

What is Qualitative Research?

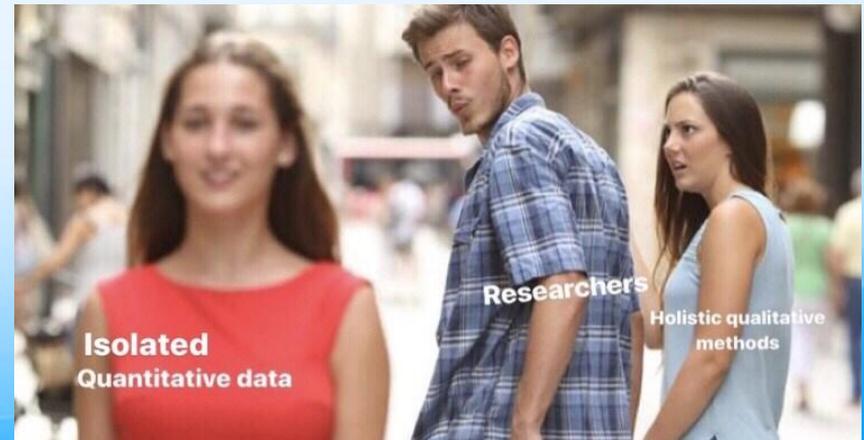
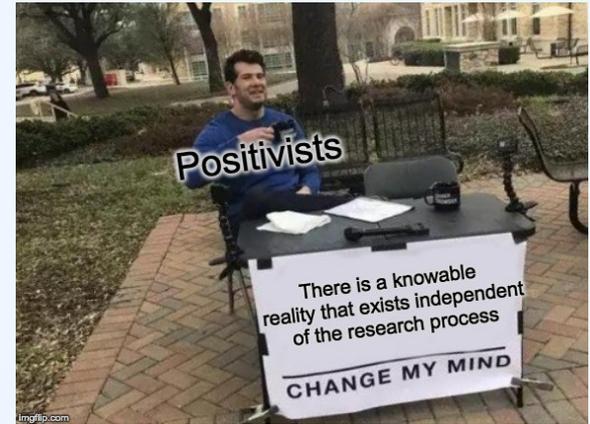
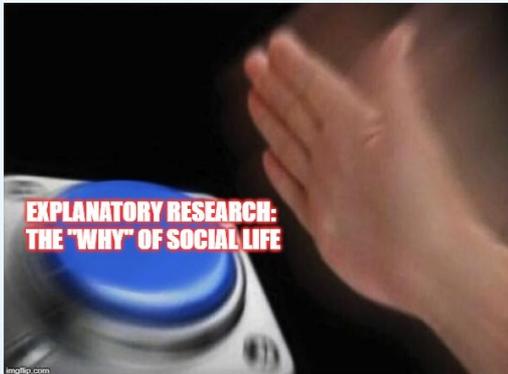
April 4, 2019

Today's goals

1. Discuss examples of past experiences with qualitative research, or future instances when qualitative research may be professionally useful.
2. Compare purposes, goals, and approaches of qualitative and quantitative research.
3. Differentiate between emic and etic perspectives in research.
4. Relate the qualitative philosophy to the design cycle.
5. Brainstorm potential topics and questions for a qualitative study.

Reactions

An Invitation to Qualitative Research



Agenda

1. The nature and purpose of qualitative research (1)
2. Emic and etic perspectives
3. A brief detour into the socially constructed nature of reality
4. The design cycle / spiral
5. The nature and purpose of qualitative research (2)
6. The research question

What is research?

