving those goals, as well as assumptions about the social context of research and the political and economic structures that shape its conduct and use.

Understanding qualitative researchers' stance toward theory requires further exploration of what a "theory" is. There are three characteristics of the concept of theory in scientific use that are important for this discussion:

1. Theory is abstract, and refers (at least in part) to entities or ideas that are hypothesized, abstracted, or inferred rather than being directly observable.
2. Theory is general; it refers not only to a single instance or case, but also to all instances or cases of a particular type.
3. Theory is typically explanatory; it tells us why things happen, rather than simply describing what happened.

All of these characteristics have created difficulties for the use of theory in qualitative research. Qualitative research has generally focused on concrete description and interpretation, rather than the development of abstract propositions. It has similarly been skeptical of the formulation of general propositions or models and has emphasized the importance of particularity and context. Finally, it has typically rejected the idea of causal explanation, emphasizing the role of interpretive understanding (Max Weber's *Verstehen*) rather than explanation in the human and social sciences. These three characteristics of theory, and their implications for qualitative research, are addressed below.

Abstraction

In the philosophy of science, the generally accepted definition of a theory during the first half of the 20th century, one taken from logical positivism, was that a theory consists of a set of abstract (ideally, mathematical) propositions, some of which take the form of "laws," that predict a range of specific events or results. Such theories constitute a deductive system that explains specific events by subsuming them under the theory; this system was known as the *deductive-nomological* model of scientific explanation. For many logical positivists, the abstract terms (e.g., photons, gravity, or social cohesion) employed in these statements or laws (known as *theoretical concepts*) were not thought to have any "reality"; they were simply useful constructs in subsuming or predicting observable events, and needed to be defined operationally in terms of the procedures used to apply and verify them. (The classic example is "intelligence is whatever intelligence tests measure.") Since such theories could not themselves be directly investigated empirically, the goal of research was to test the predictions derived from these theories, using empirical data.

In the social sciences other than economics (and, to some extent, psychology), this model of theory was never generally accepted. However, during the mid-20th century, its impact was reinforced by the dominance of highly abstract theoretical frameworks (for example, the theory of action proposed by Talcott Parsons) and by the view that the main purpose of research is to derive and test the prediction of such theories. Thus, despite the striking lack of success of the deductive-nomological model in generating theories in the social sciences that were equivalent in explanatory power to those in the physical sciences, this model continued to influence social scientists' thinking about theory.

As a consequence, many qualitative researchers rejected the use of abstract, formal theory in their work. Barney Glaser's and Anselm Strauss's concept of grounded theory, which endorsed the view that the inductive development of theory from data collected during an investigation was more important than testing prior theory, was a major statement of and influence on this development.

However, in philosophy, from about 1950 on, the deductive-nomological view of theory was subjected to severe criticism, from both inside and outside the positivist tradition, and was eventually abandoned or modified beyond recognition. It is now generally accepted that the formal, law-like, deductive conception of theory espoused by the positivists is not a valid understanding of the use of theory even in many of the physical sciences, and that the antirealist or instrumentalist view of theoretical terms is highly problematic. The social sciences in particular do not normally proceed by developing highly abstract, formal theories and empirically testing the implications of these theories. And while much quantitative research still employs the concept of operational definitions of theoretical terms, this view has never been widely adopted in qualitative research.

A less restrictive conception of theory is now widespread, one that sees theory as simply a set of concepts and the postulated relationships among these, a model or framework that has implications for understanding or action. Theories can range from highly abstract frameworks to models that are closely linked with observation and experience. In addition, there is a growing recognition that theories, like most of human thought, are to an important extent metaphorical rather than strictly logical in nature; they draw on what are usually unconscious metaphors from basic human

experiences. Such a conception of theory is much more compatible with qualitative research, which focuses on concrete situations, events, and meanings.

Generality

Closely connected with abstraction, theory is typically assumed to be general rather than particular; with the possible exception of history, the social sciences have treated theories as being applicable to more than a unique case. The range of generality extends from so-called grand theory, such as structuralism, psychoanalysis, rational choice theory, and Parsons's theory of action, mentioned above, through Robert Merton's middle-range theory, focusing on a more limited set of phenomena and backed by empirical data, such as reference group theory, social network theory, and Erving Goffman's theory of total institutions, to very specific theories of or hypotheses about particular types of phenomena or settings.

Qualitative researchers have tended to avoid broad generalizations about the issues they study. They have focused on specific, local understanding of the settings and activities they study and rarely claimed that they had developed propositions that applied to a wide range of settings or activities, as theory in the traditional sense would seem to require. The idea of generalizability itself has been problematic for qualitative researchers, and Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln's substitution of *transferability* for the traditional concept of *external validity* or generalizability has been widely adopted. For transferability, the traditional emphasis on developing a general theory from multiple studies is replaced by the idea that other researchers or practitioners can adapt and apply the conclusions of one study to their own particular situations. In particular, qualitative researchers have usually avoided claims that their theories are predictive in the ways that quantitative researchers have often endorsed.

However, other qualitative researchers did not abandon the concept of generalizability, or of theory, but adapted these to the requirements of qualitative inquiry. Robert Yin distinguished between statistical generalization and analytic generalization, the latter also described as generalizing to theory. He argued that qualitative case studies generalize in the same way as experiments in the natural sciences—not by applying statistically to some defined population, but by contributing to the development of a theory with wider applicability. Howard Becker made a similar

claim, emphasizing that such a theory identifies a general process, but does not predict results independent of context. Instead, it needs to be applied in conjunction with the specific social and cultural features of the setting in question, which can create very different outcomes. Yin's and Becker's approaches to theory employ the broader and more commonsense view of theory presented in the previous section: as a system of concepts and postulated relationships among these.

Explanation

Not all theories in the social sciences have explanation as their goal; some important theories (such as Talcott Parsons' theory of action) have been mainly typological, proposing a system of ideal or abstract concepts and the logical relationships among these. Such theories have tended to be fairly general and abstract and have not received much use by qualitative researchers, for reasons discussed above. However, explanation is generally felt to be an important goal of theory.

For most scientists, explanation is causal explanation; an explanation claims to describe what caused a particular result or state of affairs. This concept of explanation has been problematic for many qualitative researchers because the model of causation that is typically invoked is particularly uncongenial to qualitative research. This model, derived from Hume's regularity account of causation, holds that causal explanation consists simply of showing that the presumed cause is regularly followed by a given effect and that other plausible causes for this effect can be ruled out. Hume proscribed any reference to unobservable processes as being metaphysical. This view was incorporated by the logical positivists in their model of explanation, a model that has survived the demise of positivism and is a dominant influence on quantitative research.

As a result, it is widely held that only experimental research, or quantitative techniques such as structural equation modeling, can answer causal questions. The Humean regularity account of causation leaves no role for the major strengths of qualitative research—its ability to elucidate the meanings, processes, and contextual influences that are involved in particular events or situations. As a result, many qualitative researchers have either denied that they were making causal claims that were more than speculative or have argued that causality is not a valid concept in the social sciences (a particularly influential statement of this position was that by Lincoln and Guba). The latter

position fit well with the emerging interpretivist approach to social research, which focused on the elucidation of meaning rather than causal explanation (a distinction emphasized by Max Weber, although he did not see the two as mutually exclusive).

However, there is now a well-developed alternative approach to causation and explanation—one that sees explanation as the explication of the processes and mechanisms that result in a particular occurrence in a given context. This view, advanced both by philosophers and by social researchers, is often labeled *realist* or *critical realist* in contrast to both positivism and constructivism. It is very compatible with qualitative researchers' emphasis on process and on contextual influence and also with their emphasis on the importance of meaning, if meanings are taken to be real entities that can causally influence people's actions. Such a stance legitimates the explanatory role of theory in qualitative research and implies that adequate theories in the social sciences need to incorporate issues of meaning, process, and context, rather than simply stating relationships between variables.

Issues in Developing and Using Theory

In the more recent conceptions of theory outlined above, theory is a simplification of the world, but not necessarily a highly abstract, logical model; it is a simplification that can exist at many levels, and one that is aimed at clarifying and explaining some aspect of the world and our experience of it. A useful theory is not just a framework; it tells an illuminating story about some phenomenon, one that provides new insights and broadens our understanding of that phenomenon. This conception of theory is more compatible with, and gives greater prominence to, many of the issues that are central to qualitative research than are traditional positivist or neopositivist views.

However, such a conception of theory does not eliminate all problems with developing and using theory in qualitative research. Developing theory is not something that can be reduced to an algorithm; it is dependent on the phenomena that one wants to theorize about, and the specific goals, abilities, and paradigmatic commitments of the researcher.

First, it is important to recognize Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön's distinction between a theory that a researcher states or explicitly applies (espoused theory), and the actual theory or theories that inform the research (theory-in-use). The latter is generally far

more extensive and complex than any espoused theory, and may require considerable reflection (or critique) to uncover.

Second, as postmodernists argue, no theory can completely characterize any social phenomena; it is always incomplete and leaves out alternative possible understandings. Thus, the acceptance of any theory privileges a particular view of the phenomena it addresses and can limit or distort the researcher's understanding. Becker has pointed out the ideological hegemony of dominant theories and how they can deform researchers' conceptions of the things they study, showing how such theories distorted his early research on marijuana use.

An awareness of alternative concepts and theories that are applicable to the phenomena being studied is thus an important counterweight to the ideological hegemony and deforming power of established theory. Such alternatives may be found in other fields, or in sources other than published literature, including the researcher's personal experiences, the unpublished ideas of other researchers, and thought experiments that attempt to generate such alternative ways of seeing these phenomena. However, as with theory-in-use, recognizing these as alternative ways of seeing is likely to require a reflective and critical perspective on existing theory, and assessing the theory in question relative to alternative plausible theories is one of the major tasks of any research.

Finally, the view of theory presented above implies that the testing of theory should involve more than simply making predictions from the theory and seeing if these are confirmed by research. It should also involve investigating the processes stated or implied by the theory, to see if these are actually operative for the phenomena in question. The ability of qualitative research to do this has been argued by many qualitative researchers, and this approach to theory provides additional support for these arguments.

Joseph A. Maxwell and Kavita Mittapalli

See also Explanation; Generalizability; Grand Theory; Grounded Theory; Realism, Theoretical Frameworks; Transferability

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THICK DESCRIPTION

The term *thick description* was introduced into qualitative research by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who borrowed it from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle. It has often been misinterpreted to mean rich, thickly detailed description, but neither Geertz nor Ryle used it in this way. Ryle developed this concept as part of an attempt to banish from philosophy the idea of “mind” as a separate entity from behavior. He argued that mental terms refer not to unobservable “ghostly” processes located in a “secret grotto” in the skull, but to aspects of people’s public behavior—not their bodily movements per se, but their dispositions, powers, and propensities to behave in particular ways in specific contexts. Mental terms thus describe behavior thickly, incorporating these propensities and contexts in the description as opposed to describing “thin” behavioral accounts—for example, describing someone as playing golf rather than as hitting a small white ball with a metal stick. Geertz added to this the idea that thick description incorporates the cultural framework and meanings of the actors, their codes of signification, providing an emic account grounded in the actors’ cultural context; thick description is thus the essential activity of ethnographic research.

Ironically, considering the importance of this concept for qualitative research, Ryle’s strategy of identifying mental terms with behavioral dispositions was an essentially positivist approach of attempting to eliminate theoretical terms referring to unobservable entities from philosophical and scientific discourse. It can be seen as a variant of what earlier positivist philosophers had called *logical behaviorism*. Geertz was not endorsing this position—his essay “Thick Description” is subtitled “Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”—but one of his goals in using the concept of thick description was to argue that ethnography did not require access to the inner thoughts and feelings of those studied and to assert the public, observable nature of the phenomena that anthropologists sought to interpret.

Logical behaviorism eventually foundered under a barrage of philosophical criticisms, but the term *thick description* has outlived its philosophical origins and taken on new meanings. More recent uses of this concept have tended to see thick description as inherently interpretive rather than descriptive, linking the term to the position that all observation is theory-laden and that descriptions are social constructions rather than reflections of some external reality. Thomas Schwandt (2007), for example, states that “to thickly describe social action is actually to begin to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, and so on that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick.” (2007, p. 296) Norman Denzin coined the phrase “thick interpretation” to emphasize the interpretive nature of this activity and has drawn on Geertz’s later work to support the inseparability of description and interpretation.

Joseph A. Maxwell and Kavita Mittapalli

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Ethnography; Interpretation

Further Readings

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THINK ALOUD METHOD

See COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

THINKING QUALITATIVELY WORKSHOP CONFERENCE

Thinking Qualitatively is an annual event consisting of a series of workshops in conference format. Participants can mix- and-match workshops, creating their program from approximately 20 half-day or full-day workshops offered in six concurrent sessions.

Organized by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM), University of Alberta, Canada, the series is offered over a one-week period every summer. Participants are generally those who are new to qualitative inquiry, including many graduate students. Because of its flexibility, programs can be tailored to meet participants' own research interests and individual needs. Faculty consist of scholars affiliated with the IIQM, assisted by international guests. Previous keynote speakers have included Juliet Corbin, Phyllis Stern, and Arthur Frank.

The sessions are primarily at the introductory level, providing an excellent overview of the principles of qualitative inquiry (e.g., previous conferences have included sessions such as "Preparing Your Proposal," "Sampling," "Interviewing Techniques," and "Coding.") Qualitative methods are explicated with sessions on narrative inquiry, phenomenology, ethnography, interpretive inquiry, using videos, observational research, and grounded theory. The conference concludes with a one-day workshop on textual data analysis using a computer program, such as NVivo.

The weeklong series also includes a special session each day: a poster session is offered, so that registrants can circulate and discuss their own work, keynote presentations bookend the event, and panel discussions (such as "Doing a Qualitative Dissertation") are offered. Networking lunches provide opportunity for informal discussions with the faculty and for meeting new colleagues.

Participants agree that, while intense, Thinking Qualitatively is an excellent way to be mentored into qualitative research. The goal of the workshop series is to bring participants to the level that by the end of the conference they will feel confident enough to commence an actual qualitative project.

Information about Thinking Qualitatively may be found on the website for the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology or by searching the internet using the series title Thinking Qualitatively.

Janice M. Morse

See also International Institute for Qualitative Methodology

Websites

International Institute for Qualitative Methodology:
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/iiqm>

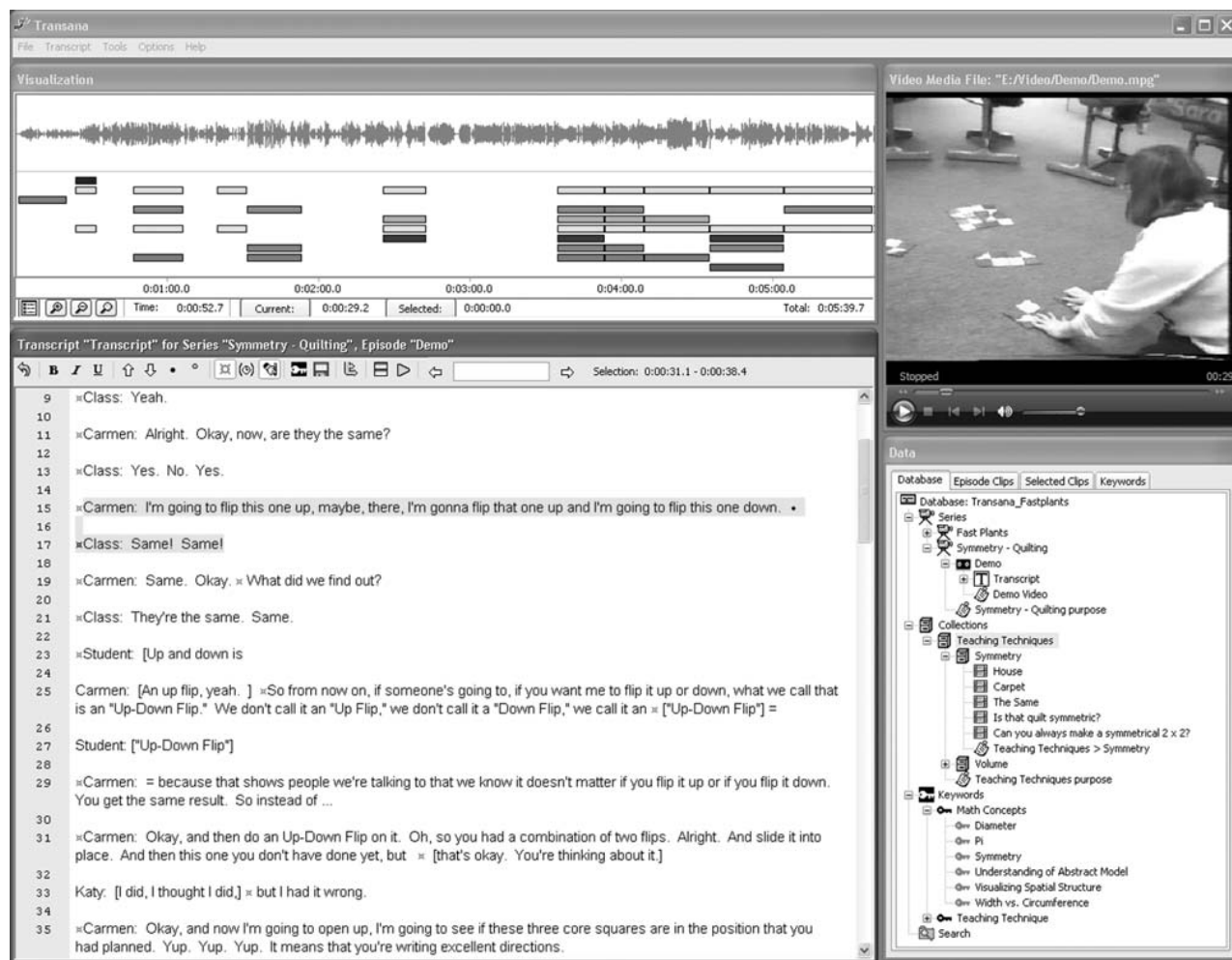
TRANSANA (SOFTWARE)

Transana is an open-source software program available via its website, www.transana.org, that facilitates computer-based transcription and management of media files. Available for both Mac and PC platforms, it was developed primarily for use with video data, but it can also be used with audio data. Transana provides integrated organization of transcription, coding, presentation, and analysis of audio and video data. It was first developed by Chris Fassnacht and is now developed and maintained by David Woods and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin's Center for Education Research. Transana has gained wide popularity for its low cost, availability, user-friendliness, and its increasing power to facilitate transcription, coding, and organization of large corpora of qualitative audio and video data.

Transana allows the user to play media files and simultaneously transcribe or code without switching applications or browser windows. The program also includes keyboard shortcuts that mirror the functions of traditional pedal transcribers (i.e., pause, stop, rewind, fast-forward), includes automatic rollback from zero to 5 seconds after pausing, and has shortcuts for fine-grained transcription superscripts. Users can also select media playback speed (from 1/10 to two times the original speed) and can insert timecode stamps in a transcription, allowing for easy access to key points in the media file or transcript.

In addition, Transana functions as a database, linking a transcription file (exportable in Word rich-text format) to a media file. Timecode markers, keywords, or other codes can be used to call up portions of the file or catalog and group relevant portions of data. Transana also includes a hierarchical organizing system for organizing multiple layers of transcripts or codes for the same media clips.

Transana is available in single- or multiuser versions, the latter of which provides database access to multiple parties across institutions. This ability allows for continued and shared consideration of the data in its original media format without sole reliance on transcripts alone. Making such a consideration of non-verbal interactions easily available to multiple parties opens data up to dispute-verification during coding, analysis, or dissemination. Transana also includes a presentation feature in which media clips can be



Transana Screen View. Transana's typical display including (clockwise from top left): Visualization window (shows audio waveform), video window, data window (shows database file organization), transcript window.

Source: Copyright University of Wisconsin–Madison; used by permission.

presented with overlain transcripts or codes. The ability to view video in tandem with codes and transcript keeps these analytic processes more visible and fluid and thus open to others' insights and opinions throughout entire process.

Kate T. Anderson

See also Computer-Assisted Data Analysis; Film and Video in Qualitative Research; Transcript; Transcription

Further Readings

Saferstein, B. (2004). Digital technology and methodological adaption: Text on video as a resource for analytical reflexivity. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1, 197–223.

Websites

Transana: <http://www.transana.org>

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript is a textual representation of an audio- or videorecording. Researchers who use interviews and focus groups tend to construct their analyses based on transcripts made from audiorecordings (and sometimes videorecordings). Similarly, researchers who videorecord observations often rely upon transcripts of those recordings in their analyses.

To create a transcript, transcriptionists often use foot pedals that control playback of the audiorecording

A Sample Transcript

Researchers make choices about the level of detail that is required or desired in the transcripts for a given research project. This sample interview transcript was generated from a one-on-one interview with a professor about her experiences as a researcher and a research educator (McGinn, 2007). The transcript emphasizes verbatim words exchanged between the researcher and participant, supplemented with notations for filled pauses (e.g., *um*), hesitations (pauses timed by the second), and laughter. Emphasis has been marked with italics. No attempt has been made to include extralinguistic or non-body language. Standard punctuation (e.g., commas, periods, and question marks) has been included to facilitate reading of the transcript.

Interviewer: When did you yourself start to feel like a researcher?

Participant: (8-s pause) Well, it's funny, you think about how you. Probably younger. I mean, I don't think the actual label is given to you, like it wasn't until my second year, research assistant, but I don't know, definitely in grade school. I guess when I first started doing projects and things. Like that independent study sort of first task I think, I think my first one was Grade 3 or Grade 4, I forget, but around there. It was that sort of *um* doing something, investigating something on your own away from, knowing that the teacher sort of was giving you that sort of freedom. I really see the research as starting to explore

different things on your own and trying to make sense of it.

Interviewer: So that on your *own*, investigating on your own

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Was what led to that feeling of researcher, sense of yourself as a researcher?

Participant: And just the excitement of finding something I think as well. So that

Interviewer: So the opportunity to do

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Something but then

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: The emotional reaction to doing it

Participant: Yeah, to finding something interesting.

Interviewer: All right. So what about for the graduate students, what do they have to do or feel to feel like researchers?

Participant: (5-s pause) Well, I think they again, I think they need to find that topic that will provide them with that feeling of excitement or discovery. I think that is the key to feeling like a researcher because (5-s pause) because if you're just doing a task for, that doesn't really mean anything to you I don't know if you really feel like a researcher. (laughs)

Source: McGinn, M. K. (2007). [Becoming social science researchers: Learning and enacting new practices and identities]. Unpublished raw data, Brock University.

so that they can operate the audio controls without removing their fingers from the keyboard. Complete transcribing systems also allow adjustments to the speed of playback that do not affect pitch and to the length of the segment prior to a stopping point that is repeated when playback continues (i.e., backspacing).

In recent years, some transcriptionists have begun using voice-recognition technology to facilitate transcription. Common software programs include Dragon NaturallySpeaking, IBM ViaVoice, and iListen. Voice-recognition technology is designed to translate a single speaker's voice to text so that it is ideally suited to dictation of fieldnotes or diary entries from researchers or research participants. This technology has also been used with variable success to transcribe interviews and

focus groups, typically by listening to the audiorecording and dictating it into the computer. It is essential to compare the resulting transcript against the original audiorecording to address errors introduced through the dictation or by the software.

With or without the use of voice-recognition technology, transcriptionists are engaged in interpretive and constructive acts as they produce transcripts. Some scholars have, therefore, begun to analyze the influence of the transcriptionist on the research data and the resulting analyses. Regardless of recording quality or the transcriptionist's expertise, transcripts cannot fully represent spoken discourse or movement. Spoken discourse includes verbal content (e.g., words, word fragments, filled pauses such as *um* and *er*), prosodic information

(e.g., rhythm, intonation, pitch, volume), paralinguistic information (e.g., laughter, audible breaths, sighs), extralinguistic information (e.g., gestures, fidgeting, gaze), pauses, and various contextual cues. It is virtually impossible to document all elements of spoken discourse in a transcript for at least four reasons:

1. It is difficult to reliably identify all these components of speech.
2. There are no clear notation systems that can represent all this information textually.
3. Transcripts become less readable as additional speech elements are recorded.
4. Spoken discourse does not include punctuation or follow other standard grammar rules, yet transcriptionists naturally add these conventions as they type.

Transcripts are even more limited textual reproductions when it comes to movement and other visual information that is present in videorecordings. Researchers need to think carefully about which information is most important to their analysis and how to best document that information in transcripts to support their analyses.

Michelle K. McGinn

See also Audiorecording; Data; Videorecording

Further Readings

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TRANSCRIPTION

Transcription is the process whereby recordings of research conversations (interviews, focus groups) are turned into textual material (transcripts), which then become the primary data for subsequent analysis. Perhaps because transcription is so ubiquitous and taken for granted, its significance in the interpretive process is routinely underestimated. This is unfortunate because in the translation from richly textured lived experience to

audiorecording to two-dimensional written prose, the data are transformed in ways that have particular consequences for interpretation. This consequence is true even in cases where new developments in computerized software permit the researcher to work with and code audio material directly because ultimately most qualitative research is made accessible to others (published) in written form. This entry reviews issues related to transcription quality, identifies strategies for enhancing it, and discusses related ethical concerns.

Transcription Quality

Paying attention to the ways in which transcripts are generated and what they represent invokes two parallel discourses about transcription quality as an aspect of rigor in qualitative research.

Anticipating and Reducing Error

The first (and dominant) discourse on transcription in qualitative research holds that one must be vigilant in anticipating and reducing sources of error in the production of verbatim transcripts. Transcriber fatigue, poor-quality recordings (background noise, use of low-quality microphones and recording equipment, poor microphone placement), and difficulty understanding accents and culturally specific turns of phrase are said to lead to errors. When transcription is contracted out to individuals who are not affiliated with the study (as sample sizes of funded research studies grow), lack of familiarity with the subject matter, with academic and/or qualitative research, or with the interview itself can pose additional challenges, particularly when a background in nonresearch settings leads transcribers to tidy up the material (e.g., as with dictated correspondence). Even under ideal conditions it is possible to mistake words for others that sound very similar, leading to interesting reversals of meaning (e.g., *consultation* versus *confrontation*).

