

Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies

Bonnie S. Brennen

ROUTLEDGE

Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies

Qualitative research: You may have heard it described as research-lite, an approach for the math-phobic that's less rigorous or even easier than quantitative research—but truth be told, qualitative research is actually just as challenging, time-consuming and difficult to get right as its quantitative counterpart. While qualitative research can be controversial, contradictory and ambiguous, it can also be inspiring, invigorating and enlightening. It can get you out from behind your desk and allow you to experience your research topic firsthand. And it can help you develop a more nuanced understanding of communication as a social and cultural practice.

Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies provides students and researchers with the tools they need to perform critically engaged, theoretically informed research using methods that include **interviewing, focus groups, historical research, oral histories, ethnography and participant observation, and textual analysis**. Each chapter features step-by-step instructions that integrate theory with practice, as well as a case study drawn from published research demonstrating best practices for media scholars. Readers will also find in-depth discussions of the challenges and ethical issues that may confront researchers using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research does not offer easy answers, simple truths or precise measurements, but this book provides a comprehensive and accessible guide for those hoping to explore this rich vein of research methodology.

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CHAPTER 1

Getting Started

Value things not because of their worth but because of their meaning.

— Gabriel Garcia Marquez

You may have heard it described as research-lite, an approach for the math-phobic, less rigorous or even easier than quantitative research, but truth be told, qualitative research is actually a messy endeavor that is challenging, time-consuming and difficult to get right. Qualitative research does not provide us with easy answers, simple truths or precise measurements. It can be controversial, contradictory and ambiguous. However, it can also be insightful, enlightening, emancipatory and fascinating.

Qualitative Methods for Media Studies provides you with specific instruction on how to undertake research using a variety of different qualitative methods. The methods addressed in this book are common qualitative methods that are particularly relevant to answering media-related communication research questions. The methods chapters include examples of and discussion about published scholarly research using the method being addressed. In addition, you will find activities and research exercises for each method to help you learn how to conduct research using qualitative methods.

Each qualitative method addressed in *Qualitative Methods for Media Studies* is grounded theoretically, culturally and historically. This text offers

guidance on framing qualitative research questions, instruction on the interpretation of research findings and discussion on how to integrate theory with practice. It also discusses the implications of qualitative research in the field of media studies and considers ethical issues and challenges researchers confront related to specific qualitative methods.

As you will soon discover, full disclosure is always appropriate in the realm of qualitative research. This book is based on my personal experiences teaching qualitative methods to graduate students at Marquette University, Temple University and the University of Missouri, Columbia. My approach to qualitative research is influenced by my own research activity using a variety of qualitative methods as well as by discussions and debates I have had over the years with graduate students and research colleagues. My own research is based on the theoretical framework of British Cultural Studies. In my work I specifically draw on Raymond Williams' definition of theory as the systematic explanations of real-world everyday practices, and it is this understanding of theory that guides *Qualitative Methods for Media Studies*.

I agree with Williams' cultural materialist understanding of culture as a way of life, as well as his description of history as "a continuous and connected process" (Williams, 1983, p. 146). As a cultural materialist, I find that all documents of material culture, including newspapers, books, films, popular music, television programs, comic strips, current fashions as well as newer media such as Facebook, Second Life and Twitter, are produced under specific political and economic conditions, and that any or all of these cultural products can provide us with insights about our society at a particular historical place and time.

The cultural approach to communication that I take in *Qualitative Methods for Media Studies* understands the communication process as a means of production that is based on the discourse of individuals and groups and is produced within a specific cultural, historical and political context. It is through our use of language that we make meaning and construct our own social realities. Because language is a fundamental part of all qualitative analysis, I believe that it is important to use the correct words to describe aspects of the qualitative research process. Throughout this book I provide you with appropriate words and concepts that are particularly relevant to qualitative research.