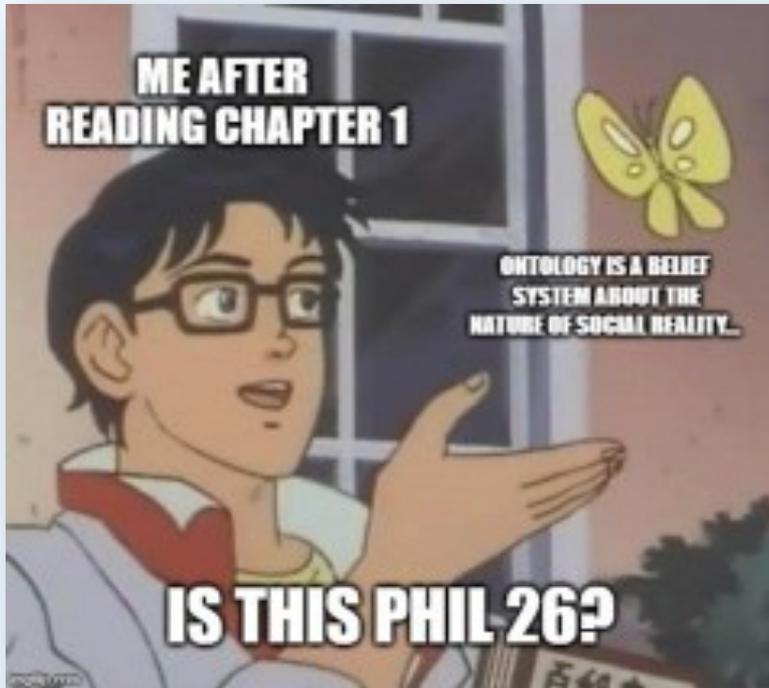
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Methods – the toolkit

- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Observations

Life histories, auto-ethnography, hearsay ethnography, cognitive methods, archival research, content analysis, case studies, rapid rural appraisal, photovoice, chat rooms / online forums, etc...



Stepping back:

In which we will use the words “ontological” and “epistemological.”

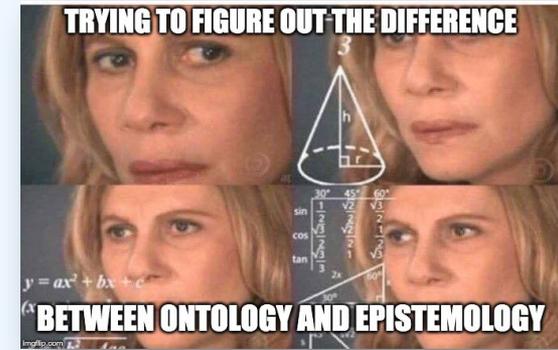
Qualitative and quantitative approaches

Questions of culture, society, community, and behavior.

Differ in methods used and data (/knowledge) produced

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Objective	Detailed understanding of underlying reasons, beliefs, motives. Hypothesis generating. 	Quantify data and extrapolate results to a broader population. Hypothesis testing. 
Purpose	Understand why, how, processes, influences, context	Measure, count, quantify, identify relationships.
Data	Text	Numbers
Study population	Smaller n, selected non-randomly	Large representative sample
Data collection methods	Interviews, focus groups, observations	Populations surveys, opinion polls, exit interviews
Analysis	Interpretive	Statistical
Outcome	Develop initial understanding, identify and explain behavior, beliefs, or actions	Identify prevalence, averages, and patterns. Generalize to broader population.

Assumptions



Assumption	Question	Characteristics
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is multiple/subjective, seen through multiple perspectives
Epistemological	What counts as knowledge? How do we justify claims? What is the relationship between the researcher and the research?	Subjective evidence from participants; Attempts to lessen distance between researcher and research(ed).
Axiological	What is the role of values?	Research is value-laden and biases are present
Methodological	What is the process of research? What is the language of research?	Inductive logic; study the topic in context; emerging design.

Purpose of qualitative research

- Understand the issue from the perspective and with the **language of the population**
- Rich understanding of sensitive topics
- Qualitative research questions:
 - Processes, experiences, contexts, how, what, and why?
 - “How do interviewers experience emotionally charged data collection?”
- Quantitative research questions:
 - Size, scope, correlation
 - “What is the prevalence of vicarious trauma among research assistants?”

