Workshop on Qualitative Research

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What is qualitative research?
What kinds of questions can be answered using qualitative research methods?
- Narrative inquiry, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology
Criteria for evaluating qualitative research
Qualitative research, broadly defined:

“Any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.”

(Strauss & Corbin, 1990)
Qualitative Studies

Exploratory projects that focus on:
- Describing
- Understanding
- Explaining

Small in scale, but in-depth studies

Questions → What? Why? and How?
(not How many? How frequently?)
Qualitative methods are used:

- To gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively (Multerud, 2001)
- To better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known or knowledge is incomplete
- To gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known
Qualitative Research Findings

- Rich contextualized descriptions of complex phenomena
- New perspectives on things about which much is already known
- In-depth information that may be difficult to convey with quantitative methods
- Initial explorations to develop theories, generate hypotheses
- Offer explanations for unexpected findings generated by quantitative studies
Important Characteristics of Qualitative Research

- Conduct inquiry in a way that limits disruption of the natural context of the phenomena of interest
- Acknowledged participation of the researcher in the research ("human instrument" of data collection)
- Uses predominantly an inductive approach
- Reports new understandings in a literary style rich with participant commentaries.
Based on a belief in multiple realities
A commitment to the participants’ viewpoint
Qualitative research has an emergent design
## Comparison of Research Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– Objectivity valued</td>
<td>– Subjectivity valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– One reality</td>
<td>– Multiple realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Reduction, control, and prediction</td>
<td>– Discovery, description, and understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Measurable</td>
<td>– Interpretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Parts equal the whole</td>
<td>– Whole is greater than the parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Report statistical analyses</td>
<td>– Report rich narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Researcher separate</td>
<td>– Researcher part of the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Context free</td>
<td>– Context dependent</td>
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Narrative Inquiry

- Life-story research
- Based on tendency for people to story their experiences.
- Data analysis methods focus on plot or structure of stories, the use of metaphors and linguistic devices, etc. as well as the influence of the listener.
- Purpose – to understand meaning individuals give to experiences.
Narratives of Smoking Relapse
(Bottorff, Johnson, Irwin, & Ratner, 2000)

Purpose of the study:
- Explore ways postpartum women provide accounts of their smoking relapse
- Uncover ways in which meanings are created from the experience of smoking relapse

Interviews with 27 women who had quit smoking prior to pregnancy and relapsed
Relapse Narratives

Controlling one’s smoking
- I started with the odd puff or cigarette, but I’m really still a nonsmoker because I control my smoking.

Being vulnerable to smoking

Nostalgia for one’s former self

Smoking for relief

Never really having quit
New insights into complexities of relapse experience not captured by existing theories of relapse (e.g., Marlett, 1985)

Cessation programs that focus on behaviour change do not address the context in which women stop smoking.

New ways to support cessation are required.
Other Examples of Narrative Inquiry


Ethnography

A means of studying groups of individuals lifeways or patterns including health beliefs and practices of a culture.

Focus on revealing aspects of social patterns or observed conduct

Interpretive -- a search for meaning within social norms, culturally patterned behaviour
Reasons for using ethnography

- Develop theories that are grounded in life experiences, beliefs and practices
- Understand complex societies and sub-groups
- Understand human behaviour
Varieties of Ethnography

- Traditional vs. contemporary ethnography
- Cognitive and language-based ethnographic approaches
- Critical ethnography
- Other types (e.g., autoethnography, institutional ethnography, interpretive ethnography)
Ethnoscience

- South Asian Women’s Perceptions of Breast Health Practices (Bottorff, Johnson, Hilton, Grewal, Baghat, Clarke, 1999)
- Tobacco Dependence from the Perspective of Adolescents (Johnson, Ratner, Bottorff, Shoveller, Lovato, 2003)
Increasing recognition that youth who smoke are dependent on tobacco

Questions about suitability of current conceptualizations of dependence for youth

Screening tools for youth must be based on their experience, be reflective of their language and the way they see the world.
Research Questions

What are the patterns of language that youth use to describe tobacco dependence?

How do these patterns reflect the meaning that dependence has for youth?
Methods

- Secondary analysis of 6 focus group and 42 personal interview data previously collected with youth
- Primary open-ended interviews on the nature of nicotine dependence with 13 youth
- Open card sort interviews (using 60 key phrases) with 14 youth
Selected findings

Youth talked about — “being controlled by cigarettes,” “needing to smoke,” and “being addicted” to cigarettes.

The need to smoke appeared to extend beyond the need for nicotine.
Aspects of Tobacco Dependence

- Social
- Pleasurable
- Empowering
- Emotional
- Full-fledged dependence
Tools are required to help youth become aware of the early signs of dependence.

