

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY IN RESEARCH DESIGN: A QUESTION OF INQUIRY

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Good evening, and welcome. Welcome to the first of three research method sessions.

These sessions came about because, as you know, you guys have an internship that you do, which is report on activities that takes place when you do your work abroad or in-country, whatever. But we decided that the research component of it needs to be enhanced more and strengthened more. And so we designed a series of research method sessions that will help to clarify some ways that you can approach your projects that may be much more [INAUDIBLE] focus. So today is on qualitative research methods. And I'll talk more about that as we commence.

So today, my presentation is going to be Qualitative Methodology in Research Design-- A Question of Inquiry. So right now, even if you look at the title itself, what I wanted to do is give a sense of what qualitative methodology is and about how do you design it pertaining to maybe what you're interested in doing in your internship. But the subtitle, A Question of Inquiry, is really what it's all about here, is inquiring. You're trying to find out, you're trying to learn something. So I'm going to spend an hour talking about qualitative research. As most you know, I'm Dr. Joseph Dorsey. I'm adjunct professor here at the Patel College of Global Sustainability.

The agenda will entail several things. I'm going to talk about qualitative inquiry and research design, five traditions of qualitative research and one emerging method, qualitative evaluation, relevance to your internships, and then we'll have questions and answers. But first, I want to say, this is what we're going to talk about today, what qualitative research can do.

So what I'm going to talk about is how qualitative research is defined-- why would you choose to conduct a qualitative study in the first place, what are the preliminary decisions needed to be made when you're doing qualitative research, what types of questions you may ask, and how the information is collected, as well as how analysis is undertaken. We'll also cover how data and analysis are represented, how we do assessment of qualitative studies, checking for accuracy, and overall format used in the design of the study. So it seems like a lot of stuff.

First, I'm going to define it. Now, I could define it myself and basically say qualitative research is nonstatistical. You're not really using a lot of numbers. Numbers can be part of it, but it's mostly about the context of what you're doing, finding meaning in the research that you do. So qualitative research is a multi-method focus involving interpretive, naturalistic approaches to a subject matter. Another definition could be that it's an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions that explore a social or human problem.

So what reasons would one want to conduct qualitative research? Well, maybe if you want to do field work. And see, one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you guys about qualitative research is because mostly what you're going to do is work in the field. We've designed the program so that you usually do something abroad. So that means that qualitative research, to me, may be more

appropriate than quantitative research, particularly since some of you, or maybe most of you, at least half you, are doing maybe a one-year program, and so this is sort of accelerated. If you're doing two years, then you probably may think about using quantitative methods. But I think for short-term fieldwork, some of these methods maybe more appropriate.

It can be time complex and time consuming dealing with the process of data analysis. So in a way, what I'd like to say-- I'm presenting qualitative research to you today, but I'm not saying you necessarily have to do it. You could still do a very good internship project paper and not necessarily be qualitative research. But what I wanted to do is give you another option, another way to approach it, so that we could have-- actually, if you want to do a more methodological focus on your project, then you can know that there are ways to do that. And I think that's what we didn't have before. Last year when we started the college was options and different arrays of how you can approach your work. So a lot of times students had to figure it out on their own. At least I'm thinking if I give you a framework like this, you can start to think of, can I do this. Is this something that's appropriate for the type of research I'm considering.

Typically in qualitative research, you're writing long passages, because you have evidence that you want to substantiate. So I think the more I talk about qualitative research, the more you realize that a lot of it comes out of you. Whereas maybe we're doing surveys and so forth, there's questionnaires that guide the questions and the direction you go, with qualitative research, a lot of it is your own reflection on your experience, so really participating in a form of social and human science research. So you're really not going to ever do qualitative research with animals. I don't see how you could. It's mostly dealing with humans in some way, and you're not really doing any geological work or biological stuff. You're mostly dealing with people in some form.

Other reasons is the nature of the research. Dependent upon the kind of research you do, you may say, qualitative work is for me. Because I'm trying to find out how something works or what I'm looking at. What am I looking at when I'm dealing with this particular situation?

You may have a topic in mind that you want to explore more deeply into that topic. You may want to take a more detailed view of a topic. I think as I talk, I may give more examples based upon some of the research I did. In fact, my dissertation work was qualitative research. So I may use a few examples as we move on.

But the thing I think is very key to qualitative research is the idea of a natural setting. It's not a lab environment. You're not necessarily surveying to a certain degree. It's more about what's going on in real time in a real place. And that's what you're trying to capture with qualitative research. Like I said, it's a more so of a literary writing style, although we do expect you to write a little more scientifically in this particular program. But you can also do it in a more literary style.

