

*The Power and Wonder of
Qualitative Inquiry*

Jim Lane, Ed.D.

University of Phoenix

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Who Am I, and Why Am I Here?

- My task is to discuss a topic with an audience that is likely more knowledgeable and experienced than I in that topic.
- Every time I open a journal article or book, I am reminded of what I don't know.
- Field of qualitative inquiry is broad and overwhelming. I am pinching a piece of the elephant.
- I am a learner, a traveler, a chronicler, a seeker.
- I do not see myself as a crusader, but as a viable conduit for expression, leaning, and social change.

But words came halting forth, wanting
invention's stay;

Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's
blows;

And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my
way.

Thus great with child to speak and helpless in
my throes,

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart,
and write.

(From *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney)

What is Qualitative Research?

“An active process with one’s mind and body to find patterns in data and articulate their relationships. (It is) a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life” (Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“Qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe narratively what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning-relevant *kinds* of things in the world – kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests – focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning” (Erickson, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 36).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“There is a pressing need to show how the practices of qualitative research can help change the world in positive ways. It is necessary to continue to engage the pedagogical, theoretical, and practical promise of qualitative research as a form of radical democratic practice” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“It is time to move into an uncertain, open-ended utopian future. ... A critical framework is central to this project. It privileges practice, politics, action, consequences, performances, discourses, methodologies of the heart, and pedagogies of hope, love, care, forgiveness, and healing” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018.).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“Research is an interactive process shaped by one’s personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting.”

“Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Characteristics of Qualitative Work

“In order to do qualitative research, you must accept that there is no universal truth, that all findings are tentative and context-based, and that we live in an irrational and chaotic world”
(Janesick, 2011).

Characteristics of Qualitative Work

- It is holistic: It attempts to understand the whole picture under study.
- It looks at relationships within a system or subculture.
- It refers to the personal, face-to-face, immediate interactions in a given setting.
- It is attentive to detail and focused on understanding the social setting rather than predicting and controlling.
- It relies on the researcher as the research instrument.
- It tells a story in narrative or poetic forms (Janesick, 2011).

Common Misconceptions about Qualitative Research

- It is easy, and anyone can do it.
- You should only learn qualitative research to augment quantitative work.
- Most people can do interviews and observations with little or no practice.
- Anyone can write with no practice, preparation, or quiet time. (Janesick, 2011)

Some Terms to Identify Qualitative Work

- Action research
- Case study
- Descriptive study
- Ethnography
- Field research
- Life history
- Narrative inquiry
- Oral history
- Autoethnography
- Portraiture
- Phenomenology
- Hermeneutics
- Ethnodrama
- Grounded theory
- Constructivism
- Visual research

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“We live in a time that caring isn’t enough. We need to do more than care. We are story tellers. We have the power to share stories - contain the power to make the understanding of those lived part of the human condition.”

“We must conduct qualitative research through a critical lens. Our human portraits don’t stand alone. They are part of larger infrastructure of society. If we have any hope for change, we must learn to understand all sorts of people to work together for the common good” (Yvonna Lincoln, 2017).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“Phenomenology asks, ‘What are the meanings of these experiences?’ It is the reflective study of the way we experience the world in our everyday life. It is situated, perspectival, contextual. It is experience as lived through, pre-reflective, subjective yet intersubjective”

(Van Manen, 2017).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as “trying to make sense of life as lived. This is knowledge as understanding in personal, experiential, contextual, and temporal ways.”

Distinction between views:

- Large is personal

- Small is broad, showing trends and tendencies (Connelly, et al, 2006).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“Storytelling helps people to disagree, and it helps them to figure out what their opinions are in the first place” (Chase, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

“Writing stories and personal narratives have increasingly become the structures through which I make sense of my world, locating my particular biographical experiences in larger historical and sociological contexts” (Richardson, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

Autoethnography is a form of narrative study that is written and recorded by the individual who is the subject of the study (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Creswell, 2013; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, et al, 2011).”

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

“Auto-ethnographies show people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and what their struggles mean . . . Writing difficult stories is a gift to self, a reflexive attempt to construct meaning in our lives and heal or grow from our pain” (Ellis, 2007).

Thoughts from Qualitative Researchers

Clandinin and Connelly call for “wakefulness” on the part of the researcher, proceeding forward with a constant alert awareness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots, scenarios, and unidimensional characters” (2000).

We Are All Biased

Scoldings and reminders from my children

- Names with alternative spellings
- Roles of women
- Poor grammar

A Philosophical Metaphor for Qualitative Inquiry





Do I dare

Disturb the universe?/

Do I dare to eat a peach?

From *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, T.S. Elliot

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by
the shore,

Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,

To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod
to me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

From *Song of Myself*, Walt Whitman



Miscellaneous References

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Clandinen, *Sage Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*

Denzin & Giardina, *Qualitative Inquiry in Neoliberal Times*

Lawrence-Lightfoot, *The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk, & Adventure in the 25 Years After 50*

Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*

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