Used qualitative findings to develop a measure that captures the multi-dimensional aspects of emerging tobacco dependence:

- Stratified random sample of 3,280 adolescents – 562 smoked (17%) → Initial psychometric evaluations were promising.
- Validating instrument using survey data from an independent sample of over 5,000 adolescents in BC.
Other Examples of Ethnography


Reed-Danahay, D, (2001). 'This is your home now!': Conceptualizing location and dislocation in a dementia unit. *Qualitative Research, 1*, 467-64.
Grounded Theory

First developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967)

Primary purpose is to explore social processes to generate explanatory theories of human behaviour.

Data collection, sampling and analysis all occur simultaneously as the study progresses and further data collection are based on emerging theory.
Data Generation $\leftrightarrow$ Data Analysis
(Open, Axial and Selective Coding)

\[\downarrow\]

Core Variable

\[\downarrow\]

Grounded Theory
**Aim:** understand couple dynamics and interactions that influence tobacco reduction

**Sample:** Women who quit/reduced smoking for pregnancy AND their partners (n=30 couples)

**Data Collection:** In-depth, open-ended *individual* interviews at 2 time periods:
- Following delivery
- 3-6 months postpartum

* Bottorff, Kalaw, Johnson, Greaves, & Stewart
Couple Dynamics & Tobacco

- Tobacco-related routines
- Tobacco-related interaction patterns (TRIPs)
  - Disengaged
  - Conflictual
  - Accommodating

Compelled Tobacco Reduction

WARNING

CIGARETTES HURT BABIES

Tobacco use during pregnancy reduces the growth of babies during pregnancy. These smaller babies may not catch up in growth after birth and the risks of infant illness, disability and death are increased.

Health Canada
Altered Couple Interactions Related to Women’s CTR

Disengaged TRIPs

- Partners began for 1st time to exert pressure for woman’s TR
- Tension over inequity related to TR for preg
- Women set limits on partner smoking, and experienced resentment
What do findings demonstrate?

- Importance of addressing women’s TR during pregnancy in context of domestic relationships and interactions
- Tobacco - potential avenue of power and control
- For some couples TR for pregnancy associated with heightened conflict and increased vulnerability for women
Redesigning Interventions

Women-centred smoking cessation interventions

De-linked, couple-oriented, i.e., individually delivered to women and their partners

- increase awareness of couple dynamics and routines that influence tobacco use, and
- provide guidance for women and their partners on how to create a supportive environment for tobacco control within family units.

CTRCI: Planning Grant (Bottorff, Johnson, Greaves, Poland), 2004-5
Other GT examples


Phenomenology

- Both a philosophy and a method
- The central focus is the lived experience of the world of everyday life (often the taken for granted aspects of life)
- Provides rich descriptions of experience as it is lived, deeper understandings increase our sensitivity and make the thoughtful provision of care possible
Max van Manen (1984)

- Orient to the phenomenon by formulating phenomenological questions and bracketing
- Engage in existential investigation (generating data, using personal experiences, tracing etymological sources, literature, art, etc)
- Engage in phenomenological reflection (e.g., uncovering thematic aspects in life-world descriptions)
- Engage in phenomenological writing and rewriting
The lived body in dementia
(Phinney & Chesla, 2003)

- **Being slow** – taken-for granted activities become halting and tentative

- **Being lost** – being unable to find one’s way in an unfamiliar world
  - Lost in the world of space
  - Lost in the world of equipment
  - Lost in the world of activity

- **Being blank** – being in an empty world within meaningful habits and practices fall by the wayside
Using the findings?

- Understanding the lived experience of dementia stimulates a deeper understanding of symptoms.
- Understanding the place of the body in dementia may suggest fresh ideas and directions for assessment and intervention.
Other Examples of Phenomenology


Explaining the findings of quantitative studies
Learning more about the health care problems from the standpoint of the patient/families
Monitoring treatment impact (e.g., quality of life)
Others?
Using Qualitative Research to Solve Problems in HC Delivery (Olson, 2001)

- Understanding organizational behaviour
- Evaluating organizational processes
- Tracking the impact of organizational change
- Elaborating leader’s roles and functions
- Other??
  - Understanding access and service delivery from point of view of individuals and families
Criteria for Evaluating Qualitative Research

- Is the research significant? Is there new or unique information that is added to the work of others?
- Are the methods appropriate for the question?
- Are informants appropriate to inform study questions?
- Was data collection systematic? Adequate?
- Is reference made to accepted procedures for analysis? Was a systematic inductive approach used?
Criteria for Evaluating Qualitative Research (continued)

- Is there adequate discussion of how the themes, concepts and categories were derived from the data?
- Are the researcher’s conceptualizations true to the data? Are findings presented in within a context? Is the reader able to apprehend the essence of the experience from the report of findings?
- Is the credibility of the findings addressed?
- Do the conclusions reflect study findings?