I must be honest with you and tell you that I disagree with the belief that researchers can do qualitative research without using an explicit theoretical framework or that it is easy to mix qualitative and quantitative methods seamlessly. Instead, I agree with Cliff Christians and James Carey (1989) that there are important differences between qualitative and quantitative methods that are related to philosophical orientation, cultural traditions,

research values and priorities as well as with specific worldviews or ideological positions.

In order for you to understand the theoretical orientation that guides *Qualitative Methods for Media Studies*, I feel it is important for you to get a sense of my views on key issues relevant to the field of qualitative research. Although the theoretical perspective that I incorporate into my work frames the content of this book, it is useful to understand that in a fundamental sense, all research is a collaborative effort. Throughout the process of writing this book I have bounced ideas off of fellow researchers, friends and family members. Through my discussions with others I have worked through a variety of conceptual issues, methodological puzzles and research concerns related to the process of qualitative research. I would like to thank my Dean, Lori Bergen, and my colleagues at Marquette University for their support of my research and give a special shout-out to my Provost, John Pauly, for writing the invaluable *Beginner's Guide to Doing Qualitative Research in Mass Communication* and serving as a wonderful sounding-board for this project. I have been fortunate to have a great research assistant, Colleen Moore, and I thank her for her thoughtful assistance on this project. In addition, I appreciate the insightful questions and thought-provoking comments from my children Annie and Scotty as well as their polite inquiries meant to keep this book on track. Finally, this book is dedicated to Hanno Hardt, who was a wonderful mentor and friend. I will miss his unfailing encouragement and guidance.

While I appreciate all of the help I have received throughout this project, clearly the buck stops here, and I take full responsibility for any errors or omissions that you may find in this text.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

When we think about quantitative social science research, we see that it strives to be systematic, precise and accurate as it tries to determine validity, reliability, objectivity and truth. Quantitative research attempts to isolate specific elements and it uses numbers and numerical correlations within value-free environments to measure and analyze the “causal relationships between variables” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 8). Because it uses numbers to quantify data, quantitative research is often considered more authentic, important and scientific. For some, numbers are seen as more reliable than thoughts. As one statistician suggests, some people “worship the statistician as someone who, with the aid of his magical computing machine, can make almost any study ‘scientific’” (Blalock in McKee, 2003, p. 123).

In contrast, qualitative research is interdisciplinary, interpretive, political and theoretical in nature. Using language to understand concepts based on people's experience, it attempts to create a sense of the larger realm of human relationships. As Steinar Kvale (1996) explains, the subject matter of qualitative research is not "objective data to be quantified, but meaningful relations to be interpreted" (p. 11). Qualitative researchers consider alternative notions of knowledge and they understand that reality is socially constructed. They showcase a variety of meanings and truths, and draw on a belief in and support of a researcher's active role in the research process.

At this point you may be wondering how socially constructed realities are actually created through language. Several years ago I came across an *Utne Reader* article, "Stop Lights and Phone Sex," that provides us with a useful example of the construction of a language-based symbolic reality. The essay contrasts the socially constructed reality of a man named Charlie with the lived reality of Fido the dog. In the article, Charlie uses symbols to experience different cultures, learn about his environment and pass on the knowledge he has attained to future generations. Fido lives in the present, experiencing only what he sees, tastes and smells. While initially it might seem that Charlie's socially constructed reality is superior to Fido's, the essay maintains that in addition to the knowledge gained from symbolic reality, symbols can also alter our perceptions, and manipulate our feelings, our moods and our tastes. Offering examples from a misplaced zero in a banking transaction, a phone sex hotline and an unusual art museum exhibit made out of garbage, the article explains that "[s]ymbols can lead Charlie to do things he wouldn't normally do, buy things he wouldn't normally buy, and think things he wouldn't normally think; Fido is blissfully unaffected. Humans use symbols and symbols use humans" (Proctor, 1995, p. 50).

