

# Qualitative Methods in Action.

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# Qualitative Methods in Action

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A PASSION FOR BETTER MEDICINE.™



# Part 1: Qualitative Methods Overview

# What is qualitative research?

- Answers questions about human behavior
- Presents the “human voice”--What do people think?
- Focuses on ‘lived experience’

# Qualitative Research

- Theory based
- Holistic
- Descriptive and flexible
- Can be used in both *research* and *quality improvement* studies

# Theory

- Major theoretical approaches
  - Grounded theory
  - Phenomenology
  - Narrative/Discourse Analysis
  
- Theoretical approach influences
  - project design
  - data analysis
  - report/manuscript structure & content

# Perspective

## ■ Emic

### – *insider perspective*

- What is 'life' like from the perspective of the person 'living' the experience?

## ■ Etic

### – *outsider perspective*

- What is 'life' like from perspective of person looking in on the experience? [researcher's perspective]

## Use of qualitative methods

- Before research question is defined—  
can help focus topic
- Can be used concurrently with  
quantitative methods
- Can be used at the end of a project to  
further explore a topic that came up  
during data collection



# Qualitative methods

- Observation
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Case study/life history
- Ethnography
- Questionnaires
- Rapid Assessment

# Observation

- 4 kinds of observation:
  - **complete observer**-visible but no interaction
  - **observer as participant**-visible, interacts
  - **participant as observer**-observer role secondary
  - **complete participant**-often undercover
    - Some feel this is unethical.

# Interviews

- **Open-ended**--allows for longer answer
- **Closed-ended**--short, specific answer
- **Structured**--specific topic, structure.
- **Unstructured**--casual dialogue. Let it go where it will guided by interviewer.

# Focus Groups

- Useful way of getting information from a group of people in a controlled setting
- Use when interaction among participants will yield the best information
- Provides a great deal of useful information quickly

# Ethnography

- Ethnography is the study of culture.
  - “What is going on here?”
  - Seeks to capture ‘cultural context’ of events.
  - Looks for patterns, themes, connections and relationships that have meaning to members.
  - Theory based
  - Holistic
  - Descriptive and flexible

# Part 2: Data and Process

# Supplementary data

- Examples
  - Photos/videos
  - Audio recordings
  - Maps
  - Measurements
  - Written documents
  - Patient records
  - Historical records
  - Objects

# Sampling Strategies

- Very important part of qualitative research design
- Types
  - Purposeful sampling
  - Stratified purposeful sampling
  - Saturation sampling
  - Snowball sampling
  - Extreme case sampling
- Representative
  - Sample should be representative of available respondent sample, when possible



# Confidentiality

- The researcher's success is based on the establishment of trust between informant(s) and researcher.
- Often observe or are told information that is delicate. Protection of sources is key.
- If informants trust your discretion they will probably open up and provide better information.

# Research Process

- Begin research with an open mind.
- Know reason for research/ background information
- Careful and thorough literature search
- Development of research question(s)

# Next Steps

- Selection of theoretical perspective
- Selection of data collection methods
- Prepare project proposal and submit to IRB (Institutional Review Board).
  - See LVHN IRB website for needed forms and resources

# Field work process

- Get “sense” of site; includes information on key events/times/players/ rhythm of activity.
- Map site--pictures, diagrams, organizational chart
- Figure out who key informants are.
- Develop rapport with people--casual conversation and careful questions.
- Begin observations. People must get used to your presence so they ignore you.
- Keep written field notes for each field session

# Data Analysis

- Requires an open mind. Do not come to premature conclusions.
- Qualitative research is interpretive. Interpret based on all project data including photos, video, historical, and other information.
- Look for themes, connections, relationships.
- Can use computer software to aid in analysis.

# Project Report/Manuscript

- Important part of process.
- Be sure to address research questions in report.
- Link results to theoretical perspective
- Include quotes and descriptions to enhance findings—this is hallmark of qualitative reporting.
- Include recommendations/ next steps, if possible.

# Part 3: The Lived Experience

- Interview group work
- Ethnographic observation group work
- Focus group workshop debrief

# Questions?