And also, it really depends on whether you have time and resources. Real good qualitative research takes a long time, so you may have to shorten what you do and do it more efficiently, because you don't have a lot of time. But it also has to do with a receptive audience, because people have to be

open to this as an approach. If you are going to go talk to people in another part of the world, you've got to make sure that you're approaching it properly. So in a way, it really comes down to who you're trying to get information from and how they will respond to you whether you get what you're looking for.

And you also have to look at yourself as an active learner, that it's not so much that you know what you're looking at. You're there to find out what's going on. So you're always in the learning process.

So there are several phases of a study one could do. Of course, planning in your general approach is important. You have to know what you're doing. And then you have to be aware of the problematic issues. So of course, anything we do here is about solving problems. That's what the Patel College is about. Even before it was the Patel College, it was called the Patel Center for Global Solutions. So Dr. Patel was looking to create a center or a place where we can solve problems. So any project you do should be focused on somehow looking at a problem and finding some solutions.

There's also phases of your design that could be trying to understand your assumptions of knowledge. Because with knowledge, it's not always evident what you need to learn. So sometimes, you have to study more about what you need to learn to acquire that knowledge. You may have your own assumptions, but that's why you do literature review and things like that.

When I was a grad student, one of my professors told me, basically, you know nothing. When do you mean, I know nothing? He was basically saying that any ideas you have, anything you write, has to be backed up by citations and references, basically saying we all build upon the knowledge of others. So that idea of assumption of knowledge is that you may assume that you know, but you really don't know until you really do the work, the study to find out.

And also, what is the problem? Once again, pose the problem that you'd like to answer. In qualitative research, the idea is that you shape questions after exploration. Sometimes, we come in with these questions, but do you know if the questions are really relevant to what you should be studying? So in a way, qualitative research is, you go and explore and figure out what's the issue, and then you start to ask questions rather than just assuming you have the right questions. Because there's nothing worse in research at all than asking the wrong questions. Because you ask the wrong questions, your data is not valid.

So in a way, what we're doing is collecting words and images, not so much numbers. Like I said, when I talk about quantitative research, we'll talk more about numbers. So when you think about qualitative research, what you're thinking is about words. What are people saying? What are you reading? What are the images, the things that you're experiencing? And that's why I think because you guys are getting a Master of Arts, MA, rather than an MS, I think in a way, you might want to do more research on qualitative methods. Because this maybe is a little more appropriate for the kind of work that you guys do for an MA. And that's why I think it's important.

So using qualitative methods, you're looking at a contextual inquiry. What you're trying to do is understand and find meaning in the world about you. So it's more not so much about the content, but it's the context, the why, trying to answer those questions of why. There's also a relative focus as well, time and space specific. With qualitative research, it's really specific to that time and that moment. So you guys have maybe six weeks, eight weeks. I'm not sure what your time and your internship will be. But you have this two-month, maybe, window of time to experience some type of culture, or some type of environment, some business, some organization, or whatever in a certain place in the world. So it's really relative. That's the relative experience that you're getting there.

And once again, the key bringing up this notion of naturalistic, it's a natural environment, as close to normal as possible, and also face-to-face encounters with people. So qualitative research is about you being right there. Maybe you're not really sending out a survey by mail and waiting for it to come back or maybe on the phone calling somebody, but you're actually there in front of people asking questions. And it's about shaping a narrative. It's about telling a story or giving voice. So what you could be doing is giving voice to people.

My research was in Flint, Michigan, my dissertation, where I was looking at a community that had a waste energy facility located in their community. And that waste facility would most likely create air pollution for those people, because it was going to be burning wood waste. It was sanctioned by the government. The local government was OK. They wanted the taxes from the company and so forth.

So you get this dynamic of community, local government, and industry. And whose voice gets lost sometimes in this process is maybe the community's voice. Because the government, they have a certain amount of power and influence as well as the company.

So my work was about creating a narrative that focused on the voice of the community, the activists, the ones who were trying to protest and mobilize against the citing. So to me, doing a qualitative study made more sense if I wanted to look at this particular environmental justice case around the idea of giving voice to the people or telling their story. So if you want to give voice or tell a story in your internship, this is why qualitative methods would be the way to go.

There are five traditions of qualitative research-- multi-disciplinary approaches, one is biography, another is phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. And I'm going to spend some time talking about each one of these.

Biography is most likely something you guys won't do. But it is a qualitative method. This is something maybe a historian would use. Everyone understands what a biography is. It's usually about an individual. It's about the experiences of that person.