As we consider connections between a socially constructed reality and the qualitative research process, it is important to consider the notion of transparency. When researchers openly describe their theoretical foundations and research strategies, along with the basis for their decisions, intentions and motivations, readers become aware of the potential uses and implications of the research (Rakow, 2011).

Qualitative researchers tend to use a variety of different methodologies in their work. For example, in my own research I have used several types of textual analyses, including discourse analysis and ideological critique, as well as historical analysis, case studies and open-ended in-depth interviews. No matter what qualitative method researchers use, their choice of method is based on the questions they wish to ask, the specific historical context that relates to their research questions as well as the theoretical framework they plan to use for their research. In an effort to clarify the research process, each

methods chapter in *Qualitative Methods for Media Studies* discusses research using a single qualitative method. However, as you begin your own research efforts you will come across qualitative research that combines two or more methods. This is because qualitative researchers often incorporate the notion of triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods, to increase the rigor of their analyses and to develop in-depth understandings of social experience.

In the realm of media studies, by which I mean research that looks at aspects of news, information and/or entertainment in mass communication, journalism, broadcasting, advertising, public relations, visual communication and new media, quantitative researchers tend to see communication as a behavioral science. They draw on scientific models of communication and use a variety of methodological strategies to measure the effects of different types of communication on various groups in society. For example, quantitative researchers consider topics such as the effects of television violence on children, the effects of race and ethnic identity on the evaluation of public service announcements, and the effects of political advertising on voters.

In contrast, qualitative researchers consider the diversity of meanings and values created in media. Rather than focusing on media effects or influences, they attempt to understand the many relationships that exist within media and society. For example, qualitative researchers who study media might look at how people understand advertising messages about cancer, how children are represented in online communities or how breaking news is framed in daily news photos. As John Pauly (1991) notes, the goal of qualitative research “is simply to render plausible the terms by which groups explain themselves to the world and to clarify the role that mass communication plays in such explanations” (p. 7).

The Development of Qualitative Research

Just like 7 Up, the Un-cola, the use of qualitative methods in media studies research emerged as a viable alternative to challenge the status quo. When we look at the rise of qualitative research during the second half of the twentieth century, we see that it begins with a rejection of social science quantitative research ideas, procedures and protocols.

Although much of the early journalism and mass communication research was influenced by Pragmatism and framed from a cultural and historical understanding of communication, by the 1940s political scientists, sociologists and social psychologists were making important contributions to media research using quantitative social-scientific methodologies. As the

field of mass communication research developed in post-World War II American society, communication researchers, who often saw science as a liberating force, embraced a scientific definition of mass communication and developed methodological techniques to measure the social effects of communication.

Preoccupied with the functional aspects of mass communication, researchers constructed scientific models that defined the field, illustrated its scientific nature and legitimated mass communication research as a social science endeavor. Critical cultural theorist Hanno Hardt (1992) suggests that the conceptualization of the field of communication as a behavioral science encouraged an emphasis on methodological concerns such as sampling, measurement, research design and instrumentation which tended to overshadow considerations of theoretical issues regarding the role of media and communication within society.

While quantitative social science research remained the dominant approach to mass communication research throughout much of the twentieth century, some researchers did not see the need for social science to “imitate the natural sciences in form or method” (Christians and Carey, 1989, p. 354). Scholars like Neil Postman suggested that attempts to understand human feelings and behavior should not be considered science because it was difficult to show cause-and-effect relationships within human behavior. Although researchers were unable to prove or disprove interpretations of human experience, Postman (1988) suggested that the more insightful research in media studies drew its relevance and strength “from the power of its language, the depth of its explanations, the relevance of its examples and the credibility of its theme” (p. 13).

Researchers who questioned the dominant social science perspective of mass communication often envisioned communication as a cultural practice, through which issues of power, class and social identity could be negotiated. Like Postman, other researchers found that quantitative methods could not help them to answer central questions regarding the role of “communication as the social production of meaning” (Jensen, 1991, p. 18), and researchers began to turn to alternative theoretical perspectives and qualitative methods to understand communication as a social and cultural practice. Media studies scholars began drawing on the theoretical perspectives of British Cultural Studies, Critical Theory, Political Economy, Feminism and Postmodernism among other alternative perspectives to frame their qualitative research studies.

