Verification Strategies
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Agenda

• The Problem

• Issues in Rigor
  • What is it?
  • Guidelines versus orthodoxy
  • In process versus post hoc evaluation
  • Minimum standards or ideal gold standards?

• Verification
  • Characteristics and goals
  • Strategies
This thing we call rigor
“In the literature on reliability and validity, I find the terminology execrable! We have so many terms to cover the same concept. Nobody is talking to anybody. Anybody who does anything at all on reliability makes up a new term to cover what has previously been discussed in another field.”

(Brink, 1991, pg.. 163)
Whatever validity is, I apparently ‘have’ or ‘get’ or ‘satisfy’ or ‘demonstrate’ or ‘establish’ it. . .”

(Wolcott, 1990, p. 121, cited in Morse et al., 2002 page 15).
Rigor

Demonstrating integrity, competence, and legitimacy of the research process by using strategies that are inherent in the research process
Worrying Trends

• Shift from constructive (during the process) to post hoc evaluative standards

• Predetermined criteria as guidelines, orthodoxy or ideal standards

• Standards, goals and criteria regarded synonymously

• Consumer, reviewer or researcher responsibility?

• Standards external to the research process itself
• Back staging of strategies to ensure rigor during research in favor of criteria and standards for evaluation of overall significance, relevance, impact and utility of completed research

• Less focus on in-built strategies in research process that can act as a self-correcting mechanism.

• De-emphasize processes of verification to catch serious threats before it is too late to correct them
Verification Strategies

Strategies used during the process of inquiry – built into the inquiry process to actively ensure reliability and validity and thus rigor.
Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain

(Morse et al. 2002, pg. 9)
Verification in Qualitative research

• Inbuilt mechanisms
• To identify and correct errors as you go
• To prevent errors before they are locked into the developing model and before they subvert the analysis.
• Reflect principles of qualitative inquiry
• Incremental and self correcting in iterative processes of qualitative research
Iterative processes in qualitative research

• Always moving back and forth between design and implementation

• Checking congruence between question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies and analysis

• Systematically check data and fit of data

• Maintain focus

• Constant monitoring and confirming conceptual work of analysis and interpretation
There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception...

~Aldous Huxley~
Verification strategies

1. Methodological coherence
2. Sampling sufficiency
3. Developing a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis
4. Thinking theoretically
5. Theory development
1. Methodological Coherence

- Congruence between research question & components of the method
- Adherence to assumptions & consequently to strategies within each method
- Coherence between research components with data to meet analytic goals
- Incrementally verifying previous components and the methodological assumptions as a whole.
2. Sampling Sufficiency

- Sample Appropriateness

- Sampling Adequacy:
  - Saturation and replication
  - Seeking negative cases
3. Sampling – Data Collection – Analysis Relationship

Concurrent data collection & analysis
4. Thinking Theoretically

- Macro-Micro Perspectives
- Thinking with concepts
- Using literature carefully
5. Theory Development

- Micro perspective of data & macro conceptual/theoretical understanding.

- Theory develops as an outcome of the research process rather than being adopted as a framework to move the analysis along.

- Theory is used as a template for comparison and further development of the theory.
Other Strategies

- Prolonged engagement to avoid interpretations based on limited contact: getting beyond the public face to see routines, common occurrences and unusual events

- Participant checks: verify developing interpretations, hunches, hypotheses with participants: Do they make sense or resonate?

- Personal journals

- Peer debriefing and review

- Participant reflexivity: how did the researcher come to write this account? Transparency about processes including challenges, twists and turns
Select References


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Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: The eight “Big Tent” criteria for Excellent qualitative research, Qualitative Inquiry, 16(10), 837-851