The Interpretive Nature of Transcription

A second discourse on transcription in qualitative research has more recently emerged that highlights the essentially interpretive nature of transcription. A more reflexive stance vis-à-vis issues of transcription accuracy is advocated. It is argued that, as the raw material from which transcripts are generated, even audiorecordings cannot be verbatim records of a research interview because they do not capture many elements of interpersonal interaction, nonverbal communication, and interview context that are essential

for the interpretation of what is said (hence, the growing use of videorecording). Elements of pace, tonality, affect (humor, sarcasm, excitement, hesitancy), and some elements of turn-taking and verbal communication that do not translate easily into text (e.g., laughter, paraphrasing or mimicking others, or the interviewer's use of *uh-huh* that may steer the interviewee, intentionally or unintentionally) are, in many cases, lost in translation from oral to written. Within this second, more postmodern, discourse on transcription, not only is the possibility of verbatim transcription called into question, but also its desirability, as issues of contextuality, voice, representation, authenticity, audience, and positionality are brought into consideration.

Strategies for Maximizing Transcription Quality

In practice, these two discourses are not as mutually exclusive as might initially be assumed. It is both possible and necessary to simultaneously maintain a reflexive stance that problematizes many modernist assumptions about transcription, without entirely abandoning claims to rigor (albeit inherently limited ones) made possible by availing oneself of opportunities to anticipate and prevent many of the more obvious sources of error described above. Potential strategies for maximizing transcription quality include (but are not limited to) (a) ensuring highest possible audio quality (e.g., minimizing background noise, appropriate quality and placing of microphone); (b) use of notation systems and conventions/instructions to guide transcription (on how to deal with pauses, laughter, interruptions, intonation); (c) selection and training of transcribers; (d) reviewing transcription quality (of a random or purposeful subsample; co-transcription to assess inter-staff reliability when more than one transcriber is being used); (d) interviewer and researcher involvement in transcription (particularly in pilot phase for early detection of problems, and sensitization of researchers to the interpretive work of transcription); (e) involving transcribers in research meetings and as key informants in the analysis of data; (f) member checking (having research participants review their own transcripts for accuracy—though it should be emphasized that the process and results are not straightforward, and many issues of presentation-of-self, selective recall, and self-censorship inhere in member-checking); (g) flagging ambiguous material during the interview (prompting for clarification); (h) using fieldnotes and

observational data to inform interpretation during and following transcription; and (i) reporting on transcription quality when writing up qualitative research.

Which of these strategies are employed and how they are used depends significantly on the kind of transcripts required to answer the particular research question(s) under investigation. The kinds of transcripts and attention to detail required for a conversation analysis will be very different from what is required for studies that focus more on what is said than how it is said. Indeed, in some studies verbatim transcription may be selective (focusing only on some passages, summarizing the others) or not at all required (e.g., listing of issues raised, brainstorming strategies for action).

Ethical Issues

In transcription, several ethical considerations deserve mention. One concerns the need to protect the anonymity of research participants by removing not only names but also other potential identifying information from transcripts prior to analysis, especially in cases where multiple research team members may have (or request) access to the data. A second concern is how interviewees are represented in published material. Because the spoken word has a different syntax, structure, and rhythm than written prose, an insistence on the use of verbatim quotes may inadvertently cast research participants as less articulate than if they had been asked to write on the subject. The potential consequences in cross-cultural research or research with marginalized groups (e.g., for reinforcing stigmatizing stereotypes) should not be underestimated.

Transcription is not just a phase of data preparation and data management; it is interpretive work that occurs early in the analysis phase of most qualitative research projects. As such, transcription calls for the same attention to reflexivity and rigor as other components of data analysis—perhaps more so, insofar as transcriptions involves the production of the raw material upon which subsequent analytic work is based.

Blake D. Poland

See also Focus Groups; Interviewing; Member Check; Rigor in Qualitative Research;

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TRANSFERABILITY

Due to the nature of the qualitative methodologies, it is not appropriate to have the large sample populations found in some quantitative studies, which might have a sample of 500 to 1,000-plus participants. With any study, there should be careful thought into selecting the participants with the inherent notion that they somehow represent the entire population. This being the case, researchers and readers can then begin to make connections from the revealed data to both local and entire community-level behavior and practice. These considerations are applied to qualitative methodologies through a process called *transferability*.

In quantitative research, generalizability suggests that the results of a given study can be applied across all environments related to the context being studied. For example, the results of a study looking at the impact of an educational campaign against drinking and driving among 400 14- to 18-year-olds in Idaho could be generalizable to all 14- to 18-year-olds in Idaho. Transferability implies that the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts and situations beyond the scope of the study context. For example, the results of a study exploring the decision-making process of 10 labor negotiators in conflict-intense situations could be transferred to police officers handling conflict-intense situations.

To increase transferability, qualitative researchers should focus on two key considerations: (a) how closely the participants are linked to the context being studied, and (b) the contextual boundaries of the findings. In the first consideration, the participants need to be relevant members of the community related to the study. If a study was about the impact of cultural capital and employment opportunities among new immigrants and only Chinese and Pakistani participants were selected, it would lack transferability because the original context is not being accurately measured. The other consideration is concern about providing a complete understanding of the context being studied

and ensuring that the research questions are appropriately answered. It is from here that readers can explore the research document and determine if the findings can be transferred to their setting or environment. So with generalizability, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the findings can be generalizable to a larger context or the entire population. In transferability, it is the researcher's responsibility to paint a full picture of the context and then allow the reader to determine if the work is transferable to their context.

Qualitative researchers can use two strategies to increase the transferability of a study. The first is through thick description. Thick description means that the researcher provides the reader with a full and purposeful account of the context, participants, and research design so that the reader can make their own determinations about transferability. The other methodology is through purposeful sampling. Here, participants are selected because they most represent the research design, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Participants most consistent with the research design will enhance the potential that readers can assess the degree of transferability to their given context.

Devon Jensen

See also Generalizability; Purposive Sampling; Sample; Thick Description

Further Readings

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TRANSFORMATIONAL METHODS

Transformational methods are used to inspire positive social change. Researchers generally adopt transformational methodologies in their pursuit of social justice, socioeconomic or cultural equity, empowerment of marginalized individuals, or actions taken in a process of exposing and resisting hegemonic power structures. The ends of transformational research are not only taken as modes of restorative justice, but are also futuristic, formed in existentialist hope that the world we currently live in could be improved by breaking down power structures that result in oppression.

Defining Transformational Research

The twofold purpose of transformational research (variously referred to as emancipatory, revolutionary, or resistance research) is to change practice for the better while also revising stereotypes, habits of mind, and deeply held meanings that guide people's thinking about social and political issues. Research that is done for transformative purposes is *praxis-based*—that is, it involves a dynamic interplay between reflection and action, between knowing and doing. Its focus is the intertwining of research and practice. Thus, the transformative power of research resides in the potential for creative ideas and social constructions aimed to reform undesirable but common social practices. The essential characteristics of transformational research are described as being *subjective, relational, collaborative, interpretive, and performative*. Each of these distinguishing features is shared with many other qualitative methodologies, but transformational researchers also explicitly intended to advance particular moral and political standpoints.

Types of Transformational Research Methods

Transformational research methods fit within the common framework of qualitative research. The research is largely ethnographic and relies primarily on observations and interviews. However, each of these methods is tweaked and refined to serve the purposes of social transformation. Methods are used flexibly to accommodate the inquiry context and are tailored to meet the dynamics of locally determined participant research communities. No prescribed methods for interviews or observations hold fast across transformational studies, but instead, methods are structured by participant-researchers to best suit the context in which the research occurs. One of the hallmarks of transformative research is that its methods are used as avenues to include multiple representations, diverse voices, dynamic (and sometimes uncomfortable) revelations of culturally entrenched beliefs, assumptions, and stereotypes. It is necessary for the transformative researcher to adapt methods to the particulars of participant communities in order to best serve the ends of multiplicity and diversity. Another notable feature of transformative methods is that researchers make no claim to objectivity in taking up these research approaches—transformative researchers readily acknowledge that the

processes of doing research affect the people being researched.

Interviews

In most examples of transformative research, interviews are interactive, conversational, and dialogic events. All parties to the interview are encouraged to relate their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the topics of conversations. Personal narratives and stories about life's experiences are encouraged during conversational exchanges. The interviewer is not a distanced outsider in the interview and he or she is well aware that his or her own contributions to the interview might affect the content of the conversation. Similarly, empathetic understanding is the goal, with the interviewer telling of his or her own beliefs as a way to make connections with the person being interviewed. In most instances, researchers describe the interview process as a democratizing event that serves to give depth and breadth to representations of the voices of individuals in the community being researched.

Interviews in transformative research are sometimes also used to persuade or educate. That is, the act of interviewing may draw the interviewee's attention to particular issues associated with the research topic. An example might be when, in an effort to involve parents of children living in shelters as advocates for their child's rights in school, the researcher asks the parent questions that elicit comments about school equity. In some instances, the interview might become a conversation that is the catalyst for parental activism for children living in shelters. In this way, the interview process can itself be a transformational moment.

Additional interview methods that fit in this framework include cross-interviews in which co-researchers interview each other and instances when members of community groups interview other community members or when community members lead group dialogues.

Observations

Observational objectivity is not generally a goal for researchers working from within transformative paradigms. Thus, there is no attempt by researchers to create a balance between empathy and detachment. What comes into question is the extent to which researchers can actually be members of participant communities

in which research takes place. Many researchers see themselves as community members and may include life histories, descriptions of activities, photographs, and interview dialogues that represent their inclusion in community contexts. They see their role as community member rather than as being that of an inquirer about the community. Community membership varies in transformative research models along a continuum from indigeneity to concerned other. Some researchers address the issue of distance by including multiple participants as researchers of their own lives. Observations of daily living take place in journals and other reflective documentations of everyday experiences. As with interviews, in research that is deliberately designed to transform social practices, opportunities for observational studies are used to create dialogues. The goal is to generate diverse perspectives on what people believe has transpired during any given social event, to develop commentary on the meanings of body language and other physical social cues, and to understand diverse perspectives about the context, physical settings, or place in which the research is based. Observations are undertaken as a way to inspire imagination to embrace equity and social justice, to plan measures to enact imagined differences, and to take actions for the purposes of social change.

Reflections

Compatible methods include reflective practices such as analytical self-expressions, documentation of the researcher's own life history, and creating personal narratives (i.e., autoethnography). Transformational research frequently involves reflective consideration of the researcher's own subjective oppression. Because transformative research involves the researcher's own beliefs and feelings about social issues, it is one of the researcher's tasks to present autobiographical information and include in the research dialogue her or his beliefs, assumptions, and personal ambiguities toward the political and social landscape that contextualizes the inquiry. Taking a self-reflective stance opens the research lens to encompass a broader subjectivity than that of the individual to one that is socially and historically located. An example might be self-reflective feminist inquiry that relates the researcher's life history to the shared experiences of women in a male-dominated social and intellectual tradition. The subject of the research in

this example is the self situated in the context of a virtual, historical reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and gender values that have reified over time.

Yet, transformative research does not rely on the researcher's reflective introspection or personal history as a verification of truth, but instead adopts a relative stance toward truth. Personally held truths are considered in comparison and relation with the personally held truths of other local people. Subjectivist epistemologies denote the collective creation of meanings and understandings by participants and researchers. Thus, truths are not defined in correspondences to individually perceived realities, but are, instead, multiple, ambiguous, paradoxical, contextual, and susceptible to diverse and contradictory interpretations. Meanings are co-created and co-constructed, negotiated dialogically, in part, through the interactions of research participants and researchers. They are simultaneously defined by their ties to history, tradition, mythology, distributions of knowledge, resources, and power; thus, meaning is made relative to context(s). Mystory, herstory, and history become entwined in what are often ambiguous, contradictory, and contextually relevant "truths." Both individual and socially constructed histories and practices influence the research process and its outcomes, but individuals, societies, and their practices are also changed by activations and meanings created while doing research.

Analytical Perspectives

The processes of transformative praxis call for research methods that are compatible with research that is subjective, relational-collaborative, interpretive, and overtly political. Due to the collaborative, interactive processes of transformational research, analyzing data is ongoing and iterative; it requires techniques and attitudes that encourage reflection, dialogue, and imagination. In transformative research models, communities of participants are encouraged to use dialogic approaches to the exchange of perceptions, beliefs, and ideas. The goal for dialogic interplay is not consensus; rather, in most instances, it is the inclusion of multiple, diverse voices of minority participants in the research community. Finally, imaginative thought is a requisite function in answering the question, "Transformation to what?"

Representational Forms

Quality transformative research is evaluated by its diversity of participation, depth of collaboration and other features of community-based inquiry, and by the extent to which it results in transformative praxis that advances equity and social justice. It must move people to reflection and action. It opens the imagination to new possibilities. The results of such research are not always found in traditional research reports and publications in professional journals recognized as being exemplary of “good” work or entrenched in the systems of academic reporting. Its value may be determined by its usefulness to members of participant communities in the research.

Transformative research is contingent to a performance-based social science (e.g., performance ethnography). Its representations show how people experience everyday life and put into practice cultural meanings that shape experiences of injustice, prejudice, and stereotyping. These social performances can take place during the research, through dialogue, community gatherings, and in the creation of cultural artifacts that represent people’s thoughts and feelings toward social systems (e.g., communal artworks that are designed and enacted by research participants). Representations of transformational research lend themselves to multivoiced texts and cultural expressions of thoughts and feelings. As a result, some transformational researchers cross into arts-based research methodologies and utilize drama, dance, stories, poems, and visual art forms in their search for representational forms that are suited to multiple and diverse discourses.

Ethics of Transformational Research Methods

Researchers operating in a transformational mode must ask themselves the following questions: Who chooses the issues of greatest concern is a community? Whose voices are being heard? Are minority voices and diverse factions within a community given space—even when the researcher disagrees with the political and social stance of some groups or individuals? If not, how does one justify excluding some voices while including others? The researcher needs to give great attention to issues like negative freedom and the creation of new forms of oppression that might result because of the research. Basic moral

principles expected in transformative research include intellectual honesty and forthrightness about the researcher’s purposes and assumptions, points of view, and guiding theories; actions taken by the researcher must be responsible and enacted without malice—the researcher must be aware of the impact of research processes and avoid stirring up negative interactions among research participants or other community members. Researchers must take great care in analyzing newly formed power structures; among the many newly formed power structures that researchers are obligated to avoid are paternalistic positionings of the researcher within the community of participants.

Advantages and Challenges of Using Transformational Research Methods

Transformational research demonstrates the unique attribute of being deliberately poised to use inquiry processes to revise both theory and practice. There are immediate results to doing research—it has relevance in communities and to individuals and it does not give way to abstractions that are unconnected to real people and to oppositional social movements. It has potential for emancipation of oppressed individuals and communities and can give rise to positive social change.

In each of its advantages, the researcher might find a potential disadvantage. Because the research is important on a local level, it is rarely easily generalized to larger populations. For many researchers, this means it is difficult to publish and disseminate the results of the research in academic journals and other forums that privilege scientific aggregations of knowledge to the largest possible populations. Because it is moral and political, the research is very demanding for researchers who must give close scrutiny to ethical dilemmas and the political import of the work. Often, the researcher cannot realize the desired results of transformation or emancipation, but he or she may need to settle for cathartic research performances that demonstrate little in the way of policy reformation or changes in social hegemony, and rest with the assurances that many such efforts sustained over time can, indeed, engender social change.

Susan Finley

See also Community-Based Research; Critical Arts-Based Inquiry; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Performance Ethnography

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TRANSLATABILITY

All researchers translate concepts from one context to another. However, translatability usually relates to how research findings can be translated across languages. Many researchers do not attempt to question their language base. There is, however, growing interest across a range of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics and translation, and interpretation studies, about the extent to which words and concepts can be translated across languages and the best ways of ensuring that meanings are carried across languages in ways that reflects possible differences in views.

Various ways for translating research accounts to ensure validity have been put forward. Some researchers argue for back translation to see if translators agree. Other researchers prefer to use professional translators or argue that community researchers who know the languages involved should be employed as they know the culture. There is controversy about the extent to which these techniques address the issues involved. Many words and concepts have no literal translation. There are many possible words that can be used in a translation. Who is doing the translating has also been shown to be important. For example, a second-generation translator may not use the source language in the same way as someone brought up speaking it. Translating from any language baseline has been shown to involve built-in cultural assumptions as translation constructs boundaries between people like the translator and others who are different. Moreover, there is no one single language community within any language. For example, people may be differentiated according to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion. Both professional interpreters and

community researchers translate from their own perspective and do not represent all language users and all translation positions within a language. Meanings are also not tied to and cannot be attributed to particular languages in any straightforward way. Some degree of interpretation in the wide sense of the term is needed in representing views across languages.

For reasons discussed above, researchers across disciplines are increasingly arguing that there is no one single correct translation possible. They have suggested ways of opening up texts so that the reader can see how the translation has been done and the dilemmas the translator faced in doing them. For example, the original language may be provided, concepts pulled out and the context described, arguments provided for a particular choice of word, or the context of a word that appears to have a straightforward translation discussed to show possibly different uses across languages. The perspective of the translator is important and debated using concepts such as Liz Stanley's intellectual auto/biography, which is used to define research findings as a product of the researcher, the research participant, and the context.

Bogusia Temple

See also Cross-Cultural Research; Cultural Context; Interpretation

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TRANSPARENCY

The notion of transparency is an overarching concern for establishing the quality of qualitative research. At its most basic, transparency is the benchmark for writing up research and the presentation and dissemination of findings; that is, the need to be explicit, clear,

and open about the methods and procedures used. As such, transparency is recognized as a basic requirement of all qualitative research. However, in a broader sense, it is of critical importance for every stage of the research process.

Transparency is often simply taken for granted. It is sometimes referred to in terms of clarity and visibility, or it is implied in discussions of rigor, validity, credibility, confirmability, and so on. However, in qualitative inquiry the need for transparency has become most urgent. The field is rapidly expanding and employs a wide range of quite different methods that in turn are evolving and being refined, sometimes in several different directions at once. Collecting data in naturalistic settings requires compromises and adjustments to procedures. The procedures of data management and data interpretation need to be as explicit as possible. Transparency is the key.

A defining feature of all scientific research, whether qualitative or quantitative, is that the claims of an addition to knowledge are subjected to an exhaustive critical evaluation. This evaluation is a two-stage process: the first involving the reflexivity of the researcher, and the second, involving the dissemination to the target audience. Transparency lays the groundwork for this critical evaluation.

Qualitative inquiry requires a thorough critical self-exploration of the researcher's assumptions, procedures, presuppositions, decisions, self-interests, and so on. Researchers are strongly encouraged to record and explore their self-observations in their research diaries. It is important to stress that reflexivity is applied to the entire research process and is not merely a focus on the potential sources of bias. In planning, designing, and carrying out research, there must be a conscious examination of paradigm assumptions, research strategies, selection of participants, and decisions made in collecting and interpreting the data, pointing to the fact that the researcher has a participatory role in any inquiry. Transparency and reflexivity, therefore, go hand in hand since without transparency, reflexivity is undermined; at the same time, reflexivity obviously promotes transparency.

In addition, transparency is an overriding concern in laying the groundwork for the critical evaluation. Procedures of inquiry, data collection, and data analysis must be clear enough for others to replicate, and therefore must be transparent. Notice that the emphasis here is on the procedures being replicable and not the findings. This difference is an important one between qualitative and quantitative inquiry.

The basic question in writing up research is, "Have I described with sufficient transparency (i.e., clarity and thoroughness) (a) the assumptions and methods used in designing and carrying out my research, (b) the methods used in analyzing my data, and (c) the ways in which my findings and conclusions follow from the data?" This question may seem to be straightforward enough, but the litmus test lies in researchers not only being clear to others about what they have done and what they have found but also being clear to themselves at every step and in every stage about what it is that they are doing and about the assumptions that they are making.

With respect to critical evaluation of the findings and conclusions of a qualitative study, the issues of credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability, and so on need to be discussed. Again, it is transparency that is the key. The credibility of a qualitative inquiry lies in the transparency of its assumptions, biases, choices, decisions, procedures, and justifications. The confirmability of an inquiry crucially relies on the transparency of the procedures involved. The dependability and transferability of the findings can hardly be considered viable if transparency is not appropriately established.

In terms of good practice, the pioneering development of grounded theory by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, and its subsequent elaborations, could be held up as an excellent example of transparency in action. Other examples might include Jane Ritchie's development of framework, a tool with a high level of transparency used for data management; there is also the situated methodological approach developed by Clive Seale and colleagues in which they recognize, among their list of 23 features of good qualitative research, the researcher's need to be transparent and reflexive about conduct, theoretical perspective, and values.

In addition, critical issues must be raised with respect to how new inquiry methods are to be presented and how existing methods are to be refined and made explicit. For example, recently David Hiles and Ivo Čermák have proposed a model of narrative research called narrative oriented inquiry (NOI). This model explicitly strives toward transparency in both the collection and analysis of narrative data. The critical issue in the development of NOI, and in establishing its rigor, has been in making its underlying assumptions and procedures transparent.

Another issue that should be raised is with respect to the use of computers for qualitative data analysis. There

should be a basic requirement that software is published with the clearest exposition of its data-handling procedures and theoretical assumptions. Joy Bringer, Lynne Halley Johnston, and Celia H. Brackenridge have argued that transparency in the use of software is necessary for accountability and is crucial for establishing congruence between methodology, data analysis, and findings.

Transparency also raises critical issues with respect to how qualitative methods are being taught. Textbooks must be written with an eye for the details in methodology that the novice researcher will need. In addition, transparency can make an important contribution to the ethical considerations of qualitative research; that is, with respect to the role that values play in human inquiry, especially in the examination of the obligations and requirements placed upon participants.

In summary, transparency is a term that is now receiving much more attention within qualitative inquiry. As the field expands, the need for complete transparency of paradigm assumptions, procedures, and data analysis, as well as in research dissemination, becomes ever more pressing.

David R. Hiles

See also Confirmability; Credibility; Ethics; Grounded Theory; Reflexivity; Rigor in Qualitative Research

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data analysis. The basic idea underpinning the concept of triangulation is that the phenomena under study can be understood best when approached with a variety or a combination of research methods. Triangulation is most commonly used in data collection and analysis techniques, but it also applies to sources of data. It can also be a rationale for multiple investigators in team research. Questions that commonly arise in discussions of triangulation tend to address one of two concerns: the issues of using triangulation as a test of validity of research findings and the practical difficulties of using more than one method to study the same phenomenon.

The concept of triangulation is borrowed from navigational and land surveying techniques that determine a single point in space with the convergence of measurements taken from two other distinct points. The multimethod approach is seen to be a research strategy that can reduce biases or deficiencies caused by using only method of inquiry. Initially, in the 1950s and 1960s, triangulation was put forward as a way to increase the measures of validity or to strengthen the credibility of research findings by comparing the results of different approaches to a single unit of study. In other words, triangulation could measure what was thought to be the same thing by using different methods of investigation. However, the use of triangulation of methods to minimize measurement biases has been critiqued over the years by qualitative researchers for corresponding too closely to positivistic notions of reliability and validity. It is claimed that different approaches can measure different aspects of a research problem, but they also yield different kinds of data.

In qualitative inquiry, researchers tend to use triangulation as a strategy that allows them to identify, explore, and understand different dimensions of the units of study, thereby strengthening their findings and enriching their interpretations. However, there are differences among researchers and commentators on the nature, degree, and utility of comparison of findings garnered from different approaches.

Norman K. Denzin's widely cited work on the theoretical underpinnings and implications of combined methods in sociological qualitative research has popularized the definition of triangulation as a combination of methods used to study the interrelated phenomena from multiple and different angles or perspectives. His formulation of triangulation is still widely used by qualitative researchers and is comprised of four basic

TRIANGULATION

Triangulation in qualitative research has come to mean a multimethod approach to data collection and

types: triangulation of methods of data collection, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation (including methodological variations that account for between-method and within-method approaches), and triangulation of data sources.

Triangulation of Methods

When designing and conducting research, qualitative investigators frequently combine methods such as interviewing, surveys, and observation across variable times and in different places in order to collect data about their research phenomena from multiple perspectives and in different contexts. Researchers may also vary their methods within each type of approach; for example, in order to gain a more complete picture of a participant perspective, the researcher may use a combination of conversational interviewing and structured interview questions, techniques that would elicit different but complementary data. Another way to provide multiple perspectives is to use a combination of sampling methods to collect data from different kinds of informants or from the same people but at different times and in different places. The findings of quantitative methods of data collection may also be triangulated with the results of qualitative methods. For example, statistical measures may be held against the hermeneutic analysis of conversational interviews in order to provide a more complete picture of the research problem.

Investigator Triangulation

Another way that researchers attempt to increase the validity and trustworthiness of their findings is by deploying more than one investigator in the collection and analysis of data. This technique allows for additional insights in the process of making sense of the data as it brings different perspectives and different epistemological assumptions that may inform the research results. Several commentators on investigator triangulation caution against the use of untrained students and unmotivated research assistants (sometimes called the “hired hands”) who may end up damaging the trustworthiness of any research findings through lack of engagement and accountability. It is generally recommended that co-investigators be full research partners through all stages of the research project, not only to guard against the hired-hand syndrome, but also to allow for the full play of competing

theories and to provide an ongoing opportunity to deal with researcher biases and conflicts.

Respondent or member validation is a related cross-checking strategy that does not usually extend as far as making people co-investigators, but does invite research participants and other stakeholders in the research project to comment on research findings. Respondents may corroborate or refute the conclusions reached by the investigators by providing alternative perspectives.

Theory Triangulation

Examining the research findings using different theoretical lenses can also aid researchers in overcoming their own personal biases or ideological blinders. Different facets of the research problem can be explored by examining research results using analytical frameworks related to different theories. This kind of triangulation does not normally allow for any kind of integration of results and would not be used to make claims of increased validity: this method of triangulation suggests that different theoretical approaches will undermine the credibility of competing research findings. However, exploring research data using a different theoretical lens can be a particularly useful way to examine dissonant or anomalous data. Theory triangulation can enable a deeper understanding of the research as investigators can explore different ways to make sense of the data. Tensions that might arise between theoretical explanations of the same data may yield new insights into the aspects of the research problem. However, many qualitative researchers disagree with the notion that researchers can stand outside of the epistemological perspectives that they bring to any project, claiming that it is not logical to compare analyses of data that are informed by different theoretical concepts.

Triangulation of Data Sources

Qualitative researchers may increase the credibility of their research findings by drawing from evidence taken from a variety of data sources. For example, to name just a few common sources of data, researchers may gather evidence from interviews, participant observation, written documents, archival and historical documents, public records, personal papers, and photographs. Each type of source of data will yield different evidence that in turns provides different insights regarding the phenomena under study.

Issues in Research

Pragmatic issues of research design must be considered when using methods of triangulation. Triangulation can be impractical for some qualitative research projects due to the inflation of research costs related to multiple methods of inquiry and team investigations. Researchers using strategies of triangulation need increased amounts of time to collect and analyze data. The amount of data collected can pose its own problems as triangulation can result in vast amounts of evidence.

