

Criminology 321

**Logic and Principles of
Qualitative Inquiry**

Recap

- We ended last week talking about some principles of qualitative inquiry and thus far had discussed these:
 - Contextual; *in situ* – must study behaviour in context
 - Case Study – the contexts in which behaviour of interest happens
 - Emergent; Flexible – you adapt to the situation

Reflexivity

- We are social beings trying to understand social beings
- How can we ensure that our findings are not simply a product of our current beliefs?
- Trying to alleviate bias by exposing and addressing the quant myth of “objectivity” while at the same time trying to achieve it

Rival Plausible Explanations

- Triangulation valued: data redundancy and saturation help assess validity and deal with RPEs
- You seek to understand perspective of participants, but not constrained by those views
- Always looking for negative evidence

Qualitative Perspectives

- Not formulaic: tantalizing and scary
- Part of what we must learn is how to do it well
- Lots of examples in the everyday world; qualitative research is everywhere

Qualitative Case Study Inquiry

- Physicians: diagnostics (see *House*)
- Forensic Specialists: (see books by Kathy Reichs or watch *Bones*; *CSI*)
- Coroners: prevention (*DaVinci's Inquest*; *Quincy*; *Coroner*)
- Criminal Investigations; Trials; Commissions of Inquiry

Qualitative Analysis in Sherlock Holmes



Sherlock Holmes

- Holmes had followed the case in the paper
- Upon arrival he surveys the scene, interviews the principals, and is very specific about what he asks (What was for dinner? Did you close door behind you?)
 - Seeks “rich description”; thinks re *process*
- He inductively generates theories *and* creates tests to see which rival explanations are most plausible

Sherlock Holmes

- He starts by looking at the evidence that Inspector Gregory has gathered



Inspector Gregory

The Inspector has a Theory



Sherlock Holmes

- The curried mutton and the dog that didn't bark suggest to him it was an inside job. Was Mrs. Straker a part of it?



Sherlock Holmes

If Straker had intended to harm Silver Blaze, wouldn't there be evidence of it?



Sherlock Holmes

But then where's the horse?
Looking for clues in the right places



Sherlock Holmes

- The interview with Syllas Brown at Mapleton – “You’ve been watching me” – shows that Holmes is right about the horse
- But is he right about Straker, too?
- Not content with “shadow evidence,” he goes to London to see whether “Mr. Darbyshire” is actually Straker.

Sherlock Holmes

Off to London to tie up loose ends, but not before
testing one last hypothesis



Different Styles of Qualitative Analysis in *Silver Blaze*

Inspector Gregory:

- Gathers evidence
- Comes to a quick conclusion
- Is content with “shadow” evidence
- Does not look for negative evidence
- Remains purely inductive
- Lacks imagination
- Does not consider rival plausible explanations

Sherlock Holmes:

- Gathers evidence
- No premature conclusions
- Is not content with “shadow” evidence
- Is open to and seeks negative evidence
- Inductively generates a theory, then tests its implications deductively
- Considers rival plausible explanations

Logic of Qualitative Inquiry

- Although fictional, Sherlock and Inspector Gregory have parallels in the real world
- The “qualitative research” you will do after you graduate will affect real people and change their lives

What do these people have in common?



Disgraced pathologist Charles Smith stripped of medical licence



TORONTO
THE CANADIAN PRESS



Dr. Charles Smith, shown in Toronto in 2009, faces a disciplinary hearing in February, 2011.
KEVIN VAN PRAAGEN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL
A disciplinary panel in Toronto has stripped disgraced pathologist Dr. Charles Smith of his medical licence.

Parallels

Wrongful Conviction:

- premature conclusions, tunnel vision
- coercion in interviewing, leading questions, false confessions
- conflicts of interest (e.g., gaol informants)
- confusing science and advocacy

Qualitative Principles:

- must consider rival plausible explanations
- assertive but unbiased; non-judgemental; guided by evidence
- must consider social location of participants
- reflexivity; the data must make a difference