The Qualitative Studies Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the Philosophy of Communication Division of the International Communication Association

(ICA) were formed in the late 1970s to provide qualitative researchers with academic homes where they could present theoretically informed media-related research. While mainstream mass communication research journals tended to reject qualitative research that did not use an historical method, scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* and the *Journal of Communication and Media, Culture and Society* consistently published qualitative research. By the end of the twentieth century, qualitative methodologies had been fully integrated into the realm of communication and media studies; academic conferences regularly showcased theoretically informed qualitative research; and most of the scholarly journals in our field published qualitative research.

In the twenty-first century, qualitative research is an integral part of the field of media studies. However, you may be surprised to learn that there are still some social science researchers who remain hostile to the use of qualitative research methods in media and communication research. Some of these researchers see qualitative research “as an attack on reason and truth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 7), while others maintain that their resistance not only reflects a desire to separate knowledge from opinion and to differentiate between “hard” science and “soft” research but also is framed from a belief that truth can be independent of politics (Carey, 1989, p. 99). Rather than take offense at the hostility of some social scientists, qualitative researchers often respond that because researchers are integral to the research process, offering insights, observations and evaluations of the evidence, at the most fundamental level all research methods are qualitative. As Vidich and Lyman (1998) note, “[W]e judge for ourselves on the standard of whether the work communicates or ‘says’ something to us—that is, does it connect with our reality? Does it provide us with insights that help to organize our own observations? Does it resonate with our images of the world?” (p. 44).

Conceptual Orientations

While *Qualitative Methods for Media Studies* is not a book about theory, it is helpful for you to understand that researchers use theory to make sense of their findings and to orient their work within a larger conceptual orientation. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers like to draw on intellectual maps and models to help them represent their philosophical worldviews. These intellectual maps are often referred to as paradigms, and these paradigms provide a set of views and beliefs that researchers use to guide their work. An understanding of paradigms is of particular importance to qualitative researchers because they often find methodological

questions of secondary importance to the larger philosophical issues and questions.

When we think about different research paradigms, there are three conceptual elements that quickly come to mind: epistemology, ontology and methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (1998b) clearly explain each of these concepts: “Epistemology asks: How do we know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Ontology raises basic questions about the nature of reality. Methodology focuses on how we gain knowledge about the world” (p. 185). For qualitative researchers, each of these elements influences the methods that they choose to use in distinct and significant ways.

And yet, since qualitative researchers pick and choose their theoretical positions from a variety of perspectives, some scholars find it difficult to create a single qualitative paradigm or intellectual map that represents a specific worldview and trajectory for qualitative research perspectives and traditions. These researchers prefer to see qualitative research not as a paradigm but instead as an interdisciplinary theoretical response to, and a reaction against, quantitative social science research. As David Hamilton (1998) suggests, the tradition of qualitative research is “a messy social movement, one that is structured as much by recombination of different activities as by their differentiation, divergence and continuity” (p. 113).

Guba and Lincoln (1998) maintain that qualitative research is not a unique paradigm but rather is influenced by several distinct paradigms, including Positivism, Post-Positivism, Critical Theories and Constructivism. Each of these paradigms is thought to provide specific values and principles that guide all of our research strategies and activities.

In contemporary society, Positivism remains the dominant paradigm of the physical and social sciences. Positivists consider reality to exist and scientific truth to be knowable and findable through rigorous testing that is free from human bias. The aim of inquiry of Positivism focuses on explanation, prediction and control while knowledge accumulates as factual building blocks in the form of “generalizations or cause–effect linkages” (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 212). Within a Positivist paradigm the value of research is determined through internal validity, which is how findings correspond to the issue being studied, and external validity, which is the extent to which the findings can be generalized and related to similar studies. In addition, the reliability, or the extent to which the findings can be reproduced or replicated by another researcher, as well as the objectivity, or lack of bias, are also central considerations in evaluating the value of research. Researchers use experimental methods to verify hypotheses, and as you may have already figured out, these methods are primarily quantitative in nature.

