

Criminology 321

Understanding Qualitative Approaches

Term Research Project

- Start thinking about:
 - A topic
 - Whom to interview
 - An understanding of ethics issues
- First (electronic) proposal is due 7 Oct
- You cannot *formally* begin until approved but can talk with people ahead of time to discussion participation, preferences

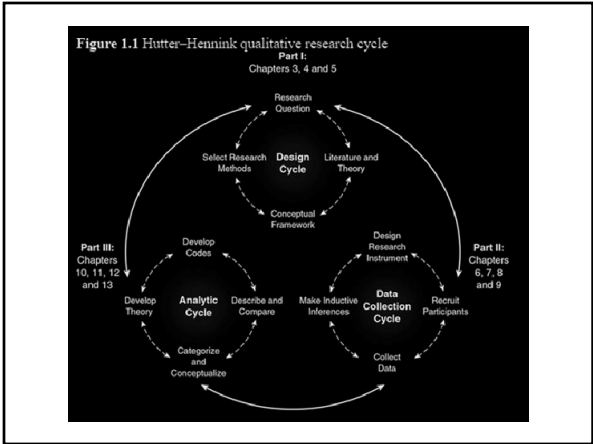
Examples of project possibilities

From depot to street: Real life in the RCMP	Living the Dream: from PeeWee to Pro	Maintaining a long-distance relationship	Woman in a male-dominated occupation
Escaping the Iranian Revolution	Living in an arranged marriage	It's over! Withdrawal and divorce	Life history of family member
Growing up a twin	My life as a pilot	Dealing with addiction	Recovering from injury
Immigrant: Stranger in a strange land	Going through med/law/other school	Deciding to emigrate from ...	Political protest before the internet

Now Posted on Canvas

Can you solve this?

- Deductive logic
 - You start with a theory that you test by seeing whether predictions hold
- Inductive logic
 - Theory emerges from repeated observation
- Abductive logic
 - Combines the two in looking for a solution that considers rival plausible explanations



Ontology

- Positivist = realist = there are social facts/laws in the world and our job is to discover them
- Interpretive = constructionist = the core phenomena are perceptions of the world and the ways we construct our realities
 - “Perceptions are real because they are real in their consequences” (W. I. Thomas)

Epistemology

- Positivist = Researcher is expert; need to maintain social distance, remain aloof to ensure 'objectivity' (etic; understanding)
- Interpretive = Seek "contextualized understanding of behaviours, beliefs, motivations"; closeness is valued to create rapport and gain insights into people's perceptual worlds (emic; *verstehen*)

Methodology

- Positivist = gather aggregate data to examine patterns, relationships, discover generalizable laws *ceteris paribus*; hypothetico-deductive method a favourite
- Interpretive = focus on behaviour in context; use methods that allow you to understand socially constructed realities; small purposive samples

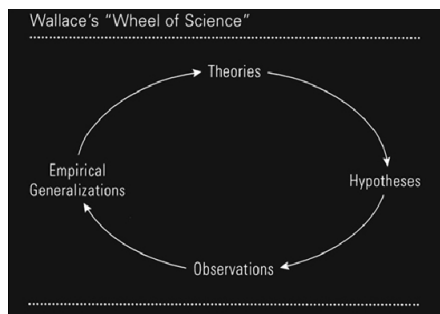
Table 2.2 Key differences between qualitative and quantitative research

	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Objective	To gain a contextualized understanding of behaviours, beliefs, motivation	To quantify data and extrapolate results to a broader population
Purpose	To understand why? How? What is the process? What are the influences or context?	To measure, count, or quantify a problem. To answer: How much? How often? What proportion? Which variables are correlated?
Data	Data are words (called textual data)	Data are numbers (called statistical data)
Study population	Small number of participants, selected purposefully (non-probability sampling)	Large sample size of representative cases
	Referred to as participants or interviewees	Referred to as respondents or subjects
Data collection methods	In-depth interviews, observation, group discussions	Population surveys, opinion polls, exit interviews
Analysis	Analysis is interpretive	Analysis is statistical
Outcome	To develop an initial understanding, to identify and explain behaviour, beliefs or actions	To identify prevalence, averages and patterns in data. To generalize to a broader population

Underlying similarities?

- Those are some of the differences. Are there similarities as well?
 - Both are "empirical," i.e., they believe in real world evidence
 - Both involve theory and data and overlap in both theory and method
 - Both attempt to address and eliminate rival plausible explanations

Iterative/Cyclical



Contextual; *in situ*

- Behaviour happens in context and cannot be divorced from context
- Research is best conducted *in situ*
- Interviews may or may not happen *in situ* but generic questioning makes little sense
- The greater the time spent, the better
- Leads to an emphasis on case study

Case Study

- Greater emphasis on *depth* than breadth
- Must understand the people or milieu under study on its/their own terms;
- Generalizability considered later, in more theoretical (rather than statistical) terms
- Intrinsic, instrumental and multiple case studies

Emergent; Flexible

- Research is *emergent* – looking for issues of interest rather than imposing them (part of an *inductive* approach)
- Adaptive rather than standardized strategies/procedures.
- The final research question is often different from the original

Rival Plausible Explanations

- Triangulation valued: data redundancy and saturation help assess validity and deal with RPEs
- You seek to understand perspective of participants, but not constrained by those views
- Always looking for negative evidence

Reflexivity

- Not “bias” or “subjectivity”
- Trying to alleviate bias by exposing and addressing the quant myth of “objectivity”
- We are social beings trying to understand social beings
- How can we ensure that our findings are not simply a product of our current beliefs?

Qualitative Perspectives

- Not formulaic: tantalizing and scary
- Part of what we must learn is how to do it well
- Lots of examples in the everyday world; qualitative research is everywhere

Qualitative Case Study Inquiry

- Physicians: diagnostics (see *House*)
- Forensic Specialists: (see books by Kathy Reichs or watch *Bones*; *CSI*)
- Coroners: prevention (*DaVinci's Inquest*; *Quincy*; *Coroner*)
- Criminal Investigations; Trials; Commissions of Inquiry