IAT 801 Qualitative Research Methods - Introducing the Study, Week 3

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WK1: Introduction

- Review of Papers and Discussion (continued)
- Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry (continued)
- Research Problem & Purpose Statement
- Research Questions
Review of Papers and Discussion
Review of Papers and Discussion

- A Phenomenology (Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Appendix C)
  - Study of the images or cognitive representations of AIDS patients
  - Illness representations shaped understandings of the disease and influenced therapy, problem solving, and behaviour
  - Involved 58 men and women diagnosed with AIDS
  - 11 major themes based on 175 significant statements
Review of Papers and Discussion

• An Ethnography (Haenfler, 2004; Appendix E)
  • Study of straight edge movement
  • 14 year study, 250 concerts, interview with 28 men and women, documents, internet, and other media
  • Study reconceptualizes resistance to opposition
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Phenomenological Study

- Reports on the “lived experiences” of a phenomenon
- Roots in philosophy: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty
- Essentialist view: Researchers search for “essential, invariant structure” or the underlying “intentionality of consciousness”
- In analysis aims to reduce phenomenological data
- Aims to “bracket” or “epoche” experiences by suspending prejudgments
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Phenomenological Study – Principles

• A return to the task of philosophy of knowing before empirical sciences

• A philosophy without assumptions: bracketing or epoche to suspend all judgments of what is real

• The intentionality of consciousness: an object is inextricably linked to one’s consciousness

• The refusal of the subject–object dichotomy: disavowal of Cartesianism. Reality’s perceived within the meaning of experience to an individual
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Phenomenological Study – Methods

• The concept of *epoche* is central
• Research questions explore the meaning of *lived experiences* by individuals
• Phenomenological data is collected in long interviews, researcher self-reflection, and experiential techniques
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Phenomenological Study – Methods

• Data analysis:
  • Protocols are divided into statements or horizontalization
  • Data transformed into clusters of meanings
  • Resulting description is *textural* and *structural*
  • Personal meaning can also be incorporated

• Phenomenological report provides a better understanding of the *essential, invariant structure (essence)*: “I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that” (Polkinghorne, 1989)
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Phenomenological Study – Challenges

• See Creswell’s challenges
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

An Ethnography

- An ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system
- Researchers examine observable and learned patterns of behaviour, customs and ways of life
- Genesis in cultural anthropology including Boas, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Mead, Park and Dewey
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

An Ethnography – Principles

- Researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the participants, typically through participant observation
- Researchers study the meanings of behaviour, language, artifacts and interactions of the culture sharing group
- Culture is bound and constructed by a group
- Themes of structure and function can guide the research of social organization:
  - Structure: kinship and political
  - Function: patterns of social relations
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

An Ethnography – Methods

- *Fieldwork* is immersion into *member* culture to gather data through observations, interviews, and materials to develop a *portrait of cultural rules*

- Key concepts:
  - *Gatekeepers* permit entry into membership
  - *Key informants* provide insightful information
  - *Reciprocity* awareness of involvement of participants
  - *Reactivity* awareness of the impact of the researcher
  - *Deception* is avoided in *transparency* in the role of the researcher
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

An Ethnography – Methods

- **Aim of holistic cultural portrait:**
  - *Thick description*
  - *Emic*: participant’s view
  - *Etic*: researcher’s view

- “They [researchers] establish what a stranger would have to know in order to understand what is going on here or, more challenging still, what a stranger would have to know in order to be able to participate in a meaningful way” (Wolcott, 1996)
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

An Ethnography – Challenges

• See Creswell’s challenges…
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Case Study

- A case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple forms of data.
- Antecedents in cultural anthropology, i.e., Malinowski’s Trobriand Islands, Chicago School’s “One Corner” study.
- Familiar in psychoanalytic cases (Freud), medicine, law, business and political science.
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Case Study – Methods

- Yin (1989) describes qualitative and mixed methods approaches: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies
- Single, multiple, comparative, multi-sited, within site case studies
- Purposeful sampling dependant on type of case study
- Multiple sources of data collection (observations, interviews, documents and audio-video data)
- Triangulation: related analysis of data around a central point or points
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Case Study – Methods

- *Holistic* analysis across the entire case(s) or *embedded analysis* of a specific aspect
- Emergence of a detailed description for its own purpose, validation, theory generation and theory validation
- Multiple design decisions, e.g. within-case analysis or cross-case analysis.
Four Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry

A Case Study – Challenges
• See Creswell’s challenges...
Research Problem & Purpose Statement
The Research Problem

- The intent is to provide a rationale for why the study is needed
- Research problems can originate in multiple fashions (personal experience, job-related, advisor’s recommendation) but the strongest problems arise from identified gaps in the literature (result of a literature review)
- Research problems are framed by the method used, e.g. the need for a theory (grounded theory), the need to understand a phenomenon (phenomenology)
Research Problem & Purpose Statement

The Purpose Statement

- The purpose statement provides the major objectives or “road map” to the study
- Creswell’s script (p.103)
  - Identifies approach
  - Encodes the action of the researcher, e.g. “describe” in a case study or ethnography; and the foci and outcomes of the research
  - Identifies the central phenomenon
  - Identifies or foreshadows participants
  - Defines the central phenomenon in the context of the method
- Review examples (pp 107–07)
Research Questions
Research Problem & Purpose Statement

The Central Research Question

• Four types of questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006)
  • Exploratory (phenomenon little understood)
  • Explanatory (explain patterns related to a phenomenon)
  • Descriptive (describe the phenomenon)
  • Emancipatory (engage social action)
• Qualitative questions tend to focus on “what” and “how” questions
Research Problem & Purpose Statement

The Central Research Question

- Anticipates the method of inquiry, e.g. “What are the core values of the straight edge movement, how do the members construct and understand... subculture?”
- A central overarching question: “the broadest question they could possibly pose about the research question”
Research Problem & Purpose Statement

Subquestions

• A study is reduced to the central research question and several subquestions
• Subquestions can take on two forms: issue subquestions and procedural subquestions. Studies can be composed of both.
• Issue subquestions breakdown the central phenomenon into subtopics
• Procedural (Topic) subquestions “call for information needed for description of” the phenomenon, study or case
Research Problem & Purpose Statement

Discussion

- Review research questions structured on Creswell pp. 111 & 113
- Theoretical frameworks (Ch. 2)
Questions?

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