

Research Workshop 101

Qualitative Research

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Actually, research can be more like this:



Outline for today's workshop

Overview of research

Qualitative Methodologies

Qualitative Methods

Tips

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Group Exercise

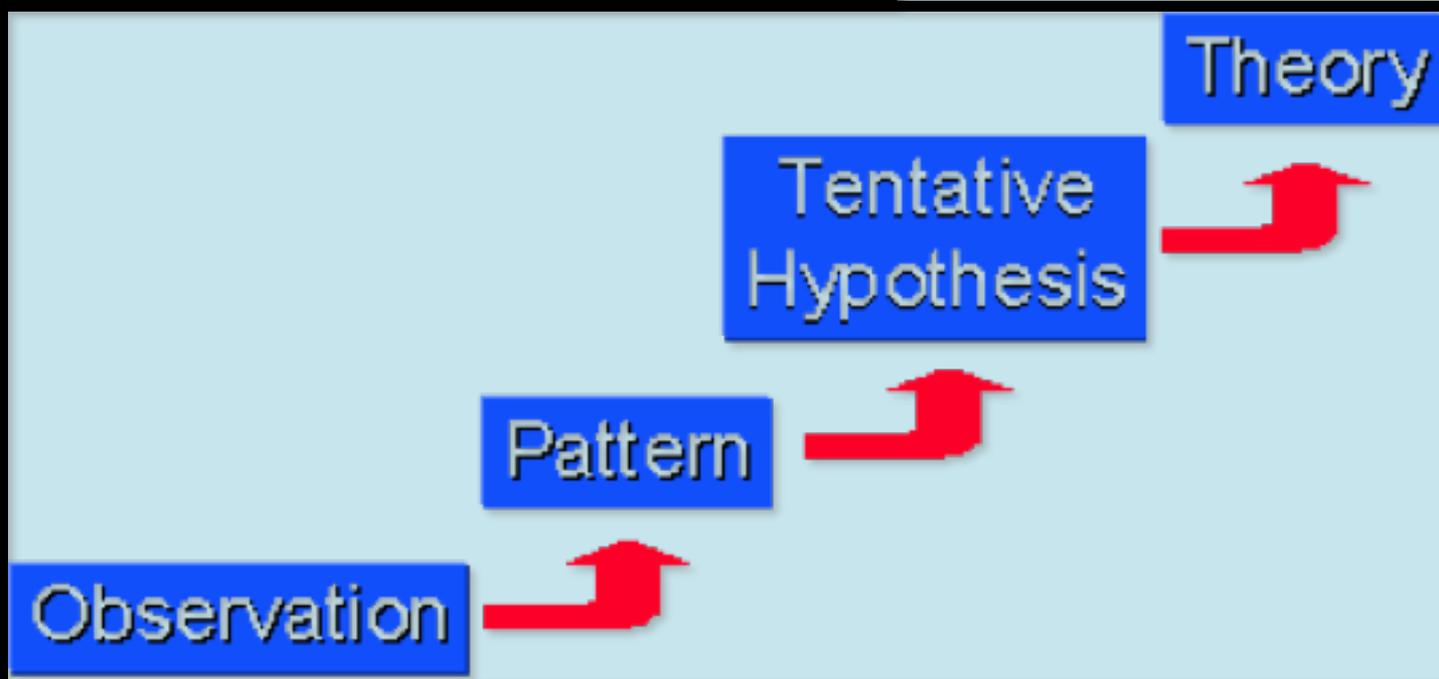
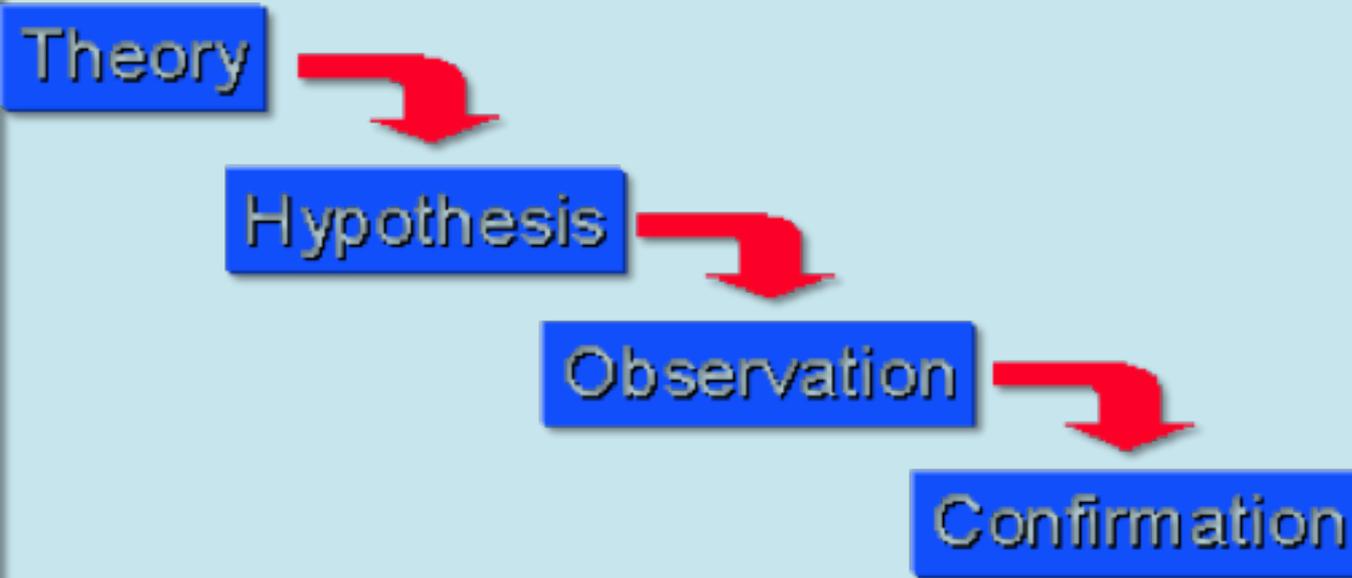
Why **RESEARCH**?