The Post-Positivist paradigm is quite similar to Positivism. However, it responds to recent criticisms of Positivism in a few key areas. While reality is thought to exist, Post-Positivists consider that because people are flawed, they may not be able actually to understand it. Findings that can be replicated are thought to be probably true. While Positivists seek to verify their hypotheses, Post-Positivists use a variety of experimental methods, including some qualitative methods, in an effort to falsify their hypotheses. Post-Positivists also draw upon the concepts of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity to evaluate the quality of their research.

The other paradigms that influence qualitative research are all non-Positivist alternative worldviews that blend research issues and theoretical positions, blur disciplinary boundaries and draw upon all types of qualitative methodologies. The term Critical Theories denotes a variety of theoretical positions, including (but not limited to) Neo-Marxism, Feminism, Cultural Materialism, Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism. Critical theorists consider reality and truth to be shaped by specific historical, cultural, racial, gender, political and economic conditions, values and structures; in their research they critique racism, sexism, oppression and inequality, and they press for fundamental and transformative social change.

Constructivism represents a theoretical shift regarding the concept of reality from realism to relativism. Constructivists lean towards an anti-foundational understanding of truth, rejecting any permanent “standards by which truth can be universally known” (Guba & Lincoln, 2003, p. 273). They work to build consensus and they favor negotiated agreements that are made by community members. Constructivists replace Positivist concepts of external and internal validity with notions of authenticity and trustworthiness.

Guba and Lincoln (2003) add an additional paradigm, Participatory/Cooperative Inquiry, to their list of paradigms influencing qualitative research. Participatory/Cooperative Inquiry is a transformative perspective that emphasizes the subjectivity of practical knowledge and the collaborative nature of research. While new paradigms are always interesting to consider, at this point it is not necessary for us to get bogged down debating the number of paradigms, if any, that influence qualitative research. What I would like you to remember from this discussion is that researchers who come from Positivist and Post-Positivist perspectives maintain a belief in a singular, big-“T” understanding of truth as well as a notion of a unified reality. Positivists and Post-Positivists try to exclude the influence of values from their work and they see ethics as being separate from their research concerns. Positivists and Post-Positivists see researchers as neutral observers

who primarily rely on quantitative methods to test, verify, falsify or reject their research hypotheses.

In contrast, the alternative worldviews of Critical Theories, Constructivism and Participatory/Cooperative Inquiry, among others, all believe in multiple interpretations of a little-“t” understanding of truth and envision many constructed and competing notions of reality. All of these alternative paradigms consider values to shape their research and find ethical considerations essential to their work. They see researchers’ subjectivity as integral to the research process and they draw primarily upon qualitative methods to answer their research questions.

There seems to be no clear consensus among researchers on whether qualitative methods actually constitute a paradigm in themselves or whether the field, instead, is influenced by a variety of other paradigms. Yet I think it is important to remember that it is the worldview, philosophy or theoretical framework that guides the questions qualitative researchers ask as well as the method or methods they choose to use in their research. Qualitative researchers do not pick a method they wish to use and then frame their research questions around their chosen method. For qualitative researchers, the choice of method comes from the questions they wish to ask.

You may wonder how you might go about selecting an appropriate theoretical framework, worldview or research paradigm to guide your work. I often tell my students that while researchers may try out a variety of perspectives, a theoretical framework usually picks you. What I mean by this is that each of you will develop a specific view of the world that makes sense to you. After some trial and error, each of you will discover a paradigm and/or conceptual perspective that fits with the specific way that you see the world.

