

# Quality in qualitative research

## October 31st

Feedback on your revised research proposals.

Continuation of discussion on generalizations.

Presentation by Lars, Renate and Jan (Group 6) on "evaluating case studies".

Presentation by Muhammad (Group 4), Silverman chap. 16

Silverman 14, 15, 16 + Klein & Myers

# Feed-back on RP

- In what way is your study interesting / relevant? (un-researched, raises new questions about a topic, previous research is ambiguous)
- Research question and methods - what kind of knowledge do you seek and how do the methods applied support your inquiry (the knowledge you seek)?
- If you use interview... specify: what kind, who, how long, where (also describe the setting, e.g. any artifacts present / used during the interview?), how come? Transcription (ethnographically, CA, partly) - pitfall when only using interview, see silverman p. 239.
- If you do observation... specify: what kind, who, where, how long, how come?
- The same goes for generation of data via documents (specify which kind(s), from where (+ date?))
- Strengths / weakness about the method(s) + how they support each other
- Do you take photos? Explain in what way they support your study
- If you are conducting e.g. an ethnographic or a case study specify what it entails and justify your choice
- What about analysis of data? Are you coding (GT)? Are you writing memos? DA?
- Are you supporting your memory by diary, photos, drawings, taped comments, field notes written after a visit to the field?
- Is it a criteria, in terms of your delivery, to generalize (in what way and for what / who)?
- Do you have one set of questions in your introduction and a chapter on methodology introducing another set?
- Verify your statements with references or with a 'we believe'
- Theory... okay to specify, but main focus should be on the above (methodology, research design and their interplay)
- What did you learn from your study? (methods?, research topic? your bias, your positioning, your relation in the field?)
- Insert references to the literature of this course

IN WHAT WAY(S) IS IT IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE / THINK ABOUT THE ABOVE?

# Continue on generalizations

Anybody want to resume topics raised at the last lecture (and from readings of to day)?

- In what way are generalizations important?
- Forms of generalizations?

# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14) - table 14.1

## Validity

- By validity is meant 'truth': interpreted as the extent to which an account represents the social phenomena to which it refers

## Reliability

- Refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions

# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14)

## Validity

- Analysis is interpretation whether data is collected quantitatively or qualitatively (+ you might add that methods are chosen (they high-light different aspects of the world studied - e.g. questions asked, answers replied).
- Pay notice to this and have awareness about 'posed' objectivity. There are no innocent positions.

But how then to ensure validity in qualitative research?.....

# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14)

- No golden rule.... and be careful of not falling into anecdotalism (when research appear to tell entertaining stories or anecdotes but fail to convince the reader of their scientific credibility)

Answers to the complaint on anecdotalism in qualitative research found in.....

# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14)

- Triangulation (multi ways of investigating situations or finding)
  - Pitfall: ambitious for the student researcher, requires time, personnel resources
- Verification from participants
  - Pitfall: they might not be the best to comment on their own actions
  - (discussion: in what way is good to have the participants verify transcripts, data?)

In what way, then, do you think critically about your data analysis to aim at more valid findings?

# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14)

The refutability principle (refute assumed relations between phenomena) - how to obtain this:

*The Comparative method:*

- Find another case to test out a temporary hypothesis

Or

- Inspect and compare all data fragments that arise from one case for same instance e.g. advice resistance



# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14)

## *Comprehensive data treatment*

- Inspect and compare all data till your generalization is able to apply to every single goblet of relevant data you collected

## *Deviant-case analysis*

- Comprehensive data treatment implies actively seeking out and addressing anomalies or deviant cases (e.g. moral adequacy in rel. to 'relatives dying alone')
  - Rather than treating deviant cases as (statistically) uninteresting / insignificant go into detail to see if your overall argument e.g. needs modification or if it holds. As such, validity is about showing examples from dif. angles, also deviant cases

# Silverman 14, 15

Quality (14)

*Using appropriate tabulations*

- Quantification in qualitative research, e.g. counting members own categories to test or revise your generalizations.

Discussion: Have we read a text in which quantification appear in a qualitative study? Which? In what way?

# Silverman 14, 15

Reliability (14)

In obtaining reliability (degree of consistency) seek:

- **Low-inference descriptors** (recording observations 'in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say, for example, rather than researchers' reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers' personal perspectives to influence the reporting.

And

- The coding of data analysis was done 'blind' - both the coding and the analysts of the data 'conducted their research without knowledge of (the) expectations or hypotheses of the project directors
- The computer-assisted recording and analysis of the data meant that one could be more confident that the patterns reported actually existed throughout the data rather than in favorable examples

# Silverman 14, 15

Evaluating qualitative data (15)

Good-quality research satisfies the following:

- It thinks theoretically through and with data
- It develops empirically sound, reliable and valid findings
- It uses methods which are demonstrably appropriate to the research problem
- Where possible, it contributes to practice and policy

# Silverman 14, 15

Evaluating qualitative data (15) - table 15.2, criteria for the evaluation of research - think / discuss in relation to your RP

1. Are the methods of research appropriate to the nature of the questions being asked?
2. Is the connection to an existing body of knowledge or theory clear?
3. Are there clear accounts of the criteria used for the selection of cases for study, and of the data collection and analysis?
4. Does the sensitivity of the methods match the needs of the research question?
5. Is reference made to accepted procedures for analysis?
6. How systematic is the analysis?
7. Is there adequate discussion of how themes, concepts and categories were derived from the data?
8. Is there adequate discussion of the evidence for and against the researcher's arguments?
9. Is a clear distinction made between data and its interpretation?

# Silverman 14, 15

Evaluating qualitative data (15)

## Four quality criteria:

1. **Building useful theories:** one case about a cultural category (of anomaly animal) and social organization forms a social theory on 'anomalous'.
2. **Self-critical approach:** rather than taking at face value the stories by a group of talkative manager, reflection on motive for being talkative -> motivated theoretical contribution on how cliques work within management
3. **Appropriate research methods:** Think critically about status of your data, maybe asking questions, receiving answers (interview) isn't the ideal approach for getting to know the other: observation, audio recordings worked better for Moerman in his study on 'where are the Lue?'
4. **Practice contribution:** Suchman's ethnomethodological study on human-machine interaction (copier) brings focus on users' troubles in systems design.

What do Klein and Myers say about evaluation of (interpretive) empirical studies?

# Readings for next week

- Silverman: 17, 20, 21, 26 + Knowles
- We are also watching the lecture 'media and representation' by Hall.