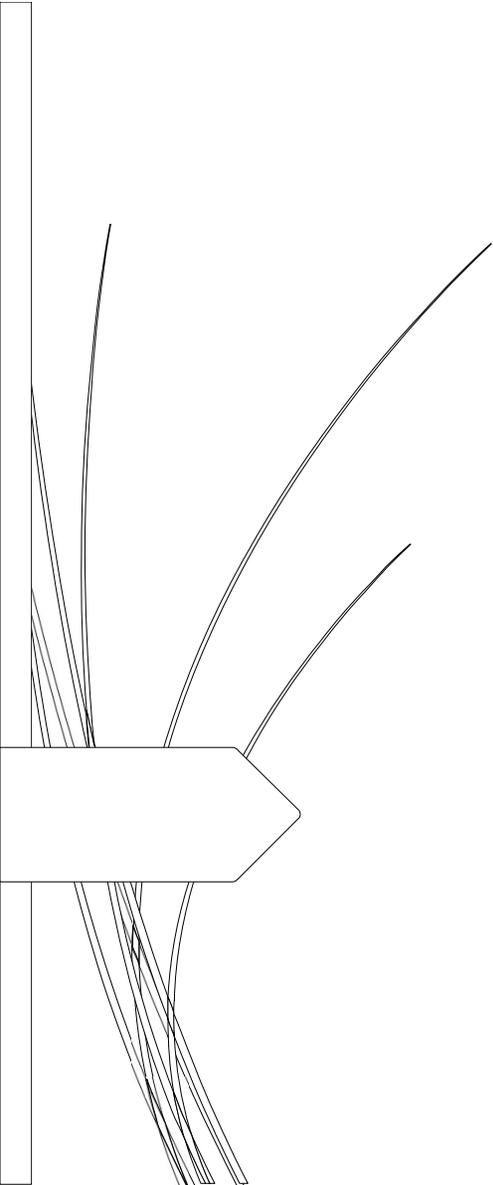




Qualitative Research: Introduction

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Lecture Format

- Difficulties in identifying the nature of Qualitative Research
- Key characteristics of Qual Res
- Main steps in qual res
- Criteria of Validity & Reliability in Qual Res
- The Main Preoccupation of Qual Res
- Critique/limitations of Qual Res



Difficulties in specifying the nature of qual Res

- ▶ Firstly, Qual Res encompass several diverse research methods.
 - ▶ E.g., main Res methods are:
 - ▶ Ethnography/participant observation.
 - ▶ Qualitative interviewing.
 - ▶ Focus groups
 - ▶ Language-based approaches to the collection of qualitative data, e.g., discourse analysis and conversation analysis.
 - ▶ The collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents.



Difficulties in specifying the nature of qual Res

- ▶ Secondly, the connection b/w theory and research ambiguous than in quant research.
 - ▶ (broadly, in Qual Res) in qualitative research, theory is supposed to be an outcome of an investigation rather than something that precedes it.