- Can lead to new innovations and advances in technology
- Expands human understanding of the world and makes sense of the world we live in
- Stimulating, exciting, and promotes development (of thought, industry, economy, etc.)

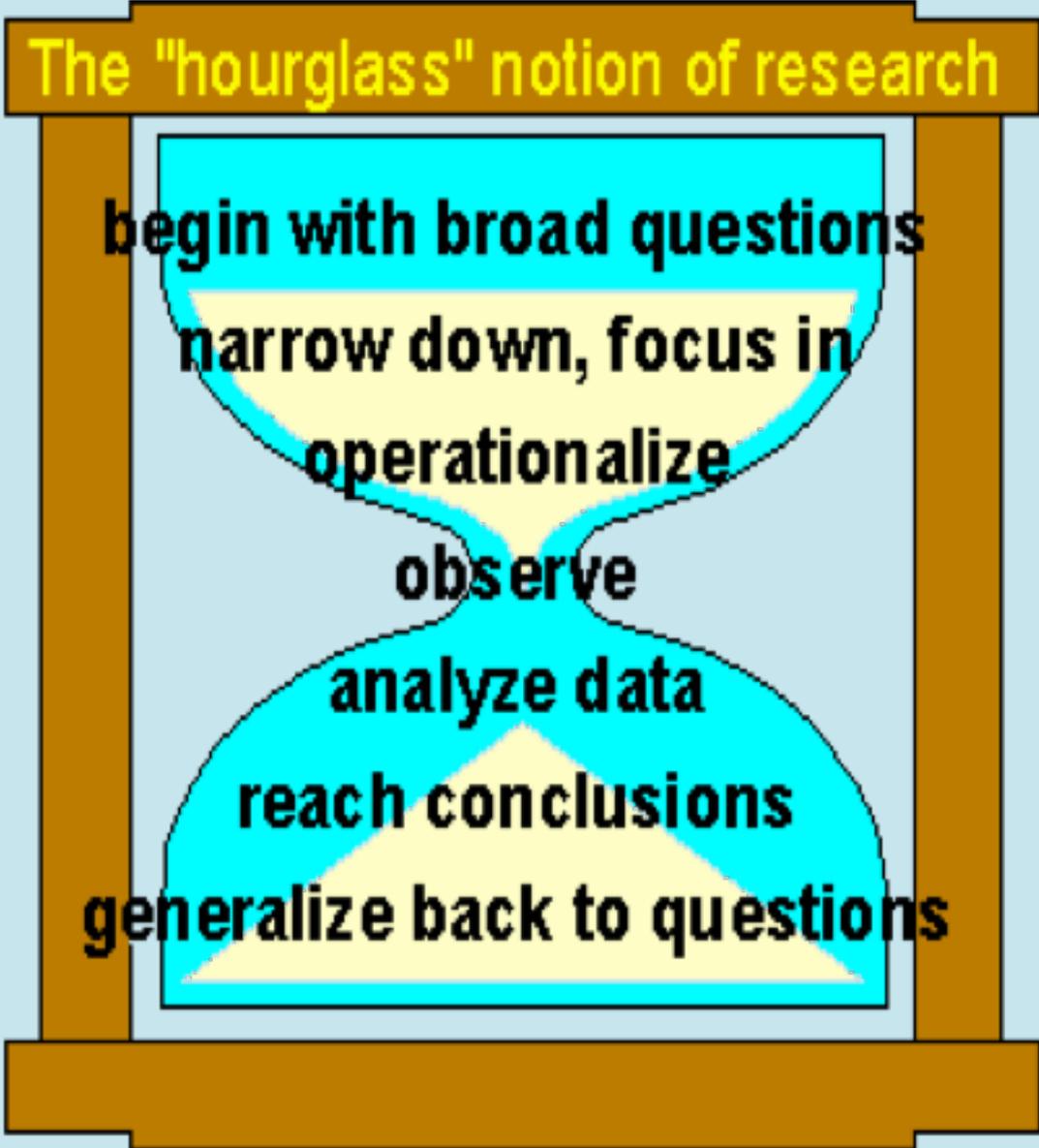
Terminology

- Methodology
 - Reliability
 - Validity
- Method
- Mixed methods
 - Inductive
 - Deductive

Which is which?