Emic and Etic perspectives

- Origins in linguistics, borrowed from cultural anthropology

- *Phoneme* and *Phonetic*

- **Emic:**

- Description of an event or process as it is meaningful to the actor.
- From within.
- Constructivist.
- Theory generating (sometimes)

“goopy”

“khupi”

- **Etic:**

- “Objective,” “universal” description of an event or process that can be applied cross-culturally.
- From without.
- Positivist
- Fits within an existing theoretical framework (sometimes).

'gu:pi:

A brief detour into the
socially constructed
nature of reality.

What is the reality?



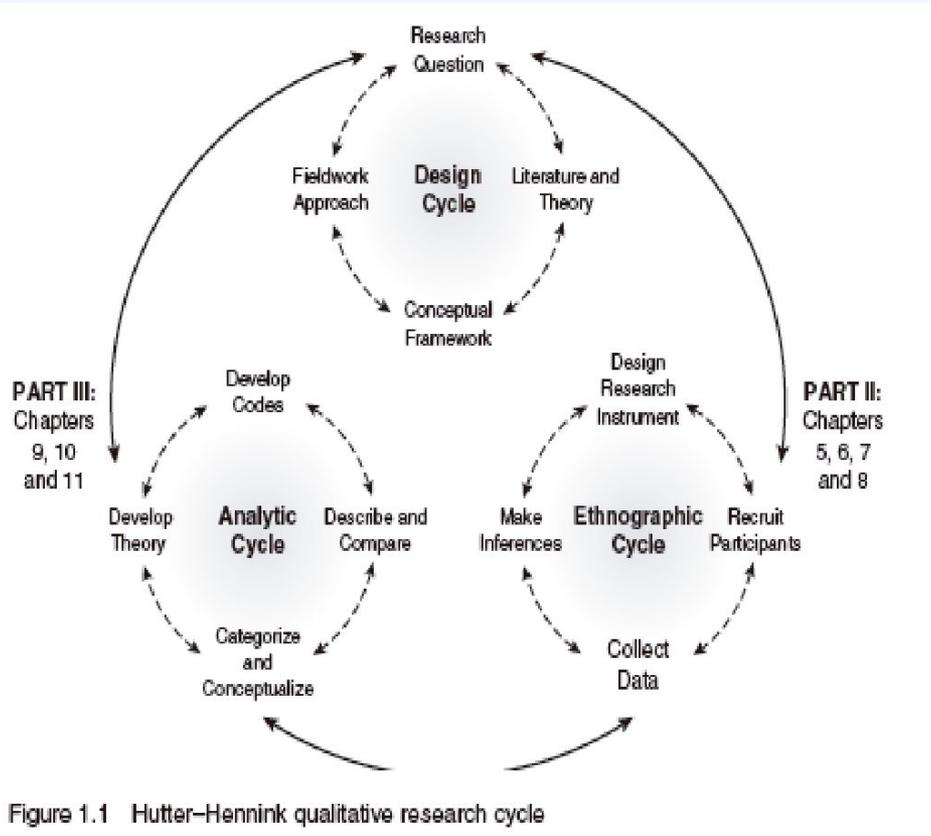
What is an elephant like?

- Is anyone right?
- Is anyone wrong?
- Which answer is 'true'?

Where are you standing?

Iterative design

The design cycle



- Qualitative research is an **iterative process**
- Constantly refine and recalibrate throughout all steps of a study
 - Design cycle
 - Data collection cycle
 - Analysis cycle

What is Qualitative research?

- <https://www.menti.com/3967dddb>



Research topics

- Qualitative approach to each question?
- Quantitative approach to each question?

Research topics

- What do you want to know?
- What are your assumptions?
- Who could you talk to?
- What could they tell you?
- Where could you find them?
- What are some potential ethical issues?
- What would be easy about this topic? What would be difficult?

Next week:

The research question

- Possibly the most challenging part of study design.
- Not too broad, not too narrow. (It will almost never be too narrow).
- What do you want to know?
- What are your assumptions?
- What is the purpose of your study?
- What is the context of your study?
- What do you want to understand?
- What do you want to accomplish?

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach: An Interactive Approach*.

Next week

- Be ready to make the case for your preferred research question, with citations
- 4/11: Research Question Due by 10am