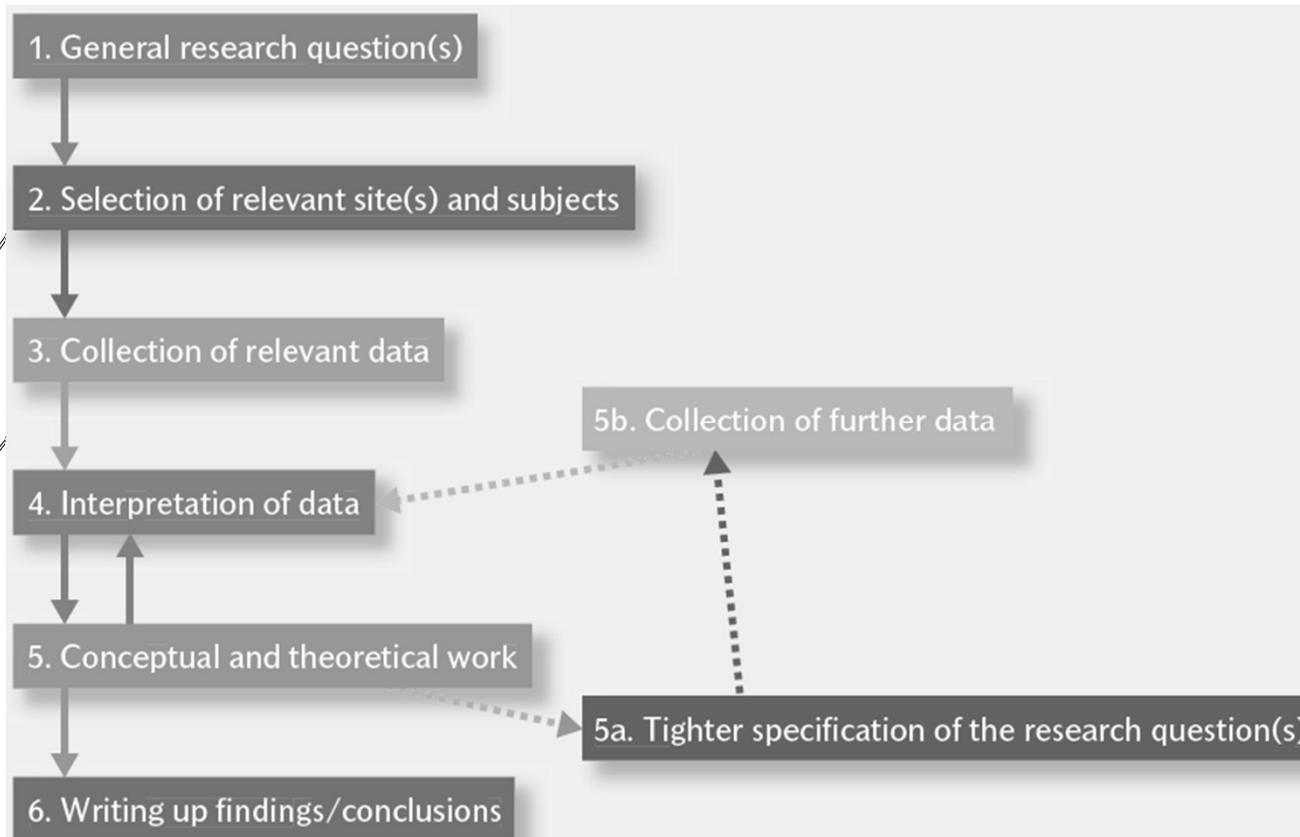


Qual Research is characteristically...

- Concerned with language
- Inductive approach
 - (narrowly, it means) data collection → theory generation.
- An epistemological position that is described as “interpretivism”
 - Understanding the social world by examining the interpretation of it by the participants.
- An ontological position that is described as “constructionism” (also referred to as “nominalism” in contrast to positivists’ “realist” ontology)
 - social properties as outcomes of the interactions b/w individuals, rather than phenomena out there’ and separate from those involved in its construction.



The Main Steps in Qualitative Research

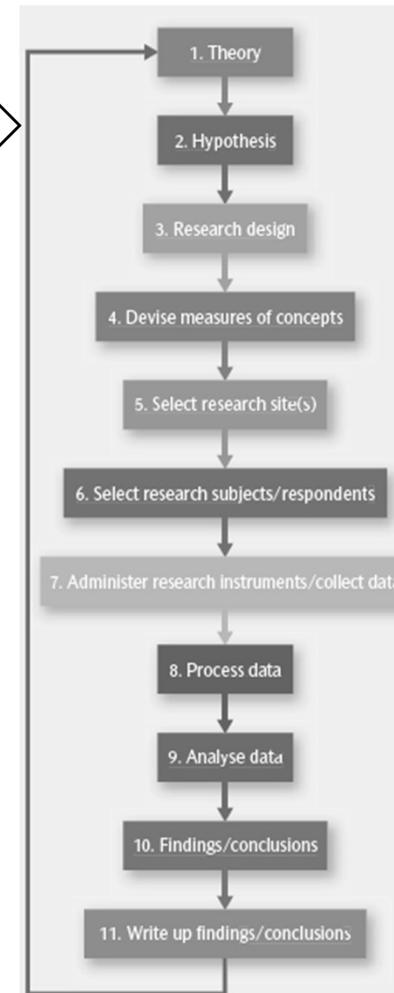
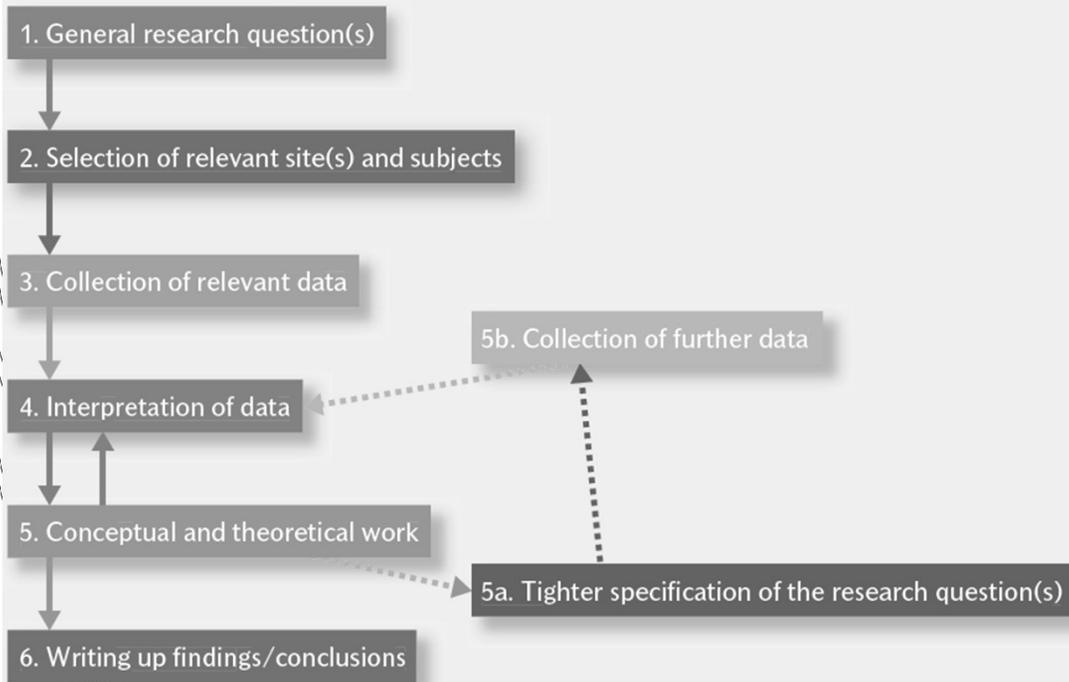