And to a certain degree, it's really their life story. It could start in infancy up to old age or whether. They may be deceased or whatever. Or it could start at some point when they were young or an adolescent, or it could talk about them as an elderly person, whatever. But it is a way of getting, for example, famous people. It could be a famous person.

A lot of biography are about presidents, obviously. Because they at one point in their lives are the main the leader of this country, and so an insight into their lives is sometimes very useful. Or it could be a celebrity.

I could think of a famous person. Let me say someone, maybe, who has passed on, and there's a biography about them. Celebrity, obviously, should be someone who is still alive, I guess. So in a way, you can look at people who are dead or you could look at people who are alive. But it's mostly about focusing on one individual.

Now, phenomenology is something that you may find a psychologist using this approach. Phenomenology is finding meaning in lived experiences. Now, notice it sounds a little cryptic. And I'm going to give a little example so you understand what this means. But we all look for meaning in life, right? So phenomenology is about trying to find that meaning to something that's significant. You usually talk to several individuals. It's not like biography, which is just one person, but you talk to a group of people.

And it's usually centered around a concept or phenomenon. So for example, there are two that I think most of you could maybe relate to-- alien abduction and near death experiences. And of course, it sounds a little humorous when you think about saying something like alien abduction. But think about how many people have said that they have been abducted by aliens. It's not a large population, but there are enough people who say they have that you could maybe do a study on that. This is a phenomenology. This is something that's not widespread in general, but very specific to some type of phenomenon that someone is abducted by aliens.

Same thing with near-death experiences. You've had people who have apparently died on an operation table and came back or whatever situation. It's not widespread throughout the population, but there are enough people who said that they've had this that you could actually maybe study this. So it's a phenomenon. It's not something that's widespread, but there's enough people who you could maybe look at and say, what's going on here? Is there something really happening? So that's what phenomenology is about.

Grounded theory could be used by a sociologist. A grounded theory is more about looking at theories of a phenomenon, or it could be individual interactions, taking actions. I guess mostly, the notion of, say, grounded theory is an engagement process looking at a response to things that are happening. And even though these terms are a little abstract, I think what can clear it up more is this example-- activist leadership in a local community. This was what I did my dissertation on.

I used a ground theory in my research, because what I was trying to do was look at a theory and see how this theory is applied by people on the ground. So I was looking at environmental justice as a theoretical framework that people could use to mobilize and organize to deal with a situation of, say, waste siting in their community. And here's the environmental justice issue.

And then to find out if it's really working, I'm talking to activists. I'm asking them questions on how do you organize, how do you mobilize, and what are your feelings about the government and the industry, and have you talked. So in a way, it's an overview, but I'm trying to see how do people interact, and can I see a theory in this interaction.

Another way we can go with this is an ethnography. This might be something that some of you can maybe look at for your internship maybe. This is the anthropologist's approach where you're describing and interpreting a culture or a social group or a system, studying what makes these people work, what are the cultural components of the society. Or it could be an examination of observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and norms.

So a lot of this is observing. With ethnography, you're not really intervening. You're mostly watching and seeing how people behave. So with ethnography, the key is to not really intervene much, but stay as an observer.

Examples of this would be studying an ethnic neighborhood or looking at Greek organizations, the sororities, fraternities, or one would think of saying an indigenous community. So these are ways that you look at communities or groups that have some commonalities that create a culture that's specific to this particular group.

And lastly, once again, is the case study. It could be social. Political scientists may look at a case study. And to be honest with you, case study is probably the form of qualitative research that most of you might find more appropriate for this type of internship. Because you're looking at the exploration of a bounded system over time.

The word bounded, it kind of means that it's contained, it's a certain contained group or environment. When I give an example, it will make it a little more clear what this means. You would use in-depth data gathering as well as multiple sources of contextual information.

The examples would be a city. My dissertation work was a case study. I basically even say that in my subtitle. I was looking at this area Flint, Michigan and Genesee County where this particular thing was taking place. So it's specific to maybe a city.

It could be a person. You could use a person as a case study. A little different from a biography where maybe the biography is about the person's life. The case study will be more within the context of some issue, maybe, some circumstance or some condition that's taken place right then or maybe took place. Maybe they were a victim of violence, and they want to talk about that or something. But it's not necessarily a whole life story.

So when you're doing qualitative research, you're look at multiple sources of information. Because different from, say, quantitative research where you may get some statistics and you just do some correlations, qualitative research, you really have to convince people why you're saying what you're

saying. So the more ways you say it, the more you can maybe support what your assumptions are, because you're using multiple methods.