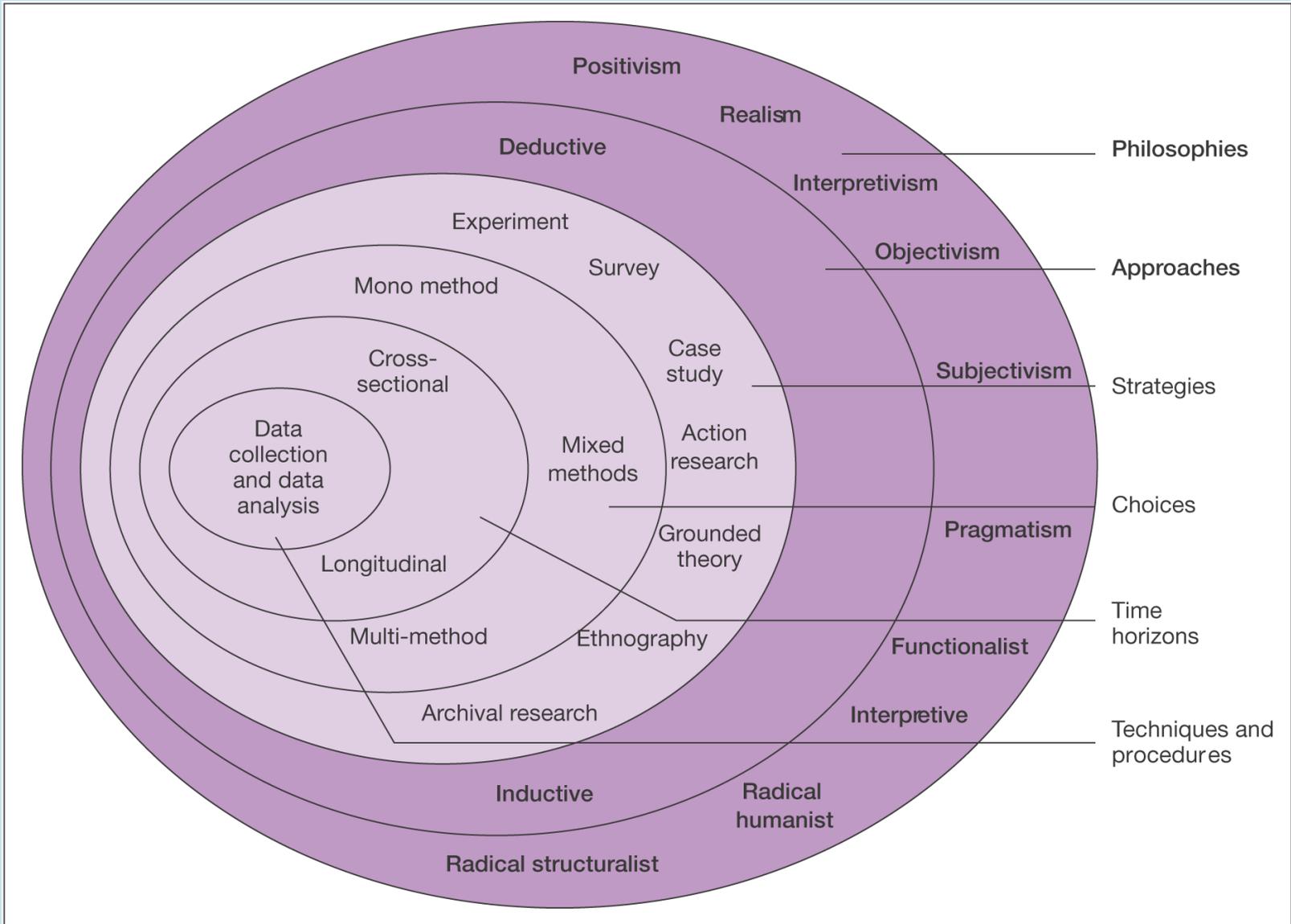


The "hourglass" notion of research



The diagram illustrates the research process as an hourglass. The top bulb is wide and contains the text 'begin with broad questions', 'narrow down, focus in', and 'operationalize'. The narrow neck contains the text 'observe'. The bottom bulb is wide and contains the text 'analyze data', 'reach conclusions', and 'generalize back to questions'. The hourglass is set within a brown frame with a top and bottom bar.

begin with broad questions
narrow down, focus in
operationalize
observe
analyze data
reach conclusions
generalize back to questions



The research 'onion'

Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2006

Positivism vs. Constructionism

Reality is out there, it can be objectively measured with the help of experimental methods

“Reality” is what we make of it; there are many “realities” that can be captured through subjective methods



E.g. witnesses at a car accident

Qualitative vs. Quantitative

Quantitative research

- Data analyzed, usually numbers
- Tends to be in positivist tradition
- Use standardized measures that fit diverse data into categories. Facilitates comparison and statistical aggregation of data.

Qualitative research

- Data are usually words
- Tends to be in interpretive or constructivist traditions
- Allows study of selected issues, cases, or events in depth and detail

Literature Review



- Come up with your research questions and objectives
- Define parameters (boundaries)
- Generate and refine key words
- Conduct search (internet, books, journals, etc)
- Obtain literature (get a copy of it to read!)
- Evaluate
- Record (jot notes in your own words)
- Start drafting review (compile and write summary)

Research Question

1) Descriptive