Although there is general consensus among qualitative research commentators that triangulation enables researchers to deepen their understanding of either a single phenomena or of a contextual set of interrelated phenomena, there is some disagreement as to the epistemological foundations of such a research strategy. For example, some commentators suggest that one research method comes with its own assumptions about reality, about what is knowable, and about what counts as evidence such that it is incommensurate with another research method that carries its own epistemological concepts and array of ontological evidence.

There also continues to be debate among qualitative researchers regarding the degree to which triangulation strategies allow for comparison and integration of evidence from multiple methods of data collection and multiple analytical perspectives. Furthermore, the tension between notions of verification and the enrichment of understanding is not resolved; qualitative researchers continue to use methods of triangulation to render a fuller picture of research phenomena as well as to verify and validate the consistency and integrity of research findings.

Paulette M. Rothbauer

See also Bias; Data Analysis; Data Collection; Quantitative Research; Reality and Multiple Realities; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Trustworthiness; Validity

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TRUST

Although trust has a commonsense familiarity, defining trust has been a central sociological concern, with different definitions often being intimately tied to authors' wider theoretical projects. Nonetheless, there are some common attributes of trust and several familiar axes in thinking about the dynamics of social trust. Trust is a form of faith in the outcome of another's actions or of institutional responsibilities. It exists in a context of imperfect knowledge and future contingency, and, as such, it is a form of belief despite uncertainty. In modern societies trust has been conceived as a mechanism that helps reduce complexity and enhance communications. It is also seen as a substitute for more formal methods of regulation such as contract. Examined as either the property of individuals or as a social mechanism, trust is typically conceptualized in terms of its positive social consequences, which are often seen as monumental, so much so that a stable foundation of trust has been proposed as a precondition for stable societies.

The first generation of sociologists, including Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer, analyzed changes in the nature of trust that they believed were characteristic of the transformation from premodern to modern societies. Today, active sociological research programs examine a series of questions pertaining to trust. These include inquiries into the interpersonal dynamics of trust, the cultural or national differences in trusting relationships, and the kinds of trust that enhance corporate or government performance. Studies of social values and political structures frequently examine the question of whom we trust. Given that individuals cannot independently verify the grounds of most knowledge, trust is also recognized as being a vital epistemological resource that precludes the potentially paralyzing need to personally investigate the veracity of all truth claims.

Other disciplines have also demonstrated a long-standing interest in trust, including political science's focus on the role of trust in democratic governance, psychology's investigations of trust as a personality trait, and economics' focus on trust as an exchange mechanism. Issues of trust are particularly germane to qualitative forms of inquiry as researchers must often establish intimate bonds with research participants, many of whom do not benefit in any immediate way from participating in research. Hence, dynamics of both interpersonal and institutional trust are operational in terms of recruiting and maintaining research participants and also in terms of keeping faith with such individuals. Occasionally, this places a heavy obligation on researchers to understand the expectations of research participants so as to not undermine their trust in the researcher and the research process.

A defining characteristic of trust is that it can be broken. Trust is fragile and is easily undermined through deceit. Considerable sociological research examines structures that arise in a context of reduced trust, including policing, surveillance, and credentialization. The fragility of trust has also led to pronouncements that contemporary societies are experiencing a crisis of trust, attributed to an ostensible decline in the long-standing bases for social cooperation, consensus, and solidarity. Such talk of a crisis can also be seen as symptomatic of a society that is undergoing changes in the dynamics of trust, as individuals are required more than ever before to place their trust in major institutions.

Kevin D. Haggerty

See also Accountability; Credibility; Risk; Trustworthiness

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TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, trustworthiness has become an important concept because it allows researchers to

describe the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameters that are typically applied in quantitative research. Hence, the concepts of generalizability, internal validity, reliability, and objectivity are reconsidered in qualitative terms. These alternative terms include transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability. In essence, trustworthiness can be thought of as the ways in which qualitative researchers ensure that transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability are evident in their research. Moving away from the quantitatively oriented terms allows qualitative researchers the freedom to describe their research in ways that highlight the overall rigor of qualitative research without trying to force it into the quantitative model.

To understand the differences between these quantitative and qualitative terms, it is helpful to compare the parallel concepts. To start, transferability and generalizability can be compared. Although generalizability refers to situations where research findings can be applied across the widest possible contexts, transferability reflects the need to be aware of and to describe the scope of one's qualitative study so that its applicability to different contexts (broad or narrow) can be readily discerned. In this way, a study is not deemed unworthy if it cannot be applied to broader contexts; instead, a study's worthiness is determined by how well others can determine (i.e., through a paper trail) to which alternative contexts the findings might be applied.

Credibility and internal validity are also considered to be parallel concepts. A study possesses internal validity if the researchers have successfully measured what they sought to measure. In contrast, a credible study is one where the researchers have accurately and richly described the phenomenon in question. Here, instead of ensuring that one has measured what one set out to measure, one is making sure that they have accurately represented the data.

The next pair to be considered is objectivity and confirmability. In an objective study, the data is considered to be unbiased. Confirmability, on the other hand, reflects the need to ensure that the interpretations and findings match the data. That is, no claims are made that cannot be supported by the data.

Finally, reliability-reproducibility and dependability can also be compared. Findings are considered to be reproducible if they can be replicated exactly when using the same context and procedure. Achieving reproducibility or reliability in this way

can be challenging for the qualitative researcher who studies the constantly changing social world. As a result, dependability becomes a more realistic notion in the qualitative context. Here, the researcher lays out his or her procedure and research instruments in such a way that others can attempt to collect data in similar conditions. The idea here is that if these similar conditions are applied, a similar explanation for the phenomenon should be found.

In sum, trustworthiness provides qualitative researchers with a set of tools by which they can illustrate the worth of their project outside the confines of the often ill-fitting quantitative parameters.

Lisa M. Given and Kristie Saumure

See also Confirmability; Credibility; Dependability; Rigor in Qualitative Research; Transferability

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TRUTH

Truth may be defined quite simply as undistorted knowledge. Straightforward as that definition may be, there are seemingly endless problems associated with identifying truth in empirical social environments. Positivists maintain that truth must be defined relative to empirically observable criteria. In response, power-elite theorists have asserted that due to the interventions of power brokers, observable reference points must be viewed with suspicion. Indeed, postmodernists have concluded that due to the pervasive influences of cultural power coupled with the inevitable shortcomings of human epistemological systems, the pursuit of universal truth should be aborted altogether. In spite of this pessimistic appraisal, Timothy McGettigan has advanced a definition of truth that, while acknowledging the postmodern critique, reestablishes the importance of empirical observation in the process of redefining reality and thereby constructs an epistemology that is founded upon a universal definition of truth.

Seeing Is (Dis)Believing

Mathematicians have their axioms. However, outside the conceptually precise domain of mathematics it is somewhat more difficult to locate truth. In many scientific fields, empirical observation serves as a means to generate and evaluate knowledge claims. For example, zoologists observe lions and zebras on the African savanna and thereby establish (among other things) the truth of their predator–prey relationship. Although Elton Mayo illustrated long ago in his Hawthorne studies that truth in observation has its limits, nevertheless, the relative truthfulness of various knowledge claims is often equated with the degree to which the phenomena in question are observable. For example, dark matter remained a purely theoretical phenomenon until astronomers identified observable markers of its existence. In the social sciences, however, observation has not been universally endorsed as a valid means of establishing truth.

The insistence upon preserving observation as a basis for articulating truth claims (and as a foundation for “good” science) is closely associated with a school of thought known as *positivism*. Generally speaking, positivism may be understood as a philosophy of science that advocates a reliance on empirical observation to assess the plausibility of theory. Although positivism has been the subject of extensive criticism, it remains an influential, if not the dominant, paradigm in the social sciences.

Relying upon observation as a means to evaluate knowledge claims has a strong intuitive appeal. Human judgment is profoundly influenced by sensory inputs: people tend to invest faith in those things that we can see, smell, hear, taste, or touch, whereas phenomena that defy observation (e.g., the Abominable Snowman) tend to tax credulity. Nevertheless, C. Wright Mills and other elite-power theorists have long maintained that observable social phenomena are not reliable measures of truth. Indeed, elite theorists assert that power brokers often deliberately distort observable social phenomena for the purposes of deceiving casual observers. For example, Enron executives projected an illusion of prosperity that, until 2001, most observers accepted as truthful. Therefore, according to this perspective, regardless of what qualitative researchers may encounter with their senses, observable “truths” should be regarded as potentially cunning fabrications designed by the powerful to deflect attention

from their nefarious undertakings. As a result, elite theorists argue that those who maintain strict faith in the observable world cannot avoid being dupes of the powerful; for example, Enron made a killing as long as investors remained sold on the company's dissimulations. To get beyond elite-generated distortions, Mills argued, observers need to employ a special form of insight—something he referred to as a *sociological imagination*. According to Mills, a sociological imagination is a conceptual framework through which observers can ascertain the impact of invisible social forces on the landscape empirical social reality. Without a sociological imagination, Mills insisted, observers are certain to become lost in a “welter of confusion.”

Rejecting Universality

Further complicating matters, radical power theorists have asserted that while elite power brokers may distort observable reality, an even more insidious form of cultural power tends to subvert observers' cognition. As characterized by Stephen Lukes, the radical face of power creates a dislocation between an individual's real and subjective interests—and induces what Marx referred to as a false consciousness. Essentially, this perspective proposes that a subtle but extremely persuasive form of power cultivates what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as “tastes” in the minds of individual social actors. Such tastes tend to predispose individuals to pursue objectives that appear to be born of individual desire, but that are, in fact, inculcated by prevailing sociocultural influences.

For example, the cultural context of the early 21st-century United States tends to inscribe its citizens with tastes for private homes, automobiles, computers, credit cards, cell phones, and fast food. Generally, Americans do not view their appetite for such cultural products as the work of social coercion. However, if Americans were to be situated in a markedly different cultural context, 16th-century Inuit culture for instance, then their desires would incline in a much different direction; that is, toward a passion for warm fur-lined clothing, well-constructed igloos, dogsleds, kayaks, and raw seafood. In the context of preindustrial Inuit culture, it would be preposterous to lust after Big Macs because the extant cultural system would exert neither the impetus to seek nor include the means to fabricate such delicacies. Thus, the third face of power functions as a remarkably effective

social glue because of the way that it impels individuals to apply themselves tenaciously to the pursuit of those things that existing cultural systems are designed to provide. Conveniently, those selfsame forces facilitate the reproduction of the cultural context within which individuals are embedded: our hunger for automobiles effectively sustains the viability of numerous global industries that are bent on catering to consumer desires; for example, petroleum, steel, shipping, and so on.

Consequently, as a result of the pervasive influences of radical power, many social theorists have argued that individuals are incapable of observing truth. That is, if all observable reference points and every individual's cognitive framework has been manipulated by cultural power, then any truths an observer might identify must be either partly or wholly the product of manipulative social power. For example, Michel Foucault asserted that in every circumstance, knowledge and truth are instruments of power. From this perspective, truth is a mechanism that is employed to achieve the positive goals of political regimes: truth encourages those it influences to “do the right thing”—that is, conform to the will of established authority.

It was for reasons similar to these that postmodernists asserted there was no longer any virtue in championing universal truth. Postmodernists pointed out that all knowledge is constructed within bounded sociocultural systems, and whether touted as truth or not, postmodernists emphasized that no form of knowledge could ever be more universal than the social system in which it was constructed. Indeed, not only does knowledge tote the baggage of the social context in which it was generated, but it also imposes ideological coercion upon those who are exposed to it. Proceeding from those assumptions, postmodernists concluded that the modern, scientific hegemony of truth was nothing more than a duplicitous justification for Western imperialistic abuse. According to this perspective, scientists (being more qualified to assess and represent truths) unduly elide the experience of their subjects by claiming the right to speak on their behalf. The unique concerns of research subjects tend to enter learned dialogues only in the form of parenthetical statements; that is, subjects are generally perceived as being unqualified to register valid truths in sophisticated scientific dialogues.

As an antidote, postmodernists decided to jettison the notion of universal truth in favor of embracing

individual-level truths. This diminution of truth standards remedies what postmodernists identify as a preeminent shortcoming of modernist science: throughout the modern era, disparate voices have been elided from the pantheon of “valid” knowledge due to the fact that modernist truth standards have been excessively coercive and exclusionary. Postmodernists rectified this problem by asserting that all knowledge is equally valid.

Such an inclusive orientation to the philosophy of knowledge accomplishes a number of important goals for postmodernists. First, by elevating the status of common knowledge, postmodernists believed they could offset the destructive influences of Western-model social change. Secondly, postmodernists have argued that, as a consequence of eliminating the preeminence of truth standards, learned dialogues could become populated by a greater diversity of voices. In this scenario, research subjects are afforded more opportunities to speak for and thus represent themselves. Consequently, by creating an environment wherein common folk could register their own individual-level truths, one could argue that the rotten core of modernity was more likely to be exposed.

Indeed, Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren have proposed that critical or resistance postmodernists, while recognizing the dangers that are inherent in the development of universal knowledge claims, still maintain that the pursuit of some form of truth must remain central to the production of knowledge: both to make nonrelative knowledge claims as well as to effect coherent challenges to existing structures of power that constrain knowledge. Nevertheless, critical postmodernists still find themselves in a problematic philosophical relationship vis-à-vis the concept of truth.

That is, modernist researchers developed objective scientific practices in order to minimize the degree to which researchers’ subjective biases would influence the substance of scientific inquiry. Postmodern researchers have criticized traditional research practices for failing to grapple with invisible ideological influences that are imposed when researchers adopt an objectivist orientation to the research process. Consequently, critical postmodernists have asserted that it is essential to actively challenge the substance of existing structures of power in order to identify, dismantle, and transcend their invisible influences in the research process. However, without being able to rely on a universal definition of truth, it is not possible for postmodernist researchers to be confident that

their efforts to challenge existing structural power relationships are indeed founded in a project that serves better or different purposes than the imperfect modernist strategies they criticize.

Redefining Reality

The crucial flaw in the postmodern strategy has been its rejection of universal truth criteria. Fortunately, the postmodernist disavowal of truth is the product of a remediable misunderstanding. Once again, postmodernists abjure universal truth (in agreement with Foucault) because of their contention that all knowledge is manipulated by power. However, this viewpoint presumes that power can only influence knowledge negatively: distorting and/or corrupting knowledge and deflecting it from an evocation of undistorted truth. Although McGettigan agrees that the effects of power always modify knowledge, he does not believe that power must always corrupt truth. McGettigan’s basis for this claim derives from a theoretical formulation through which he asserts that individuals are capable of generating truth by redefining reality.

To be brief, redefining reality is a process through which individuals can challenge and modify misleading knowledge through a combination of astute observation and a creative capacity for ingenious, innovative cognition (i.e., human agency). As such, via the process of redefining reality, individuals can challenge and negate some of the influences that the third face of power exercises over their consciousness; redefining reality is a means by which individuals can alter the existing landscape of social reality by creating spaces within which they can think and act with a degree of independence from individual, organizational, and cultural social constraints.

Herein lies the crucial distinction between redefining reality and postmodern criticism. Without a nascent, formative definition of truth, innovative critiques of science (postmodern and others) are incapable of coalescing into orderly and constructive epistemologies. On the other hand, redefining reality implies that challenging ideological constraints on knowledge represents only the first step in the process of generating moments of truth. It is only by mastering an understanding of the limitations of established bodies of knowledge that it becomes possible for individuals to develop a platform upon which to fruitfully transcend the shortcomings of established knowledge frameworks.

This process is capably illustrated in the context of a field research project that McGettigan conducted on the Green Tortoise, a neohippie adventure travel company. McGettigan's initial orientation to the Green Tortoise was rooted in an uncritical acceptance of standard research practices. However, an unanticipated emergency altered his perspective profoundly. During a crossing of the Rio Grande, a male Tortoise passenger allegedly pitched a Mexican rowboat operator and a female passenger into the river. Although the boat operator made it to shore, the passenger disappeared downstream. When McGettigan dove into the river to render assistance, he happened to lose his glasses. Thus, McGettigan's optical vision became blurred for the balance of the journey. However, his leap into the river also unexpectedly enhanced his perspective.

In choosing to intervene as a real participant in the field environment, McGettigan transgressed a number of barriers that he had erected for the purposes of doing good science. Ironically, by unintentionally contravening the boundaries that McGettigan had assumed would preserve the validity of his research, his newly uncorrected vision generated redefined insights of utmost lucidity about the irresistible charm of the Green Tortoise.

Thus, the process of redefining reality often begins when agents make unanticipated observations (e.g., as a good scientist maintaining objectivity is a virtue, but it can also be a liability—especially in situations where field subjects encounter an urgent need for help). Individuals may follow up such observations by issuing a challenge to established ideological controls (i.e., if being a good scientist means that I must stand idly by while the people under observation come to harm, then I must transgress the constraints of good science). In the process of attempting to make sense of such difficulties, individuals encounter opportunities to deconstruct the conceptual frameworks that limit their ability to comprehend puzzling phenomena (i.e., as a human being, my foremost responsibility is to render assistance to those who are in need—even if doing so requires intentional, researcher-inspired corruption of the formerly sacrosanct field-site). As individuals reevaluate their beliefs with respect to their inability to comprehend anomalies, the features of their epistemological systems that do not hold up under scrutiny come under substantial erosive pressure. Indeed, if individuals are persistent enough, they may reach a point at which the critical mass of their

contemplations overwhelms the remaining shackles of their former beliefs, and thus they may experience a moment of truth (e.g., privileging subjective human values actually constitutes a basis for better science than the objectivist formula for good science that artificially suppresses such concerns).

A moment of truth is an experience wherein individuals are transported from an inadequate definition of reality to a more satisfactory version. These experiences may be considered relatively truthful moments due to the fact that they are generated through a process that involves the active negation of ideological distortions over a particular definition of reality. This is not to say that the redefined system of beliefs at which one arrives after experiencing a moment of truth is, therefore, truth—far from it. In keeping with the assertions of radical power theorists, McGettigan maintains that all established belief systems exert their own forms of ideological power upon the architecture of knowledge. Thus, to experience a moment of truth does not transport one to an ideal realm wherein truth reigns unchallenged—as opposed to the assertions of Jürgen Habermas in his ideal speech scenario. Instead, McGettigan merely suggests that the process of redefining reality permits individuals to negate some of the influences of radical power and thereby negotiate with the pervasive, consciousness-distorting influences of radical power sufficiently to establish a location for agency in a world of multidimensional social coercion.

Truth and Agency

The fact that agency may be established in a world of social coercion makes it possible to establish and defend a “socially situated” definition of truth. The version of evolutionary truth that McGettigan advocates asserts that no single person will ever produce an unequivocally final representation of truth. Instead, humans can access narrow, momentary glimpses of truth through the process of transitioning from outmoded to improved definitions of reality.

According to the theoretical formulation upon which the redefinition of reality process is based, it remains up to each observer to evaluate the veracity of knowledge claims. For example, even the most widely accepted scientific theories are, and should be, subjected to intense criticism. An environment that invites criticism of even the most popular theories—whether or not people approve of dissenters' viewpoints—is

crucial to the process of progressively and legitimately redefining reality. In other words, dissent is an acid test through which to interrogate good ideas and obliterate bad ones. Once again, no theory produced by humankind either has, or ever will, capture the entire truth. Indeed, precisely because of that limitation, the notion of redefined truth is an essential means through which to emphasize that even relatively truthful ideas often can and should be supplanted by better ideas.

Indeed, given the foregoing discussion about the limitations of culture-bound knowledge systems, McGettigan suggests that it will never be possible for humans to generate absolute truths. Instead, what McGettigan proposes is that eternally provisional, but increasingly proximate paradigms emerge from a negotiation process among

1. ingenious, redefining human minds;
2. observable (and, in particular, anomalous) empirical phenomena; and
3. established epistemological systems.

Redefining Good Science

Thus, the capacity to redefine reality implies that it is possible for social scientists in general, and qualitative researchers in particular, to identify and analyze exercises of the third face of power from within the coercive context of empirical social reality. Indeed, far from dissolving practical reality, as Habermas argues, the capacity for social actors to redefine reality implies that good scientists can only obtain a thorough understanding of sociological subject matter by acting as agents who interrogate the coercive context of social reality from within. One must directly confront the invisible influences of social power in order to effectively grasp the complexities of the simultaneously contradictory and complementary relationships between agents and the social reality they inhabit.

The notion of redefinable reality posits that there is a universe “out there” that exists independent of human cognition. As such, McGettigan argues that universal truth does exist, but such truth is not contained within extant scientific theories. Rather, the truth extends infinitely into the unlocked mysteries of the evolving social and physical universe. Truth is an intrinsic, inseparable feature of phenomena as they exist independent of human perception. Lies and distortions come into existence via the vast human

capacity for ignorance: humans view the empirical world through awed and flawed psyches. Thus, realization of the ultimate, universal truth is only possible through a process of transitioning from inadequate to improved—but never perfect—descriptions of the empirical world. Although admirable in many ways, people’s grasp of infinite mysteries remains woefully limited. Nevertheless, the process of redefining reality supplies the necessary cognitive mechanism—that is, moments of truth—through which to take gradual but confident steps toward a broader understanding of the truths that influence the empirical world—and unless I am mistaken, that has always has been (and always should be) the primary objective of good science.

Timothy McGettigan

See also Agency; Objectivity; Positivism; Postmodernism; Power; Reality and Multiple Realities; Representation

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TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Typological analysis is a strategy for descriptive qualitative (or quantitative) data analysis whose goal is the development of a set of related but distinct categories within a phenomenon that discriminate across the phenomenon. Typologies are characterized by categorization, but not by hierarchical arrangement; the categories in a typology are related to one another, not subsidiary to one another. Typologies are common in the human sciences and are often used to distinguish among behaviors such as parenting styles or learning styles. In qualitative research, typological analysis requires four steps. First, before data collection

begins, the investigator identifies some organizing framework for typology development. The framework may be structured as a continuum, with endpoints such as doing well or doing poorly. Next, once there are data in hand, the investigator identifies the important sources of commonality and variation that occur in the data set. Third, the investigator looks within those sources of commonality and variation for patterns of similarity and difference. Finally, those patterns of similarity and difference are reconstructed into ideal types or model cases.

Continua used for typology development reflect disciplinary priorities: education researchers may be interested in school success; nurse researchers may be interested in kinds of illness-management behaviors. The continuum and the research question provide criteria for evaluating the importance of sources of commonality and variation. The investigator identifies aspects of a phenomenon that are important across all cases in the sample and are also important to the phenomenon as a whole; for example, in a study of persons with cerebral palsy, all participants may describe getting help with personal care, leading to the development of the theme personal care use. Although major themes may be inductively derived from the data, they are often identified as part of the conceptual model or research question and incorporated into data collection, especially if semi-structured interviews are used. In the example above, participants talking about personal care use may describe differences in the kind of help they receive, in the quality of help they receive, and in their response to the need for help with personal care activities. Each of

these subthemes can be subdivided into categories; for example, quality of help could include good help, inconsistent help, harmful help, or no help at all. Whether the theme derives from the research question, a conceptual model, or a comment from a participant, its legitimacy for use in typological analysis depends on its presence in some form across all cases and on its relevance to the research question.

The development of ideal types or model cases is the last step in typology development. In order to be useful, a typology must identify the confluence of categories that distinguish one type or style from another and present these confluences in ways that are easily recognizable. Typological analysts often present their findings as a series of case examples.

Lioness Ayres and Kathleen A. Knafl

See also Semi-Structured Interview; Thematic Coding and Analysis

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U

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding is comprehending an entity; achieving a grasp of the essence of another or of an experience; empathizing or sympathizing with another individual, group, or culture; or knowing what something is about or what something is like. Understanding is predetermined by a belief that experience is embodied with meaning, significance, and characteristics, that there is something to be understood.

The act of understanding allows us to perceive, distinguish, and make sense of the nature of being-in-world. It also encourages us to know the consequences of things and of actions and reactions to varying entities. The more one understands something, the greater one's awareness becomes of the embeddedness, the implied order, and the interconnectedness of human phenomena and experience. Through understanding, we come to discern patterns of language, sounds, forms, symbols, behavior, action and reactions, themes as characteristics, and the essence intrinsic to individuals and their experience.

Within the realm of qualitative research, unlike the natural science approach, understanding an entity makes no claims of generalizability and instead focuses on the subjective nature of the particular. Understanding from the qualitative perspective is at first paradoxical, as a researcher is asked to suspend his or her prior understanding of behavior or experience, sometimes called bracketing or unknowing. From the perspective of qualitative research the very characteristics of understanding need to be seen for how they might interfere with the research goal, which is in some form to understand. Some of these characteristics that could influence

clarity come from the realization that when one attempts to understand something one already has presuppositions, prejudices, biases, and his or her own experiences and perceptions, existing traditions, history culture, and constructions of reality. Researchers are not blank slates. They are representatives of their own understandings.

Understanding, within the qualitative research paradigm, is a project of discovery with the potential of emancipation from the distorting aspects of prejudices, bias, presuppositions, and traditions. This process of understanding phenomena is very powerful and requires self-knowledge, introspection, and circumspection. Presuppositions, like perceptions, are critical whether one is the researcher or the participant because individuals see these points of view as truth.

Individuals understand the world through constructing it with their own values, beliefs, and attitudes originating from the context and contingencies of their lives. There is a prejudgment to understanding of an entity based on many things, among them the historical, experiential moment in time. So researchers have already presupposed when they seek to understand.

The understanding of individuals, groups, cultures, and experience that originates from contingencies of a different temporal, historical, and cultural context in which individuals no longer reside, nor are a part of, often results in finite boundaries, bereft of meaning, and essentially limited in usefulness. Such acontextual understanding can contribute to poor professional practice, injustice, inequality, oppression, and much misunderstanding in the temporal moment.

Suspending one's understandings of phenomena to the extent possible allows one to engage in an authentic encounter open to discovery and different possibilities

and to engage in the truth of another's understanding. The various interpretations of reality in a very multi-storied world, however, are essential to understand if social and political policies, professional practices, and the emergence of different theories and approaches are to be free of bias and prejudice, appropriate to the individual or group, and effective and successful.