Some basic types of information would be interviews, of course. Interviews are generally one on one when you ask a person questions face to face. Observations, as I said before, where you don't really say anything. You watch people's behavior. So you live among a group of people for weeks, months, or whatever, and you take notes and have a diary, and you watch what they do and you see where there are patterns. And maybe you come in with some theoretical frame that you want to test, and you watch to see if it works out from the observations.

And of course, documentation is very important. Documentation can be anything from records, newspapers, magazines, things that you can cite from your research-- audiovisual materials, maybe radio, television, videos about this group of people, this individual whatever. Other new forms could be certain sounds. I'm not quite sure how that plays out, but I read it in the literature as I was presenting this.

But I guess there are some sounds. Maybe-- well, let's think about helicopters hovering over above, something like animals barking. That may have some impact on some behavior patterns of the group that you're looking at. People's email messages-- because, of course, that's now a way of communicating. You can see what people are saying. And you can see how many people are getting in trouble in media now because of the type of email messages they send. So that's definitely one way you can get information. Social media now, Twitter and Facebook, all these other media, and certain computer software.

Now, this is what's important for both quantitative as well as qualitative-- consciously considering ethical issues. Remember anytime you do research, there's an ethical component, because you're somewhat intrusive, especially dealing with human subjects. Now, if you're doing secondary data collection where all you're doing is taking some statistics and graphs, something that was written before, and writing about it, there's no harm to it. But if you're going to start talking to people, you have to seek consent.

And I think next time I talk, I'll talk more about human subjects, that type of work on human subjects. But you want to make sure you get permission to talk to people about things you're going to talk about. You don't just want to do a study.

Now, you could walk up to someone and ask them a question, and they can answer that question or not. But if you're actually asking a question because you're doing research and you don't tell people that you're doing that research, you're sort of being-- what's the next thing-- you're being deceptive. So when you're doing research, you always want to not be deceptive. Because you don't want people coming back later and feeling as though you violated their trust, or you invaded their territory, or you got some information that they didn't necessarily want to be publicized.

So research is very much built upon making sure that the people know that you're asking them questions and why you're asking them questions, and maintaining confidentiality if that's part of how the research is set up. Maybe people won't tell you something if they think other people are going to hear. Normally when you do research, it's aggregated so that it falls into a grouping, that you don't necessarily single out one person and say, Bob said that he cannot stand-- whatever. Maybe you could say 35% of people cannot stand blah, blah, blah. Bob's in there, but Bob's in there with Sue, and Jane, and Mary, and Bob. So they're all aggregated into one clump.

So confidentiality is important, as well as protecting the anonymity of people with whom we speak when it's appropriate and necessary. Now, confidentiality may be just not identifying who said something. You may still mention-- anonymity, I guess, is a little more deeper where you don't even identify anybody at all. Maybe you just take some statements and you throw them out there, but you never even say where you got them from.

Or what you do, as I did in my research, is code people's names. Change the alphabets around, give a false name or something. But you have to find ways to protect people, because you don't want them to get upset and come back to try to sue you or whatever. Now, these cases, you may not even get that deep into your research to do that. But I just want to think about it if you're going to be dealing with human subjects.

Let's go back to comparing these five research traditions. With the biography, the data collection is fairly simple. There are primary interviews and some documents. So any time you see a book that's written, a biography, and autobiography, somebody sat down with that person or they did it themselves. Well, they didn't do it themselves. I guess you can interview yourself. But most likely if it's autobiography, they just wrote what they were feeling.

But a real biography involves somebody interviewing that person. And you can use support documents, things that were written about them. Maybe they may have a journal that they kept, and you use their journal.

But out of that analysis, you come out with stories. We love stories, right? Our lives are all about stories. Anytime you read a newspaper, you're reading a story. You watch a TV show, it's a story. When you were a kid, you asked your parents, tell me a story.

So we're all storytellers. Think about those images of indigenous people sitting around the campfire. Someone is telling a story. So really, stories are-- it's pretty common for humans to want to hear stories.

So in a way, telling a story is part of what your goal can be. An epiphany, it could be something life changing, some awakening that someone has come up with that you want to share with others so they can be awakened as well. And it may also have a historical content, the idea of putting something in perspective according to history.

So if you look at phenomenology, we're talk about collecting interviews for up to, say, maybe 10 people. So once again, think about those alien abductions or after life experiences. You don't need a whole lot of people to do this. You just need enough people so that you can say that there's a pattern here, that they're saying some of the same things. So maybe there's something here. So you get their statements.

You find meaning. What does all of this mean? And once you have meaning, you can start having meaning themes, which means you start aggregating the meanings. You start finding multiple meanings in what you're looking at. And eventually, you can have a general description of the experience. And you can say now because I've looked at all this stuff, I can explain what we're seeing here.