(e.g. what % of population would vote for ODM or PNU in the next presidential election?)

2) Relational

(e.g. what proportion of males and females would vote for ODM or PNU candidate in next election? → gender & voting preference relationship)

3) Causal

(e.g. public poll to see if new political ad changed voter preferences → cause (campaign) and effect (change in proportion of voters for ODM or PNU))

INDICATORS

Some Qualitative Methodologies

- **Grounded Theory**
- **Ethnography**
- **Case studies**
- **Social**
- **Action (Participatory Action Research)**

Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967)

- Aim is **derive a theory GROUNDED in data**
(is that inductive or deductive?)
- Looks to extract from data an understanding of particular real-world situations.
- STEPS:
 1. Identify substantive area of interest
 2. Collect data
 3. Open Coding (as you collect it so that core categories are recognized)
 4. Writing Memos throughout the entire process
 5. Conducting selective coding and theoretical sampling
 6. Development of a theory

Ethnography

Ethnography: “...the study and systematic recording of human cultures.” (*Merriam Webster Online*)

- Purpose is to uncover social, cultural or normative patterns
- *Participants* are the experts
- Basically a *cultural description*
- Behavior occurs in a **context** and ethnography takes that into account
- Assessors must become **immersed** in a particular situation in order to describe and interpret people's actions

Case Studies

- Focus is on *discovery* rather than confirmation.
 - Looking in depth at an **individual case**, not a whole population.
 - E.g. to learn more about an outstanding business model (Blowplast Ltd.); to study the customers at one restaurant in Nairobi (Java)
- Who can think of other examples?

