

Does size matter?

Qualitative approaches to the study of (problem) gambling

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Outline

- Qualitative vs quantitative methods
- Sampling
- Surveys vs interviews
- Trustworthiness
- Qualitative methods
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Observation
 - Case studies
- Knowledge mobilization/transfer/exchange
 - PAR, arts-based research

Thinking differently...

Quantitative

- outcome oriented
- basic element of analysis is numbers
- uniform in appearance & data collection
- generalization
- control of error

Qualitative

- process oriented
- basic element of analysis is words / meaning
- appearance variable (method, sample, philosophy)
- depth, transferability
- authenticity, trustworthiness of findings

Epistemologically...

Quantitative

- single reality
- reality is objective & context free
- test/predict - hypotheses
- reductionistic - examines 1-2 two main variables across a large sample (predict relationships mathematically in a population)

Qualitative

- multiple realities
- reality is socially constructed & context interrelated
- understand experience, meaning
- holistic perspective
- small samples

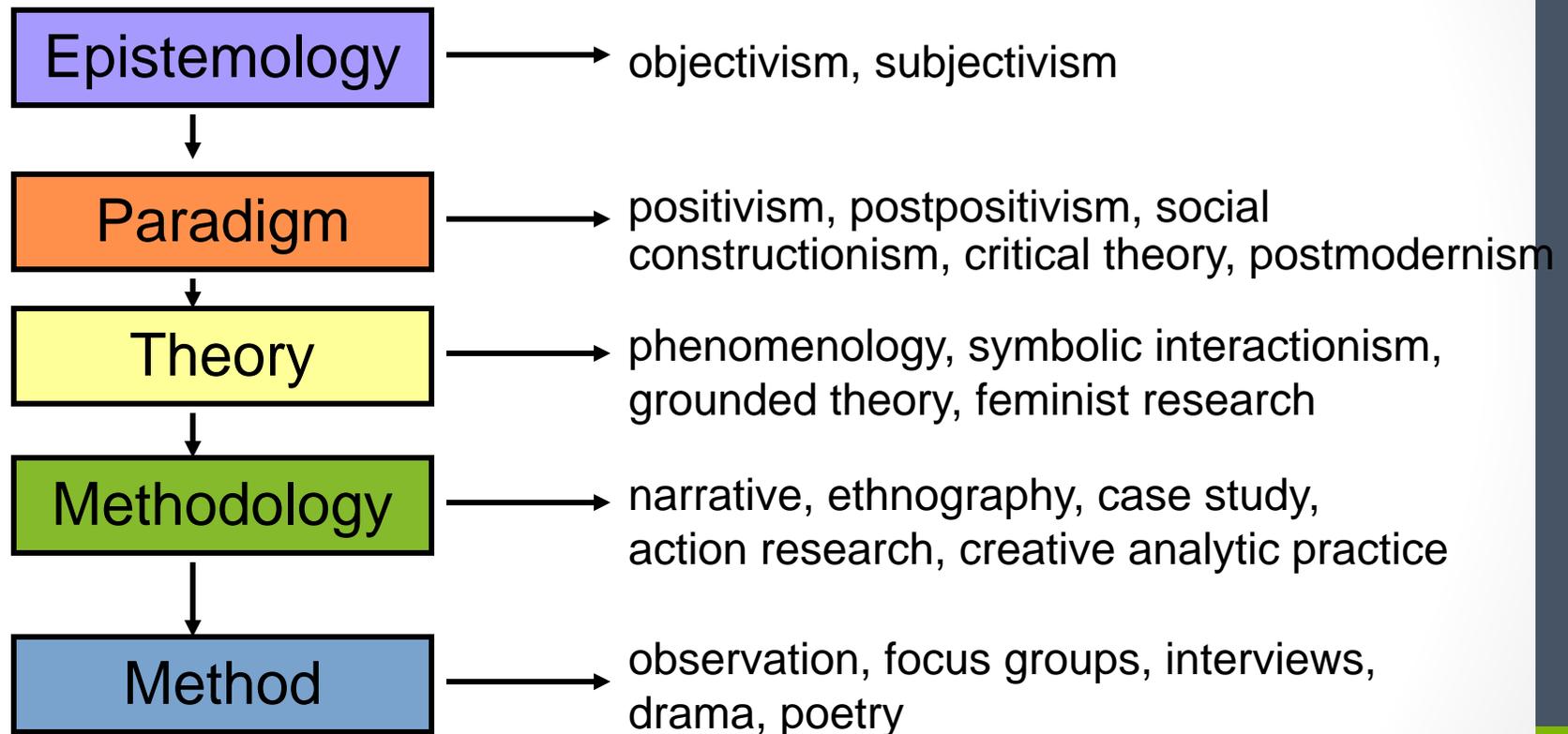
Methodologically...