If you grounded theory, your interviews can rise to between 20 to 30 individuals to saturate the categories and to detail a theory. So when I did my research in Flint, I had about roughly 30 activist leaders that I interviewed. And I had them in several groups. I had the core leaderships, which was the core leaders. Then you have the people that assisted them. Then you have people who came and went but weren't always there with protests and so forth.

So anyway, the point is that you don't want to have too many people. Because then you might as well have a quantitative study. But you just want enough that you can say that you're hearing enough of the same things that you can see that maybe this is what the problem is. Because 15 people are talking about this, and maybe the others aren't talking about it.

Now, what you need to do when you do this, of course, is have a coding system. There are several of them, open coding. The axial coding is a values coding. Selective coding is looking for certain patterns. And then you can create some kind of matrixes where you can see these things.

Right now, we're doing the sessions, and I'm doing this one-hour session, and then I'm doing another one in a few weeks. But we're hoping to turn this into a course maybe for next year. That may not do some of you any good. But this is the beginning of going from just having sessions to maybe having a full course that the students will take. And in that, I could get into much more detail about how all the coding and all that stuff works. But right now, I just want to give you a sense that if you're going to do any of these, there's certain ways it has to be done properly.

So now we've got ethnography, data collection. It's primary observation and interviews with additional artifacts. So ethnography is not just only observation and talking to people, but you want to have things that are part of the cultural artifacts-- can be writings, stories that they tell, maybe even visual things from the field that help describe what's going on, help you with the analysis, and of course, interpretation as well.

And then there's the case study, which is kind of my favorite. When you're doing data collection, you're using a multiple sources, which means lots of documents. Archival records, going to the library, anything that's written down somewhere-- journals, things like that, interviews,

observations, and physical artifacts. So when I did my dissertation research, I pretty much did all of these things.

So in my work, in my chapters, I had certain ways I approach each one. I had a section on what I observed. I had a section on interviews as well as documentation and lit review. So when you're doing case study work, which is kind of like grounded research, you have to put all these together to piece it together and tell a story which creates themes and assertions.

So ultimately, what you're trying to do is get a narrative form. What I'm doing is capsulizing what these five traditions are. With biography, you really are given a detailed picture of an individual's life so people can come to understand who that person is and why they're so famous.

The phenomenology is description of the essence of an experience. Like I said, if people have a common experience, what is the point, what is the essence of it, what is the common factor that's created this experience for these people.

The grounded theory is basically looking at a theory and trying to give it legs, trying to help it to walk, and figuring out how does the theory apply to what I see going on in the real world. An ethnography is a description of a culture, of cultural behavior of a group of people or an individual. And the case study is an in-depth study of various cases or a case.

Now, there's another what I call emergent method called focus groups. The reason I call it emergent is because it's not of the five traditions, but is something that is much more recently put together. And it's something else I used in my research as well. So I did in-depth interviews, but I also did focus groups.

And this is a research technique from marketing. So some of you who are in entrepreneurship might find this a little attractive. A focus group is a small group, no more than, say, 12 people from various backgrounds who are brought together to give their opinions on a proposal or some aspect of a proposal. And that's kind of from the literature, but it could be anything. It doesn't have to be a proposal.

It could be, in marketing, maybe a soft drink or something. But you want to get-- it's sort of like a group interview. And because you're interviewing a lot of people at once rather than one by one, it's less costly as far as money and time, because you're get it all done at one time. The reason that you don't want to really do more than 12 people, because the more people you have, the less opportunity for some people to have something to say. So you want to make sure that everybody gets heard. So 12 or less is usually the number of a focus group.

When you're conducting focus groups, the group's members do not necessarily have to be representative of a community. So they don't always have to be like each other. But what you're trying to do is choose from some demographic, issue-related, or geographic reason. But whatever

the reason is, the people have to have something in common. But it doesn't have to mean that they're from the same place.

So when you're doing a focus group, generally you invite individuals from different backgrounds, and partly because you don't want everyone to really think the same way, because then you're not going to get any real contrast. You're not going to really find out what you want to know if everyone is thinking the exact same way. You want there to be some diversity over the issue or whatever you're trying to-- if you're going to market a product, you want to make sure that there are a variety of different types of people testing that product out. Because if you have one group of people who are all of phenotypically the same, it may apply to just them. But if you look into the general marketplace, it may not be appropriate.

You set the rules. People are not representing others, only themselves. So what you're saying is, say what you think. Don't try to build upon other people's comments. Gathering data is an open-ended question. This is a very important component of qualitative research is open-ended questions. If you know anything about surveys in general, most of the time they're close-ended unless they have an open-ended component to it. But they just want you to give an answer yes or no, choose between these three, whatever, and that's it.