Patricia L. Munhall

See also Bias; Bracketing; Critical Action Research; Ethnography; Grounded Theory; Interpretation; Interpretive Inquiry; Observer Bias; Perception; Phenomenology; Reality and Multiple Realities; Social Justice; Subjectivity

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UNOBTUSIVE RESEARCH

In their book *Unobtrusive Measures*, Eugene Webb, Donald Campbell, Richard Schwartz, and Lee Sechrest noted that each research method has its own weakness or bias. To counterbalance the weakness of one method, they suggested that researchers use multiple methods (referred to in the literature as methods triangulation) to obtain a more accurate or complete picture of the entity under investigation. One of these methods is unobtrusive research, which can be defined as methods that involve no direct or overt contact with the study participants. Although unobtrusive measures also have their own unique weaknesses, Webb et al. suggested their use to complement data collected through other methods.

Types of Unobtrusive Research

Unobtrusive research methods evoke thoughts of historical research or of observations in which the researcher can play the role of a complete observer. However, there is much more to this type of research

than the obvious. In the literature, attempts have been made to categorize unobtrusive research methods. Webb et al. discussed erosion and accretion measures. In the former category are things that demonstrate wear (e.g., worn pages in a book), while the latter category focuses on the build up of things (e.g., the build up of garbage or accumulation of books in a personal library). Another way is to look at these methods through print and nonprint categories. This entry provides a brief description of some of the methods subsumed under this broad categorization of unobtrusive research and the resources used. The method and the resources used by the researcher depend on the purpose of the research project, the availability of the items, and on her or his training, imagination, and creative spirit. Data analysis for unobtrusive research includes content, thematic, or semiotic analysis. For a discussion of these analytic methods, readers are advised to consult other entries in this text, as well as other authoritative sources.

Print Materials

The examination of print material falls under the rubric of unobtrusive research because there is usually no direct contact with the original writer. Researchers, such as historians, use current as well as archival documents, such as diaries, letters, newspapers, historical pamphlets, broadsheets, government documents, and census data, to name a few. Tombstones provide a wealth of information on family histories, wars, immigration, health, and the justice system. Graffiti can be studied from a social or linguistic perspective. Textbooks can be perused to determine how information on a topic has changed over the years. For example, a researcher may examine all the editions of a medical textbook to follow the social, cultural, and medical evolution of a disease. Pharmaceutical advertisements in magazines can shed light on gender issues. In case studies where the emphasis is on gaining a good understanding of phenomena within a particular setting, there is a good marriage between obtrusive (e.g., interviews or overt observation) and unobtrusive methods. Researchers often comb through the emails, memos, minutes of meetings, annual reports, and so on of the case under investigation. Maps or floor plans can also provide unexpected information about activities within and the social milieu of an institution. Other print sources available to researchers are photographs, paintings, and sheet

music. Art historians study paintings to understand the different periods of an artist's career. Photographs can be used to study architecture, automobiles, genealogy, or fashion trends. Dictionaries and thesauri, such as the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* or the American Psychological Association's *Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms*, can be consulted to trace gender and social changes. There are so many print resources that can be used in unobtrusive research that it is not possible to list them all. Interested researchers can read more about these topics in the list of further readings below.

Nonprint Resources

Included in this category are people, computers, and recordings. Each one will be discussed briefly.

People

In observational studies of people, a researcher can play a number of roles throughout the study. The first role may be as a complete observer, which allows the researcher to become familiar with the people, place, and activities of the community being studied. The researcher's role is restricted to observing, and no attempt is made to engage the participants in conversation. This role can be quite useful in studies of how people use space, such as in airports, subway stations, libraries, or places of worship. For many social science researchers, however, complete observation seems to have lost its appeal because the validity of the data collected may be called into question. Without being able to ask questions, the researcher may misinterpret, misunderstand, or not grasp the full meaning of what she or he sees.

The use of proxies is another unobtrusive research method. People (often students) are recruited and trained to engage in a certain activity, such as asking particular questions of a librarian, teacher, or police officer, to name a few examples. The proxies record their activities, observations, and results and give the report to the researcher for analysis. Although this method has definite advantages (one of which is the detachment of the researcher from the actual interaction), there are some major disadvantages, such as how the proxies play their role, whether they complete the agreed upon assignment, and whether they accurately remember the transactions or write a complete and accurate report.

Computers

The advent of the internet allows researchers to collect data and yet remain completely absent from the scene. Two unobtrusive, nonparticipation methods discussed in the literature are transactional log analysis (TLA) and netnography. TLA allows researchers to observe how people maneuver their way through databases or other online products. TLA is a good way to assess the accessibility and user friendliness of a website or to learn about people's strategies for finding information. Netnography is the ethnographic study of people through their communications in chat rooms, listservs, blogs, and other online forums. Through lurking, researchers can gain an in-depth understanding of people's thoughts, opinions, and beliefs relating to a myriad of issues, such as health, travel, politics, wars, and so on. Two articles, covering many issues in the use of netnography as a research method, have been included in Further Readings.

Recordings

The final category includes musical recordings, audiotapes, films, and videos. The latter two are particularly good resources for researchers interested in understanding the behavior of people within the context of a situation. One example is the use of video cameras to capture both voice and actions of study participants who are testing a new database or website. Audiotapes and musical recordings can be studied for pattern recognition, linguistic trends, social or cultural issues, or other phenomena of interest.

Advantages and Disadvantages

With interviews, questionnaires, and observations, there is the potential for participants to alter their behavior in reaction to the researcher's presence or to the realization that they are being studied. The major advantage of unobtrusive research is that this reactive effect is eliminated. Other advantages are based on the method and resources used. For example, access to print and nonprint resources might be easier. Using netnography, data can be collected in a safe environment, such as in a home, office, or library. Furthermore, because there is no face-to-face contact with participants, researchers may be able to collect more reliable information on sensitive topics. The researcher can work at her or his own convenience because there are no appointments to

schedule with study participants. Finally, some authors suggest that this type of research is less expensive to do; however, they may not be taking into account the cost of traveling to archives or observation sites, obtaining interlibrary loans, or purchasing documents.

However, there are also disadvantages with unobtrusive research. Gaining approval to use nonparticipant or complete observation data collection techniques from an ethics review board (IRB) of a university may be problematic. Some members of the IRB may not see such methods as viable ways to collect data, while others may veto these techniques on ethical grounds. Selectivity is another major problem. People who wrote the original documents may have selectively recorded events, thus incorporating their biases. Their handwriting may be faded or difficult, if not impossible, to read. Furthermore, written material reflects only the stories of literate people. Print and nonprint documents may be missing from collections or, due to budget restraints, curators may have been selective in what they purchased. In the nonparticipant or complete observer role, researchers may not record important events because of lack of knowledge, inattention, bias, boredom, or fatigue. Researchers who decide to use an on-off schedule of observation may miss crucial events during the off period. In addition, the researchers' distance from the people involved in the event may hinder their ability to explain what is really transpiring. Therefore, the representativeness of their observations can be questioned. Thus, although there are some definite advantages, the disadvantages of unobtrusive research methods speak to the need to use them in conjunction with other methods that can offset these inherent weaknesses.

Ethical Considerations

There are ethical issues in both categories of unobtrusive research. In the print category, misrepresentation of information, plagiarism, and violations of copyright are all possibilities. Researchers may also select data that coincide with their opinions or intents and ignore what does not conform. Allan Kellehear mentions that researchers need to be honest with library or archival staff about their intended role. He also addresses the issue of confidentiality (or anonymity) for the people or institutions named in any current documents. They may not want their identities revealed in any published research.

In the nonprint category, ethical issues abound. Studying people without their informed consent is of paramount importance, especially if the researcher intends to publish the results of the study and does not use other methods to corroborate her or his findings. In the literature about the studying of online communities (e.g., netnography), the overarching question seems to concern the ethics of lurking. Discussions center on public versus private domain and the potential invasion of privacy of the people who are posting messages. Are they aware that what they post can be published as part of a research study? Have people had the opportunity to consent or request that their postings not be made public? Do they know that a researcher is lurking on a site where, heretofore, they have felt comfortable discussing issues of interest with other people in the particular community? Some of these questions have been addressed by the IRBs of many universities who have designed specific forms for the use of the internet in research. Items covered may include the typical ones on how the data will be collected and recruitment methods, but may also require a letter of support from the owner of the site. As the use of unobtrusive research methods involving the internet becomes more commonplace, some of these issues may be resolved. Overall, unobtrusive research methods have their place in qualitative research, but researchers have to be aware of the challenges involved so that no harm is done to any individual.

Lynda M. Baker

See also Content Analysis; Mixed Methods Research; Semiotics; Thematic Coding and Analysis; Virtual Ethnography

Further Readings

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UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Unstructured interviews in qualitative research involve asking relatively open-ended questions of research participants in order to discover their percepts on the topic of interest. Interviews, in general, are a foundational means of collecting data when using qualitative research methods. They are designed to draw from the interviewee constructs embedded in his or her thinking and rationale for decision making. The researcher uses an inductive method in data gathering, regardless of whether the interview method is open, structured, or semi-structured. That is, the researcher does not wish to superimpose his or her own viewpoints onto the person being interviewed. Rather, inductively, the researcher wishes to understand the participant's perceptions, helping him or her to articulate percepts such that they will be understood clearly by the journal reader.

Qualitative researchers often describe interviews on a continuum. On the one end are structured interviews, which serve purposes similar to those of a verbal questionnaire. Researchers using this method typically begin with a hypothesis, idea, or hunch and then engage participants with demarcated questions about those constructs. Unstructured interviews, often referred to as open interviews, exist at the other end of the interview continuum. Semi-structured interviews typically are combinations of structured and open methods.

When utilizing unstructured interview methods, the researcher frequently begins with vague, general questions. For example, the research might ask, "What is it like being a school nurse?" The research participant has few clues as to the researcher's own opinion of where the researcher would like the conversation to go. Consequently, there are relatively few demand characteristics when using this method. In short, the interviewee determines the direction the interview will take when using an unstructured interview.

Use of Unstructured Interviews

Among others, there are five occasions when a qualitative researcher might wish to employ unstructured interview methods. One is when studying relatively new domains. In such circumstances it is not reasonable to ask a set of preestablished questions of the participant. Rather, researchers approach the interviews

more inductively. Second, unstructured methods may be particularly useful when qualitative researchers utilize research waves. In these waves, an interviewer can begin with unstructured interviews first, then progress to more structured interviews in later periods of data collection. Third, unstructured interviews can be helpful when depth, rather than breadth, is the primary goal of the research project. Often depth and breadth are necessary trade-offs in research, particularly when time limitations apply to the data collection. When researchers are more interested in knowing greater details about a phenomenon, unstructured questions may aptly accomplish those aims.

Fourth, unstructured interviews can be particularly useful for ethnographic research. Living among a group of individuals, learning their culture and perspectives lends itself naturally to having conversations with participants more so than asking them a set of prescribed questions. Lastly, the unstructured research method may be more useful when qualitative researchers work with particularly articulate individuals. Allowing these people freedom to take the interviews where they wish to go may provide insights to the construct being studied that could not be assessed via more structured interview means.

Michael W. Firmin

See also Closed Question; Data Collection; In-Person Interview; Structured Interview

Further Readings

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2004). The active interview. In D. Siverstein (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method, and practice* (pp. 140–161). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

UNSTRUCTURED OBSERVATION

In unstructured observation, the researcher enters the field with some general ideas of what might be salient, but not of what specifically will be observed. Therefore, observation is holistic, unstructured, and unfocused, with the investigator attempting to document as much as possible about the setting and its participants in order to discover themes of interest. Unstructured observation is not constrained by checklists and coding schemes; rather, the researcher

reports in narrative style about observations that are relevant to the research questions. Unstructured observation is most frequently associated with an interpretivist, constructivist paradigm that emphasizes the importance of context, sees knowledge as being co-constructed by both participants and investigators, and asserts it is impossible to completely separate the observer from the observed.

Unstructured observation is characterized by emergent research design, recognizing that what is observed may change as experience is gained in the setting. Data are collected about the physical setting, its history (often through documents), the context, the participants (including their physical characteristics such as age, gender, race and stature, their activities and their interactions with others), and the rhythm of activities. Investigators look and listen, and data collection is very thorough and detailed, especially at the beginning of a project when what is significant is still unknown. Unstructured observation recognizes that important themes can emerge from the mundane. Data are usually recorded as fieldnotes that include jottings, maps, and diagrams. Unstructured observation usually leads to more structured observation as more is learned about the context. This increased structure is better regarded as focused rather than as structured or systematic observation, which uses checklists.

Unstructured observation is particularly useful in the early stages of an observational study. It is more holistic than other forms of observation, capturing more information about the setting of interest. Unlike methods such as interviews, unstructured observation

allows investigation of context and process in an ongoing rather than episodic manner. It is effective for looking at interaction among individuals and between groups. When used with interviews, unstructured observation allows for comparison between participant accounts and actual behavior. Unstructured observation is a flexible method that allows for the collection of comprehensive and rich data.

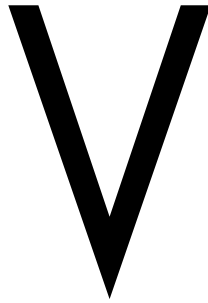
A major weakness of unstructured observation is that it is susceptible to observer bias as investigators choose what to observe and how to process and analyze that information. In keeping with the concept of researcher as instrument, the quality of data collected and the findings are heavily dependent on the skill and experience of the investigator. Reactivity is also a potential problem, although it is usually overcome through habituation. The very nature of unstructured observation means that it is impossible to predict in advance all that will be of interest. Therefore, for example, obtaining informed consent from all participants (if necessary) requires ongoing effort as individuals move in and out of the research context.

Lynne E. F. McKechnie

See also Observational Research; Observer Bias; Researcher as Instrument; Structured Observation

Further Readings

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VALIDITY

In the field of research, validity refers broadly to the “goodness” or “soundness” of a study. A multitude of approaches to and conceptualizations of validity have emerged, differing significantly depending on the research methodologies and paradigms that guide each particular research project. From positivist to postpositivist perspectives (which guide most quantitative research), validity is often broadly described as being dependent on the degree to which a study actually measures what it purports to measure—whether “the truth” is accurately identified and described. Validity, from this perspective, is increased by researchers’ use of specifically prescribed and well-entrenched procedures and strategies. Along with—and inextricably related to—notions of reliability, objectivity, and generalizability, validity is centered as an essential indicator of research quality in the positivist/postpositivist tradition.

In contrast, numerous conceptualizations of (and values for) validity are described in the field of qualitative research. Because of the multiplicity of paradigms and methodologies that are categorized in the qualitative field, it is overly simplistic—indeed inaccurate—to describe global qualitative criteria for validity. The purposes and methods of each qualitative study dictate, to a considerable degree, the type of validity that is sought. For example, whereas many social constructivists describe the validity of studies as being dependent on the resonance of their findings with participating communities’ common discourses, qualitative researchers from critical and action research perspectives are more likely to describe

studies as being valid to the extent that they are pragmatic (i.e., lead to social change-directed actions). In fact, some qualitative researchers reject attempts to demonstrate validity altogether, suggesting that such efforts counter the very essence of subjective interpretive work. Judging the validity of qualitative research projects is, then, often seen as being done most appropriately in an individualized contextual manner rather than through the application of broadly applicable standards and criteria.

Cognizant of this “validity variance” within the field, there are some validity-related commonalities in qualitative research. One of these is the vernacular that has frequently been used to indicate “goodness” or “soundness” in qualitative research projects. Described by Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (among others) as appropriate qualitative alternatives to the quantitative goals of validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability, notions such as trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity, transferability, and plausibility are often cited as parallel criteria for quality research. These concepts suggest that qualitative research can be rigorous in its inquiry into meaning within fluid and continually contested contexts without being held accountable to inappropriate quantitative validity benchmarks. Throughout the course of a study (as opposed to waiting until the completion of data collection and analysis), researchers can increase trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity, transferability, and plausibility by using strategies such as continual verification of findings, member checks, self-reflection, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, sampling sufficiency, theoretical thinking, and audit trails. Ultimately, although the appropriateness of

these parallel criteria and strategies is, as mentioned previously, dependent on each study's guiding paradigm and methodology, most who do qualitative work agree that the validity of all research is heightened by ensuring that research procedures remain coherent and transparent, research results are evident, and research conclusions are convincing.

Peter Miller

See also Generalizability; Knowledge; Objectivity; Quantitative Research; Reliability

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VALUE-FREE INQUIRY

Value-free inquiry is precisely what the term implies—inquiry (or research) that is thought to be free from the influences of human values. The preceding phrase, “thought to be,” is called to readers’ attention because value-free inquiry is a deeply contested concept. Thus, value-free inquiry is at the center of competing understandings about the nature of knowledge (epistemology) and specifically about how we understand the relationship between what we think of as facts (objective knowledge) and what we think of as values (subjective knowledge). For reasons that are discussed in this entry, qualitative researchers have largely abandoned the claim that any form of research (qualitative or quantitative) is value free or objective, whereas quantitative researchers tend to insist that quantitative research is, to at least some degree, objective and “scientifically neutral.” Thus, researchers from various backgrounds or schools of thought disagree about whether facts can be separated from values. To understand this dispute, it is useful to realize that the very thought of making a distinction between facts and values is, in the larger scope of human history, a relatively new idea. This entry begins with a discussion of the origins of the concept of value-free inquiry that is helpful in understanding why quantitative

researchers came to understand their research as objective, scientifically neutral, and value free.

The Origins of Value-Free Inquiry

The origins of value-free inquiry date roughly back to the scientific revolution of the 17th century. During that time period, a monumental shift took place in our understanding of human knowledge. Influenced by philosophers, physicists, and mathematicians, this shift represented a change in humans’ understanding of the universe (and themselves in it) as a holistic entity to their understanding of the universe as a dualistic relationship between mind and body, fact and value, subjective and objective.

Rene Descartes’s famous dictum, “I think therefore I am,” represented his belief in the necessity for human knowledge to emanate from an essential foundation. There is the mind, and it is distinct from the body, from the external world, and from nature ruled by mechanical laws. Human knowledge, therefore, required bringing the beliefs of the mind into alignment with the world outside of itself. Likewise, Isaac Newton’s metaphor of the universe as a giant clock depicted nature as objective and predictable. Hence, careful and methodical experimentation was requisite to unlocking its mysteries.

As the principal elaborator of empiricism, 17th-century British philosopher John Locke incorporated the concepts of mind/body dualism and reality as mind independent, thereby extending these concepts to an understanding of facts as distinct from human values. During the 19th century, French philosopher Auguste Comte contended that the distinction between facts and values (our subjective, values-imbued opinions) required methods of inquiry restricted to the physically observable. As the leading architect of positivism, Comte held that knowledge could be true only if it corresponded directly with a physically observable fact. Comte’s younger contemporary and correspondent, British empiricist philosopher John Stuart Mill, argued that inductive logic leading to laws of causation is the proper starting place for justifiable knowledge. His development of experimental procedures as a means for eliminating false causes and deriving verifiable causal relationships further instantiated the fact-versus-value distinction. These concepts (e.g., mind/body, fact/value, objective reality as mind independent, correspondence theory of truth, laws of causation) and

attendant experimental procedures were incorporated by early 20th-century French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who favored the scientific method as a superior approach for studying the social world. Social facts, he believed, should be treated as things, and inquiry in the social sciences should be a value-free process.

Max Weber, however, is widely held as being the most influential advocate of value-free inquiry in the social sciences. It is important to note that Weber did not claim that values were not a part of social science research. Rather, he believed that researchers can make objective observations and descriptions of others' values in the absence of making ethical judgments of their own values. Furthermore, he viewed research as making important contributions in helping people to determine the most efficient means to a predetermined and valued goal. Weber invoked a separation between "existential knowledge" (knowledge of what is or exists) and normative knowledge (whether what exists should or ought to exist). The distinction between the terms *is* and *ought to* asserts that researchers can conduct research on political affiliations, for example, without making any judgments about whether people should belong to one affiliation or another. Furthermore, he contended that knowledge about the factual existence of a phenomenon cannot establish its value and vice versa. Within this conceptual framework, social scientists act as neutral brokers, so to speak, confining their inquiry to the factual while leaving normative considerations to others.

Contested Assumptions

Widespread consensus surrounding the assumptions of value-free neutrality has long dominated research in the social sciences, so much so that this consensus has achieved something of a commonsense status among quantitative researchers. This is certainly not the case, however, among qualitative researchers. Because the possibility of value-free inquiry has undergone such a decisive undermining, qualitative researchers realize that it is no longer possible to sustain the assumptions of value-free inquiry. Philosophical critiques centering on the assumptions underlying value-free inquiry point out that value judgments permeate all aspects of research activity. Most obviously, the very choice of a research topic reflects researchers' values about what is important or worthy as opposed to trivial or inconsequential. The

very framing of the research question, the tools selected for the project, and so on pervasively structure the character and form of the results.

Perhaps more fundamentally, however, these critiques have thoroughly undermined two major assumptions underpinning value-free inquiry: the possibility of objective (theory-free) observation and the neutrality of the research methods themselves. First, for inquiry to be value free, researchers must be able to rid their observations of the influences of language, personal experiences, motives, beliefs, and culture. They must, in other words, be able to control their propensities to see some things, not see other things, and generally see things in light of their own interests and prejudices. Yet the possibility of achieving theory-free observations has been discredited both by theoretical physicists and by philosophers of science who have pointed out that it is impossible for humans to achieve such a state of self-transcendence. The objects of human observation do not exist apart from the meanings that observers bring to them, and because this is the case, all observation is inevitably prepossessed by the individual observer's personal dispositions. Stated succinctly, to observe is to interpret.

Second, the empiricist/positivist assumption that research procedures are neutral and, as such, serve as a means for holding researchers' values in check has also been seriously undermined. Research methods, including statistical ones, invariably presuppose the nature of what exists and how it can be understood. They do not supply us with direct access to things as they really are, nor do they provide accurate depiction or neutral access to a mind-independent reality outside of ourselves. Instead, the procedures of research are tools that contribute to the human construction of knowledge. Moreover, research procedures are themselves creations saturated with the intentions, purposes, and worldviews of those who fashioned them.

Although most scholars now acknowledge that all research is manifestly value laden, the implications of such a realization have spurred ongoing debate. In particular, the assertion that value-free inquiry is impossible confronts inquirers with the unavoidable conclusion that all research is a moral undertaking and all knowledge is, at its core, moral. More to the point, it poses the question of how researchers arbitrate differences about competing knowledge claims. If appeals to the supposed authority of methodological

neutrality cannot, and do not, function to adjudicate competing knowledge claims, by what means are these disagreements resolved? Various responses to this apparent quandary can be understood broadly as occupying three main positions: philosophical realism, neorealism, and nonrealists.

Philosophical Realism

The first of these positions can be characterized as an insistence on the foundational tenets of value-free inquiry. Researchers who take this stance (philosophical realism) maintain that distinctions between facts and values not only can be made but also should be made. Despite varying degrees of acknowledgment that absolute methodological objectivity is not possible, adherents of realism argue that the procedures of science (empiricist methods) are the best tools available for distinguishing between objective and subjective knowledge. From a realist perspective, belief in a realm of knowledge that is mind independent, existing outside of our opinions, values, and culture, is a necessity because otherwise all knowledge claims become equal. Finally, realists assume not only that the nature of true knowledge is objective and value free (epistemological realism) but also that the nature of reality (ontological realism) is likewise objective and value free.

Neorealism

The second position is much like the first, although adherents to this position (often termed *neorealists*) recognize that all human knowledge is mind dependent. Even though neorealists agree that researchers cannot obtain objective knowledge in a practical sense given the impossibility of theory-free observation, they maintain that it is possible, at least theoretically, for researchers' knowledge to achieve accurate depictions of an independently existing reality. Stated differently, neorealists have dropped the assumption of epistemological objectivity but still retain the concept of ontological realism. For them, the goal of researchers is to enhance the degree to which their mind-dependent knowledge approaches or achieves closer approximations to that reality. Neorealists hold common ground with realists in that they share the conviction that the assumption of some form of foundational objectivity is indispensable for the purpose of adjudicating disagreements among knowledge claims.

Nonrealists

Those who have relinquished both epistemological and ontological realism, who have fully foreclosed on the possibility of value-free inquiry altogether, comprise the third position. Referred to as nonrealists (or antifoundationalists/nonfoundationalists), researchers holding this perspective point out what they consider to be fundamentally irreconcilable contradictions in both the realist and neorealist positions.

Implications

For nonrealists, the main criticism of the realist position is that its adherents have simply chosen not to engage the issues at hand. Realists, they point out, have not acknowledged, nor can they refute, the conclusion that there is no theory-free observation, no neutral research procedures, and therefore no means for distinguishing between facts and values. Although realists may occasionally concede that absolute objectivity is impossible, they proceed as if this significant concession were of little or no consequence. In asserting and reasserting the possibility of value-free inquiry, realists apparently believe that research procedures can afford them at least partial objectivity. But to claim some form of relative objectivity raises the following question: How might one distinguish between the objective and subjective aspects of the research results? How can any sense be made of cobbling together the opposing concepts of relativism and objectivism? Given that no answers to these vital questions are forthcoming, nonrealists find the realist position to be decidedly unconvincing.

Nonrealists find the neorealist position to be similarly incoherent. Having divested themselves of the concepts of theory-free observation and procedural neutrality, neorealists, like their nonrealist counterparts, embrace the conviction that all knowledge is culturally constructed and value based. They have, in other words, rejected objectivist epistemology. However, like their realist counterparts, neorealists retain objectivist ontology. This effort to carve out an ostensive middle ground strikes nonrealists as deeply problematic. To claim that an objective reality exists outside of ourselves, and that it is a reality about which we can never have objective knowledge, is a moot point for nonrealists. More pointless still is the neorealist contention that the main criterion for judging research is the degree to which researchers'

constructed knowledge approaches or gets closer to that objective reality. This line of reasoning raises a rather obvious question: How would a researcher know if she or he has gotten closer to an objective reality unless the researcher knew ahead of time what that reality is? From the nonrealist perspective, such an undertaking is tantamount to aiming at an unknown target.

The nonrealist understanding that there is no value-free inquiry means that researchers construct, rather than discover, both knowledge and reality. What they know about the social world is not the social world itself but rather what they make of it. Accordingly, researchers cannot appeal to something outside of themselves to evaluate the worthiness of their knowledge claims. This perspective does not mean that research is less important, necessary, or influential. In addition, it does not mean that researchers must consign themselves to perpetual ambiguity or a sense of incapacity and indifference. Instead, they must make careful choices in the absence of complete knowledge and enter into dialogues (with one another) that offer ethical justifications for actions, choices, and practices.

