Chapter 14 Rubin and Babbie
Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative Research -- research methods that emphasize depth of understanding and deeper
meaning of human experience; generally generates theoretically richer, yet more
tentative conclusions than quantitative methods

Various roles of the observer -- varies by degree of participation and observation
  • complete participant -- observe, but not identify; ethical issue of deception
  • participant-as-observer -- participate fully, identify as observer
  • observer as participant -- identify as observer, partial participation
  • complete observer -- strictly observe
It is important to attend to the researcher’s relationship to the participants

Qualitative field research paradigms
  
  Naturalism/ethnography -- naturalistic research (observing the details of everyday life as they
  naturally unfold in the real world); the study of a culture from the point of view of the people
  who inhabit the culture

  Grounded theory -- inductive process of discovering theory from data; theories grounded in
  data through constant comparisons of evolving concepts and empirical data

  Participatory action research (PAR)—researcher’s function is to serve as a resource to those
  being studied (typically disadvantaged groups) as an opportunity for them to act effectively
  in their own interest; participants are involved in defining various aspects of the research

  Case studies—idiographic examination of a single individual, group, family, organization,
  community, or society; can use client logs as a sources of data

Preparing for field research includes conducting a literature review, contacting informants and using
information provided by them cautiously, and making informal and formal contacts.

Sampling in qualitative research is more often purposive, including snowball sampling, quota
sampling, deviant case sampling, intensity sampling, critical incidents sampling, maximum
variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, theoretical sampling

Qualitative interviews can be undertaken in various ways
  • informal conversational interviews
  • interview guide (or schedule) approach
  • standardized open-ended interviews

Life history (oral history interviews), review of client logs, and focus groups are three additional
qualitative methods.

Recording observations raises a number of issues
  • how much can you trust your memory?
  • how can notes be taken in stages?
  • how much should you record?

Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research center around depth of understanding (a strength),
subjectivity (both a strength and weakness), and generalizability (usually a limitation).

Standards that can enhance the quality of qualitative studies include 1) prolonged engagement, 2)
triangulation, 3) peer debriefing and support, 4) negative case analysis, 5) member checking, and
6) auditing.