But with qualitative, open-ended questions are open-ended. That means you ask a person to give you a question, and then they give you that answer. And whatever that answer is, you take it. That's the answer you get. And you didn't influence that answer at all. You didn't tell them within the parameters, you can only say these things. You ask them what they say. And then after they've said what they've said, then you look at what they said.

And that's what's really interesting. That's why it takes a long time, too, sometimes, because you have to look through people's sentences and paragraphs and everything they've said, and look for word patterns and different themes. So it can be kind of lengthy. But like I said before, you don't necessarily have to do qualitative research if you want to. But if you decide you want to do this, it can be very interesting to really dig deep and to find out what people think about something.

Also, avoid voting. Ideas and opinions, are they objective? Sometimes we get a group of people together, you want to say, how many people feel about? No. That's not the point. You're not voting on how many people feel about something. You want to find out what an individual thinks about something. The next individual, what do you think about it? What do you think about? What do you think about it? So it's not so much vote on it. You're trying to get individual answers in a group setting.

Being imaginative in questioning and using humor. The reason you use humor is because you have to get people to loosen up and feel comfortable and say what they're really thinking. And in a way, it sounds kind of cokey. Saying, oh, make sure you're funny. It's not that. It's about making sure people are comfortable. So maybe humor is the best way to do that.

Another important component is that the interviewer must not influence the respondent's answers, which means that you can't lead. And when I did focus groups in Flint, it's like I had to develop a skill. Actually, it helps me now as a professor, because I can have this stone face during oral defenses and stuff where you just don't show any emotion.

And that's what you have to do when you're an interviewer. There's a reflex to nod your head when people are talking, and you can't really do that when you're doing focus groups, because you're influencing people. You're saying, yes, that's what I want to hear.

So no, you're not supposed to encourage people to say what they think you want to hear. They're supposed to say what they want to say. So you almost have to not even nod your head or agree with them. So it's a very tricky thing when you do focus groups. Because as the interviewer, you have to not influence the responses. You have to make sure that you're always neutral and you let the people tell you what they want to say without influencing it.

So like I said, the strength of a focus group is that a single issue can be explored. With a focus group, you basically want to know something about maybe one or two particular things. I wanted to know about activism and how people mobilize and organize in the Flint community. That's all I was asking them. I wasn't asking them about their jobs, or about what they thought about the football team in the city. That wasn't part of it. It was only, as an activist, what's going on here, what do you think about this.

One issue-- bring out subtle variations in their views. And that's what you get from it, is that people will hear other people, what they say. It's like they've got earphones on and nobody is hearing. People hear other people, and they may respond to the next person's comment. So each response builds subtle relationships between the answers that you're getting. Somebody might come back again and say, now that I've heard blah, blah, blah, I'd like to change my answer, or let me elaborate on what I've said. So you start to see that they can build upon variations of their views.

The group atmosphere may create different dynamics in the interview, like I said. Some people may start to say, this is how I feel, and other people may not agree. So the dynamics may start to shift a little bit. But like I say, once again, it's less costly than individual interviews.

But the weakness is-- and this you can understand about a focus group-- it can lead to controversy. Like I said, you may get some people get very heated about what someone else says, and then you have to make sure that you don't let it get out of control. Someone may dominate. You may get one person that wants to do all the talking. And there's limits in time. You can't keep people there for five, six hours. You'll only be able to get so much information out of people in maybe an hour at the most.

Try not to have that voting tendency. And it also requires well-skilled interviewers, like I said before. And information gathering is only an exercise. Just getting the information alone means nothing. You have to do something with it after you gather it. So you could have a focus group, and you could

just go home and never do anything with it. That's not the point, but that's what a focus group is-- just getting information.

I think I'm going to have to move a little more quickly, because this hour is moving really fast. With qualitative data, like in focus groups, gathering data is collectively in group sessions. It's using open-ended but targeted questions. Like I said, make sure the questions are targeted to what you're trying to learn from the group. The results are direct quotations, capturing people's personal perspectives, experiences, and insights.

And so the local aspects of focus groups, one is about being descriptive. It describes something. There's certain types of characteristics, experiences, relationships, and narratives that take place when people are talking about the same subject matter. And also, the conceptual component is, once you get all this conversation from people, you look for key words.

You look for categories, meanings, and codes, and indexes. And that's what thought was very interesting. Because when you go in, you have the literature that says that this is what people are going to talk about. So when you find out, you're asking them questions and they've answered, now you can go back and say, the literature said they were going to talk about this, they were going to say certain words, and yes they did, or the literature was wrong, because we talked for an hour and no one ever mentioned this at all. Or it's like, wow, this stuff that I found out that the literature never talked about and I didn't even know existed.