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See also Hermeneutics; Interpretive Inquiry

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VERIFICATION

Verification is the product of checking one or more aspects of the research process to ensure that they are a true representation of what actually occurred or are clearly derived from the analysis. Within qualitative research, this often occurs once the raw data have been gathered. For example, interview participants might be sent copies of the interview transcripts and asked to confirm that what is represented in the text is a true reflection of what occurred during the interviews. Another strategy to verify findings emerging from the analysis of a focus group might be the presentation of the analysis to the participants of the focus group so as to elicit their responses to the work and to ensure that all participants agree with the direction and focus that have been pursued in the analysis.

Comparable to validation (or the demonstration of validity) within a positivist paradigm, verification is a strategy used most often by qualitative researchers working within a naturalistic tradition to demonstrate the rigor of their work. Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba proposed four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—with verification of the research findings with research participants (or “member checking”) making up a key strategy for ensuring credibility. However, as John Cutcliffe and Hugh McKenna pointed out, there are potentially a number of different outcomes resulting from this process, and the researcher needs to be clear how this strategy is being used. For example, are all research participants expected to agree with the data as originally noted and to confirm that the emerging theory is reasonable? Or, are participants expected to become actively involved in interpretation, possibly adding their own insights and perspectives? How will the researcher accommodate the views of one dissenting participant within the analysis? Although Cutcliffe

and McKenna supported attempts to verify findings with research participants, they advised care in selecting methods of testing verification and argued for multiple ways of doing this.

Those who espouse a relativist or postmodern approach to research may be critical of the use of strategies to ensure verification, contesting the notion of one single reality and arguing that the “truth” of a phenomenon will be mediated through both the writer and the readers of the research. The critical or postmodern researcher may lay claim to other criteria in demonstrating quality such as reflexivity, which foregrounds the role of the research, rather than laying claim to an authentic or true representation.

Claire Ballinger

See also Accountability; Credibility; Rigor in Qualitative Research

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VIDEO INTERVENTION/ PREVENTION ASSESSMENT

Video intervention/prevention assessment (VIA) is an audiovisual research method for collecting participant-generated data on human experience. First developed in 1994 as a means of investigating the illness experience of children and adolescents, VIA has proven to be sensitive and versatile, applicable to a wide variety of research questions about the nature of human experience. VIA participants are loaned small, easy-to-use consumer camcorders and asked to “teach the researchers” about their experience by making visual narratives—“video diaries” of their everyday lives. Researchers transcribe the visual narratives into

dual-stream objective and subjective logs of the video data. Researchers import the logs and linked video into qualitative analysis software and parallel code the data. Using grounded theory, researchers from multiple disciplines analyze coded data, triangulate, cross-validate, and synergistically add dimension to findings.

Although the illustrative examples in this entry are from health research, VIA can be used to investigate many aspects of human experience. The purpose of VIA is to investigate human experience from the perspective of the experiencer. A video camera (without a crew) in a study participant’s daily living environment presents a unique opportunity for direct data collection. In the participant’s hands, the camera yields insight on the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that color and control human experience. These data of direct human experience, when analyzed by a synergistic interdisciplinary team, yield a multidimensional understanding of what it means to be human.

Data Collection

Traditionally, research takes an “etic” perspective of researchers observing participants, but VIA, based on the premise that those who experience are the experts on that experience, takes the “emic” perspective of research participants on themselves. Based predominantly in visual anthropology, the study of humans and their behavior through images of and/or created by the people being studied, VIA incorporates elements of participant observation, narrative and discourse analysis, and ethnography. Photography and motion pictures have long been used by outside observers to document people and their lives. Recent improvement, miniaturization, and simplification of imaging technology have created the opportunity to study human experience “from the inside out” by placing video cameras in the hands of research participants and asking them to show their own experiences. VIA participants produce raw, naive visual narratives of variable production quality but containing firsthand renderings of human experience, perceptions, and behaviors. Objective information about participants’ experiences captured in the visual narratives is enriched by the subjective dimension of their firsthand perspectives.

Participants who meet inclusion criteria for a study give consent and are enrolled, followed by an introduction to the camcorder and study requirements. Informed consent for VIA is a two-stage process.

First, before taping, participants' consent only allows researchers to view the videos. Second, after completion, participants are provided with copies of their videos and asked whether they will release any or all of their visual narratives to the researchers for use in presentations, publications, and/or broadcasts.

To obtain audiovisual data that are the truest possible representation of participants' perspectives on their lives and living environments, researchers teach each participant only the mechanics of operating a camcorder—avoiding filmmaking techniques or conventions of visual style—so as to maintain the direct nature of their visual documentation. Provided with unlimited recording capacity, VIA participants are asked to “teach us about your experience” by carrying the camcorders and documenting their day-to-day lives for 4 to 8 weeks. Their primary mandate is to tell their life stories in their own ways, showing and telling the aspects that best reveal their experiences. Video was chosen because children and adolescents have been brought up with television and may have more ease and fluency in relating personal narratives, particularly sensitive material, in an audiovisual mode rather than a verbal or written mode. However, cultural expectations that photography is reserved for documentation of special events often need to be overcome because the material of interest is everyday behavior. To acquire documentation of common daily activities that can be compared across participants, researchers provide VIA participants with a list of standardized subjects of interest to augment their self-directed visual narratives. Researchers ask participants to record tours of their homes and neighborhoods, where they go and what they do from awakening until bedtime, their schools or jobs, their daily self-care, and their interactions with others. VIA participants interview family members and friends for their perspectives on the participants, their social worlds, and their interpersonal relationships. To reveal elements of their inner lives, participants are encouraged to speak directly to their camcorders each day as if they were writing in diaries, relating their experiences and responses, thoughts, and feelings about those events. When both the participants and the research team believe that the visual narratives are complete, the video equipment and all recordings are returned to the researchers.

Data Analysis

Critical to establishing VIA as a method of inquiry that generates valid and reliable findings has been the



Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment in the Field. A VIA participant videotapes a personal monologue.

Source: Photo by Mark Ostow; used by permission.

development of a rigorous structure for analyzing participants' audiovisual documentation of experience. Because participants direct their own visual narratives, VIA data are often unexpected and best analyzed using qualitative methods. VIA uses a multidisciplinary research team to optimize the analyses of these complex data on human experiences. For health research, this team includes the disciplines of medicine, public health, social work, psychology, and anthropology. Because researchers bring the different perspectives of their disciplines to the analysis, VIA data must be organized so that both the original video and the analyses done by other researchers can be accessed, displayed, and structured. VIA analysis generates a single multidimensional document that evolves through repeated analyses and is enriched by combining observations from different theoretical perspectives.

Because existing qualitative analysis software packages have focused on textual analysis, the VIA visual narratives are logged in a process similar to transcribing verbal data collected through interviews or focus groups, with attention paid to both visual and audio content. Video recorded by participants whose

experiences are being studied is much more complex than audiorecordings of participants responding to a researcher's questions. What participants choose to show on-screen and, perhaps just as important, what they choose not to show on-screen add to and synergize with the verbal content to illustrate the nature of the participants' experiences.

For analysis, the original video is dubbed to tape or downloaded to a digital file, maintaining unique numeric identifiers (video timecode) so that researchers can locate any point in the visual narrative and communicate clearly about specific sections of data. Trained loggers first watch each segment of the visual narrative in "real time" to get a sense of the story it tells and the people who tell it. Oriented by the first-pass viewing, the logger reviews the visual narrative, often requiring several passes to log the audio and visual components in detail. Computerized logs are created, designating objective and subjective content of the scene as well as other relevant details, including the date and time the video was shot, the timecode of the scene, and whether the scene was photographed by the participant, by someone else, or from a fixed camera.

The heart of the log is the objective and subjective content of the visual narrative. Objective notes document audible or visible information that is concrete and emotionally neutral and on which most observers would agree—descriptions of participants' appearance and behaviors, where they are, and with whom they interact. Dialogue is transcribed. Subjective notes record loggers' responsive interpretations of the emotional tone or psychosocial dynamics of the scene. Designed to capture the multifaceted nature of human experience, subjective observations of the visual narratives will necessarily vary. As a means of checking for accurate categorization of objective and subjective data, ensuring reliability, and enriching the subjective assessments, each visual narrative is logged at least twice, ideally by loggers of different genders, ages, ethnicities, and life experiences.

The logs and associated video are imported into qualitative analysis software, linked to the original audiovisual data, and coded inductively using the techniques of grounded theory. As coding proceeds, codes and emerging themes are presented to the multidisciplinary research team for discussion, clarification, consolidation, and refinement. Coding proceeds until saturation occurs and all video is coded by two or more coders in parallel. Once the initial code assignment is complete, codes can be queried across the visual

narrative data for similarities, differences, overlap, and/or proximity. As themes and their interrelationships are developed in research team meetings, codes are structured into groups for conceptual model building. Throughout this process, annotations are attached to the data and an ongoing project log is kept to document the evolution of analysis strategy and communicate it among multiple researchers.

Using the coded logs as a map to the data, researchers evaluate the VIA visual narratives from each of their disciplinary perspectives, meeting to discuss and triangulate their developing analyses. The VIA data are compared with, located, and validated against any other qualitative or quantitative data that may have been collected for a particular study. Overarching themes that cross data and disciplines are identified, and areas of consonance and dissonance are noted.

Michael Rich

See also Film and Video in Qualitative Research; Grounded Theory; Life Stories; Visual Narrative Inquiry

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VIDEORECORDING

Videorecording is a qualitative research method that involves capturing moving images, with or without sound, to study the visual details of interaction and

behavior. Video research is becoming more commonplace, in part because of the availability of easy-to-use, relatively inexpensive technologies that can be readily manipulated by researchers or study participants with a minimum of training. It has the advantage of offering a permanent source of complex data that can be reviewed repeatedly. Despite its advantages, videorecording presents some unique practical, analytical, and ethical challenges to qualitative researchers.

There are two distinct approaches to videorecording in qualitative research: researcher-generated and participant-generated recordings. In researcher-generated recording, the researcher chooses the subject and content of the video. Projects that use researcher-generated recordings are often concerned with capturing situated social activity in a natural setting such as a classroom, health care environment, or community space. In participant-generated recording, research participants either directly control the camera or make the primary choices of what is to be filmed. For example, "video diaries" may be used to illuminate participants' identities or lifeworlds. "Photo-voice" is another technique whereby participants created visual images that outline their stories for the purpose of emancipatory public education. Researcher- and participant-generated video records can also be combined in a single study according to what types of data best address the study purposes.

Videorecording has the ability to capture the complexity and minutiae of social interaction and behavior that would not be possible with observation alone. Video records provide a dense source of data that includes the fine details of conduct, talk, interaction, and comportment as well as the features of place, bodily adornment, and material objects. Permanence provides an advantage over observation by allowing repeated cycles of analysis in which the researcher can attend to different information over time. This allows scrutiny of different aspects of the data at different times and in different ways (e.g., freeze frame, slow motion) and permits repeated analysis by multiple reviewers. Furthermore, videorecordings can be reviewed by study participants to elicit their responses, producing an additional source of data to increase the scope of interpretation of the study phenomenon.

Although videorecording offers a source of rich and complex data, it should be borne in mind that the video record is not a "direct" representation of the object of study. The camera converts and flattens images, and choices are made about what lies in and outside the frame. There is no sense of the social context beyond

what is recorded. If videorecording is the only method used, there is often no opportunity to question participants or test emerging theories as a participant in the activity. To address these issues, a combination of video and other techniques is often fruitful.

The influence of the camera on the phenomenon being researched is a subject of ongoing debate. On the one hand, it is assumed that the method has little impact on what people do or say; on the other hand, it is asserted that the camera has a distorting effect on the social "reality" under investigation. A third position suggests that both viewpoints are problematic and that any attempt to separate the research process from the data comes at the expense of exploring how the process constitutes the data. Thus, as with other forms of data generated within a research project, how persons present themselves for the camera can be viewed as reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions that provide a resource for analysis.

There are numerous technical and practical considerations associated with digital videorecording. Because digital video files are large, a computer with significant storage capacity that can also handle the fast transfer rates for uploading, copying, and transferring files is required. Video editing software is needed to manage, sort, and/or manipulate the data for presentation. If qualitative software is used, it will need to handle video files in a method conducive to the analysis plan. Other technical decisions will affect the quality of picture and sound at the time of taping and will determine how data can be compressed and backed up.

The analysis of video data often involves using transcription and/or logging procedures to convert images into word-based texts. However, the digitization of both audio and video data, along with the increased sophistication of qualitative software programs, has made direct coding of video segments both possible and increasingly practical. Presentation of video data is often challenging because it does not lend itself well to print media such as journals and books. Hypertext and hypermedia increasingly provide alternative methods for presenting findings by allowing readers to view an image, a video clip, an audio clip, or other information linked to the main text of an electronic article or other work. Online journals are increasingly accommodating hypermedia or visual papers, and interactive CDs or DVDs can accompany or replace books and monographs.

Videorecording raises unique ethical issues related to maintaining participant privacy and confidentiality

when video data are included in research presentations. Even without direct representations of participants' images, scenes of settings, homes, or neighborhoods can compromise anonymity. This can be addressed through highly selective use of images or by altering the digital file to obscure identifying information. Alternatively, the researcher may choose not to share the images outside of the research team and limit the presentation of data to anonymized verbal descriptions. The issue of whether or not participants want their video records to remain anonymous must also be considered because this might actually be contrary to the goals of the project. In participatory and emancipatory research, for example, participants may reject the role of anonymous voice and wish to have their contributions acknowledged. These options and their consequences must first be discussed carefully with participants and vetted through institutional research ethics review.

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See also Visual Data; Visual Ethnography; Visual Narrative Inquiry

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VIGNETTES

Vignettes comprise stimuli that selectively portray elements of reality to which research participants are invited to respond. Vignettes have a role across the

qualitative–quantitative spectrum and are especially valuable in exploring perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in qualitative research. This entry covers key methodological issues surrounding different types of vignettes and participants' responses to vignette-based questioning.

Types of Vignettes

Vignettes can take a range of written, audio, and visual forms. Written text includes short scenarios and extracts from literature and newspapers. Audio vignettes include spoken narratives, music, songs, and sounds. Photography, painting, and line drawing have been used as visual vignettes. Audiovisual vignettes can include films and live performed acts.

The type of vignette used will be influenced by a combination of the research aims and questions, the nature of the research topics, and the participants involved. In qualitative research, vignettes are commonly embedded within interviews and group discussions.

The content of vignettes can be static or moving. A static vignette represents a one-off unlinked stimulus such as a short descriptive scenario. When a series of static vignettes are used, they risk a carryover effect from one vignette to another. The carryover effect refers to participants drawing from the context of earlier vignettes to aid interpretation of later scenarios. Static vignettes have also been criticized because participants may lose interest and tire of responding, often repetitively, to a number of unlinked scenarios. However, static vignettes are beneficial in their ability to cover a wide topic area and can also act as break-points when used alongside other methods.

Moving vignettes typically include extended scenarios such as narratives and film extracts. Longer vignettes can help to keep people interested during research encounters and may also save time in that contextual material need not be supplied for each new scenario. Like static vignettes, moving scenarios also risk careless responses when participants lose interest over time. Moving vignettes usually see the vignette progressing with questioning interspersed between scenarios. There is a risk that participants may become concerned with their answers, for example, if a story takes an unanticipated turn. Therefore, researchers should emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers when responding to vignettes.

It is common practice to use vignettes to be relevant and real to participants' own lives. Such vignettes have been based on previous research findings and

An Example of the Vignette Approach

As an illustration of one application of the vignette approach, consider Rhidian Hughes's research exploring drug injectors' infection risk behavior. Previous research has demonstrated drug injectors' risk behavior to be heavily influenced by situated contexts. Vignettes were used to capture, albeit partially, some of these situations. A short storybook vignette was created, narrating risk behavior scenarios confronting hypothetical drug injectors. The vocabulary and wording in the vignette aimed to be simple and used words familiar to drug injectors in England but avoided those that could cause offense. Drug injectors' overall responses to the vignette were embedded within an in-depth interview guide.

The vignette follows the lives and experiences of fictional characters as they move inside and outside prison. The researcher read the story aloud, with time given afterward to allow participants to digest information, clarify points, and think through their answers.

The storybook shown below (approximately 1,000 words) posed questions in the text for participants, and the questions were asked verbally by the researcher. As a result, a periodic discussion of issues arose.

Ben has been injecting scag (heroin) for three years. His girlfriend Jo hates the thought of Ben injecting, and he is now on a methadone [a prescribed substitute drug] script [prescription]. They are serious about each other and making plans to move in together. Ben has shared works [injecting equipment] in the past.

Ben and Jo don't want children. When they go to bed together and have sex, what protection, if any, do you think they will use?

Jo and Ben used condoms when they first started to sleep together, but now Jo takes the contraceptive pill.

One day Ben bumps into his good friend Paul. They go for a drink, and Paul suggests that they get money together to score some scag. Later they break into a house and sell the stolen stuff to one of Paul's friends.

By the time they find a dealer and get back to Paul's flat, it is past midnight. After all their efforts, they are both dying for a hit [injection of heroin]. Paul tells Ben that he doesn't have any clean works left, and they don't know of anyone nearby who might have some spare works.

What do you think would realistically happen in this situation?

Paul lent Ben his works that time after they had been cleaned with bleach and water.

The next time Ben and Paul get together they go into a department store and steal some clothes to sell, but just as they are leaving Ben gets caught by the security guard. Paul manages to run free.

Ben gets caught for this and other offences, and the judge puts him away for two years. Inside prison he's off his methadone and isn't feeling too good for lack of it. He tells this to one of the men on his floor, who introduces him to a group of men. That night before lights out they offer Ben some scag and a loan of the works that are being shared in the toilets.

What do you think would realistically happen in this situation?

Ben actually borrows the works and gives them a rinse with cold water in the sink before injecting.

Things get pretty desperate for Ben in prison, and he starts to inject whenever he can. He has sorted out a supply of scag. A new lad on the wing called Pete offers him a loan of his works in exchange for a wash out [residue drugs in a filter can be reheated to produce a further weaker injection].

What do you think will happen?

Ben accepts the offer and Pete has a wash out.

As the story progressed, Hughes observed that drug injectors related well to the vignette; some enjoyed the story and felt confident to identify possible outcomes for the vignette characters. Furthermore, participants drew from a range of perspectives in responding, including those of the vignette characters, their peers, and themselves.

constructed in collaboration with professionals and participant target groups. However, vignettes do not always require participants to have in-depth knowledge of the research topic, and some studies have constructed unrealistic vignettes to understand how individuals *might* behave.

Responses to Vignettes

There are a number of perspectives participants can be invited to adopt when responding to vignettes.

Participants may respond from the points of view of the vignette characters, their peers, and people more generally, or they may respond from their own personal viewpoints. A combination of perspectives may also be sought. The perspectives chosen will depend on research requirements. Researchers need to be clear as to what type of response they want to obtain.

Although vignettes do not necessarily require participants to be familiar with the situations depicted, when inviting people to adopt an informant's role (i.e., answering from a third-person perspective), it

becomes necessary to closely match the stimulus to the target participant group so as to minimize response difficulties. Using participants as informants and gathering responses from a third-person perspective provide an immediate distancing effect that can be beneficial when exploring potentially sensitive topics. The approach may also help to minimize socially desirable reporting patterns. Researchers may then wish to build carefully on these third-person responses to probe directly into participants' own lives.

Vignettes may try to uncover how participants themselves would react to the presented scenarios. However, there are important differences between what participants consider should be a response in the vignettes and what they would likely do themselves. Exploring these differences may help to reduce socially desirable patterns of responding.

The difference between the "vignette world" and the "real world" is one of the key criticisms leveled at the approach. Vignette scenarios require selective attention and necessarily omit the wide spectrum of issues that people face and respond to in their everyday lives. Therefore, vignettes are criticized for oversimplifying their presentations of the real world and producing unrealistic results. Vignettes are also criticized because researchers might not be able to distinguish what stimuli and assumptions trigger certain responses.

Different vignette types have also been subject to debate about the level of interpretational demand required of participants. Some researchers favor complex media (e.g., video) over simpler forms (e.g., written text). Arguably, lower interpretational demands may mean that less realistic results are obtained. However, the selectivity of vignettes in terms of both their representation of the real world and interpretation demands on participants can be harnessed as one of the valuable features of the approach. Vignettes cannot contain all of the necessary information that participants may wish to draw on in responding to vignettes because, ultimately, the context vignettes portray is selective. The very selectivity of vignettes can provide a focus for participants and help to clarify principles and concepts under study. Simplified stimuli can help to disentangle the complexities and conflicts present in everyday life.

It is important for researchers to consider the perspectives from which participants respond to vignettes and how vignette-generated data are generalizable, if at all, outside the context of the stimuli material presented. When vignette-generated data are congruent

with data obtained from other sources in the study or the wider literature, boundaries between data obtained from vignette responses and real-life situation responses may tentatively be collapsed.

Rhidian Hughes

See also Projective Techniques; Triangulation

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VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The term *virtual community* is used in three broad senses: to refer to (1) a group of people who associate themselves over time with a computer-mediated environment, with emphasis on the social behavior of the group; (2) the phenomenon of online group formation, typically in light of the historical and theoretical implications of the terms *virtual* and *community*; and (3) the technological environment (e.g., listserv, chat room, web-based environment) that facilitates and potentially shapes the formation and activity of online groups. The first sense is most common in social science research, the second in humanities research, and the third in technology-focused research and design.

The possibility of virtual communities was first envisioned during the 1960s by J. C. R. Licklider as a natural outgrowth of computer networking. The concept was popularized by Howard Rheingold in writing about his experiences on the WELL bulletin board

system during the early 1990s. Scholarship problematizing the concept soon followed. One concern was that “community” traditionally is based on geographic location, which is often irrelevant in online groups. Another was that traditional notions of community are themselves idealized and that comparisons between online and offline communities create artificial dichotomies (e.g., offline communities are deep-rooted and close-knit, whereas online communities are superficial and fragmented). Moreover, because the word *community* is value laden, having positive connotations of cohesion and reciprocal support, it is often used aspirationally to refer to desired outcomes or properties of online groups regardless of whether community characteristics are objectively present. As a consequence, some researchers avoid using the term *virtual community* and instead refer to (members of) *online forums*, *online groups*, or *online social spaces*. When the intention is to highlight the connections among individuals who make up a group, sometimes the term *social network* is also used.

Other researchers have sought to operationalize the concept of virtual community so as to evaluate empirically the extent to which online groups are community-like. Commonly cited criteria for a virtual community include a shared reason for communicating, the existence of norms or protocols, and regular interaction of some duration that takes place over the internet through a common mechanism. Some researchers add that participants should also feel like they are part of a larger group and develop emotional attachments to others in the group, noting that noninteractive participants (“lurkers”) may also experience this subjective sense of community. Despite these efforts to bring greater precision to the use of the term *virtual community*, it has become conventional in some domains to refer to online groups as communities without further specification.

Virtual communities on the internet (VCs) can be grouped into five types: interest groups (e.g., soap opera fans), support groups (e.g., health related), task-related groups (e.g., communities of practice), geographically based groups (e.g., community networks), and commercial environments (e.g., product websites designed to encourage human–human interaction). Moreover, VCs exhibit variation within each type according to factors such as creation process, age, lifespan stage, size, leadership, geographic dispersion, cultural diversity, and variety of communication technologies available.

In addition to classifying VC types, current research is investigating knowledge sharing in VCs and how VCs develop over time. As yet, little research has addressed cross-cultural communication in VCs or VCs in which communication takes place in languages other than English.

Susan C. Herring

See also Internet in Qualitative Research; Virtual Ethnography; Virtual Interview; Virtual Research

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VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Virtual ethnography is a research approach for exploring the social interactions that take place in virtual environments. These interactions often take place on the internet in sites such as newsgroups, chat rooms, and web-based discussion forums. The notion of virtual ethnography builds on existing principles for ethnographic research that stress the immersion of the researcher in the setting for extended periods of time and the aspiration to an in-depth holistic understanding of a culture. Whereas an ethnographer would usually expect to observe ongoing social existence within a chosen field site, interacting with its inhabitants and learning about their way of life, the virtual ethnographer becomes immersed in a virtual environment, observing and interacting using media appropriate to those who use that site. In addition to occasional face-to-face meetings with informants, virtual ethnographers may use email or instant messaging for interviews, conduct textual analysis of messages, and carry out social network analysis or hyperlink analysis. This entry describes different ways of defining the field site for a virtual ethnography, and some of the practical challenges that this form of ethnography poses, before concluding with an examination of some applications of this approach.

Field Sites for Virtual Ethnography

The idea of applying ethnographic methods to the understanding of virtual environments became popular in the early days of internet research during the 1990s. Nancy Baym was particularly influential in promoting a view of online environments as potentially rich sites of social interaction. She described a newsgroup used by soap opera fans and formulated an immersive approach that approached the online venue as a cultural site that an ethnographer could set out to describe in its own right. The notion of virtual ethnography became tied quite closely to the idea of online community, with the goal of the researcher being to outline the distinctive qualities of the cultures that prevailed within particular online settings. Questions of shared norms and values, social hierarchies, common languages, and collective goods, as well as the processes through which members identify insiders and deviants, became popular topics within ethnographic approaches to online settings.

In addition to documenting distinctive features of online cultures, a further important dimension of virtual ethnography has been the development of a reflexive understanding of online experience, focusing on how presence in the virtual environment is achieved. Annette Markham wrote of her own experiences of going online and interviewing people that she encountered there, drawing heavily on a reflexive ethnographic tradition to argue that the internet could, under various circumstances, represent either a tool, a place, or a way of being. This style of ethnography focuses particularly on concerns of self, identity, and presence in the virtual environment. Many virtual ethnographers, even where they focus on documenting the culture encountered within a particular online space, draw on the experiences of the researcher as an important means of insight into the prevailing conditions that allow participants to be meaningfully present to one another.

Many virtual ethnographers have chosen particular online spaces as the field sites for their studies. Such field sites are often defined by a particular communication medium such as a Usenet newsgroup, a MUD (multiuser domain) or MOO (MUD, object oriented), a web-based discussion forum, a chat room, or a massively multiplayer online role-playing game. These technologies offer more or less clearly bounded sites of social interaction for ethnographic study. Some, such as the newsgroup, rely on asynchronous interaction, so that the ethnographer can dip in and out periodically,

whereas others consist of real-time interaction and require a more sustained or organized commitment from the ethnographer. In each case, the appropriate form and timing of engagement will be guided largely by the ethnographer's developing sense of the ways in which participants operate in that setting. Some field sites, however, are less clearly bounded, and the ethnographer will need to pay careful attention to the ways in which those sites are defined in an ongoing fashion by participants and the extent to which they draw on diverse media to sustain meaningful interactions. An online game, for example, may involve both in-game communication channels and the use of web forums, external chat rooms, websites, and email. Players may also meet face-to-face periodically or play both across geographic distance and in the closer proximity of LAN (local area network) gaming events. Therefore, it is important for a virtual ethnographer to attend to the constitution of field sites across diverse media.