Main steps in Qual VS Quant Research



Qualitative

Quantitative





Reliability and Validity in Qual Res

- ▶ Herbert Blumber's (1954) distinction b/w 'definitive' and 'sensitizing' concepts.
 - ▶ Concepts in positivist/quantitative research as "definitive", i.e., once a concept is developed, it becomes (in terms of definition) fixed through the elaboration of indicators.
 - ▶ Qual Res use sensitizing concepts, i.e., they operate as a general sense of reference and guidance in collecting empirical data.



Reliability and Validity in Qual Res

- ▶ LeCompte & Goetz (1982) classification:
 - ▶ **External reliability:** the degree to which a study can be replicated. Difficulty to do, but, e.g., in replicating an ethnography, a new research could adopt the same role as adopted by the original researcher.
 - ▶ **Internal reliability:** when there is more than one observer, members of the research team agree about what they see and hear. It's similar to inter-observer consistency.
 - ▶ **Internal validity:** is there a good match b/w researcher's observations and the theories he/she is developing.
 - ▶ **External validity:** the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings.



Reliability and Validity in Qual Res

- ▶ Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) criteria of (I) **trustworthiness** and (II) **authenticity**:
- ▶ (I) **Trustworthiness** made up of four criteria:
 - ▶ **1) Credibility** (parallels internal validity): entails (1) ensuring the conduction of research according to canons of good practice and (2) confirming the findings the research from the participants of the research study (aka: respondent validation or member validation).
 - ▶ **2) Transferability** (parallels external validity): thick description should operate as a database for others to make judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other milieux.



Reliability and Validity in Qual Res

- ▶ **3) Dependability** (parallels reliability): ensuring keeping complete record of all the phases of research process (problem formulation, selection of research site, participants, field notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, etc.) in an accessible manner for peers to audit during and/or at the end of the research project. Auditing is a popular practice in qualitative research's dependability.
- ▶ **4) Confirmability** (parallels objectivity): ensuring that, while recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith rather than overtly allowed personal values into research.
 - ▶ Can be done via auditors (peers)



Reliability and Validity in Qual Res

(II) **Authenticity** concerns the wider political impact of research in terms of the following criteria:

- **Fairness.** Does the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting?
- **Ontological authenticity.** Does the research help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu?
- **Educative authenticity.** Does the research help members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting?
- **Catalytic authenticity.** Has the research acted as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances?
- **Tactical authenticity.** Has the research empowered members



The main preoccupations of Qual Researchers

- ▶ Seeing through the eyes of the people.
 - ▶ Since the subject matter of social sciences (human beings) differ from the subject matter of natural sciences (atoms etc.) – as phenomenology emphasizes -, so, better to see the world through the eyes of the people by:
 - ▶ (1) face-to-face interaction as mandatory.
 - ▶ (2) must participate in the mind of another human being (sociological, “take the role of the other”) – most often referred to as **empathetic understanding/investigation**.
- ▶ Potential problems: (1) going native!; (2) how far should a research go (e.g, if researching a criminal gang and faced with the question of participating in illegal activities)



The main preoccupations of Qual Researchers

- ▶ **Description and the emphasis on Context.**
 - ▶ Qual research quite **descriptive**.
 - ▶ Geertz (1973) recommends **thick description** of social settings, events, and individuals (participants) in the research process.
 - ▶ Reason? For giving **contextual understanding** of social behaviour.
- ▶ **Emphasis on Process.**
- ▶ Concern with events and patterns unfolding over time. i.e., a strong sense of flux and change.
 - ▶ Achieved best through ethnography/participant observation, but also semi-structured/unstructured interviews and FGDs.



The main preoccupations of Qual Researchers

- ▶ **Flexibility and limited structure.**
 - ▶ Qual Res prefer an orientation entailing as little prior contamination of the social world as possible. So,
 - ▶ Keep structure to a minimum to enhance the opportunity of genuinely revealing the perspectives of the people one is studying.
 - ▶ Rather than using structured **observation schedule, questionnaire** (as in positivist/quant research), qual researchers prefer unstructured (participant) observations, interviews, Focus Groups, etc.



Critique/limitations of Qual Res

- Difficult to replicate
- Problems of generalization
- Lack of transparency



Source/suggested reading

- Bryman, A. (Ed.) (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.