

# Qualitative Research Pearls and Pitfalls

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## Breakout Session

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# Are you really doing a qualitative study?

## ♦ Common misunderstandings

- surveys or instruments that measure “qualitatively oriented” topics like moral distress or quality of life
- Pre-post designs that measure change in a “qualitatively oriented” variable

## ♦ Define your aim clearly

## ♦ Have the next step in mind at the outset

# Sources of Qualitative Data

## ◆ What is qualitative data?

- Written materials
- Individual interviews
  - Structured
  - Semi-structured
  - Open ended
- Focus group transcripts
- Observations
  - Field notes
  - Drawings
- Videos

## ◆ What is ***NOT*** qualitative data?

- Anything with numbers
- Survey results

# Qualitative Study Designs

Study Design	Purpose of Study	Founders/ Foundations	Philosophical Underpinnings / Lens	Research Example
Grounded Theory	To develop a theory via inductive interpretation of data without an outcome identified ahead of time (a priori)	Glaser, Strauss, Corbin	Symbolic Interactionism	Cultivating knowing and relationships: A grounded theory of quality death the nursing home
Phenomenology	To describe the lived experience of a phenomenon from the first person point of view	Merleau-Ponty Heidegger Husserl	Hermeneutic Circle	Young women's experience of surviving breast cancer
Ethnography	To describe a culture or society and understand social phenomena	Cultural Anthropologists	Anthropology	Making sense of sickness and care: An ethnography of health in a rural mid-western town
Thematic Analysis	Describe perceptions; identify themes or perspectives around a certain idea	Folklorists	Qualitative Descriptive	What does 'recovery' mean to people with chronic neck pain?
Content Analysis	Deductive approach to understanding the content of communication	Berelson Krippendorff	Qualitative Descriptive	Nurses' roles in pain management for cognitively impaired older adults
Narrative Analysis	To interpret stories or cases in their natural context	Sociologists	Qualitative Descriptive	Health care transition: Youth, family, and provider perspectives

# Pearl: Match Aim to Design to Data Source

- ◆ **What do I want to do?**
  - Identify a qualitative aim
- ◆ **How am I going to do it?**
  - Identify your study design/philosophical approach/analytic approach
- ◆ **Identify source of data**
  
- ◆ **Grounded theory would not go with structured interview**
- ◆ **Ethnography almost always incorporates observations**
- ◆ **Phenomenology would not go with focus groups**

# Pearl: Know Your Qualitative Terminology

## ◆ **Saturation**

- Term to describe completeness of data
- No new ideas are emerging despite continued data collection

## ◆ **Theoretical sampling**

- Most appropriate for theory generating studies
- Subsequent participants identified based on developing theory

## ◆ **Member checking** - process of verifying findings with study participants to ensure accurate representation

## ◆ **Constant comparison**- Careful examination of data to identify and scrutinize variation

## ◆ **Reflexivity and bracketing** - Recognition of researcher's own biases and assumptions, and how they impact the study

# Pitfalls to Avoid

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- ◆ **Not naming your study design**
- ◆ **Not describing your process for data analysis**
- ◆ **Poor or no rationale for your study sample**
- ◆ **Inaccurately describing your sampling method**
- ◆ **Not justifying your sample size**
- ◆ **Misusing fundamental qualitative research terms**

# Pitfalls to Avoid

- ◆ **Misaligning philosophical underpinning to study**
- ◆ **Misusing a theoretical framework**
  - Absent
  - Present but not applied
  - Present but misaligned
- ◆ **Not practicing your interview technique**
  - Closed ended questions - could be ok if followed by open ended
  - Leading and acquiescence
- ◆ **Misjudging the study timeline**



# Examples for Discussion

- ◆ *Next I'd like to ask you about your weight management. When do you weigh yourself each day?*
- ◆ *We aimed for saturation, therefore we interviewed every nurse on the unit.*
- ◆ *We were interested in dementia patients' experiences with hospitalization, so we interviewed 20 caregivers of patients with dementia.*
- ◆ *After the interviews were completed, we analyzed the data and uncovered 5 overarching themes.....*