The issue of online/offline connections has also preoccupied virtual ethnographers. Although early internet studies often celebrated the stand-alone nature of online culture, it has recently become more important to trace the threads that connect online life with offline contexts. Daniel Miller and Don Slater were particularly influential in promoting an approach to ethnography of the internet that focused on its embedding within particular cultural contexts. They described the internet in Trinidad, finding that users there were able to interpret the internet as a means to sustain a distinctively Trinidadian culture. This approach is also linked to the form of virtual ethnography developed by Christine Hine. Here virtual ethnography is conceived as an adaptive and connective approach that takes online sites seriously as places for social interaction but also seeks to follow the threads of meaning-making (both online and offline) through which these interactions make sense to participants. The focus is on the internet as both a cultural context and a cultural artifact that is shaped by various expectations and becomes meaningful to users in particular contexts. Virtual ethnography, in this formulation, becomes more closely allied to the emerging traditions of multisited ethnography found in anthropology. Nicole Constable developed an approach that traversed online mailing lists and web forums, as well as visiting users of these media in their homes in China, the Philippines, Russia, and the United States, in pursuit of an ethnographic understanding of correspondence marriages. Virtual ethnography has become an adaptive approach that does not always confine itself to

online sites but rather tries to take into account the diverse cultural contexts within which online interactions make sense.

Challenges of Virtual Ethnography

Virtual ethnography poses a number of practical and conceptual challenges for the researcher. Although the principles of virtual ethnography have stayed quite close to approaches developed in more conventional face-to-face settings, there have been a number of dilemmas relating to the application of these principles and some specific technical issues that the shift to different media imposes.

Lurking or Participating

The online setting can often be experienced without active participation. Many of the members of a mailing list or web forum will “lurk,” reading messages without actively participating or indeed being visible in any way to other participants. This potential to observe unobtrusively has been attractive to some ethnographers, who find in it the possibility to study a setting that is undisturbed by their own presence and interventions. However, some have questioned how far this form of passive observation can be termed an ethnography given that it lacks the engagement that is often considered necessary for ethnographers to develop in-depth understanding and to expose their developing ideas to input from other participants.

Deception and Identity Play

Some have questioned the ability of virtual ethnographers to make authoritative statements about the users of online settings. A prevailing concern that deception is common online and that many users adopt fabricated identities leads to some caution in taking statements that people make about themselves online at face value. Nonetheless, there are some indications that deception and identity play are not as common as once thought. Also, the question of how far online statements are to be trusted is not always an issue of concern if the goal is to study an online culture in its own right. Many virtual ethnographers will draw on some form of triangulation to confirm the statements of online informants through observation in different forms of interaction.

An Example of Virtual Ethnography: Online Fandom

Nancy Baym's ethnographic study of an online soap opera discussion group, *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, Fandom, and Online Community*, is often cited for its innovative qualities as one of the first efforts to take internet interactions seriously as sites for sociological interest. Baym argued that the newsgroup she studied provided an excellent site for observing practices of audiencehood beyond its significance as an example of online social practice. The study also unpacked the often glibly used notion of virtual community to explore the ways in which a virtual community, a fan community, and a community of practice coexist with and reinforce one another. Baym carried out her ethnographic work as an active member of the group in which she was at first a full participant before adopting it as an ethnographic field site. As an ethnographer, she conducted online interviews and surveys, carried out textual analysis of threads of discussion, and was also informed by in-depth knowledge of the soap opera that participants in the group discussed. Although the study was contained largely within the boundaries of a newsgroup, it needed to attend to the meaning-making that participants performed through their references to the soap opera and to the everyday lives within which their contributions took place.

Source: For more information on this topic, see Baym, N. (2000). *Tune in, log on: Soaps, fandom, and online community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Prerequisites for Immersion in Online Environments

A virtual ethnographer needs to adopt an appropriate persona to be able to interact effectively in an online environment and to present himself or herself to the other participants in these interactions. This can entail consideration of appropriate self-presentation, including choice of signature, adoption of an appropriate avatar, and (sometimes) preparation of a website giving details about the researcher and the research project. In some environments, the question of skills becomes particularly significant, most notably in gaming environments where a virtual ethnographer may need to accrue an appropriate skill level or amount of credits so as to maintain interactions with potential informants. Choice of character can also be crucial in shaping the interactions that can be experienced.

Ethics, Informed Consent, and Trust

The question of ethics and informed consent has been particularly troubled in virtual ethnography, largely because of the possibility of lurking unannounced. In any face-to-face setting, there is a danger that participants will forget about the presence and role of an ethnographer over time even where consent has been negotiated. In a virtual environment, however, there appears to be a greater concern that an ethnographer will exploit the opportunity to lurk and observe interactions that participants might otherwise wish to avoid having observed. It might be assumed that internet interactions are public, but this does not always accord with the practices and expectations of participants. The level of concern about this issue varies depending on the sensitivity of the topic, the vulnerability of participants, and participants' expectations about the level of privacy of their interactions. Nonetheless, deliberate deception and covert ethnography are potentially as problematic in online ethnography as in face-to-face settings. Virtual ethnographers may also need to pay particular attention to developing trust with online informants, who may themselves expect to be able to triangulate information on the identity of ethnographers who approach them via websites, guarantees from gatekeepers, or evidence of institutional affiliation.

Applications of Virtual Ethnography

Some modes of virtual ethnography are focused on understanding the online experience in its own right. This approach to virtual ethnography may place particular stress on the relationship between technological affordances and the interpretations users place on them to create distinctive cultures or on the offline cultural contexts that create and sustain particular online formations. Ethnography has been a particularly significant strand of internet research, focusing as it does on the social reality of the online experience and forming a foil to preceding frameworks that stressed the constraints of online interaction. Ethnographers of the virtual environment were able to demonstrate that rich and complex social formations were possible online and that people adapted to and worked around the features of the technology rather than being inherently constrained by them.

In addition to its contribution to understanding online interactions in themselves, virtual ethnography offers a means to explore diverse other important social phenomena as they are manifested in the online environment.

The internet is populated by miscellaneous groups and sets of interests that make visible many issues of concern for social researchers. Virtual ethnography can be used as an approach to explore the ways in which these issues are manifested and undergo transformation on the internet. Fields as diverse as health studies, deviance and social control, ethnicity and gender studies, organizational culture, and media studies find in the internet a potential site to study rich and naturally occurring social interactions related to their concerns. Virtual ethnography offers a means to develop in-depth understanding and detailed descriptions of these cultural domains.

Christine M. Hine

See also Ethnography; Internet in Qualitative Research; Virtual Community; Virtual Research

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VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

A virtual interview is any form of interview that uses information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as email, discussion board, and real-time chat. It is a specific form of virtual research that enables researchers to use the immediacy of the internet to access participants and gather data for qualitative research investigations. Virtual communication has become one of the main forms of human engagement and is used in the transmission and exchange of ideas, experience, and attitudes. It follows that ICTs provide unique and inventive opportunities for qualitative researchers.

The types of virtual interviews include structured unstructured, and semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and group interviews. Each follows the same logic in terms of suitability of method for types of data collected. For example, structured

interviews can be used for large data collection on attitudes; focus group interviews for an in-depth understanding of attitudes, perceptions, and opinions as well as for evaluation purposes; and in-depth interviews for accessing experiential data. To this extent, each technique can be targeted and directed at specific individuals or interest groups, or it can be circulated more broadly to assess attitudinal responses.

One-on-one real-time virtual interviews provide focused and spontaneous responses, as do synchronous virtual focus group interviews. The former aim to closely replicate the discursive nature of face-to-face interviews, whereas the latter can be “fast and furious” so that threads may be difficult to follow with multiple participants responding simultaneously, thereby disrupting the sequential nature of interaction. Asynchronous responses, on the other hand, provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own responses and those of others. This enables participants to monitor what information they are prepared to share, and this is ethically

important when discussing sensitive issues. In the virtual setting, participants have a choice of responding to a question or withholding a response, thereby providing a noncoercive discursive environment. With asynchronous virtual interviews, the ongoing discussion is structured by specific questions during a set period of time (usually several days to a week).

One main difference between face-to-face and virtual interviews is the somewhat changed role of the interviewer or moderator. The interviewer must construct the environment for discussion and explicitly set the rules of engagement prior to the interview because the interviewer’s role is less interventionist and less directive than in conventional interviews. Virtual listening cues, the insertion of probes, and additional questions need to be developed both to enhance the steering role of the interviewer and to replace visual nonverbal cues, such as nods and facial expressions, of the face-to-face interviewer.

Lyn Turney

Research Studies Using Virtual Focus Groups

Virtual methods can be considered when designing studies that involve groups or individuals who are, for whatever reason, hesitant or unable to participate in face-to-face interviews. In two separate studies, researchers used virtual focus groups (alongside face-to-face groups) in studies of public attitudes to new biotechnologies. They wanted to include participants who had a stake or special interest in either DNA paternity testing or stem cell research; the participants’ opinions were integral to the studies. Accordingly, for the paternity testing study, a group of fathers’ rights leaders, who advocate unrestricted and direct access to paternity testing, was interviewed online. Men who were involved in fathers’ rights groups were generally unprepared to speak to outsiders but actively participated in a virtual group, providing an in-depth understanding of their attitudes, as well as their constituents’ attitudes, toward paternity testing. The second paternity testing group was mothers whose estranged partners had denied paternity. The mothers and their children were compelled to undergo testing to have the fathers’ names on their children’s birth certificates and/or to meet the requirements for claiming child support payments. All of the women were single mothers with responsibilities for young babies that affected their ability to participate in a face-to-face

focus group. For the stem cell research project, the two interest groups involved were those with a particular interest in, or stance on, stem cell research. The first consisted of a religious group with strongly held views on abortion; the second was a patient group whose members had a medical condition that might be helped or cured by stem cell research. The latter group was interviewed only online. This patient group was people living with either Parkinson’s disease or spinal injury who were young enough to personally benefit from any promising developments in the near future. Their restricted mobility, medication, and need for care rendered it nearly impossible to meet in a face-to-face setting. Anonymity and virtual engagement were enhanced in each group by the absence of physical cues and the use of anonymizing techniques afforded by the technology itself. Virtual identities enabled participants to find commonality beyond the usual social and physical barriers to communication such as socioeconomic status, gender, age, ethnicity, and (importantly) disability status. Overall, the researchers found that virtual interviews fostered democratic participation in research, enabling inclusion of groups whose members’ pertinent views otherwise may have been overlooked.

Source: For more information on this topic, see Turney, L., & Pocknee, C. (2005). Virtual focus groups: New frontiers in research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4(2), Article 3. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4_2/HTML/turney.htm

See also Internet in Qualitative Research; Sensitive Topics; Virtual Ethnography; Virtual Research

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VIRTUAL RESEARCH

Virtual research can refer to both data collection by means of the internet and research about the internet itself. Because the latter is more about “researching the virtual” than about “virtual research” as method, this entry focuses on the internet as a tool for gathering data from participants and locating data sources for qualitative research projects.

Types of Virtual Research Methods

When the internet is used as a research tool, computer-mediated communication (CMC) drives the data-gathering process (through interviews, observational techniques, document analysis, etc.). CMC refers to a situation in which individuals communicate across a computer network. In an interview, the researcher and participant might interact over email or via real-time chat. In observational studies, the researcher might observe participants’ communication patterns in a virtual community. In document analysis, the researcher might examine the linguistic details of individuals’ web postings.

Interviews

In broad terms, two types of interviews are discussed in the virtual context: standardized (i. e., structured) and nonstandardized (i. e., semi-structured or unstructured)

interviews. In standardized online interviews, participants are asked specific questions and must answer the questions according to predetermined responses. In essence, this process resembles the administration of a questionnaire and typically lends itself to a more quantitative style of analysis and reporting. Email and web-based surveys are commonly seen as possibilities for administering this type of questionnaire. When email is used to administer a structured interview online, the survey can be sent as a text or HTML file, as an attachment, or using a survey design program. Typically, participants complete the appropriate responses and send the files back via email. Web-based surveys, where a researcher can create a survey (i.e., a structured interview) that will look the same to all participants and can be accessed via a website address (URL), are also commonly used. Once participants hit “submit” on the web survey, the data file is sent to a private location on the researcher’s server.

In nonstandardized interviews (individual and group), participants are not limited by predetermined responses. As with all interview methods, the interviews must strike a balance between the participants’ responses and the research goals so that the participants do not stray completely off-topic. With nonstandardized virtual interviews, one must again select the type of tool used to administer the interviews. Typically, this involves choosing between synchronous (e.g., videoconferencing) and asynchronous (e.g., email) modes of communication, with synchronous tools providing more flexibility for negotiating responses and gaining immediate clarification from respondents.

Observational Studies

Observational methods are often used in virtual environments because researchers are less reliant on retrospective accounts from participants and can watch events unfold. Such studies can use participant observation (i.e., researchers engage in the community they are studying) or nonparticipant observation (i.e., researchers observe the community but are not active participants) to examine individuals’ interactions in virtual spaces. As studies of virtual communities become more common, so too do observational studies in virtual environments. Observational studies may examine the linguistic structures present in virtual communities, or they may examine the cultures

that exist in these virtual communities. In all cases, the researcher must select a “space” in which to conduct the research (e.g., a public newsgroup that examines global warming).

Document Analysis

Personal documents (both solicited and unsolicited) are often considered as an optimal means for understanding how individuals experience life events. These documents may take the form of autobiographies, journals, or diaries. Although qualitative researchers have traditionally used hardcopy versions of these texts, online versions are becoming increasingly popular. This shift to online versions of these personal documents may stem in part from the fact that the internet enables researchers to access a wider array of participants from around the globe, enhancing the scope of a study on a particular phenomenon; however, another reason for the shift is the proliferation of personal web postings (e.g., blogs) on a variety of topics. Online data sources offer a built-in archiving structure as the information is collected in electronic form. Furthermore, researchers do not need to be concerned about the legibility of participants’ handwriting. Online sources may include text, video, audio, and a range of other document forms that can extend qualitative analysis of particular phenomena. For participants, writing online can be less time-intensive than writing by hand, and it is easier to send data to researchers. However, a couple of caveats exist. Participants might not write as much in online situations (e.g., due to eye strain), and if they are providing written diaries, the results may be less longitudinal in nature because participants might not link current entries to those posted previously.

Ethics

All three methods for conducting virtual research must be considered in the context of evolving ethical issues as they apply to online information processing, informed consent, confidentiality, and etiquette. As in face-to-face research, participants’ rights are central to the design of research projects in virtual contexts. For example, any data collected should be protected in such a way that they are safeguarded against alteration, unauthorized access, or loss. When conducting

research in private virtual environments, such as members-only discussion groups, researchers may need permission from a list owner and/or list members to gather data. However, researchers may be able to use other data sources (e.g., information posted to publicly available websites) without needing to complete an ethics review. Researchers should consult the guidelines developed by their own institutional review boards, along with other texts, for guidance on the ethical issues relevant to their particular research projects.

When one considers informed consent, the issues will differ slightly depending on the research context (e.g., email, chat). In an email study, consent may be completed *de facto* by participation in the study (e.g., when participants read the consent statement on the top of a questionnaire and submit it via a web form), or the researcher may first need to email the consent form to participants and have them return it via email (or by fax if a signature is required). In the context of a real-time chat environment, participants could be guided to a research website to read the consent form and decide whether they want to participate in discussions. When researchers “lurk” on mailing lists and newsgroups (i.e., read postings without making their presence known), consent may depend on the nature of the group (public vs. private) and other factors particular to the design of the study. As in other qualitative studies, parental consent may be required in projects involving children; however, this may be more complicated in a virtual environment where individuals may pretend to be older (or younger) in age to participate in a study.

Confidentiality also becomes more complex in online environments. Using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity, for example, might not be enough; researchers might need to strip additional data (e.g., email addresses, user login names) or take other steps to ensure that participants’ information remains anonymous. In the context of chat and online communities, researchers must take additional steps to protect the identities of participants—similar to the issues raised with face-to-face focus group methods. In other cases, participants may wish to be identified (rather than anonymized) in research publications. However, in some cases, even researchers might never know participants’ true identities.

Some elements of “netiquette” (the rules of etiquette used on the internet) also have implications

for the ethical treatment of participants in online studies. Maintaining professionalism and being clear about intended meanings may be more difficult in an online research setting than in a face-to-face one. For example, when researchers initially contact participants, it may be inappropriate to use common online conventions such as emoticons. In a real-time chat context, researchers should not be so intrusive as to continually send instant messages to participants if they do not answer initially. When working with mailing lists or newsgroups, researchers should ensure that they provide context for the messages to which they are replying, that they do not “flame” or humiliate participants, and that they do not send private messages to a public list.

Advantages of Using the Internet to Collect Data

There are many advantages to using the internet as a data-gathering tool. First, the online environment allows researchers to contact potential participants around the globe, including areas that are difficult to access in person. The internet can facilitate discussions with hard-to-reach individuals (e.g., shift workers) and provide access to locations that are traditionally closed to researchers or dangerous to access. Participants may also be more willing to discuss sensitive issues because the context can feel more anonymous than in face-to-face communication. CMC also provides access to communities that are entirely web based such as support groups and virtual playgrounds. The financial and time-related costs of conducting research online (e.g., compared with physical travel) can also be quite reasonable. Because the data are already in electronic form, the costs of transcription, recording equipment, and other data collection elements can be reduced significantly.

From participants' points of view, it is often easier to find an internet connection where they can complete the research than to get to a physical location of the researcher's choosing. Moreover, it can also be easier to complete the research tasks in discrete sessions if other responsibilities (e.g., child care) interrupt the research. Some participants may also feel safer completing the research project in an environment that is familiar to them such as their home offices.

Challenges in Using the Internet to Collect Data

Despite these advantages, numerous challenges exist in conducting virtual research. Typically, internet communication is text based, thereby reducing researchers' capacity to interpret nonverbal communication. This can make data analysis and interpretation much more difficult. Researchers may need to consider real-time video or other data collection tools to supplement textual documents obtained via the internet. Also, individuals can easily misrepresent themselves in the virtual context, and this can affect the trustworthiness of the data gathered.

More pragmatically, researchers need appropriate technical expertise to gather data in this way. It can also be challenging to recruit participants without being viewed as a source of spam when requests for participation are sent across newsgroups or in bulk emails. Even locating email addresses for potential participants can be a challenge, especially as individuals and organizations attempt to block spam and other unsolicited messages. Some potential participants might not want to engage in an online study, or they may be unable to participate as a result of limited skills in using computer technology. Clarifying instructions for research participation may be more difficult in a virtual environment than when the researcher and participant are face-to-face. With longitudinal studies, there is a potential loss of participants who simply disappear from the online environment (e.g., when they lose internet access or do not update their contact information). In all projects, it is also important to recognize the impact of the “digital divide”—the fact that geography, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, and other factors can leave some individuals without access to computer technology.

As internet tools become more sophisticated, and as the number of internet users continues to increase worldwide, the prevalence of (and potential for) virtual research will continue to grow. Qualitative researchers will need to rise to the challenges that exist in conducting this type of research while capitalizing on the advantages.

Kristie Saumure and Lisa M. Given

See also Internet in Qualitative Research; Virtual Community; Virtual Ethnography; Virtual Interview

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VISUAL DATA

A liberal definition of visual data would need to include any empirical material perceivable through the sense of sight. However, such a definition would help little because it would include entities as diverse as social behavior in an experimental laboratory, checkmarks on a questionnaire, interaction in naturalistic settings, and geophysical elements of landscape. Therefore, a stricter definition of visual data that simply includes iconic objects and the symbolic meanings that people attach to these is preferable. To clearly understand the convenience of such a definition, it is important to begin with the concept of “icon.”

American semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce proposed that signs ought to be divided into three main categories: indexes, icons, and symbols. Indexes refer to relationships based on natural causation (e.g., smoke is indexical of fire, lighting is indexical of stormy weather). Symbols are what we commonly use in everyday life to refer to abstract meaning (e.g., words, numbers). Icons are those signs that embody whatever they represent (e.g., a passport picture represents a person’s face, a realist painting of landscape signifies the landscape it portrays, a sketch drawing of a male figure on a public wash-room door refers to a man). Most methods of

visual data analysis deal with iconic signs—still or moving pictures (e.g., advertisements, videos, film), drawings, paintings, maps, and other images. Although for the most part analysis of visual data is conducted on such signs, visual research is also conducted on public behavior (especially nonverbal interaction), material culture, landscape, and the human body and its adornments.

Several qualitative methods are available for the analysis of visual data, including but not limited to the content analysis of visual images, visual ethnography, historical comparative analysis, semiotics, iconography, and social semiotics. The most common examples of visual data in the research literature are those contained in Erving Goffman’s book *Gender Advertisements* and in Roland Barthes’s book *Mythologies*. *Gender Advertisements* featured a collection of advertising images selected from various popular media and accompanied by ethnographic-like reflections on the nature of images as expressions and evidence about complex social realities. Photographs here are studied as statements about social ceremonies—the ceremony of advertising and the iconic ceremony of social portraiture, that is, society’s ways of expressing



Ferry-Boating or Theatre-Going? A visual representation of the gazing aspects of mobility.

Source: Photo by Phillip Vannini; used by permission.

cultural rituals and beliefs visually. Taking a less ethnographic and more critical stance, *Mythologies* instead stands as one of the classics of postmodern visual culture—a culture revolving around the role of ideology or myth. Images tend to be interpreted as natural expressions of the status quo—of taken-for-granted natural realities—because they are seemingly unable to lie. Popular expressions such as “you need to see it to believe it” and “a picture is worth a thousand words” express this belief well. Yet it is precisely because of the alleged “natural” correspondence between an icon and its referent—in other words, between a picture and that which it represents—that visual images are particularly insidious, according to Barthes.

Phillip Vannini

See also Visual Data Displays; Visual Ethnography; Visual Narrative Inquiry; Visual Research

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VISUAL DATA DISPLAYS

Visual data displays include tables, figures, and other graphic presentations that assist readers in gaining insights into decisions that were made during the course of a research project. These visual data displays reveal the processes and methods that were used in data collection and analysis, and they contribute significantly to the credibility of the research. This entry addresses some of the strategies that have been employed for assessing the methodological rigor and analytic defensibility of qualitative research. As used here, rigor is defined as the attempt to make data and explanatory schemes as public and replicable as possible.

Background

Criticism from both inside and outside sources, as well as the proliferation of qualitative methods in educational research, has led to considerable controversy about standards for the design and conduct of qualitative research. Discussions regarding these standards

have failed to address one very important dilemma—questions concerning the credibility and status of qualitative inquiry as related to the privatization of this type of analysis. In short, the basic premise involves how researchers account for and disclose their approach to all aspects of the research process. Central to this premise are the core elements of classical science—replicability and refutability.

Three observations form the basis for this call for public disclosure of decisions made during the conduct of research. First, what exactly does it mean when a researcher writes that “themes emerged”? Readers are expected to take the word of the researcher that he or she did a credible job in data analysis—that the themes that were developed and reported actually have some congruence (verisimilitude) with the reality of the phenomenon studied. Typically, little if any evidence is provided for readers to assess the development of the findings that are offered.

Second, although triangulation, member checks, and other qualitative techniques are mentioned frequently in design or methods sections of research articles, rarely is there evidence of exactly how these were achieved. They are invoked as if magical incantations, and readers must simply believe and trust the researcher—a leap of faith that is sometimes hard to accomplish. Many qualitative researchers will note that they used triangulation to increase the reliability of their research findings. Unfortunately, usually little if any evidence of this is found in the data analysis presented. Results of member checks are rarely reported, and where multiple sources of data are used, the data that are presented do not always adequately represent all of the data sources.

Third, rarely are readers privy to the protocols that are used to collect data. For example, many authors do not provide readers with the interview questions or any hint of those questions. Typically, the analysis that is presented actually leads readers to wonder what the data collection protocols included.

These three observations have led to the conclusion that, in all the discussions of validity in qualitative research, there is one major element missing—the public disclosure of processes. One way in which to achieve this public disclosure is through the creation and inclusion of visual data displays either in the body of the research report or in an appendix. Good qualitative research shows the hand and opens the mind of the investigator to his or her readers. The

efforts to do this might not always be successful, but there should be clear paths indicating the attempt has been made.

Documentational Tables

Three dissertation studies that employed visual data displays developed by Vincent Anfara, Jr., are used to illustrate the utility of the tables presented here. These tables document the relationship between a study's research questions and data sources, the processes of theme development, and triangulation (the example provided deals with triangulation of data sources, but the same technique applies to other types of triangulation).

Conducted in middle schools, the first study (by Kathleen Roney) looked at characteristics of effective middle school teachers, the second study (by Kathleen M. Brown) focused on teaming and advisory programs in middle schools, and the third study (by Beatrice Mickey) investigated the principal as change agent and instructional leader.

Two disclaimers should be kept in mind when considering application of the approach described here. First, no claim is made that this approach ensures validity or trustworthiness. Second, the primary value of this approach rests on its potential to encourage researchers to make analytic events open to public inspection.

Data Collection: Designing Interview Questions That Address Research Questions

Research design can be defined as the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial questions that were asked. Keeping in mind that research questions provide the scaffolding for the investigation and the cornerstone for the analysis of the data, the process of forming interview questions on the basis of what truly needs to be known is a fundamental step. The following matrix (Table 1) presents readers with an excerpt of a study's three major research questions and two sub-questions that served as the foundation on which the subsequent interview questions were designed. To the right of the two research questions that are presented here are codes (e.g., P3, T5, S4) referring to specific interview questions. P3, for example, indicates the third question from the interview protocol developed for the middle school principals (the "T" refers to teachers and the "S" refers to students). Constantly revisiting the central questions that the researcher hopes to answer is helpful in establishing a base of reference for the exploratory interview questions.

Roney's multisite qualitative case study was devoted to defining the term *effective* as it relates to characteristics of middle-level teachers. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data-gathering

Table 1 Excerpt From the Table: Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>
1. What are the characteristics identified by principals, teachers, and students that middle-level teachers need to possess in order to be effective in teaching young adolescents?	P2, P3, P4, P6 T2, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10 S1, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S10, S11
2. How do teacher preparation programs help or hinder the development of middle-level teachers and their feelings of effectiveness?	P4, P5, P6, P7 T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 S4, S5, S7, S8, S9
<i>Excerpt from Interview Questions Designed for Middle School Principals</i>	
P3. How would you describe an effective middle school teacher? Are there characteristics that middle school teachers need to possess or to develop in order to be effective middle school teachers? Is there a priority order to this list?	
P4. What qualities or characteristics are lacking in the middle school teachers that apply for teaching positions? What qualities or characteristics would you like to see in the middle school teachers that you interview?	