What follow are some questions for you to consider to help you get started with your search for your own theoretical framework that will provide you with guidance for your media studies research.

- What does objectivity mean to you?
- What is neutrality?
- Do you believe it is possible for a researcher to be completely objective? Why, or why not?
- Do you see the field of media studies as a social science or as part of the tradition of humanities?
- What is your view of the role of science in contemporary society?
- Is human reality pre-set or is it shaped by specific historical, cultural and/or economic conditions?
- What is the goal of media studies research?

- Do you believe that truth is relative?
- What is a researcher's role in the research process?
- Do you think that researchers should try to bring about social change? Why, or why not?
- Do you think that we can measure people's opinions, feelings and/or concerns? Why, or why not?
- Are there cause-and-effect relationships that can be determined in people's behavior?
- Is there a single notion of truth that we can find out and/or know?
- Do you think that reality is socially constructed? Why, or why not?

While there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, your responses will help you to determine the type of research that is best suited to your own worldview and the particular qualitative methods that may best fit with your perspective. You may also wish to compare your answers with the earlier discussion of Positivism, Post-Positivism, Critical Theories, Constructivism and Participatory/Cooperative Inquiry. For those of you who embrace the relativity and fluidity of Critical Theories, Constructivism and/or Participatory/Cooperative Inquiry, you will find the multiple perspectives of qualitative research methods comforting and understandable. However, for those of you who reside comfortably within a Positivist paradigm, seeking precise answers, objectivity, neutrality and a knowable and findable Truth, the messiness of qualitative methods may test your worldview, common sense and patience.

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CHAPTER 2

Doing Qualitative Research

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

— Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 5)

Two very different understandings of the communication process emerged in Western cultures during the nineteenth century. Cultural theorist James Carey refers to these two perspectives as the transmission view and the ritual view of communication. The transmission view envisions communication as a process of sending, transmitting or delivering information in order to control others. Drawing on a transportation metaphor, and favoring technological advances within the communication process, the transmission view focuses on sending messages over distances in order to distribute common knowledge and ideas. In contrast, the ritual view associates the communication process with the ancient notion of communion. From the perspective of a ritual view of communication, people share customs, beliefs, ideas and experiences, a process that reinforces and maintains a common culture. As we compare the transmission view and the ritual view of communication, we can see that these perspectives also serve as metaphors that illustrate fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Carey (1989a) illustrates differences between the transmission and the ritual views of communication through his analysis of a newspaper. From a transmission perspective a newspaper disseminates news and information, and “questions arise as to the effects of this on audiences: news as enlightening or obscuring reality, as changing or hardening attitudes, as breeding credibility or doubt” (p. 20). The transmission view questions that Carey raises are the same types of questions quantitative social scientists ask in their media-related research. Assessing a newspaper from a ritual view focuses less on news as information than on news as a dramatic ritual act that invites audience participation. Newspaper readers are thought to join in with the dramatic action to help make sense of their historically based cultural experiences and to socially construct their realities. As with qualitative scholars, from a ritual view readers do not focus on media effects, structures or functions; instead, the use of language in a newspaper provides readers with dramatic and engaging presentations of the world.

Language is a fundamental aspect of all qualitative research. It is through our discourse—or, in other words, our writing and speaking—that we communicate ideas and information, create communities and construct our social realities. At a basic level, qualitative research strives to understand the traditions, contexts, usages and meanings of words, concepts and ideas. As Neil Postman (1988) suggests, the purpose of research is “to rediscover the truths of social life; to comment on and criticize the moral behavior of people; and finally to put forward metaphors, images, and ideas that can help people live with some measure of understanding and dignity” (p. 18).

