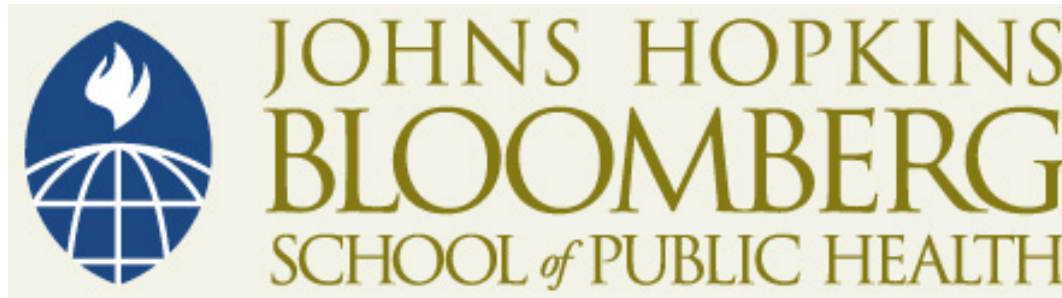


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# **Lecture 5:**

# **Qualitative Methodology**

- **Carol Underwood, Ph.D.**
  - **Associate**

# Contents

- **1. Introduction to qualitative methodology**
- **2. Review of selected qualitative methods**
- **3. Qualitative data analysis**

## **Methodology:**

**a general approach the researcher uses to explore or examine the issue or phenomenon of interest**

# Two 'Schools' of Social Science

## Approach

**Positivism/  
Empiricism**

**Phenomenology/  
Interpretive  
social science**

## Concepts

**Social structure,  
social facts**

**Social  
construction,  
meanings people  
hold & upon  
which they act**

## Methods

**Quantitative,  
deductive,  
hypothesis-testing**

**Qualitative,  
inductive,  
hypothesis-  
generation**

# Commonly-Cited Distinctions Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research\*

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**Qualitative**



**Interrelated**



**Quantitative**

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**Provides depth of understanding**

**Asks “Why?”**

**Studies motivation**

**Is subjective**

**Enables discovery**

**Is exploratory**

**Allows insights into behavior, trends,**

**Interprets**

**Studies process**

**Measures levels of occurrence**

**Asks “How many?” “How Often?”**

**Studies actions**

**Is (relatively) objective**

**Provides evidence**

**Is definitive**

**Measures level of actions, trends,  
and so on**

**Describes, predicts**

**Measures point(s) in time**

\*These distinctions do not always hold, but reflect *typical* ways in which the two methodologies are used.

# Which to Use: Qualitative or Quantitative Methods

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## Issues to Consider

Use qualitative methods when you...

Use quantitative methods when you...

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**Purpose of research**

**seek a richer, more personal picture of individual motives, decisions, or practices.**

**need to calculate numerical indicators/parameter estimates of populations.**

**NOTE: Because sample sizes are smaller and respondent selection is purposive, the results of qualitative research do not lend themselves to statistical generalization.**

# Which to Use: Qualitative or Quantitative Methods

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## Issues to Consider

### Use qualitative methods . . .

### Use quantitative methods when you...

---

**Purpose of research**

**to learn the words, phrases, and concepts used; to develop an awareness of the categories that define an area of investigation.**

**have identified the salient categories, know which words or phrases are used, and want to know the distribution of these ways of thinking or health practices among your intended audience.**

## **Use Qualitative Methods to:**

**to help clarify or illuminate  
quantitative research findings**

# Which to Use: Qualitative or Quantitative Methods

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**Issues to Consider**

**Use qualitative methods when you...**

**Use quantitative methods when you...**

---

**Sample size**

can answer your questions with a relatively small number of participants; want to know more about a small, “elite” group of people.

have the ability to sample systematically so that the sample is statistically representative of that population

# Which to Use: Qualitative or Quantitative Methods

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**Issues to Consider**

**Use qualitative methods when you...**

**Use quantitative methods when you...**

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**Analytic capabilities**

**are competent to analyze the findings. Qualitative research has a high degree of flexibility--therefore, it is possible for the researcher to be undisciplined and not fully think through the research issue.**

**have good statistical & analytic skills.**

**Validity  
&  
Reliability**

# Validity

**Extent to which a measurement reflects the real meaning of a concept under consideration.**

***Example:* Decision-making as a measure of the structure of a marital unit among low SES Puerto Rica couples (where the margin of choice was extremely narrow)**  
**or**  
**Division of labor between spouses as a measure of the structure of the marital unit**

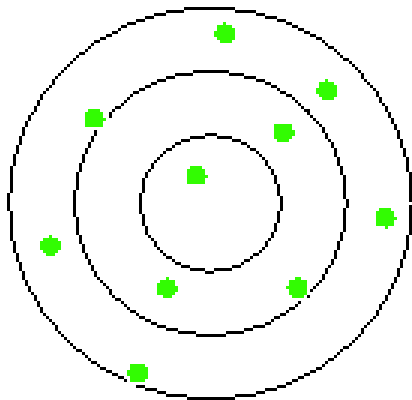
# Reliability

**Extent to which a particular technique or measure, applied repeatedly to the same object, would produce the same result each time.**

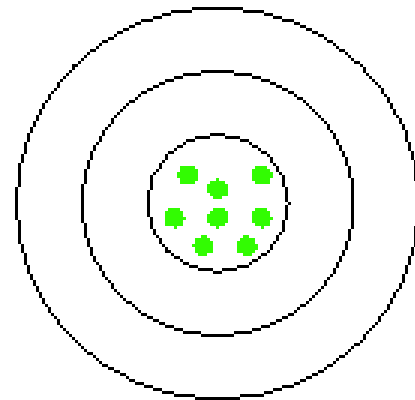
*Example:* “How has your husband’s (or wife’s) schizophrenia affected the allocation of household tasks?”