Source: Adapted from Roney, K. (2000). *Characteristics of effective middle level teachers: A case study of principal, teacher, and student perspectives*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University.

Note: P = principal; T = teacher; S = student.

source used to help construct the participants' perspectives regarding the research questions. Because of this fact, it was imperative that the interview questions be carefully cross-referenced to the study's research questions. The researcher could not afford to conduct interviews and prepare transcriptions only to discover that the right questions were not asked. It needs to be pointed out that this type of matrix could just as easily show the relationship of other data sources (e.g., documents, observations, surveys) to the study's research questions. Using this type of matrix helps to ensure that the right questions are asked—or at least questions that will help to answer the study's main question(s).

Data Management: Conducting Data Analysis Through Code Mapping

The purpose of analysis is to bring meaning, structure, and order to data. Confronted with a mountain of impressions, documents, transcribed interviews, and fieldnotes, the qualitative researcher faces the difficult task of making sense of what has been learned. The purpose of this process is to present readers with the analytic process and salient themes. Table 2 outlines six themes that were developed as a result of the data analysis of Brown's study investigating how advisory programs either help or hinder the creation of a sense of care and community in middle schools. The following three research questions were used:

1. How do advisory programs help or hinder the creation of a sense of community and care for students and teachers?
2. How do the structural/procedural components of an advisory program hinder or enhance the creation of a sense of community?
3. What do teachers and students say is the most significant effect of advisory programs on school?

The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous, and this process of sitting down and making sense of interviews and fieldnotes can be overwhelming. The purpose of Table 2 is to present readers with the larger consolidated picture that resulted from the reduction and interpretation of the data collected. As the reams of data were brought into manageable chunks (see first iteration in Table 2), and meanings and insights were brought to the words and acts of the participants involved, several themes

(see second iteration in Table 2) were generated. The third iteration (see Table 2) brings the analysis to a level of hypothesis or theory development. By making all aspects of this analysis process open to public inspection, a chain of evidence and an audit trail were constructed, and strengthened the dependability and reliability of this research.

Findings and Data Triangulation: Methods of Verification

A common criticism directed at qualitative research is that it fails to adhere to canons of reliability and validity. Internal validity is concerned with how trustworthy the conclusions drawn from the data are and the match of these conclusions with reality, whereas external validity refers to how well conclusions can be generalized to a larger population.

The aim of Mickey's research provided in Table 3 was to investigate the principal as change agent and instructional leader. Table 3 (an excerpt from the actual table) shows how multiple sources of data collection as well as multiple voices—the voices of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators—were used to triangulate the findings of this study. Sources of data collection consisted of individual face-to-face interviews with key informants, observations, a questionnaire that was administered to a select group of teachers, and an examination of a wide variety of documents. Table 3 shows the major findings of this study listed under five categories and the four sources of data collection. Each data source provides corroborative evidence to verify information obtained by other methods. Each finding listed in Table 3 is corroborated by at least one other source of data—in several cases, three or more sources of data. In this particular study the use of multiple sources of data collection as a form of triangulation prevented reliance exclusively on a single data collection method and, thus, aided in neutralizing any bias inherent in a particular data source. In this study, triangulation of the interviews with questionnaires, observations, and document analysis, as well as triangulation of the interviews with one another (teachers ↔ teacher leaders ↔ administrators), rendered a holistic understanding of the situation and generally converging conclusions.

Conclusion

The primary point argued in this entry is that qualitative researchers must be held accountable for their actions

Table 2 Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis

<i>Code Mapping for Advisory Programs (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)</i>			
RQ #1: A Sense of Community and Care?	RQ #2: Structural/Procedural Components and the Sense of Community?	RQ #3: The Effect of Advisory Programs on Teachers and Students?	
<i>(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)</i>			
Creating Community in a State of Bureaucracy: The Paradox of Producing and the Process of Praxis			
<i>(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)</i>			
1A. Caring Is Women's Work	2A. Battle Lines: Administrative Support Versus Teacher Resistance	3A. From Attention Provider to Detention Giver	
1B. Fear of the Affective Domain: For Some Yes and for Some No	2B. Student Mingling or Teacher Meddling?	3B. No Matter What Happens, Something Good Seems to Result!	
<i>(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)</i>			
1A. Gender Issues/Equity?	2A. Organizational Structure	3A. Discipline Problems	
1A. Nurturing Ability?	2A. Accountability?/Training?	3A. Demanding/Disruptive	
1A. Male Advisors?	2A. Support Versus Dissatisfaction	3A. Positive and Proactive	
1A. Only Women Can Care?	2A. Scheduling/Resources?	3A. Focused and Patient	
1B. Affective Versus Cognitive	2B. Student Interest/Sharing	3B. Connections/Interactions	
1B. Waste of Instructional Time	2B. Trust/Respect	3B. Feel Better/Get Help	
1B. Uncomfortable/Touchy-Feely	2B. Unreceptive/Bewildered	3B. Know Personally/Easier	
1B. Interpersonal/Family-Like	2B. Supportive Relationships	3B. Communication/Difference	
DATA	DATA	DATA	DATA

Source: Adapted from Brown, K. M. (1999). *Creating community in middle schools: Interdisciplinary teaming and advisory programs*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University.

associated with the research process such as establishing triangulation, theme development, and the relationship between research questions and data sources. The purpose of these visual data displays is to enhance the opportunity for criticism and public inspection of qualitative studies—to encourage analytic openness. Using

concepts from classical science—replicability and refutability—qualitative research should be written with enough clarity and detail so that someone else will be able to replicate the study and either find the same results or refute the findings. Although there is the danger of reducing the practice of qualitative research to

Table 3 Excerpt of Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

Major Findings	Sources of Data			
	<i>I</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>Q</i>	<i>D</i>
Theme I: Instructional Leadership				
1. The principal's strong instructional leadership had a significant influence on the success of pedagogical restructuring.	X	X	X	X
2. The principal provided the necessary resources to support change.	X	X	X	
3. Extensive professional development was a key factor for successful pedagogical restructuring.	X	X	X	X
4. Development of teacher leadership facilitated pedagogical restructuring.	X	X		

Source: Adapted from Mickey, B. (2000). *Instructional leadership: A vehicle for one urban principal to effectuate pedagogical restructuring in a middle school*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University.

Note: I = interview; O = observation; Q = questionnaire; D = documents.

technical issues to be resolved by “cookbook” methods, this is not the intention.

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.

See also Audit Trail; Data Analysis; Interview Guide; Research Question; Trustworthiness; Validity

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VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Visual ethnography uses photography, motion pictures, hypermedia, the web, interactive CDs, CD-ROMs, and virtual reality as ways of capturing and expressing perceptions and social realities of people. These varied forms of visual representation provide a means for recording, documenting, and explaining the social worlds and understandings of people. It is important, however, to emphasize that visual ethnography is not purely visual. Rather, the visual ethnographer simply pays particular attention to the visual aspects of culture as part of his or her ethnographic efforts.

Until recently, mainstream social scientists have been steadfast in their belief that the written word is a superior form for representing most types of data. Qualitative researchers use narrative accounts, interviews, fieldnotes, and the like, all of which are textually based. Quantitative researchers depend on the written word in their survey instruments to collect their data; although some researchers generate numeric data directly from observations, this approach remains quite rare in the social sciences overall.

The social sciences do, nonetheless, take the verbal self-report as both true and a primary source; after all, such an account can be reduced to text. Ethnographers pay more attention than most to verbal (as opposed to written) information. But

here too the decided preference favors self-reports and words reducible to text. Yet every culture is composed of countless nonverbal images, signs, and symbols; these can be described in words, but one might question whether describing a sunset actually transmits the same aesthetic understandings as when one witnesses a sunset. Approaches to the visual in anthropology and sociology, as each applies itself to questions of culture and meaning, have developed in rather different ways and have evolved using different understandings of the visual.

Ethnography Defined

Ethnography has been around for a very long time, especially as practiced by cultural anthropologists, and although there are a variety of definitions for this term across the social sciences, there are certain elements that remain fairly constant. These include that ethnography is a methodology that involves a researcher immersing himself or herself into natural settings, either covertly or overtly, over some prolonged period of time. During this effort, the researcher will watch, listen, ask questions, and generally collect whatever data are available in an effort to better understand the issues and questions that are the focus of the research endeavor.

The History of Visual Ethnography

Historically, visual ethnography began in the post-positivist tradition where researchers provided photographs to support fairly traditional anthropological accounts in ethnographic studies. Photographs were little more than props used as visual aids in these endeavors; the “true” ethnography was the written narrative accounts of the researchers’ observations. This process grew into what has come to be called *visual anthropology* and was fairly common throughout the 1920s, in studies such as those by Bronislaw Malinowski, and through to the late 1950s.

Concern about the use of visual ethnography began to emerge, however, during the 1960s and through the early 1980s, centering on whether visual images and recordings could be expanded and used to viably support the observational research undertaken in the social sciences beyond anthropology. The concern of many social scientists of the time was that

visual data were too subjective, unrepresentative, and nonsystematic.

Beginning in the mid- to late 1970s, visual anthropologists began to focus their attention on ethnographic film and video, and they also began to question the idea of visual realism that had been the longtime anchor of visual aids in anthropological investigations. Visual sociologists who had also been developing their use of photography from the perspective of a realist paradigm began to react to feminist and postmodern critiques and shifted toward more reflexive and self-identifying orientations in their research, including the use of photography and film.

By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the social sciences began to hear calls for a redefining of the relationship between researcher, informant, and participant in the form of collaborative and participatory approaches and research frameworks. These notions began to be incorporated into the emerging visual ethnography and to combine with the notion that the meaning of a photograph is constructed by the maker and the viewer—that both possess social understandings and interests in this photographic act. Thus, the photograph was a means by which its maker could express his or her feelings and understandings about something and could inform others both through the image and with further explanation and sharing. This creation, use, and sharing of meaning seemed to approach the same basic tenets of symbolic interaction that words had been associated with previously.



The Social Phenomenon of a Wedding Cake Cutting. Cutting the wedding cake has become an important symbolic first act undertaken together by a newly married couple.

Source: Photo by Leah Lee Photography; used by permission.

Visual Ethnography and the Social Sciences

Although visual ethnography is certainly used among a growing number of social scientific disciplines, it has flourished most among those disciplines with traditional ethnographic histories, namely, anthropology and sociology. Anthropology, in fact, has been somewhat more open to the use of photography than has sociology. One might speculate that this wider acceptance by anthropology reflects the reality that its traditional focus of research on non-Western cultures can be understood as *visibly* distinguishable from the focus on cultures of the West, where many of the anthropologists themselves originated.

Ethnographically inclined sociologists were also quick to obtain cameras and include photographs in their research efforts. But it is safe to assert that by the 1980s, visual anthropology was somewhat more developed than visual sociology. It was not until the past decade or so that visual sociologists began to innovatively develop the use of visual ethnographic methods and link these to theoretical underpinnings.

Visual Ethnography and Theory

The relationship between theory and methods is always important for understanding any type of research study. Similarly, understanding the theoretical underpinnings of one's method is also important in terms of how well this method will function in investigating a given research problem. Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of the visual ethnographic method, then, is crucial for understanding how images and processes connected with creating images are used to produce ethnographic knowledge. The existing literature on visual ethnography has been criticized for being too centered on "how to" types of descriptions of methods and analysis and being linked to a largely positivist realist framework. This orientation tends to express an image-based research methodology that offers fairly prescriptive frameworks, and that tends to objectify and seeks to make generalizations, but that in effect detracts from the very qualities and potentials that might emerge from the ambiguity and expressiveness of visual images gathered ethnographically. Such criticisms underscore the need for further work in visual ethnography that intentionally departs from the traditional positivist and realist orientations and toward newer more reflexive

and subjectively oriented approaches to making and understanding ethnographic images.

Thus, among the criticisms of visual ethnography found in the literature is that it remains unable to connect with social scientific theory or that visual sociology has only limited connections with sociological theory. However, the collaborative and participatory approaches that have begun to emerge with greater regularity across the social sciences, under the labels of *participatory research* and *action research*, place visual ethnography as a prime methodology for collecting and sharing data and connect visual ethnography with an assortment of social scientific theories associated with this orientation to research. These participatory orientations tend to be highly reflexive and seek to draw meaning and understanding from the various participants. Visual ethnographic techniques provide a means for empowering participants to reflect on their personal concerns and interests as well as to access and share their perceptions on various issues and problems that may exist in their lives. In effect, participants are able to negotiate their visual meanings, thereby expressing their cultural understandings and, to a lesser extent, the production of meaning as attached to aspects of people's social worlds.

The Use of Visual Ethnography

The idea that everything social scientists are interested in studying exists in language or text, or is expressible in those ways, is questionable; the notion that one can explore these interests only by using words or reading texts is simply an inaccurate and rather uncreative viewpoint. To be sure, the use of visual and other methods of data collection may necessarily overlap, but this should not invalidate or diminish visual ethnographic data. Let us consider some of the ways in which visual ethnographic data may be used.

Photo Elicitation

The use of photographs or a film may be undertaken as part of what is sometimes referred to as *photo elicitation*, where the researcher asks the participants to discuss the meaning of photographs or a film specifically created or selected by the researcher with the idea of using the photographs or film to elicit information from the participants. Photographs may also belong to the participants, such as family photographs and home

movies, or may be gathered from other sources, including photo archives, newspapers, television images, and library collections. Typically, the participants' comments and analysis of these visual materials are recorded on either audio- or videotape, providing a means for analysis at a later time.

Rephotography

A slight variation on the photo elicitation technique is rephotography. This technique involves collecting photographs taken at some time in the past and making second images at the current time to reveal how things have (or have not) changed. By asking the participants about these changes, one is granted access into their social understandings about social changes, natural disasters, political causes, war, and the gamut of other social and culturally related elements that may be depicted by various photographs.

Photovoice

The photovoice technique involves a researcher giving the participants cameras and asking them to photograph certain aspects of their lives. After photographs have been taken, the researcher and participants come together to give the latter an opportunity to discuss and explain their photographs—or to literally give voice to their photographs. This technique provides a means for an investigator to gain perceptual access to the world from the viewpoints of individuals who have not traditionally held control over the means of imagining the world. The photovoice technique may involve single photographs of someone or something or a series or sequence of photographs.

Visual Narratives

To expand on the idea of a series or sequence of photographs as data is actually to introduce the concept of the visual narrative. Sociologists use verbal narratives to offer an account, tell a life story, or delineate various aspects of culture. On the microanalysis level, the visual narrative view is wholly consistent with symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction seeks to orient researchers toward the process of interaction based on interpretations. Visual materials are frequently offered as narrative in form. The most common visual narrative is film (or other media forms of motion pictures) or even single photographs taken sequentially (often many

per second) that, when viewed quickly from left to right, seem to recreate the movements that the eye would see if the images were in motion. When viewed and discussed, these visual narratives can invoke a variety of feelings and represent a number of meanings that reflect an individual's perspective on his or her life, culture, and social reality.

The Future of Visual Ethnography

The use of visual images and visual ethnography is becoming more common, and as this occurs it will gain by being written about more frequently and being theorized more rigorously. Part of the growing acceptance of visual ethnography is likely to stem from the wider acceptance and willingness of various disciplines to embrace reflexivity in their methods and to explore how subjective awareness and experience play a role in the production of knowledge.

There are at least two major tracks that visual ethnography may travel in the future. The first is the fast track, where visual ethnography leads an energized social science forward toward innovatively ethnographic and theoretically interdisciplinary new technologies that promise various ways in which to bring the changing visual experience into the production of social sciences and an understanding of the visual dimensions of society.

If one follows this first possible track, it will involve incorporating visual methods of data gathering and analysis into ethnography to a greater extent across disciplines. As implied, visual ethnographic techniques are not paradigm dependent. Visual methods have been employed extensively, for example, by social scientists examining how women sociologically identify their own roles in the family, by those running social psychological experiments, by researchers trying ethnomethodologically to capture society as it is accomplished, and by Marxists recording accounts of the exploitation of laborers.

The other track is the slower, more plodding one, where the social sciences remain largely unconnected with the rapidly changing technological world around them and become only mildly interested in studying society as a visually interesting and observable phenomenon. The advances in technology, then, have continued, and will continue, to have an influence over which track visual ethnography is likely to travel.

Bruce L. Berg

See also Cultural Context; Ethnography; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Photographs in Qualitative Research

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VISUAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Visual narrative inquiry is an intentional, reflective, active human process in which researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively. Visual narrative inquirers work from a position where experience is an undivided continuous interaction between humans and their environments that includes thoughts, feelings, doings, and perceiving. Visual narrative inquiry builds from a view of narrative inquiry as a study of experience as story and as a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a narrative understanding of experiences. Visual narrative inquiry adds the layer of meaning so that photographs and visuals become ways of living and telling one's stories of experience.

The Field of Narrative Inquiry

Relation to Narrative Inquiry

The field of visual narratives has developed over the past 10 years or so as visual narrative inquirers have included images, in particular photographs, to deepen the ways in which researchers can understand experience. Visual narrative inquirers bring photographs into the metaphorical three-dimensional space of narrative inquiry with its dimensions of sociality, temporality, and place. Each discipline and

field of study brings different ways of understanding and different contexts of visual study of experience to the methodology of narrative inquiry.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The origins of visual narrative inquiry are located in John Dewey's views of experience. Thus, for Dewey, humans are not "subjects" or "isolated individuals" who need to "build bridges" to go over to other humans or the things of nature; rather, humans are originally and continually tied to their environment, organically related to it, changing it even as it changes them. Humans are fundamentally attached to what surrounds them. The Deweyan view of experience is further informed by the works of philosophers such as Mark Johnson and David Carr and of literary theorists such as Carolyn Heilbrun and Mary Catherine Bateson. The works of Judy Weiser, Jo Spence, and Robert Ziller also inform explorations of visuality within narrative inquiry.

The Process of Visual Narrative Inquiry

Working within the relational methodology of visual narrative inquiry, researchers become aware of the intentionality and the ethics of listening and seeing the stories that children, youths, and adults share through the process of the inquiry. There is a need for visual narrative researchers to stay engaged with the ongoing ethical negotiations of working visually. This also calls attention to how visual researchers rely on a visual world that is endless and constantly changing: What is missing? What is dismissed? What is not seen? Visual narrative inquiry is a recursive process of engaging with participants in taking photographs and telling stories of those photographs over time. Visual narrative inquirers, as they engage with participants, discuss the possibilities and limitations of composing photographs, collecting photographs, and conversing with/through/about photographs.

Narrative inquiry is always composed around a particular wonder or puzzle, and visual narrative inquiry also begins with a sense of puzzle or uncertainty. As with narrative inquiry in general, visual narrative inquiry begins with the researcher's autobiographical lived experience, and the researcher's own stories of experience shape the relational space with participants. In the visual narrative inquiry process,

the shared photographs and conversations are viewed and re-viewed over time. Visual narrative inquirers listen and re-listen to conversation tapes, and look and re-look at participants' photographs, as they turn both toward the inner and the outer—the personal and the social—of both their own lives and their participants' lives to reflect, meditate, and inquire into the storied experiences that are co-created with participants and researchers. Many visual narrative inquiries work with participants who are active in their subcultures. Visual narrative inquiry has the possibility of deepening insight into what is evaded by inquiring into the stories and photographs of everyday experiences of participants who are typically not seen or heard by those outside of the particular subculture.

In the Field

Like narrative inquiry in general, visual narrative inquiry follows the narrative inquiry process of living in the field, composing field texts, and composing research texts. As a visual narrative inquiry begins, the researcher meets with participants and addresses ethical issues of working with cameras. Informed consent is obtained from adults and, where necessary (or mandated by legislation), from parents of participants under the age of consent, in which case the researcher must also obtain assent agreements allowing the researcher to work with their photographs and taped conversations. As part of the ongoing negotiation with participants, the visual narrative inquirer stays open to further negotiations, realizing that there are shifts and changes, including negotiating relationships, reevaluating purposes, and negotiating transitions before and after narrative inquiries.

Photographic Field Texts

The visual narrative inquiry process often involves working with participants through a series of four “camera works” and numerous research conversations about their camera work. Using camera work techniques in the visual narrative inquiry process means that the researcher's primary position is to listen to and encourage participants' own personal discoveries while exploring and interacting with the ordinary, personal, and family photographs they view, make, collect, remember, or even only imagine; in 1998, Hedy Bach described it as listening and looking for “a recurring rhythm, a story that has been told more than once,

a photograph taken and retaken, a narrative series” (p. 294). The four camera work techniques in visual narrative inquiry are interrelated and interdependent, and they work best when combined synergistically. Analysis of the photographs is based on input that comes from the participants, guided by the researcher's photo-stimulated questions, when the images and stories are discussed during the research conversation. In most visual narrative inquiries, multiple photographs are taken. The four camera works are creating projective photographs, composing self-portraits, collecting culture, and looking at family albums as pictorial communication. Visual narrative inquiry, through the use of these camera works, carries a sense of a search, a “re-search,” a searching again. As part of visual narrative inquiry, the relational aspects are sustained over time and place. Participants' visual narrative field texts (their photographs and stories) have a sense of being full and of coming out of a personal and social history—that which matters to them. A full description of the four camera works can be found in Bach's *A Visual Narrative Concerning Girls, Photography, Curriculum, Etc.*

Visual Narrative Composites: Research Texts

Through multiple conversations with photographs and in writing and rewriting around the photographic field texts, visual narrative inquirers create photographic research texts—the visual narrative composite—by juxtaposing historical, philosophical, and theoretical positions concerned with the reading of participants' photographs and stories within history, memory, culture, geography, language, and identity. One format is a narrative form created in columns with the first column for an image, the second column for the participant's story, and the third column for the researcher's autobiographical story (including the theories that inform the researcher's interpretations).

Ethics

There are pervasive ethical issues in visual narrative research. Images are vulnerable; that is, a photograph holds no steady fixed meaning. The inquiry space, with its attendant ambiguity, highlights the importance of visual narrative inquirers' awareness of where participants and researchers are placed at any particular moment—temporally, socially (in terms of both

the personal and the social), and in place. In any story told, multiple selves speak, and these selves are temporal productions residing in both the present and a reconstructed past. Thus past, present, and future, as contained in stories, can be seen as productions or creations that may intersect and overlap in nonlinear, unfolding, and enfolding ways. Just as living a life is unbounded, visual narrative inquiry is open to possibilities and imaginings.

Hedy Bach

See also Collaborative Research; Narrative Inquiry; Relational Ethics; Photographs in Qualitative Research; Voice

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VISUAL RESEARCH

Qualitative research focuses most readily on spoken and written words. This preoccupation with the complexity of language was evoked by Alan Peshkin, who described the task of the qualitative researcher as “making words fly.” In contrast, visual research focuses on nonlinguistic images. Pictures may be used as a source of data, as a method of data analysis, and as a means of data representation. There are multiple research methodologies for conceptualizing such work. Ultimately, the methods for the analytic use of nonlinguistic visual data can have implications for all qualitative researchers, even those who do not seek to incorporate visual images in their studies.

Philosophical Antecedents

Historically, visual images have been regarded as unreliable. Plato argued that all visual images are essentially lies—pale imitations of a reality they seek to reference. Images were not trustworthy, and the individuals who trafficked in them were dangerous frauds. During the 17th-century scientific revolution,

René Descartes reinforced this classical distrust of the visual by arguing that sight, or any other perceptual sense, is deceptive.

This prejudice in Western thought against the visual began to change during the Enlightenment—first through the work of the British empiricists and then, during the mid-18th century, with the introduction of the new philosophical discipline of aesthetics. Derived from the Greek verb for *perceive* (and the grammatical rules that govern its conjugation), aesthetics suggests a form of mediated understanding with neither viewer nor object controlling the conditions for knowing.

Although this initial concept of aesthetics was soon supplanted by interest in discriminations of preference and judgment, understanding the visual as a form of mediated understanding continued. During the 20th century, this line of inquiry could be seen in Martin Heidegger’s and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological works, which contributed to the interpretive turn in postmodernism that encouraged audiences to derive multiple readings from a single text.

Methodological Approaches Toward the Visual

There is a spectrum of methodological approaches to the use of the visual in qualitative research. At one end of the spectrum, which may be called *objective*, is the use of images as a form of data collection. At this point on the continuum, photographic images, or ethnographic films, are considered to be objective renderings of reality. Analysis of these images, through language, reveals layers of semiotic meanings. At the other end of the spectrum, which may be called *generative*, are images that are created by the researcher through the process of data collection and analysis. These images may be autonomous and require no further explication through language. A midpoint on this spectrum may be called *formative*, which applies strategies for reading latent images to lived experience. This view argues that perception inherently requires framing and focusing. Thus, our experience of objective reality is always constrained by conscious or unconscious schematic filters.

A researcher may incorporate multiple positions from this spectrum and combine aspects of the objective, formative, and generative within a single piece of research. Therefore, it is important that the researcher declare how the visual is used in the process of

inquiry. If differing visual methodological approaches are incorporated, then the researcher must either decide to communicate clearly to the readers when and why these shifts are occurring or decide that the struggle to sift between these changing perspectives is a task that the readers must undergo to experience and mediate the research.

The Objective Approach

Photography and filmmaking emerged relatively simultaneously along with the formal academic fields of anthropology and sociology. Methods for collecting and analyzing visual data are interwoven deeply into both disciplines. Initially, photography was associated with a factual rendering of a given place and time. Initially photographic evidence was assumed to benchmark a “fixed” reality. Later photographic evidence showing how a culture might have changed over time was interpreted as a deterioration of an “authentic” culture.

During the 1970s, this approach to photographic evidence was supplanted by both a more complex view toward the dynamism of cultures and a critical investigation into how the photographic lens selectively frames, omits, and emphasizes information. The camera was no longer regarded as a neutral object that recorded reality. Attention shifted to how an image was constructed. In what ways might a researcher have actively, or passively, manipulated and staged a scene before the photograph was taken—with or without the collusion of the participants? Such manipulations are particularly evident in “documentary” films produced for distribution through popular mass media. To fully understand the visual representation, not only is the visual evidence analyzed, but also the underlying contexts and conditions through which the image was conceived, created, and marketed are analyzed.