You may find that some of the qualitative research you come across is extremely complex, difficult to decipher and full of theoretical terms and discipline-specific jargon. Over the years, many of my students have expressed their frustration at trying to comprehend some of the qualitative research they encountered and they have wondered why it was presented in such a manner. Just as Andy Dufresne in *The Shawshank Redemption* asks Warden Samuel Norton, “How can you be so obtuse?” I too wonder why all qualitative scholars do not insist on crafting clearly presented, understandable research. Since the goal of qualitative research is understanding, I would encourage all researchers to write so that their work is accessible, allowing everyone who is interested to join in the conversation.

Given the crucial role of language in qualitative research, I believe it is important to use the most appropriate words to help us to explain our work clearly, precisely, carefully and correctly. When we look at social science research, we see that quantitative researchers draw on the denotative or explicit meanings of words in order to operationalize their research terms and create a precise coding system. In contrast, qualitative researchers

understand that our everyday language “is lushly metaphorical, wildly contradictory, willfully connotative, and cynically strategic” (Pauly, 1991, p. 6), and in their work they focus on the denotative as well as the connotative meanings of the words that they use. If we think, for example, of the denotative definition of the word *mother*, we know that “mother” is defined as a female parent. This is the definition that quantitative researchers would use in studies involving mothers. However, the connotative meaning of a mother often signifies care, tenderness, compassion and love. Qualitative researchers understand that while words and concepts have important denotative meanings, they also have connotative interpretations that are important to consider. In their research they not only incorporate the denotative meanings of words but also embrace the variety of connotative meanings found within language.

Qualitative researchers do not identify variables, operationalize research terms, construct hypotheses, conduct experiments, measure data or replicate findings. Instead, they ask research questions, search for meaning, look for useful ways to talk about experiences within a specific historical, cultural, economic and/or political context, and consider the research process within the relevant social practices. What follows is a list of commonly used terms in both qualitative and quantitative research. When possible, try to use the terms that best describe the type of work that you are doing.

Common Qualitative and Quantitative Terms

Qualitative research

Research question
Subjective
Engaged researcher
Transformative intellectual
Research process
Critique
Experience
Information
Analysis
Interpretation
Understanding
Imbued with values
Reconstructions

Quantitative research

Hypothesis
Objective
Neutral observer
Disinterested scientist
Operationalization
Predict
Experiment
Data
Measurement
Bias
Explanation, prediction and control
Value-free
Cause and effect

<i>Qualitative research</i>	<i>Quantitative research</i>
Occurrence	Replication
Authenticity	Validity
Trustworthiness	Reliability
Context	Variables
Insights	Generalizations

The Ethics of Qualitative Research

Because of the active role of the researcher and the understanding that all inquiry is fundamentally subjective, qualitative researchers use a variety of strategies to develop ethical ways of dealing with the people they encounter during the research process. Of fundamental concern is the principle that all individuals who participate in qualitative research projects must voluntarily agree to participate in the studies without any psychological or physical pressure, manipulation or coercion. Qualitative researchers must provide potential participants with accurate information on the intention of their studies, and there can be no deception regarding the motives of the research. Individuals' agreement to participate in qualitative research must be an informed consent based on complete, accurate and open information. Participants must be told that they are part of a research project and should be explicitly informed about all aspects of the research. In addition, participants must be informed that they are able to withdraw from a research project at any time they wish. When appropriate, participants' privacy and confidentiality should be protected and secured, and all qualitative research should be based on authentic and accurate research. "Fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances" (Christians, 2003, p. 219) are unethical and inappropriate for qualitative researchers.

Maurice Punch (1998) suggests that researchers are still trying to recover from the consequences of Stanley Milgram's 1960s-era obedience experiments in which participants were manipulated and lied to, without consent, to encourage them to administer what they thought were painful electric shocks to individuals who did not learn quickly enough. Milgram's "controversial research methods in laboratory experiments, allied to the negative reactions to revelations about medical tests on captive, vulnerable, and non-consenting populations, led to the construction of various restrictions on social research" (Punch, 1998, p. 168).

When researchers convince themselves that the use of deception is for a greater good and they maintain that deception ultimately results in little