Social

- Aims to understand human behavior, at the level of the individual



E.g. Malaria:

- We know about how caused, spread, how to prevent, how to treat
- But: Need to understand *behavior*
 - How to finance and distribute bed nets
 - How local beliefs about causation may differ from medical beliefs

Action (Participatory) Research

- Research for problem-solving
- All relevant participants collaborate to *actively examine current action* (which they experience as problematic) in **order to change and improve it**.
- The group critically reflects on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts.

Some Main Methods

1) In-depth interviews

2) Focus groups

3) Field work/Direct observation

4) Documents – diaries, letters, film

These methods predominantly generate **words**,
not numbers.

Interviews

- Conversation guided towards the researcher's agenda
- 'in-depth', 'semi-structured', 'unstructured'
- The **interviewer** is key because data are produced through interaction.



Group Interview/Focus Group

- Usually 6 – 10 people with a facilitator guiding the discussion on a topic (sometimes a 3rd party observer)
- Data generated through **interaction between the participants**
- Natural groups, or strangers
- Homogeneity/heterogeneity



Fieldwork and Observation

- “Going into the field” = direct and personal contact with people in their own environments (both formal & informal)
- Limitations based on what people SAY. Observation required! (NON-VERBAL MESSAGES!)
- Good ‘thick’ field Notes are critical



Documents / Archival



<http://www.afrol.com>

- **Secondary**

Books and articles written and based on the primary sources

- **Primary**

Materials left by people who lived in the past(n.b. Past can be just now)

Exercise: Brainstorm examples of each type

What is/could be wrong with these questions?

- “Why did you have risky sex?”
- “That must have been awful for you. What happened next?”
- “How does your culture affect your use of contraception?”
- “Do you think that women have different roles to men?”

Exercise Time!

Write 3 hypothetical questions as a researcher that you will ask to a group of six 16 year old Kenyans (mixed gender) on their use of alcohol.

You have 5 minutes.

Some common problems with questions

- **Judgmental**

- Ask what people have done, what they know.
Avoid asking them what they haven't done, what they don't know.

- **Asking the research question**

- Respondents unlikely to frame issues in abstract way

- **Too abstract/general**

- Ask about specific experiences, their story

For interviews, consider :

- Establishing rapport (trust!)
- A non-judgmental style
- The use of prompts/probes
 - How did you feel about that? What happened next? Can you explain a bit more about what you mean?
 - Mmmm, aha, etc.
 - Non-verbal cues, e.g. head nodding
- Open questions
 - Avoid yes/no responses



Interviews: Other Factors

- Audio/video recording for reliable analysis (ask permission!)
- Influence of social characteristics
 - Gender, ethnicity, age
- Language translation issues
- Ethics (IRB Clearance for human subject studies)
- Interviews only tell us what people SAY!

Additional Tips

- Take detailed notes of your surroundings
- Pay attention to what the people around you do, both **when they know they're being watched** and **when they don't**.
- 'Thick description': learn to read between the lines; recognize what is **explicit and what is implicit** (i.e. taken-for granted)
- Be aware of **your biases** and cultural assumptions and how they shape the way you observe, ask questions, 'gather' information

Analyzing Qualitative Data –

TO BE DISCUSSED FURTHER NEXT TIME

- Data Preparation: Cleaning and organizing the data for analysis
- Descriptive Statistics: Describing the basic features of the data
- Inferential Statistics: Testing your questions, models; making judgments based on the descriptive data

Computer Software

- Software does not do your analysis for you - but help organize, retrieve and manage data
- Many have specific requirements for transcripts - try it out BEFORE you transcribe all your data!
- Web site for details, demos of software
<http://www.caqdas.soc.surrey.ac.uk>
- NVIVO software

Dissemination of Research

- Essential if the gap between research and policy is to be bridged
- Think about audience of your research
- Use media, journals, websites, etc.
- Contact r@iHub for help! 😊

Now let's try it out with an Exercise!

- **Methodology:** Participatory Research
- **Method:** Focus Group



Example of Concept Notes

