

Chapter 17

Trustworthiness and Integrity in Qualitative Research

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Debates About Rigor and Validity



- Controversies about quality
 - What should the key quality-related goals be, and what terminology should be used?
 - A major dispute has involved whether “validity” and “rigor” are appropriate.
 - Some reject these terms and concepts totally, some think they are appropriate, and others have searched for parallel goals.

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Terminology Proliferation and Confusion

- No common vocabulary exists
 - Goodness
 - Truth value
 - Integrity
 - Trustworthiness
 - Validity and rigor
- Proliferation of evaluative frameworks and criteria for achieving high quality

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Controversies in Qualitative Research (cont.)

- Some frameworks and criteria aspire to being generic—to be applicable across qualitative traditions.
- Other frameworks are specific to a tradition or even to a specific analytic approach within a tradition.

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Question

Is the following statement True or False?

- A major controversy involving qualitative research is that a relatively small amount of terminology is used.



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Answer

True

False



• False

- A major dispute involving qualitative research is whether validity and rigor are appropriate terms. In addition, there has been a proliferation of terminology, leading to controversy.

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An Example of a Quality Frameworks

- Lincoln and Guba—often considered the “gold standard,” widely cited



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Lincoln and Guba Framework

- Key Goal: Trustworthiness
 - Concerns the “truth value” of qualitative data, analysis, and interpretation
- A parallel perspective, with analogs to quantitative criteria
- Encompasses five criteria:
 - Credibility
 - Dependability
 - Confirmability
 - Transferability
 - Authenticity

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Credibility

- Refers to confidence in the truth of the data and interpretations of them
- The analog of internal validity in quantitative research
- Arguably the most important criterion for assessing the quality and integrity of a qualitative inquiry

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Dependability

- Refers to stability of data over time and over conditions
- The analog of reliability in quantitative research

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Confirmability

- Refers to neutrality—the potential for congruence between two or more people about data accuracy, relevance, or meaning
- The analog of objectivity in quantitative research



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Transferability

- The extent to which findings can be transferred to other settings or groups
- The analog of generalizability or external validity in quantitative research



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Authenticity

- The extent to which the researchers fairly and faithfully show a range of different realities and convey the feeling/tone of participants' lives as they are lived
- No analog in quantitative research
- Added to the Lincoln–Guba framework at a later date



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Quality Enhancement Strategies

- Researchers can take many steps to enhance the quality of their inquiries (for either framework).
- Consumers can assess quality-enhancement efforts by looking for these steps and assessing their success in strengthening integrity/validity/trustworthiness.



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Strategies During Data Collection

- **Prolonged engagement**: Investing sufficient time to have in-depth understanding
- **Persistent observation**: Intensive focus on salience of data being gathered
- **Reflexivity strategies**: attending to researcher's effect on data
- **Data triangulation**: The use of multiple data sources to validate conclusions (time, space, and person triangulation)
- **Method triangulation**: The use of multiple methods of data collection to study the same phenomenon (e.g., self-report, observation)

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Strategies During Data Collection con't.



- Comprehensive and vivid recording of information
- Maintenance of an **audit trail**, a systematic collection of documentation and materials, and a **decision trail** that specifies decision rules
- Maintenance of a reflexive journal
- **Member checking**: Providing feedback to participants about emerging interpretations; obtaining their reactions
- A controversial procedure—Considered essential by some but inappropriate by others

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Strategies Relating to Coding and Analysis



- **Investigator triangulation**: Use of two or more researchers to make data coding, analytic, and interpretive decisions
- **Stepwise replication**: Dividing the research team into two groups to undertake parallel analyses and interpretations that are then compared
- **Theory triangulation**: Use of competing theories, hypotheses, or conceptualizations in the analysis and interpretation of data

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Strategies Relating to Coding and Analysis (cont.)

- Search for **disconfirming evidence** as the analysis proceeds, through purposive/theoretical sampling of cases that can challenge interpretations.
- **Negative case analysis**: A specific search for cases that appear to discredit earlier hypotheses
- **Peer review and debriefing**: Sessions with peers specifically designed to elicit critical feedback
- **Inquiry audit**: A formal scrutiny of the data and relevant supporting documents and decisions by an external reviewer

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Strategies Relating to Presentation

- **Thick and contextualized description:** Vivid portrayal of study participants, their context, and the phenomenon under study
- **Researcher credibility:** Enhancing confidence by sharing relevant aspects of the researcher's experience, credentials, and motivation

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Question

Is the following statement True or False?

- Persistent observation is a quality enhancement strategy useful for coding and analysis.



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Answer

- False
 - Persistent observation is a quality enhancement strategy useful while generating data.

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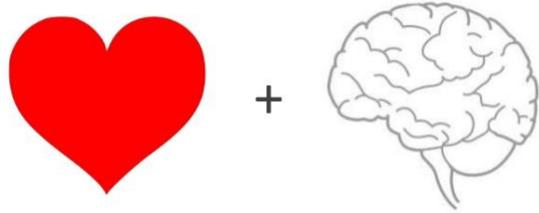
Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

- Interpretation in qualitative inquiry—making meaning from the data—relies on adequate [incubation](#).
- Similar interpretive issues as in quantitative research: credibility, meaning, importance, transferability, and implications



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