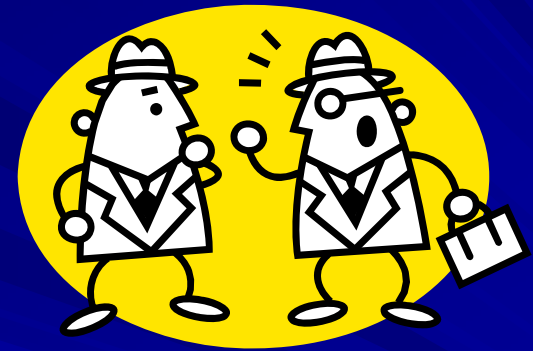


Qualitative Methodologies

Frank Houghton PhD, MA, MSc

Qualitative - Quantitative

- Contested
- Highly politicised
- Real antipathy



35

mins!

**A gentle introduction
to qualitative
research**

Qualitative Research

- Ethnography
- Visual Media
- Narrative Analysis
- Interviewing
- Focus Groups

**A gentle introduction
to some types of qualitative
research**

Qualitative Research

- Interviewing
- Focus Groups

**A gentle introduction
to some types of qualitative
research from a
practical perspective**

Why use qualitative methods?

"I'm not using SPSS!"

Why use qualitative methods?

- Complex situations
- Describe & understand
- Insight into how people make sense of their experiences
- Dissemination of research findings (stories)
- Exploratory phase
- Explanation of the results of quantitative research



Recommended Texts

Rice & Ezzy (1999)

Qualitative Research Methods,
Oxford University Press, Oxford.



Denzin & Lincoln (eds) (1994)

Handbook of Qualitative Research,
Sage, Thousand Oaks.



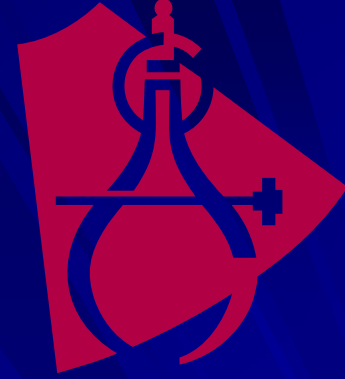
Getting Started

Theoretical Frameworks

- Positivism/ Post-positivism
- Ethnography
- Phenomenology
- Symbolic Interactionism
- Feminism
- Postmodernism
- Hermeneutics

Quality

Ensuring Rigour

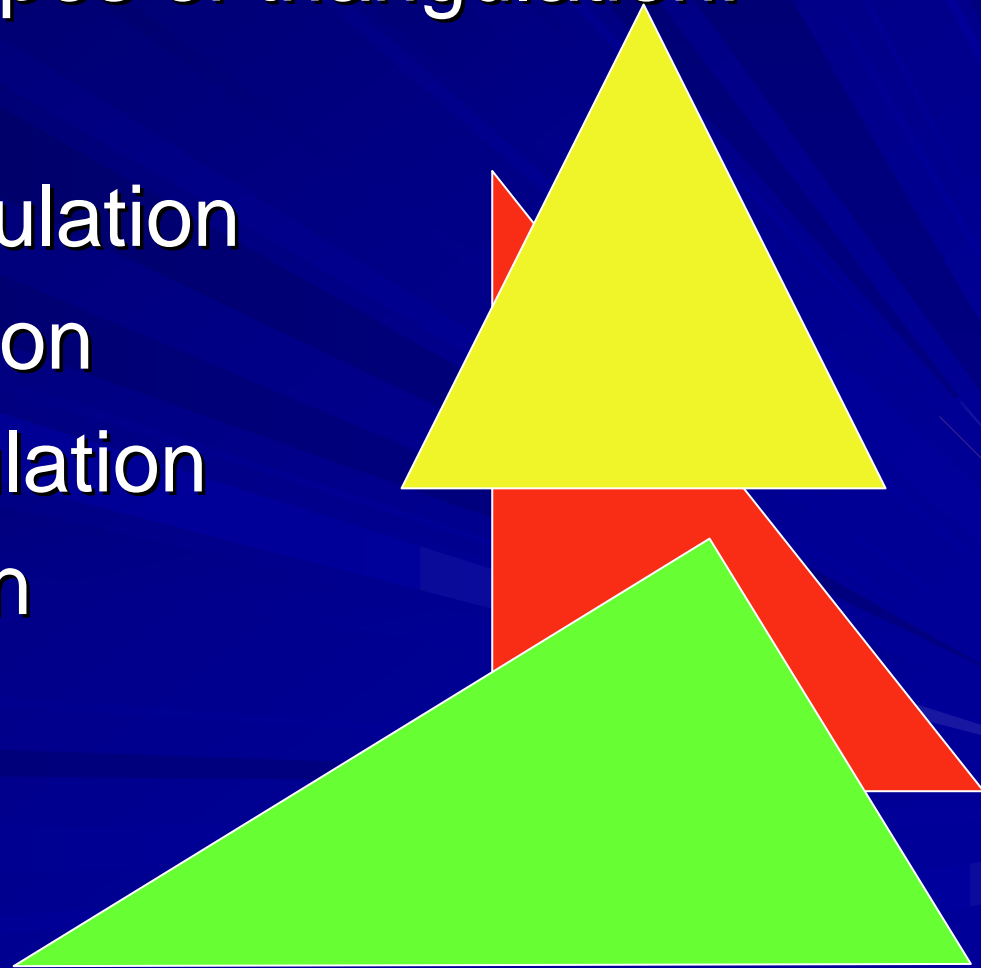


- Theoretical Rigour
- Methodological/ Procedural Rigour
- Interpretative Rigour

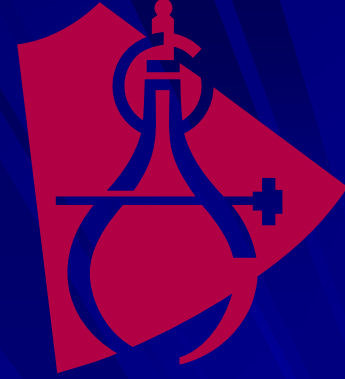
Rigour & Triangulation

There are 4 distinct types of triangulation:

- Data Source Triangulation
- Methods Triangulation
- Researcher Triangulation
- Theory Triangulation



Ensuring Rigour



- Theoretical Rigour
- Methodological/ Procedural Rigour
- Interpretative Rigour
- Evaluative Rigour
- Rigorous Reflexivity

Sampling Methods

- Extreme/ deviant case sampling
- Maximum variation sampling
- Homogeneous group sampling
- Typical case sampling
- Critical case sampling
- Criterion sampling
- Stratified purposive sampling
- Snowball or chain sampling
- Opportunistic sampling
- Convenience sampling
- Volunteer sampling
- Triangulated sampling

Sample Size



- Huge concern
- Simple answer: when the researcher is satisfied that the data are rich enough and cover enough of the dimensions they are interested in, then the sample is large enough.
- Sampling to the point of redundancy
- Theoretical sampling

In-Depth Interviews



- Open-ended
- Probing
- Avoid questions testing knowledge
- Follow interviewee
- A Theme list (1 page)
- Reflect back main themes & interpretations
- Anything else

In-Depth Interviews

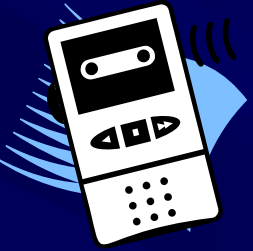
Advantages

- Discovering subjective meaning & interpretation
- Allow aspects of social life to be studied
- Allow new understandings and theories to be developed
- People's responses less influenced by the direct presence of peers
- People generally find the experience rewarding

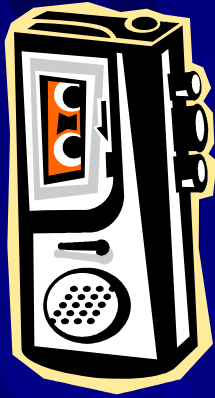
In-Depth Interviews

Limitations

- Considerable investment in time and energy
- In-depth interviewing process & development takes time
- Difficult to do

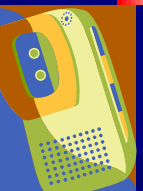


Recording Interviews



- Initial resistance/ embarrassment
- Confidentiality
- Strength & clarity of individual quotes
- Volume of information
- Lack of shorthand!

- Analogue/ digital/ directional/ external mike?
- earphones



Transcription

- Very important
- Very time-consuming
- Very expensive

- 1:10
- Useful experience
- Useful for learning



Focus Groups

- A focus group interview is a qualitative method 'with the primary aim of describing and understanding perceptions, interpretations, and beliefs of a select population to gain understanding of a particular issue from the perspective of the group's participants'.

Focus Groups

- Typically, focus group interviews involve a group of people (about 6-10) who come from similar social and cultural backgrounds or who have similar experiences or concerns. They gather to discuss a specific issue with the help of a moderator in a particular setting where participants feel comfortable enough to engage in a dynamic discussion for at least one to two hours.

Focus Groups

Key Features

- Enables in-depth discussions; small numbers
- Focused on a particular topic; detail
- Interaction between participants
- Moderator introduces the topic & assists participants to discuss it
- Participants usually share social/ cultural experiences

Why Use Focus Groups?

- Flexible
- When researcher knows little about participants
- Explore people's knowledge & experiences
- Sensitive issues/ sensitive populations
- Give a voice to marginalised groups

Focus Groups in the Health Arena

- Exploratory studies in health issues
- Testing ideas about and acceptances of new programs
- Solving specific problems
- Evaluating health programs

Focus Group Issues

- Language issues
- Homogeneous/ Heterogeneous
- Shared experiences?
- Familiar faces/ strangers

- How many- rule of thumb 3-5 per variable; saturation theory

Focus Group Personnel

The Moderator

- Leader
- Characteristics: sensitive to the needs of participants; non-judgmental; respect participants; open-minded; adequate knowledge about the project; good listening skills; good leadership skills; good observation skills; patience & flexibility

Focus Group Personnel

The Note-taker

- Essential
- Takes notes of key issues, non-verbal responses
- Tape recorder
- Interruptions

Post Focus Group Write-up



Successful Focus Groups

- Range
- Specificity
- Depth
- Personal context
- Clarity of purpose
- Appropriate environment
- Sufficient resources
- Appropriate participants
- Skilful moderator
- Effective questions
- Honouring the participant

Focus Groups - Advantages

- In-depth
- But cheaper than interviews
- Flexible- hidden/ unexpected
- Interaction
- More relaxed- similar experiences
- Can help shy participants
- Marginalised groups (illiterate)
- Can be fun

Focus Groups- Limitations

- Can only represent the perspective of group
- Quality not quantity- not statistical
- Cannot deliver in-depth info on any one person
- Cannot investigate actual behaviours
- Participants may simply 'conform'
- Researcher 'driven' and may be biased
- Influence of the moderator
- Quantity of data/ time consuming

Computers & Qualitative Research

- NUD*IST
- NVIVO
- These are not like SPSS, EPI-INFO, JMP
- Feel free to disagree with me
- (I like a good argument)



Computers & Qualitative Research

- Organising data
- A rather more complicated version of a pack of highlighter pens
- Rather more expensive ...
- Rather harder to learn ...
- (Perhaps my expectations were too high)

The End