So for the focus group idea, it's mostly creating meaning looking at language. It's mostly about what we say, how we say it, how often we say it, why we say it. And it's very, very interesting stuff.

So basically about structure and function of your study, using the qualitative method is basically asking data about what, as opposed to the quantitative which is asking how much or how many. It's also the strength of the claims, meaning can you really depend upon what you've been told-- validity, internal validity, as well as integration of the data. What's its meaningfulness? Does it mean anything?

There are several analyses, which I'll run through very quickly. One is cluster analysis. When you measure the groupings or clustering of the data, how much does the data cluster around certain themes, or the same words keep coming up. There's a clustering that you can look at. Comparative compares and contrasts different data. What's this data? What's the difference between this one and the other? There may be some differences that you can see.

Content determines the coherent themes in the data. What are the themes that are there that you expected to see, and are there themes that you never even know existed and now you can start to say, I'm seeing these new themes from listening to what these people are saying. There's also a collaborative analysis when you have support over there. Like I said, if the literature is saying this and you ask people in the real world what they think about it, does it collaborate? Do they say yes? They're doing just what the literature said they would do?

Descriptive data is basically telling people things they didn't even know or just describing what's out there that's maybe hidden, but now you've revealed it. Discourse follows emergent patterns of language discourse. There's new patterns that you can follow, maybe, through the language, what people are talking about. And then the symbolic interaction is analysis that looks at actions and behavior, and how much these actions and behavior are in it. So looking for verbs and things like that that let you know how people are behaving.

So this stuff is-- like I said, I'm going to have a reading list at the end which you can find on your own. Just Google it or whatever, qualitative research, and there's a lot of stuff out there. But the stages of it are, first of all, familiarization. You listen to the tapes. You read transcripts. What I had to do is I had to tape all these sessions that I had, both the in-depth interviews as well as the focus groups.

So I had all these hours and hours of conversations which I had to turn into transcripts, meaning I had to now see them visually, had to read them. So this took a very long time. Now there are other programs, which I'll show you some of those which do it for you. But back when I did it, I didn't have any real programs. I had to do it all visually.

Identify thematic frameworks, which means observing patterns and themes. And then after you get those patterns and themes, you can code them and create indexes about themes and concepts. And with those indexes, now you can almost chart or map out the different themes that are there, looking at key words from quotations, mapping, isolating and extracting these quotations.

But the most important component of it is interpretation. And that's where it's really difficult unless you've spent a lot of time reading about qualitative research and understanding what you want to study, because you have to interpret it. Even with quantitative research, you've got to interpret the Chi-squared, the regression. So you've got to still interpret here.

And this may be even more difficult. Because with numerical, you can say, well, if it's point blah, blah, this is what I'm looking at. With the qualitative, it really comes down to your own subjectivity. And that's why you really have to be very knowledgeable about what you're studying so that you can almost see when you're making the wrong assumptions. So anyway, interpretation is the big deal here.

There's some qualitative analysis evaluation software that one can use now so you don't have to necessarily do it all by visual looking called Nudist, which is non-numerical instructive data, indexing, searching, and theorizing. I'm sure somebody took some time to think this through so they could come up with-- I can come up with a very nasty word here. No, no. But anyway, Nudist is what it's called.

There's also QUALOG, Ethnograph. And the one I have on my computer which I haven't quite used yet, but maybe I'll get a chance to someday in the future, is Atlas TI, which maps out the network of

codes. Once you get these codes together, it'll show you how to interconnect it on some mapping systems.

So the limit of doing qualitative research is that it's not generalizable. Whereas you can say-- in my case in Flint, I can say that only happened in Flint. During that specific time in that specific place, this is what I observed. You can't say, now if I go to New York, I'm going to see the same thing, or if I go to Philly or LA. You can't say that. You can only say, in Flint in 1990, blah, blah, blah, this is what I observed. So it's not generalizable.

There are no firm guidelines or procedures. As I can say, qualitative is very subjective. A lot of it, there are certain ways you can approach it, but you can create your own measurements. You can look at it and say, well, maybe it's better if I measure it this way. No one else has ever done that. Only thing you have to do is justify it. If you can justify why you've done something, then it's OK. But if you can't justify it, then it means nothing. But it's kind of up to you.

There's constant change, obviously. Things happen, and you may think you know it, and then someone else will look at it and say, well, that doesn't make any sense. And you look at it and say, yeah, actually, it doesn't. Let me go back and look at that again. So you can't always be sure exactly when you're done, obviously. And of course, it's open to interpretation.