Quantitative

- reasoning is deductive
- theory is developed a priori & tested
- precise measurement of variables
- control & reduction of variability important

Qualitative

- reasoning is inductive
- theory emerges from the data
- rich description of meaning of concepts
- control unimportant; variability is desired



Adapted from Crotty (1998)

Samples in qualitative research

- manifest the phenomenon under examination
- represent the relevant population
- meet pre-selected criterion
- provide information rich cases for in-depth study

Qualitative samples may:

- highlights the typical or the unusual
- homogeneity versus heterogeneity [****negative case****]
- facilitates comparisons
- elaborates or deepens initial analysis

Choosing participants

- People in positions of power and authority, or with technical skills, are not necessarily the best people to talk to.
- Ask people who actually “live” the situation, “experience” the program, or “are” a member of a subgroup you are researching.
- If you do not understand the population well enough to know who can be of most use, do not be afraid to ask members that you have access to [key informants].

Surveys and Interviews

- On your own, complete the Leisure Motivation Scale.
- Now, with the person sitting beside you, role play the individual interview using the Interview Guide I've given you (max 10 min)

To consider only questions of program outcomes may limit the usefulness of an evaluation. Suppose the data suggest emphatically that the program was a success. You can say, “It worked!” But unless you have taken care to describe the details of the program’s operations, you may be unable to answer a question that logically follows such a judgment of success: “What worked?” If you cannot answer that, you will have wasted the effort measuring the outcomes of events that cannot be described and therefore remain a mystery...

If this happens to you, you will not be alone. As a matter of fact, you will be in good company. Few evaluation reports pay enough attention to describing the process of a program that helped participants achieve its outcomes...

(King et al., 1987, p. 9)

Trustworthiness

- Are the findings sufficiently authentic that I may trust myself in acting on their implications? More to the point, would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them?

Guba & Lincoln, 2005

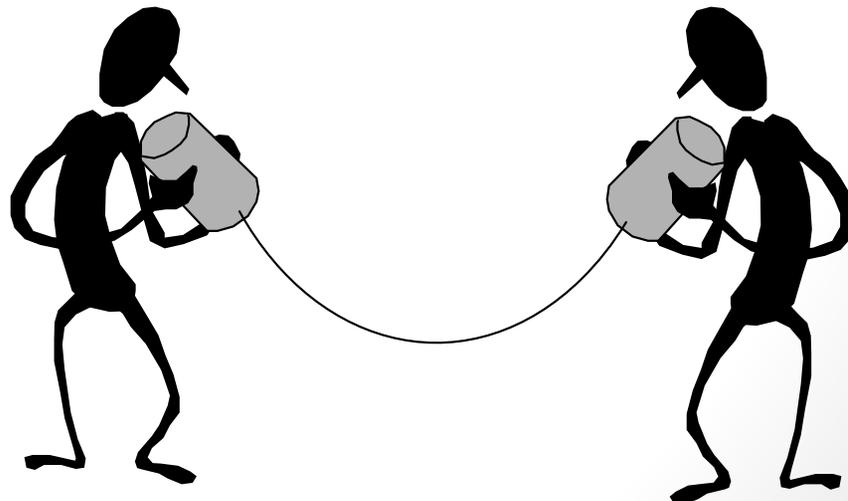
- Transferability
- Rigor
- Dependability
- Confirmability
- Credibility



Lincoln & Guba, 1986 as cited in Patton, 2002

Interviews

- structured
- semi-structured
- active
- narrative, conversational, life story



Focus groups

- “the **explicit use of group interaction** to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group”

(Morgan, 1988, p. 12)

Disadvantages

- less “control”
- moderator must have specialized skills [group observation, facilitation, active listening, emergent questioning / probing, silence, intervention.....]
- data are more difficult to analyze
- differences between / within groups can be difficult to deal with
- difficult to assemble [scheduling]
- discussion must be in a conducive environment [everyone can see everyone else, comfortable]
- group pressure to conform

Advantages

- socially-oriented research method capturing real-life data in a social environment
- interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members
- takes advantage group synergy, collective & collaborative thinking and problem-solving
- useful for gathering information about perceptions, attitudes, & intended actions or applications
- speedy results
- increase the sample size of an inquiry by talking with several people at once
- low in cost
- opportunity to gather richer and more detailed responses, probe for further information, & clarify any confusing issues

Ethnography

- to describe and understand culture from the point of view of the participants themselves
- places the researcher in the midst of the phenomena
- researchers examine the phenomena or social event as perceived by the participants
- “subjective soaking” -- field researcher from the outset abandons the idea of absolute objectivity or scientific neutrality and attempts rather to merge him / herself into the culture being studied (Clammer 1984)

Case Study

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context
- involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event [a case] or a comparison of many instances [a multiple case study]
- can be an individual, a team, a community or organization, or a country

Types of cases

- *Extreme or deviant cases*: well-suited for getting a point across in an especially dramatic way (exceptional individuals), could be an exemplar or prototype
- *Critical cases*: having strategic importance in relation to the general problem
- *Snapshot/cross-sectional case studies*: detailed, objective study of one research entity at one point in time (e.g., comparing departments within the case study agency)
- *Longitudinal case studies*: study of one research entity at multiple time points
- *Comparative case studies*: a set of multiple case studies of multiple research entities for the purpose of cross-unit comparison.

Strengths & weaknesses

- Strengths:
 - brings us to an in-depth understanding of a complex issue or object
 - can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research
 - emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships
 - provides the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods
- Criticisms:
 - not generalizable
 - intense exposure to study of the case has implications for the findings

Knowledge Mobilization

