Appraising Evidence Developed Using Qualitative Inquiry

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Building from… Feb 8, 2007 -

- How do I know the research is any good?
  - Step 1: **How to appraise the literature (Qualitative articles - theory session)**.

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To-day.....

How do I know the *article* is any good?

- Step 2: How to appraise the literature *(Qualitative articles - practical session).*
Topics we will consider during this session…..

- What are the indicators of ‘quality’ in a qualitative study?
  - A synthesis of literature

- How can we recognize the indicators?
  - Are the premises that underpin qualitative inquiry upheld in this study?

- Practice appraising selected studies
Selected Resources drawn upon....


- Cutcliffe, J.R. & McKenna, H.P. When do we know what we know? Considering the truth of research findings and the craft of qualitative research. (2002) *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 39: 611-618.
Selected resources drawn upon con’t….

- Foster, J. (1999) People with traumatic brain injuries used various strategies to deal with labels applied by society. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 2: 64
Premises..... Of qualitative research
Recognizes knowledge as ‘perspectival’

1. Assumes there are multiple perspectives ‘on’ the topic, issue or question….
   - Therefore assumes that there is not one ‘truth’

Seeks to make manifest different perspectives
Knowledge is *constructed*

2. Assumes reality is *socially constructed* which means what we know and how we experience it is shaped by context and *in interaction* with others.

Therefore the research process is an *intersubjective* one...the researcher engages with the ‘researched’ to produce knowledge

**Reflexivity** is a key concept
3. May also consider the ways broader social structures - influence experience, shape the ways actions are undertaken
Knowledge is *contextual*
4 Qualitative research uses **Inductive reasoning**

- Uses data to generate the idea
  -- ’bottom up’
  -- in many instances foregrounds the possibility of ‘alternative’ viewpoints
Insight on the ‘particular’

5 Rather than being generalizable to the broader population... qualitative research is generated to provide insights into an event or experience or phenomenon in a

- Social context
- Subjective experience
- Historical time (Thorne, 2000)
Nature of knowledge generated......

- Generally AIMS to provide Insights into, or understanding of, processes...eg
  - How power operates
  - Marginalizing processes and practices
    - How enacted in different contexts
    - How taken up and communicated in discourses
  - How a particular event (illness etc.) is managed or viewed over time

- Aim is to develop an analytic structure to offer insights into why a particular phenomenon operates as it does.
Analysis is ...

- Systematic
- Rigorous
- Auditable (Thorne, 2003, p. 70).
Nature of knowledge con’t…. 

- May contribute to an understanding of ways context influences or shapes peoples’ understandings or experiences
  - How do toxic workplaces operate?
  - Tracing the influences of patriarchy, hegemony on particular group’s (men’s, women’s, poor, etc.) experiences of…. 
With Dr. Hall you.........

Reviewed

Theoretical & Methodological Perspectives...in Qualitative Research....
In appraising quality…

Key idea to keep in mind... internal congruence.

This applies throughout the presentation of the study in the article...

- Is the question congruent with the proposed method?
- Are there clear links between the methodology and methods used?
What if you don’t know the methodology?....

- Look for supporting literature
- Is it internally congruent?

The goal is to draw upon this reading to appraise whether the ‘methods’ – what was done - is consistent with the methodological principles.
Sampling

- Principles of sampling are informed by the assumptions of the methodological perspective drawn upon....
Sampling concepts....

Sources of data...guided by **purposive sampling**.....participants chosen on the basis of their

1. **knowledge of the phenomenon** of interest and their willingness to ‘speak’ to it.
2. **Position** within an organization/society and/or
3. **Authority** or **record** of the topic of interest.
Sampling adequacy...

Guided by...

- **Depth**
  - Quality and detail of the data gathered.

- **Duration**
  - May need to gather data (observe/interview/review documents etc.) over time.

- **Analytic complexity**
  - May need to extend sampling to satisfy emerging analysis - terms you may see are... *theoretical sampling, negative case etc.*
  - You may also see terms such as ‘saturation of categories’
Theoretical sample....term used in particular methodology – grounded theory – where as the theory is being developed the researcher seeks out participants who may be able to speak to different aspects of the theory.

