

QUALITATIVE DESIGN: AN INTRODUCTION

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I. WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

A. Qualitative research is a loosely defined category of research designs or models, all of which elicit verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory data in the form of descriptive narratives like field notes, recordings or other transcriptions from audio- and videotapes, and other written records and pictures or films.

B. It is also called interpretive research, naturalistic research, phenomenological research, and descriptive research.

II. WHERE DOES QUALITATIVE RESEARCH COME FROM?

A. Social and cultural anthropology

B. Qualitative sociology

C. Professional studies: education, law, business, counseling, social work, library science, medicine, nursing, health professions,

D. History

E. Psychology: clinical, developmental, cognitive

F. Case traditions: political science, economics

G. Journalism, especially investigative reporting and media studies

H. Fieldwork in the natural sciences, especially biology, geology, astronomy

I. Humanities and the arts

III. WHAT ARE COMMON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS?

A. Ethnography

- B. Field study
- C. Community study
- D. Case study
- E. Life history and biographical study
- F. Document analysis and historical study
- G. Survey study
- H. Observational study
- I. Combinations of above
- J. Combinations of above with quantitative designs

IV. HOW ARE QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED?

- A. Participant observation
- B. Nonparticipant observation
 - 1. Stream-of-behavior chronicles
 - 2. Proxemics and kinesics
 - 3. Interaction analysis protocols
- C. Interviews
 - 1. Group
 - 2. Key informant
 - 3. Career and life histories
- D. Surveys
 - 1. Confirmation surveys
 - 2. Participant-construct surveys

3. Projective tests

E. Collection of artifacts, documents and demographics

V. HOW ARE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYZED?

A. Analytic induction

B. Constant comparison

C. Typological analysis

1. Role analysis

2. Network analysis

3. Event analysis

4. Critical incident analysis

D. Natural history

E. Enumerative analysis

F. Standardized observational protocols

VI. WHEN IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH USED?

A. Description--What's happening here?

1. Detailed accounts of events, experiences, or activities

2. Fresh perspectives on familiar phenomena

3. Participants' views of processes, groups, and settings

4. Subjective accounts of phenomena

B. Analysis--What does this mean?

1. Connections and relationships
2. Context and its influences
3. Differing perspectives toward phenomena

C. Theory--How can this be understood and explained?

1. Philosophical perspectives
2. Sociocultural, psychological, economic, and political constraints
3. Ideological interpretations such as critical or feminist theories

VII. HOW IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DIFFERENT FROM QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH?

- A. More inductive
- B. Grounded in thick descriptive accounts
- C. More discovery oriented
- D. Fewer people are studied more intensively
- E. Subjective data and stances as well as objective ones
- F. Recursive
- G. Triangulation
- H. Less reactive, more naturalistic
- I. Researcher as the instrument

VII. WHAT MAKES A QUALITATIVE STUDY GOOD?

- A. Thick, descriptive accounts of what is being studied
- B. Intensive investigation over time
- C. Use of multiple approaches, triangulation

- D. Participant corroboration
- E. Thorough descriptions and appropriate development of selection and design
- F. Introspective and reflective account of the researcher's experiences
- G. Authenticity, credibility insightfulness, clarity, comprehensiveness, and credibility
- H. Thoughtful consideration of its relationship to previous literature
- I. Judicious development and application of analytical and theoretical constructs
- J. Prudent assessment of evidence and alternative explanations for patterns discovered

Periodically revised