The NSF Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research: Their Relevance Ten Years Later

Ronald Chenail
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The Usual Suspects of Qualitative Research Standards

• The Practice
• The Theory
• The Quality
  • Validity
  • Data and Evidence
  • Claims and Interpretation
  • Generalizing and Theorizing

Freeman, deMarrais, Preisle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007
Quality in QR: Universality vs. Plurality?

• Disciplines
• Styles
• Purposes

Chenail, 2009; Freeman et al., 2007
Some Facts

- Workshop held 2005
- Report published 2008
- 23 Workshop Participants
- 4 Disciplines: Cultural Anthropology, Law and Science, Political Science, and Sociology
- 23 Papers
- 2 Categories of Standards: Shared by All 4 Disciplines; Shared by 2 or 3 Disciplines

Lamont & White, 2008
Qualitative Research Strengths

- Rich Array of Methodological Tools
- Use With or Without Quantitative Data and Analysis
- Well-Suited for Studying Complex Social Structures, Processes, and Interactions
- Numerous Dimensions and Levels of Analysis
- Exploring Micro-Social Phenomena
- Subjective Cultural Understandings
- Unraveling Mechanisms Underlying Causal Processes

Lamont & White, 2008
Qualitative Research Strengths

• Applied at All Research Stages; Not Just for Theory Generation and Hypothesis Formulation
• Quantitative-Like: Refining / Challenging Existing Theory and Generating / Testing Hypotheses
• “Thick” Description
• “Process Tracking”
• Attention to Individuals’ Contexts
• Subjective Experience and Cultural Sense-Making
• Model and Theory Generation

Lamont & White, 2008
Qualitative Research Strengths

- Flexibility and Recursivity
- Learn as You Go
- Adjust
  - Methodological
  - Theorical
  - Practical

Lamont & White, 2008
Standards Shared with Quantitative Methods

• Articulate Clear Research Question

• Define and Operationalize Constructs & Expected Relationships between Concepts

• Choose Appropriate Type and Source of Data

• Demonstrate Intellectual, Social, or Political Significance of the Project
Standards Shared with Quantitative Methods

• Undertake Systematic and Thorough Data Collection, Gathering Abundant Evidence

• Articulate Theory and Data Connection

• Conduct systematic and thorough analysis of data; Specifying Strategies

• Attend to Negative Cases and Explore Alternative Explanations

Lamont & White, 2008
Shared Standards

• Appropriate Literature / Existing Knowledge

• Theory and Data Connection

• Case Selection Transparency

• Alternative Explanations and Negative Cases

Lamont & White, 2008
Shared Standards

• Operationalize Constructs and Describe Expected Findings

• Clear and Detailed Descriptions of Data Collection and Analysis

• Describe Intellectual, Social, and Political Significance

• Discuss Generalizability or Significance Beyond Cases

Lamont & White, 2008
Shared Standards

• Specify Limitations and Potential Reviewer Objections

• Discuss Researcher Preparation
  • Cultural Fluency
  • Language Skill
  • Appropriate Methodological / Technical Training
  • Knowledge of Particular Research Context

Lamont & White, 2008
Criticisms
10 Years Later

• Although report itself is not widely cited today, the strengths and standards identified in the report are widely practiced today.

• The efforts of the committee to connect qualitative and quantitative research can be seen as being influential in the rise of mixed-methods / methodologies and designs today.

• Maybe because of its scientific context, the report can be seen as less influential on today’s commercial and arts-based qualitative research.
Relevance for Survey and Public Opinion Research

• Provides Depth and Context to the “What”

• Provides the “How” and the “Why” to the “What”

• Critical to Design Creation, Development, Evaluation, and Improvement

• Key to “Platinum” Standard
Discussion
References


References


Contact

Ronald Chenail, PhD

*The Qualitative Report:* [http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/)

Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida USA 33314
Phone: 954.262.3019
Email: [ron@nova.edu](mailto:ron@nova.edu)