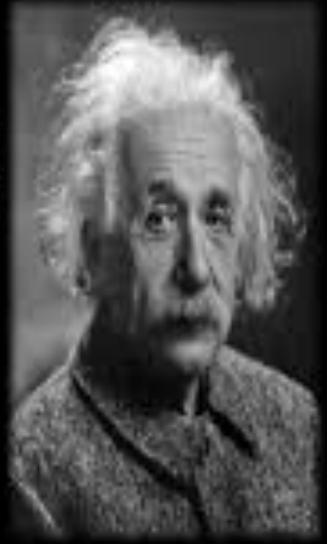


Qualitative Methods for Quantitative Researchers

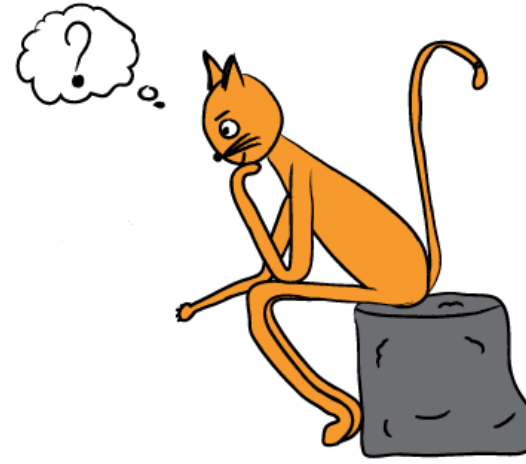
Everything that can be counted does not
necessarily count; everything that counts
cannot necessarily be counted.

(Albert Einstein)



Lori L. Jervis, Ph.D.
Professor

Department of Anthropology
Center for Applied Social Research
University of Oklahoma



What are qualitative methods?

What are qualitative methods?

Not survey
methods

Many
disciplines

Anthropology, sociology,
communications, political
science, nursing, history,
education, psychology,
etc...

Extremely
diverse

Focus Groups but...
Lots of other options

Qualitative: Words



A word cloud containing various informal and slang terms. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some words appearing larger than others. The words include: unsult, whacky, dicey, knucklehead, Dutch oven, razz, mantor, dildough, puke, booboo, eye candy, snookered, beemer, nuke, bazillion, duckface, dweet, jacko, pickled, jailbait, icky, janky, wino, munchies, grub, wimp, spunk, tanorexia, cheappucino, thinko, peegret, smurfbrain, and nook.

- Inductive: Research drives theory
 - Build theory from data
- Open-ended questions predominate
 - All responses a possibility
- Goal = encourage discussion, reflection, elaboration, FGs = brainstorming
- Less structure

Quantitative: Numbers



- Deductive: Theory drives research
 - Test theory by collecting data
- Close-ended questions predominate
 - Fixed choices, pre-coded, pre-determined responses
 - Yes, no. One word. List of choices
- More structure

** Words vs. numbers fallacy*

Why incorporate qualitative methods?

**Focus on locally/
culturally specific
information**

**Emphasizes
participants'
perspectives**

**Better able to
portray the
particular, complex,
gray areas**

**Less likely to make
(incorrect)
assumptions**

**Explores rather
than asking pre-
determined
questions**

**Utilizes follow-up
questions (probes),
employs a variety
of modalities**

**Conveys complexity
through (usually)
textual
representations**

**Uses participants
own words**

**Contrasts themes
and unique/
different
perspectives**

Is Qualitative Research Superior?

- Yes
- and no...
 - Quantitative and qualitative research approach problems from different perspectives (e.g., positivism vs. constructivism)
 - *Do different things*

Ability to capture
local/cultural/specific

Degree of
Structuring
Structured
Semi-structured
Unstructured

Degree of
generalization

Qualitative Approaches

- Ethnography
 - Method for studying cultural groups; participant observation and interviews
- Grounded theory
 - Build theory from empirical data; interviews and observations
- Focus Groups
 - Group interviews
- Case Studies
 - Intensive study of single unit
- Content Analysis
 - Analysis of written/visual materials
- Interviews (Different types)
- Observations (Different types)

Ways to Incorporate Qualitative Methods

Open-ended questions

In conjunction with other methods (i.e., add to survey)

- Most common approach

Qualitative interviews

Alone or in conjunction with other methods

Semi-structured or unstructured possible

Observations

Alone or in conjunction with other methods

Semi-structured or unstructured possible

Focus Groups??