Significant ethical and legal issues arose out of the critical examination of photography and filmmaking. The ethical context of how an image was created and how it is presented for viewing is now a major concern in the analysis of any image. This is evident in current institutional review board protocols and publishing contracts. Thus, reflexivity is now essential to visual research. Reflexivity requires self-inquiry by the researcher: Who is taking this image? Why is this image being taken? Who is being framed? Who is telling the story of what is represented in this image? Has the individual pictured consented to, or participated in, this framing?



Example of Objective Visual Research: Fifth Grade, Integrated Visual Art and Literacy Lesson, Chase Street Elementary School, Athens, Georgia. The blackboard records the major ideas of the research along with the visual images that students have studied and to which they have responded. Analysis of the visual image can reveal the curriculum studied and student engagement.

Source: Photograph by Richard Siegesmund; used by permission.

The Formative Approach

Research methodologies are linked to how specific academic disciplines frame inquiry and the production of knowledge. During the 1980s, Elliot Eisner applied methods for the analysis of visual art to the analysis of human interactions within the context of schools. In addition to noting semiotic detail, the critical methods in visual art reveal meaning through attention to subtle qualitative relationships and the felt reactions they generate. For Eisner, both symbol and feeling were critical to understanding the lived experience of a classroom. His methodology of educational criticism cast the researcher in the role of the art or movie critic. To *perceive* (aesthetically understand) the classroom, the critic must be a connoisseur—a person whose insight into mediated reality helps others to perceive what otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

The analysis of visual culture and the meanings that individuals make within their visual environment offer other methodological approaches to formative visual research. Here the researcher is not a critic but rather is cast more in the role of director or producer. For example, the methodology of visual narrative inquiry puts the camera into the hands of the research participants and allows them to frame and interpret the world through the visual signs they see around them. The

participants then select and order these images into forms that represent personal meaning. This shifts the authority of authorship and interpretation to the participants and away from the researcher. With the ubiquity of single-image cameras and digital video in cultures throughout the world, research participants are arguably equally skilled in representing themselves and their lived experiences through images as they are in relating these experiences through language via traditional interviewing methods.

Visual culture research examines the everyday, which includes the visual signs and markers that we create as entertainment or social control. The visual also considers how we present our bodies and how these are read in shifting contexts. Often visual objects, presentations of the body, and actions are created to mask aspects of reality. Sites of such research might include the visual attraction of downtown Las Vegas, a shopping mall, and the staging of an arena rock concert. Research may also focus on what we do not wish to see. For example, Stephanie Springgay has analyzed (through both words and images she has created) the mediated understandings that emerge at the sight of her breast-feeding her child at academic conferences, in family restaurants, or on airplanes.

Visual culture research can aid in the critical analysis of skillful, yet insidious, visual propaganda. An illustration of this is the “Sambo” imagery, which portrays African Americans as childish, slow-witted, and irresponsible, that was widely pervasive throughout the United States during the first half of the 20th century. It manifested itself through product advertising, popular media (including radio, live action movies, and animated cartoons), and collectible figurines. Visual culture research documents and explores the continuing legacy and presence—and even the cultural repurposing—of this stereotype.

The Generative Approach

Photography and film are just two media within the visual arts. Visual research can be conducted through a variety of visual media, including painting, sculpture, performance art, collage, and digital art. The Centre for Arts-Informed Research at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto refers to researchers who choose to represent their data analysis in artistic forms as “scholARTists.” For example, Sara Promislow uses the visual method of collage as a means of organizing and analyzing her

data. Similarly, researchers at the University of British Columbia have developed the methodology of a/t/tography, which also relies heavily on the making of visual art as integral to the process of research, a document of that process, and a form of analysis of the process. Art making may include the researcher and/or research participants maintaining visual journals that record constructed reflective visual images rather than simply reflective words.

Graeme Sullivan argued that the act of creating a work of art can be research by engaging three domains of significance: empiricist, interpretivist, and critical. In the *empiricist* domain, the work of art is assessed by its correspondence to an external reality that can be referenced and compared. In the *interpretivist* domain, work is assessed by its ability to convey personal meaning to both the creator and the viewer. Here, in contrast to the empiricist domain, a multiplicity of meanings may be present—perhaps even desired. The *critical* domain moves individuals to social action. Official religious or political art designed to motivate the viewers toward “best practice” exemplifies such artwork.

A work of visual art might begin in any one of these three domains, but to be considered research it would need to reach out to and interact with at least another domain. The direct or indirect effectiveness of the pathways, or braids, through these domains determines the quality of the artwork as research. This complex web of meaning that lies behind the making of a visual image is necessary to move art from an image to be appreciated to an image that conveys and engages linguistic and nonlinguistic inquiry.

Implications of Qualitative Research

Writing itself is increasingly affected by the visual as it is linked more closely to website design and presented through the internet rather than through the traditional bound book. As never before, the page is both text and visual image (even if the page consists only of letters). Constructing texts as strings of hyperlinked individual pages that the readers can arrange visually challenges the linearity of texts and viscerally reintroduces the concept of aesthetics as mediated knowing.

Visual research inherently explores the implications of creating, documenting, and analyzing data. Visual research reminds us that data are not found; rather, they are constructed. It questions the ethics of

research to frame an issue, the power of participants to give voice to their own narratives, and the role of the readers in creating—rather than receiving—personal meaning from a work of research. These issues have implications for all qualitative researchers. Therefore, the inclusion of structured training in the visual—the objective, the formative, and the generative—is a challenge to the preparation of future qualitative researchers in mediated understanding.

Richard Siegesmund

See also Aesthetics; A/r/tography; Arts-Based Research; Arts-Informed Research; Connoisseurship; Visual Ethnography; Visual Narrative Inquiry

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VOICE

Voice in qualitative research refers to the multiple, and often conflicting, interpretive positions that must be engaged in the representation of data. There is a long-standing tradition in deductive research methods of amplifying the voice of the researcher to the limitation, or at times the exclusion, of the voices of those being studied. This approach is grounded in the conviction

that objective perspectives are methodologically feasible and can yield a single univocal truth. In contrast to this position, a range of approaches, including post-structuralism, feminism, and various strands of post-modernism, call attention to the many intrinsic tensions that exist between the voices of researchers and the voices emerging from the data.

Social scientific research necessarily imposes a certain power over those being studied. Accordingly, qualitative investigation demands explicit consideration of the power relationships that exist between researchers and their “subjects.” Given that qualitative research frequently involves the study of marginalized persons, these relationships must be considered throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing processes. Typically, a researcher aims to point out certain features of “original” data. Theories of voice recognize that researchers’ interpretations always differ to some degree or another from the original intended meanings. Furthermore, these theories generally hold that to engage voice is to take into account the varying ways in which reality is constructed and interpreted.

Ensuring that the voices of participants are holistically represented from the data requires paying attention to these constructions and interpretations and also epitomizes our ethical responsibility to our sources. That said, ethically sound research does not necessarily require validation of interpretations from collaborators; such validation might not be possible, particularly when data sources are textual or historical. Acknowledging and understanding participants from their own authentic positions is an integral component of data analysis and interpretation. However, the complexities of voice also necessitate a reconciliation of the reflexive and interpretive dynamics that expose meaning in the data, and that are genuinely and intrinsically present, so that research represents both the scientist and the participants.

Although explanations of the phenomenon of voice vary, they share a common conception that voice is more than a metaphor for individual perspective. As such, these explanations seek to understand voice as part of a reciprocal creation of meaning intrinsic to and inseparable from any kind of social scientific research. The qualitative researcher, therefore, must strive to understand the reality of voice as a process of the lived creation of meaning and not merely as a vague ethical gesture or an attempt to understand the opinion or perspective of one’s sources. Ultimately, the notion of voice encompasses

the interpretive confluence of participant and researcher and all of the reflexive processes following from it.

Sheryl C. Fabian

See also Authority; Feminist Research; Interpretation; Power; Reflexivity

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VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability in qualitative research applies to potential conditions of research participants in which the participants, by virtue of some psychological, cognitive, physical, medical, legal, socioeconomic, or age-related status, are deemed to be more susceptible to lack of full understanding, manipulation, exploitation, or some other possible harm within the research process. Vulnerability often refers to special categories or subpopulations of participants who are regarded, by virtue of their status, as requiring special protections within the research process. Examples of vulnerable subpopulations include pregnant women, inmates, minor children, persons with psychiatric disorders and/or other cognitive impairments, persons with HIV-seropositive status, persons with compromised legal status, and persons with low socioeconomic status. Vulnerability in research participants generally suggests an impaired or reduced capacity to provide true informed consent to participate in a research study. Concern for research ethics with vulnerable populations, however, is not limited to informed consent; it also includes all decision points throughout the entire research process. The ethical principle of care or the duty to care is especially

important when working as a qualitative researcher with vulnerable populations.

Although the term *vulnerability* is generally used to refer to the condition of research participants, researchers themselves are also potentially vulnerable within the context of conducting qualitative research and are subject to susceptibility to various forms of institutional and personal pressure. This entry discusses the potential vulnerability of both research participants and researchers.

Decision Making, Stigma, and Special Protections

Assessment of research participant vulnerability is important because it potentially affects the legitimacy of informed consent. Informed consent is particularly important in qualitative research because of the kinds of data collection techniques that are widely used, including observational techniques, in-depth interviews, oral histories, diaries and journals, conversations and dialogues, and immersion in the field leading to involvement with human participants over sometimes lengthy periods of time. Such data collection techniques in qualitative research are likely to lead to significant personal disclosures, and research participants must be capable of freely consenting to take part in such interactions with the researcher. Because many qualitative research data collection techniques require face-to-face involvement between the researcher and participants, anonymity often is not possible; instead, a relationship of openness, trust, and confidentiality must be developed for the research to proceed. Any psychological, cognitive, physical, or medical condition, or any legal, socioeconomic, or age-related status, that impairs or reduces the ability of a research participant to provide free and fully informed consent compromises or nullifies the trustworthiness of a research project. Qualitative research that goes forward with vulnerable participants who are unable to provide free and fully informed consent violates the rights of human subjects.

Minor Children

Because of the differential in power relationships between adults and children, children are afforded greater protections in qualitative research. Children have less autonomy and self-determination than do

adults because of children's physical, developmental, and psychological levels of maturity relative to adults. Legally, in the United States, they are also not authorized to enter into contracts until 18 years of age in most states and, therefore, must have a parent or legal guardian sign contracts on their behalf. In other countries, where such legislation does not exist, children may be able to do so. In the case of children and research, children may be required to have a parent or legal guardian provide the informed consent to participate in the research study, but this varies by country and by the ethics guidelines used in that country. Increasingly, however, a focus on the rights of children has resulted in growing awareness that children must also be given an opportunity to decide whether they wish to participate in a particular research project and are frequently asked to give or sign an "assent" to participate in research. Simply put, assent is a child's permission to participate after having been given an explanation of the research project, its purpose, and its methods. The assent does not supplant the informed consent signed by the parent or legal guardian, but it is an additional document providing a child's consent that is sought from children who can understand and reason, usually around 7 years of age or older. A qualitative researcher who obtained an informed consent to participate in a study from a parent on behalf of a minor child but who was denied an assent from the prospective child participant would have a difficult time justifying the inclusion of that child in the research project.

Inmates

Special concern for inmates as research participants can be traced to the Nuremberg Code developed by a military tribunal after World War II to prevent the repetition of the inhumane treatment, torture, and death experienced by captive prisoners in Nazi concentration camps who were subjects of medical experimentation. The Nuremberg Code contained a foundation for current ethical guidelines in the conduct of research, especially research with vulnerable groups.

Voluntary consent is the cornerstone of the Nuremberg Code, followed closely by prevention of unnecessary suffering and death or disability, the obligation to terminate the research if it is likely to result in harm to the participants, the requirement that only highly qualified persons conduct research, and the principle that research should advance the welfare of society.

So far as prisoners or inmates are concerned, the question of whether consent can be freely offered within a context of extreme limitation of human freedoms is a serious one. The possibility that inmates might think they will gain benefits in the form of favors from the correctional institution, that inmates might think participating in research will reflect favorably on their prison records in the future at parole hearings, or that inmates might have been pressured or coerced by other inmates into participating in the research makes proceeding with research with inmates particularly complex in terms of the issue of free and informed consent. The prison population is also vulnerable in that inmates' voices about their own experiences are seldom heard "on the outside." Qualitative research provides a singular opportunity to help inmates tell the stories of their experiences and aspirations. Research with the inmate population can go forward, but only with due consideration for the complexities of obtaining informed consent within a context of absence of freedom.

Pregnant Women

The concern about pregnant women in research originated with respect to biomedical research involving pregnant women and fetuses that may result in harm to either or both. The thousands of "thalidomide babies" in North America and Europe resulting from the administration of the experimental drug thalidomide to pregnant women during the 1950s and 1960s only heightened the concerns about biomedical research with pregnant women. These thalidomide babies suffered high rates of limb deformities and premature death. Although pregnant women are classified as a vulnerable subpopulation by the Basic Health and Human Services Policy for Protection of Human Research Subjects, which regulates both biomedical and behavioral research in the United States, they are much less vulnerable as participants in qualitative research than as participants in biomedical research. In fact, qualitative research, with its focus on meaning and everyday life, presents many opportunities for qualitative researchers and pregnant women to explore and describe the experiences of pregnancy and birth within particular cultural and community contexts. However, ethical concerns and vulnerability of pregnant women participants in qualitative research are not eliminated. For example, if qualitative researchers were studying the experiences of pregnant women in the midst of

deciding whether to terminate their pregnancies, they would need to be very mindful of the ethical principle of self-determination in their research practice to avoid influencing pregnant women's decisions. Such concern for a pregnant woman's right to self-determination would be an example of a qualitative researcher acting according to the ethical principles of respect for persons and the duty to care.

Persons With Psychological and/or Cognitive Impairments

In assessing vulnerability to research risk or harm, persons diagnosed with psychological impairments and/or cognitive defects cannot be lumped into a single group with the same risk factors. Persons in this category must be assessed on an individual basis in relation to their current abilities to understand and make decisions. Mental illnesses, for example, tend to run along a continuum of severity; persons with these disorders can be in an acutely ill state with severely impaired reality contact and decision-making ability, they can be in full remission with high functioning, or they can be somewhere in between those ends of the continuum.

The following questions can be vital in assessing the ability to give free and informed consent to participate in research for a person with psychological and/or cognitive impairments:

- Does the person understand the purpose of the research and what is expected of him or her within the research process?
- Has the person demonstrated an ability to make independent decisions by asking questions pertinent to his or her role and participation in the project?
- Does the person appear to be focusing on and attending to the information presented by the researcher?
- Is there any evidence of undue coercion that might influence the person's decision to participate in the research project?
- Does the person understand that he or she is free to discontinue participation in the research study at any time with no penalty?

Psychiatric diagnoses, such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, or the diagnosis of neurodegenerative or neurocognitive disorders, such as Lou Gehrig's disease and Alzheimer's disease, should not automatically rule out people's participation in qualitative

research studies. The ethical principle of respect for persons requires that people with psychological and/or cognitive impairments, which represent potential vulnerabilities, not be excluded from research participation; rather, they must be given the opportunity to participate if they wish under conditions of greater protection and consideration for the special needs they may have.

HIV-Seropositive Persons and the Issue of Stigma

Persons who are HIV seropositive are generally regarded as in need of special protections during qualitative research because of the social stigma involved with their diagnosis and the added importance of confidentiality in doing research with any person who has a stigmatizing condition or who is in a stigmatizing situation. Stigma is an important issue in research because those persons who have stigmatizing conditions or who are in stigmatizing situations are already vulnerable to social isolation, ostracism, and shunning. During the early days of AIDS, those who were HIV seropositive were particularly vulnerable to stigma and its associated isolation. Other examples of stigmatizing conditions today include homelessness, especially for those who are newly homeless, and those whose homes have become infested with bedbugs. Such persons tend to hide their status from others because of their vulnerability to social ostracism. Qualitative researchers have historically tended to study persons with stigmatizing conditions and situations because of the unique perspectives they bring to the understanding of ostracism and social isolation. People who have stigmatizing conditions or who are in stigmatizing situations require special protections for confidentiality and respect and care for their sensitive status within the research process.

Guidelines for Protection of Human Research Participants

The infamous Tuskegee Experiment by the U.S. Public Health Service ultimately led to the formation of institutional review boards (IRBs) for the protection of human subjects at universities and other research institutions. The Tuskegee Experiment, which began in 1932 and lasted through 1972, was a longitudinal study of approximately 400 African American sharecroppers with syphilis who were not

told their diagnosis but instead were told they had “bad blood.” Moreover, the men were not given penicillin even after it became widely available during the mid-1940s as an extremely effective treatment for syphilis. The Tuskegee sharecroppers were an example of a vulnerable group based on low socioeconomic status, lack of education, illiteracy, and lack of access to health care information and effective treatment.

Reaction to this Tuskegee Experiment led to the 1979 Belmont Report, *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. This report outlined the boundaries between practice and research, described basic ethical principles governing biomedical and behavioral research with human subjects, and discussed applications of those ethical principles in relation to informed consent, risk–benefit assessment, and subject or participant selection and recruitment. The Belmont Report was designed to provide a template for making research decisions by applying basic ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice so as to protect all human subjects, in particular vulnerable groups.

The principles of the Belmont Report formed the basis for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations governing the protection of human subjects in biomedical and behavioral research. In 1991, the HHS published *Basic HHS Policy for the Protection of Human Research Subjects*, which translated the principles laid down in the Belmont Report into rules and regulations governing the practice of research with human subjects. These rules were most recently revised in 2005. The abusive experiences of a vulnerable group in a research experiment, the Tuskegee sharecroppers, have led directly to the principles and practices established by the U.S. federal government for the protection of human research subjects, and these principles and practices are those that are endorsed by IRBs throughout the nation and in many other countries around the world. In a further development that would prevent any future repetition of an event similar to the Tuskegee Experiment, the World Medical Association in 2000 banned the use of placebos in medical research wherever effective treatment exists. This ban on placebo use is part of the Declaration of Helsinki. Although this ban on placebos states a newly framed ethical principle—not a law—and is specifically related to medical research, it demonstrates the trend toward protection of human subjects in all research and the ethical imperative of the duty to care.

Researcher Vulnerability

Although care for vulnerable research participants must be the central focus of qualitative researchers’ ethical practice, the researchers themselves are not immune from vulnerability as a condition of their work and context. Researcher vulnerability potentially emanates from institutional and/or personal pressures, contextual and legal factors, and issues regarding boundaries between the qualitative researcher and participants and the potential for dual relationships that are harmful to both the researcher and participants.

Institutional pressures on qualitative researchers may increase vulnerability to taking shortcuts in data collection and/or analysis because of pressures to obtain or keep a grant, pressures to report findings prematurely, or related pressures to obtain or keep a job. Qualitative research is not always high on a funding institution’s research agenda and, therefore, may leave qualitative researchers without necessary funding to push forward their own research agendas and conduct their work. Qualitative researchers often work within academic settings where the pressure to “publish or perish” is well known and may leave researchers vulnerable to “quick and dirty” research that is without much significance or benefit to society. These pressures and contextual factors represent potential and not inevitable vulnerabilities that are best addressed by researcher awareness of their presence and implications.

Because no legal privilege guaranteeing confidentiality exists between the researcher and participants, the researcher who has gathered rich detailed information may be challenged to reveal that information in a legal setting. For example, the qualitative researcher working with an inmate population may obtain information about a participant’s criminal history that may then be subpoenaed by an attorney or a court. The possibility of legal demands for a qualitative researcher’s work product is clearly a source of potential vulnerability for qualitative researchers, especially those who work with marginalized populations such as inmates. However, the legal context that surrounds such possibilities remains a contested area in many countries.

Maintaining boundaries in the qualitative researcher–participant relationship may be especially problematic because of the nature of some of the widely used data collection methods. Participant observation, for example, requires that the researcher function not only in the role of data collector and researcher but

also in other roles dictated by the nature of the researcher's participant status. Such shifting roles and positions for the researcher requires careful attention to the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants and to the complexities of informed consent in such a context. Commitment to ongoing reflexivity throughout the research process is also important to avoid boundary crossings that are harmful to the researcher and/or participants.

Qualitative researchers spend more time more intensely with participants than do other researchers and, therefore, are more vulnerable to the development of relationships that fall outside of the research relationship. Such dual or multiple relationships are particularly harmful when the researcher is not mindful of the differences in power, status, role, and life experiences, and possibly also education and income, between himself or herself and the participants as well as the implications of such differences. For most qualitative researchers, sexual involvement with a research participant represents the most troubling and most complicated dual relationship. Vulnerability to such relationships is a reality for the qualitative researcher because of the intimacy that may be generated throughout the period of fieldwork or intensive interviewing.

Finally, because qualitative researchers study some volatile questions and issues requiring entry into physical spaces that are not part of their everyday worlds, such as drug houses and gang territories, they must consider their vulnerability to physical harm and take steps to protect their own safety. Safety is also an issue when asking participants questions that may generate anger and hostility. Actively thinking through one's work context and making plans to optimize personal safety during data collection and fieldwork in high-risk

environments can reduce a qualitative researcher's vulnerability to personal harm.

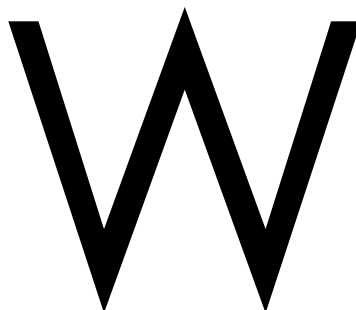
For research participants, vulnerability can be identified through differentials in power, status, access to information and knowledge, impaired decision-making abilities, limited or reduced freedom to provide informed consent, pressures generated by stigma and resulting social isolation, and any form of coercion. The effect of an identified vulnerability is to obligate the qualitative researcher to provide special protections relative to the particular needs of the participants and to ensure that the duty to care is exercised. For the researcher, vulnerability can be identified through personal and institutional pressures that might jeopardize judgment and decision making and by the potential for harmful boundary crossings and dual relationships not in the best interests of either the researcher or research participants. Ethical standards in research are evolving continuously, as are the responses by qualitative researchers to address changing standards and to care for vulnerable persons who may become research participants.

Maureen Duffy

See also Ethics; Harm; Informed Consent; Institutional Review Boards; Researcher-Participant Relationships

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WRITING PROCESS

The writing process is the series of sequential steps a writer or researcher follows to record experiences, observations, data, and research. The process of writing, by definition, suggests an ongoing commitment to editing, multiple revisions, self-reflection, and the development of characters, scenes, and findings. While the writing process references the journey between producing and revising a text, it also involves the events leading up to writing and the closing stages that follow. This entry focuses on the writing process as a series of steps leading toward progress in qualitative research projects. The process of writing follows a plan, although not always chronologically or deliberately, that begins with an idea and ends with a final product.

Writing Stages and Strategies

There are innumerable ways to write effectively, but many experts and seasoned professional writers have the same opinion in regard to the procedures they follow. These procedures are consistent with any writing project, including but not limited to academic articles, books, personal narratives, fiction, poems, ethnographies, and other nonfiction text. The step-by-step approach to writing varies, but these different approaches share the same elements. The writing process can be divided into three distinct stages: brainstorming, writing, and editing.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the initial stage of writing and includes inventing, thinking, imagining, developing, and organizing the writing project. The process of writing begins with planning. During the brainstorming stage, writers begin to formulate and write down ideas for the writing project. Even though this endeavor is usually done independently, some writers engage in discussions with colleagues during this stage to determine the range of potential topics and research questions and to create a project that responds to established scholarship.

This prewriting stage allows writers to consider a plethora of possibilities that will later be narrowed down significantly. Brainstorming can be in the form of an outline, a list, a set of questions, or free writing that will eventually become the first draft. Free writing allows writers to be spontaneous and unstructured, thinking, feeling, seeing, and experiencing new things as they write. This prewriting occurs during the process of collecting and organizing information so that the writer can consider what the purpose and goal of the writing is. Additionally, researchers must make a commitment to connect their writing to their audience (other scholars, participants, students) and contribute to knowledge through their scholarship.

Writing

Writing about the topic of interest is the second stage in the writing process. The activity of writing allows the writer to engage and teach the audience about the topic and the specific procedures followed. The writing stage

also includes active researching and gathering of information needed to establish and support the main objectives of the assignment. Writers must determine what the goals of the project are, what side they are taking, and what others have said about the subject.

The writing stage involves translating the raw data or fragments collected in fieldnotes and research into accessible and readable passages. Depending on the scope of research, a researcher will write based on his or her research experience or based on the research literature. A writer engages in his or her topic at various stages and builds upon his or her knowledge by writing about it. The writing process reflects and expresses the thoughts of the writer, allowing the writer to discover realizations about the topic and him- or herself simultaneously. The writing involves thinking, predicting, asking or answering questions, and finding answers.

Writing is a way of investigating knowledge and challenging or agreeing with previous interpretations. The writing stage begins once the research has been generated and compiled. Writers must organize their ideas and then position them against other voices. Writing requires practice, commitment, and time. The final step requires editing, revising, rewriting, and time.

Editing

The third and final stage of writing is editing and revision. This step usually occurs several days or weeks after the final draft is written. This step may also include collaborative editing, when one invites a colleague or mentor to review the manuscript. The editing stage includes proofreading, revising, rewriting, redrafting, and reorganizing the text one has already put together. At this stage of writing, the research has been compiled and the main points have been established. The point of revision is to eliminate unnecessary information and words and to construct the best possible final draft of the manuscript. First drafts, which are created during the first two steps of the process, do not necessarily resemble the final version, but they serve as maps that detail and predict how a writer's product will be presented. The editing stage allows the writer the opportunity to reinterpret previous drafts to ensure that the writing meets the goals of the project.

Writing Techniques

Voice and style are opportunities for writers to distinguish themselves and to establish their own unique perspective and creativity. A writer's voice, coupled with his or her experiences, fears, and personality, sets him or her apart and is integrated into the writing process from the beginning. Writing becomes a way of knowing, interpreting, and understanding the world, the subject, and the self. Writers make conscious choices about how (and if) they present themselves in their writing. This judgment determines what voice and style will be used, (first, second, or third person) and how the research is developed and structured.

Several qualitative writing styles privilege the writing process as a legitimate and significant stage of research. Experimental ethnography, also known as creative analytic practices and referred to as CAP ethnography, allows for a creative engagement of data. Writers are able to embed the story of their experience of researching and writing within their research paper, including autoethnography, poetry, performance text, fiction, layered accounts, drama, and ethnography. Participants' voices are typically paramount in written accounts of qualitative research, which may include lengthy quotes or other mechanisms for "giving voice" to participants' experiences and perceptions.

Robin M. Boylorn

See also First-Person Voice; Meta-Narrative; Publishing and Publication; Raw Data; Voice

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