or

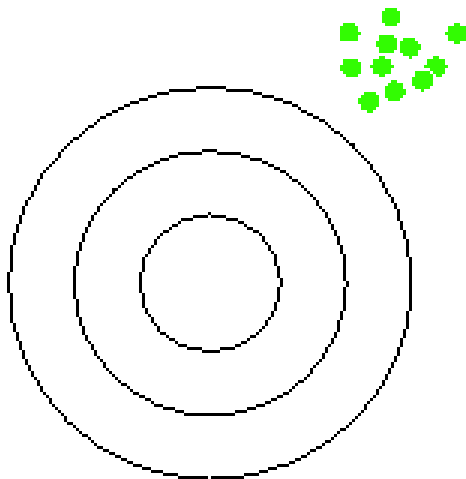
A list of specific questions regarding household task allocation developed from qualitative research



**Valid,  
but not  
reliable**



**Reliable  
and  
valid**



**Reliable,  
but not  
valid**

# **Triangulation:**

**the use of multiple methods or theoretical outlooks. The goal of triangulation is to build up a fully-rounded analysis of some phenomenon by combining all lines of attack, each probe only revealing certain dimensions of reality.**

**Depth and complete intelligibility remain the ideals in social science research.**

**The process of disentangling from within is complicated by the facts that**

- (1) we are interpreting a world that has been interpreted already and**
- (2) as researchers, we become part--if only momentarily--of the world we hope to understand.**

# **End of Lecture 5**

## **Part 1**

# **Overview of Specific Qualitative Methods**

**(Part 2)**

**Methods** are specific research techniques and, in themselves, are neither true nor false. They are more or less useful, depending upon the theories and methodologies being used, the hypotheses being tested and/or the research topic that is selected.

# Different Uses for Four Methods

## Methodology

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### Concept

### Quantitative research

### Qualitative research

Observation

Preliminary work, e.g. prior to framing questionnaire

Fundamental to understanding another culture

Textual analysis

Content analysis, e.g. counting in terms of researchers' categories

Understanding participants' categories

Interviews

Survey research': mainly fixed-choice questions to random samples

'Open-ended' questions to small samples

Transcripts

Used infrequently to check the accuracy of interview records

Used to understand how participants organize their talk

# Case Studies/Ethnography

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Immersion in a culture or subculture, may include a range of qualitative methods

- Advantages: comprehensive, “thick description,”
- Disadvantages: time-consuming, may not be replicable

# Life Histories

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## Biographies of community members

- Advantages: the “subject” directs the researcher; not limited by researchers’ assumptions; with many life histories, you may be able to describe a common phenomenon among specific groups of respondents
- Disadvantages: may not be representative, difficult to replicate

# Participant Observation

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Researcher lives in and takes part in the community of interest

- Advantages: thick description, understand context within which people live and construct meaning; researcher no longer viewed as “outsider”
- Disadvantages: your presence alters the circadian rhythm of everyday life; lengthy process; difficult to replicate

# Non-participant Observation

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The evaluator/researcher is a passive observer of events

- Advantages: feasible, locations accessible; findings not limited by predetermined questions
- Disadvantages: may not observe behavior or issue of interest; may be susceptible to criticisms regarding reliability

# Focus-group Discussions

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**A small group of respondents, guided by a skilled moderator, explores key issues.**

● Advantages: group interaction stimulates rich responses; not limited by moderator's assumptions; not time-consuming; transcripts can be reviewed by other researchers

● Disadvantages: may inhibit responses about sensitive topics; analysis is time-consuming and challenging; analyst may inappropriately quantify results; may be difficult to limit discussion to selected participants

# Group Interviews

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A small group of individuals answers questions directly put to them by the researcher.

- Advantages: new issues may arise; it may be more convenient than a series of individual interviews
- Disadvantages: the free-flow of the focus group is absent; the discussion may be constrained by predetermined questions

# Semi-structured Interviews

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One-to-one interview with an individual based on open-ended questions

- Advantages: enhance validity; respondent expresses own definition of the situation
- Disadvantages: interviewer may bias results; analyst may misinterpret findings

# Method Selection

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- Are your methods consistent with your theory?
- Do you need to generate hypotheses or test hypotheses?
- Have you justified your method choice?
- Have you explained how the methods you have selected will complement each other?

# **End of Lecture 5**

## **Part 2**

# **Qualitative Data Analysis**

## **(Part 3)**

# In the field

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- Narrow the focus of your study
- Continually review field notes for alternative questions that you might pose
- Write memos about your observations
- Organize the notes thematically

# Qualitative Data Management

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- Record with audio-tape or using copious notes
- Translate (if necessary)
- Transcribe
- Coding: by hand or using the computer
- Estimate timeline--be realistic!

# Qualitative Data Analysis

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- Consider the words.
- Consider the context.
- Consider the internal consistency.
- Consider the frequency or extensiveness of comments.
- Consider the intensity of the comments.
- Consider the specificity of responses.
- Listen for comments that are unexpected, unanticipated.
- Find the big ideas.

Source: Krueger

# Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches

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- Use qualitative methods to generate hypotheses to be tested in quantitative survey
- Develop questionnaires informed by qualitative findings
- Turn to qualitative findings to help interpret, reinforce, or even call into question quantitative findings
- Rely on qualitative findings to provide a contextual understanding of the community of interest

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**The study of demographic behavior has much to gain from the use of qualitative research methods.**

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**End of Lecture 5**