QUALITATIVE METHODS
Outline

• 1. Characteristics and Forms of Qualitative Methods
• 2. How Do We Do Qualitative Research
  – What Is the Unit of Our Research
  – What Questions Do We Ask
  – How Do We Record Data
  – How Do We Analyze the Data
• 3. How Do the Three Forms of Qualitative Research Differ
• 4. How Do We Evaluate Qualitative Research
• 5. What Are the Main Ethical Issues
Characteristics and Forms of Qualitative Methods

- Natural settings; Realism $\leftrightarrow$ experiments and surveys

Forms:
- Participant Observation
- Intensive Interview
- Focus Groups

Some Characteristics:
- Collection of qualitative data
- Exploratory research and inductive reasoning
- An orientation towards context and the relationship of the phenomenon under study to other aspects of social life
- Focus on human subjectivity
- Use of idiographic explanation
- Reflexive design $\rightarrow$ design develops as info gets revealed
- Awareness of the subjectivity of researcher
- More personal investment
- Takes longer
How Do We Do Qualitative Research

• What Is the Unit of Our Research?
  - Meanings
  - Practices
  - Episodes
  - Encounters
  - Roles
  - Relationships
  - Groups
  - Organizations
  - Settlements
  - Worlds
  - Lifestyles

• Sampling People and Events
  - Experience Sampling Method (ESM)

• Theoretical Sampling
How Do We Do Qualitative Research

What Questions Do We Ask?

What type is it?

What is its structure?
  – Authority
  – Rules
  – Social Control
  – Social Relations
  – Recruitment and Advancement
  – Social Stratification
  – Differentiation

How frequent is it?

What are its causes?

What are its processes?
  – Cycles
  – Spirals
  – Sequences

Trace back to starting point

Trace forward to starting point

Trace through starting point

What are its consequences
  – Systemic functions
  – Unintended consequences

What are people’s strategies?
How Do We Do Qualitative Research

How Do We Record Data?

• Jot down notes while on the field
• Write your actual notes later but within 24 hours at home or your office
• Take notes on your notes
• Careful and detailed note-taking!
How Do We Do Qualitative Research

• How Do We Analyze the Data?

  **Phases of the Analysis**
  • Grounded theory
  • Inductive generalizations grounded in the observations
  •
  • 1. identify concepts and problems
     • Emic vs. Etic focus
       – Who provide the main categories of the research? The actors or the researcher?
     • Conversation analysis --
  • 2. read your notes and take notes on the notes
  • 3. develop an argument and check it against your notes
  • 4. add a natural history of the development of the evidence

• **Use of Computers**

  • Ethnograph, NVIVO
How Do the Three Forms of Qualitative Research Differ

• *Choosing a Role*
  – Complete Observation
  – Participation and Observation
  – Covert Participation

• *Entering the Field*

• *Gatekeepers and Key Informants*
• *Developing and Maintaining Relationships*
• *Managing the Personal Dimensions*

• *Reactive Effects*
How Do the Three Forms of Qualitative Research Differ

- **Establishing and Maintaining Partnership**

- **Asking Questions and Recording Answers**
  - Interview guide
  - Grand tour question
  - Saturation point

- **Combining Participant Observation and Intensive Interviewing**
How Do the Three Forms of Qualitative Research Differ

• **Focus Groups**
  
  • Group of unrelated people 7-10 people
  • Better mimics the exchange of ideas in social settings

Examples:
  • Market research (movies)
  • Campaign research
How Do We Evaluate Qualitative Research

• Credibility of informant
• Were responses spontaneous or prompted by researcher
• The influence of the researcher or his informant on others' behavior

• Tacit knowledge
What Are the Main Ethical Issues

• Voluntary participation
• Subject well-being
• Identity disclosure
• Confidentiality