Popular because efficient – Get many viewpoints in relatively short amount of time

But... Conducting interview with multiple people = challenging (moderating skills!)

Other challenges:
Upfront coordination
Data analysis

So, you want to do focus groups anyway...

Rationale: *Why focus groups?*

Useful:

Topic not overly sensitive

Group dynamics = helpful in understanding phenomenon

Group “building something together” is desirable (group norms/consensus).

Not useful:

Sensitive topics

Group/community = problematic (e.g., group interview increase participant risks)

Topic requires exploration with one individual at a time (e.g., many different roles, conflicting views, etc.).

Problem of focus group Ns:

Focus group of 8 ≠ 8 perspectives

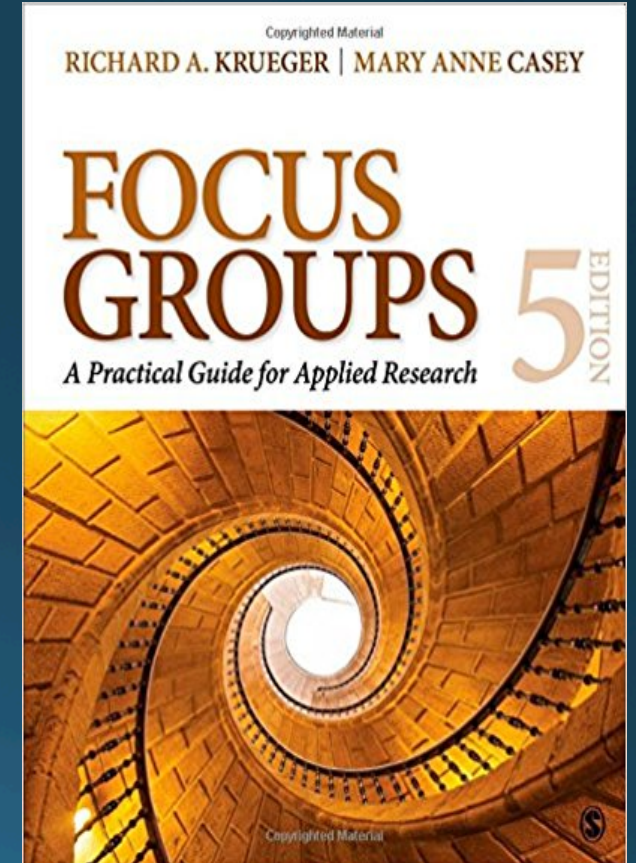
Usually 1 or 2 people have greater influence/dominance over group; some rarely speak

40 individual interviews vs 40 FG participants

- Individual interviews = more data, different data

FG tips

- Get training and/or advice from someone with experience
- Focus Group References (lots) →
- Need minimum of 2 research staff, ideally 3
 - Moderator
 - Introduce project, conduct interview, pay attention to and facilitate group dynamics
 - Comoderator/notetaker:
 - Welcome people, take notes during meeting, deal with recording equipment, issue participant payments, set up snacks, assist late participants, etc.



FG tips

- Transcription = challenging. Lots of voices to contend with
- Analysis = Challenging (small N of transcripts)
 - Usually not formally coded
 - Not worth developing coding scheme
 - Employ thematic analysis
- Number crunching focus group findings = *seriously* problematic
 - “So many said this, so many said that...”
 - Problem of focus group Ns = does not work. How can you tabulate??
 - Number crunching should not be main point of any qualitative research

Mixed Methods

"....researchers analyze, interpret, and write up their research in such a way that the quantitative and qualitative components are mutually illuminating" (Bryman 2007)

Genuinely integrated = very strong research design

Triangulation: Qual and Quan data collected on same aspect of problem and compared as check on validity

Complementary approach: Qual and Quan collect data on different aspects of problem

Sequencing:

- QUAL first: QUAL data informs survey by ensuring items comprehensible and relevant for population. QUAN survey helps with generalizability
- QUAN first: QUAN sample used to select smaller FU sample. QUAL FU used to help understand and interpret QUAN survey
- Iterative = ideal

Mixed = rare

Difficult to publish genuinely integrated
& to overcome disciplinary biases

Questions?

