RESEARCH STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

SCWK 240 – WEEK 12 SLIDES

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TRADITIONS

How to address the different aims of evaluation?

- Generation of information to aid decision-making
- Participation
- Enlightenment
- Reform
- Emancipation

Focused on evaluation which utilizes qualitative research methods, where the aim is to produce defensible knowledge claims. Quality of research still matters

APPROACH OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Qualitative research uses different assumptions/ approaches than quantitative research
- Emphasis on seeing the world from the eyes of the participants
- Strives to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them
- Holistic emphasis – studying the person, group, culture in the natural setting

SUBJECT OR INFORMANT?

People being studied are generally viewed as *participants* or *informants*, not "subjects"

- Viewed as active participants in the research
- They "inform" the researcher about their culture

Researcher seeks to understand the participants' cultural knowledge

- Hence, this requires learning about the participants' culture through ongoing discussion and involvement with them

DATA ANALYSIS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Researcher immerses self in data to bring order and meaning to the vast narrative

- Come to truly understand what the data are saying

Cyclical process – data collection occurs simultaneously with data analysis

- Analysis begins when data collection begins
- Reading, rereading, intuiting, analyzing, synthesizing, and reporting on data
- Sometimes called *theoretical sampling* (collect data until saturation is reached)

DATA ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

- Generalizations drawn from earlier interviews are often returned to participants for clarification and elaboration
- Look for meaning in the data as it is gathered
- Data similar in meaning are clustered together into preliminary categories (content analysis)
- Requires an extensive amount of time

SATURATION

Refers to a situation in data analysis where participants' descriptions become repetitive and confirm previously collected data

- An indication that data analysis is complete
- When data analysis is complete, data collection is terminated

EVALUATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Developing standards of quality

Lincoln and Guba's classic work shed light on how to assess truth in a qualitative report

Offered four alternate tests of quality that reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm:

- Credibility
- Dependability
- Transferability
- Confirmability

CREDIBILITY

Credibility refers to accuracy

Description must be plausible and recognized by participants

Credibility is enhanced by:

- Prolonged time in the field repeatedly observing and interacting with participants
- Using different data sources, methods, data type
- Conducting *member checks*
- Involving other investigators in the study

DEPENDABILITY

Dependability refers to the stability and trackability of the changes in data over time and conditions

- Want to determine the extent to which another researcher with similar training and rapport with participants would make the same observations
- This is determined by an audit trail
- Involves auditing research process, documenting all the raw data generated, and assessing method of data analysis

TRANSFERABILITY

- Transferability refers to the generalizability of the study findings to other settings, populations, and contexts
- Report must provide sufficient detail so that readers can assess this
- Lack of transferability is viewed as a weakness of qualitative methods

CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the data

- Would another researcher agree about the meanings emerging from the data
- An audit trail is used in which the researcher explicates how personal biases may have come into play

CONTEMPORARY STANDARDS OF QUALITY

- Diverse inquiry communities
- Positionality
- Community
- Voice
- Critical subjectivity
- Reciprocity
- Sacredness of the research relationship
- Sharing privileges

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

- Focuses on the whole of the human experience and the meanings ascribed to them by participants
- Provides the researcher with deep insights that would not be possible using quantitative methods
- The major strength of qualitative work is the validity of the data it produces
- Participants' true reality is likely to be reflected
- Major limitation is its perceived lack of objectivity and generalizability
- Researchers become the research tools and may lack objectivity

CHECKLIST FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

- Are you convinced that a qualitative approach is appropriate?
- Are you clear as to what your study seeks to do?
- How defensible or rigorous is your research design or methodology?
- How well was the data collection carried out?
- Is the role of the researcher clearly described?
- Did you clearly described the context?
- Were the methods reliable?
- Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?
- Are the data “rich“?
- Is the analysis reliable?
- Are the findings convincing?
- Are the findings relevant to the aims of the study?
- Are the conclusions adequate and defensible?

MIXED METHODS IN RESEARCH

A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem. It is used:

- When using both quantitative and qualitative data, together, provides a better understanding of your research problem than either type by itself
- To provide a complete picture of the research problem
- When you want to build from one phase of a study to another
- Explore qualitatively then develop an instrument
- Follow-up a quantitative study to obtain more detailed information.
- Can promote triangulation for data analysis and conclusions