- the ‘negative case’
- explore different dimensions of the experience for example - gendered or generational perspectives
Analysis...

- Explicitly described and illustrated.
- Internally consistent... steps taken are compatible with the methodological perspective being used.
Approaches to analysis. . .

Analyses of quality are systematic and involve:

- **Comprehending** the phenomenon under study
- **Synthesizing** a portrait of the phenomenon that accounts for relations & linkages
- **Theorising** about how & why these relations appear as they do
- **Recontextualising** or putting the new knowledge about the phenomena back into the context of how others have articulated the evolving knowledge (Thorne, 2003)
Appraising approaches to analysis

Is the process systematic & made explicit?

Is the context of the research clearly delineated?
  - Who is involved?
  - Why they are involved?
  - Nature of their ‘credentials’ for speaking to the question
  - If appropriate to the question (& methodological perspective) are multiple perspectives (people with different points of view on the topic, other sources of data, texts, etc. sought?)
Analysis…con’t - auditability

- Are the researchers’ decisions evident?
  - Do they describe & illustrate the decisions made through the analytic process?
  - Do they explain their role (position) with respect to the research?
  - Do they explain and illustrate the way(s) they involved the participants in appraising the adequacy of the analysis?
Qualitative ‘pyramid’ of evidence?

- Determining Quality….
  - Significance…(Morse, 2004)
    - Establishing the place for this kind of knowledge in practice & theory development
  - Levels of complexity and discovery….(Kearney, 2001)
Kearney (2001)

- **Complexity** – “substantiated linking of discrete findings into a multifaceted web of interactions” (p. 146)
  - Context of a phenomenon – historical, familial, socio-economic, environmental, political and
  - Aspects of human individuality such as meaning, perception, emotion, action, and interaction.
Discovery “presentation by researchers of new perspectives on or information about the human phenomenon under study” (p. 146).

- With previously uncaptured richness or
- In a new theoretical or interpretive framing of the phenomenon that sheds light on how it came to be and what it is like
Descriptive methods...lower levels of complexity

Interpretive & theorizing methods...(hermeneutic phenomenology, grounded theory, critical interpretive inquiry etc.)...higher levels of complexity
The Qualitative ‘pyramid’……..

- Dense explanatory description – traces the ways a number of influences impact the situation of interest – ‘thick description’ (highest complexity & discovery)

- Description of experiential variation – the main pathway is described but also variations on pathway or of process – needs depth & breadth of data and variation in sampling

- Shared pathway or meaning – synthesis of shared experience or process – higher level of complexity – with an integration of categories or clusters

- Descriptive categories – clusters of data – inventory of categories – content analysis- no linking of categories to one another – can be high level of discovery but often low level of complexity

- ‘a priori’ frameworks - (new data into ‘old’ bottles)
- Practice....

Assigned reading:

Critiquing quality....(1)

- Is the problem contextualised?
- Question or aims articulated?
- Methodological perspective noted?
Critiquing quality......(2)

- Are Methods used -
  - Compatible with the methodology?
    - Hermeneutic Phenomenology
      - Sample ‘experts’ with the experience?
      - Able to ‘speak to’ the experience?
      - Does researcher engage ‘with’ to explore dimensions of experience – sensory, emotional etc?
Critiquing quality (3)

- Analysis
  - Depth & detail evident?
    - Seeking *experience* of…
    - Account for variations in the experience?
    - Dimensions illustrated with data?
      - Central concept...Lived Body ...
        - Meanings of assistive devices in relation to different aspects of one’s life
  - Considered in relation to broader literature or conceptualizations?
- Auditable?
  - Steps of analysis made visible?

- Systematic?
  -

- Rigorous?
Insights this study offers…

On reading this study what were your thoughts?
How did it align with what you observe or experience in your practice?
Any surprises or new insights?
Critique of quality....

- Complexity?
  - Levels

- Discovery?
  - Levels
Additional examples.....

- See handout.....
To keep in mind......

- When taking up qualitative evidence.
  - Ensure you are using it as it is intended.
  - Recall the AIMS of qualitative inquiry.

- If not generalizability then what?