And as I said before, it's very situated. It's relative to a specific time and place. Like I said, the audience has to be receptive. People have to be willing to work with you and tell you what you want to know. And you have to determine if this is really the proper method. You may be using the wrong method to get the information. You may be trying to use an ethnography when you should really be doing grounded theory. So you have to make sure that you're using the proper method.

So how does this relate to your internships? Well, one, it will help you formulate the methodology for the GSRP. If you decide you want to do one of these methods, or even create your own method-- like I said, you may come up with a way of saying something that you think would work best for what you're doing. You can write that up in the GSRP. It helps you describe this methodology in more detail in the project proposal, which all of you are going to have to do.

Then obviously-- this was the real difficult part of doing research. My proposal, when I did my proposal for my dissertation research, I told them all the stuff I was going to do. And when they looked at it and they said, OK, that looks good, go do it, then there was this shocked feeling-- oh my god, I've got to now do this.

So all you're doing is preparing yourself to actually do the work. So you have to really be careful, because this is a lot of work. So that's why I'm explaining it to you and showing it to you now, because you might say, this is too much work. Let me just do a simple, simple report. But if you really want to make it something that's memorable and you can use it as a ticket to go out and say, look what I've done at the Patel College, you can look at one of these methods and implement it in

your actual research. I think I pressed it too soon, but that was basically saying, you've got to write it up afterwards.

So here is where you do the methodology. So if you decide on something, you write it up here in GSRP. I think we're on time. The key components of your research proposal, as you know, are writing up an abstract, your table of contents, your list of figures and tables and notations. And then you have an introduction. So the components of that, whether you're doing quantitative or qualitative or just basically a report, is focusing on the background, the summary of what you're doing, why you're doing it, some kind of problem statement-- what's the problem you want study and hopefully solve in some way.

Your objectives, where you're going, what are the goals, what are the things you want to accomplish during the study. And another important component is your research questions. You have to have some questions that you want to answer. Why is this study significant? What's the justification for doing this? And then the scope-- how broad is this? How many people are going to be involved? How long is it going to take? How much money do you need for this? Different things that give a scope.

Now, other components of a literature review, which is really important-- like I said before, you need to build your ideas upon other people's work, so read as much of the literature as possible to support your arguments. And then again, in red is the methodology. Whatever methodology you choose, you need to talk about that. The work plan is pretty much how you're going to do it to schedule-- days, time, weeks or whatever. And eventually, your recommendations and results, what you expect. References should be connected to what's in your lit review.

And the internship agreement is only signed after you've completed your guys' proposal. So I want to make sure everybody is clear on that. Now, the project paper is pretty much like your proposal. It's the same format initially, although you go into more detail with the methodology and your materials and methods and results and findings. So that's why it's really important to do your proposal, as much of it as you can. Because you're basically doing your paper anyway. And once you have a proposal there and most of it's written, then it's just a matter of adding the additional stuff like your discussion, your results and findings, your recommendations, and so forth.

And remember to write it in past tense. I shouldn't have to tell people that, but we have had students in the past who actually in their final paper said, I will, blah, blah, blah. You're saying, OK, that's a really lazy person who didn't bother to say I have done blah, blah, blah, meaning that they wrote the proposal and never really rewrote their final paper. Then we realize the person is not really serious. So when you finish your project paper, you're basically saying, this is what I've done.

So once again, tips on internship-- I'll go through this again, because this is really important stuff. Start early, which is like now. Write a few drafts before submitting a proposal. All of you know this by now-- usually the first thing that you write is not really your best work. You usually have to write it several times.

So the first draft-- and we'll probably tell you that too-- is not going to be the best. So once you write it a few times, then you start to really get a good proposal going. Make sure that you seek assistance from people. We're all in this together. That's what we're here. So if you need some help, make sure you find someone that's qualified to help you.

Pay attention to timetables and deadlines. This will make Randy very happy. Keep an eye on those deadlines. And not only is it good for us, it's good for you. Because you guys want to get out here on a reasonable time, right? You follow those deadlines, and you'll be able to move on. Don't wait until the last minute. Shouldn't have to tell people that, but we do that all the time. Connected to that is plan in advance. Make sure you're doing planning. Planning is very important. But be prepared for setbacks.

Any time you're in grad school, life happens. Things happen. I don't have to get into details, but there's always something that's going to happen. When I was working on my dissertation, I lost stuff on the computer. I had crashes where data just disappeared.

[GASPS]

Stuff happens-- family related stuff, financial things. But the more you get done, the less the setbacks can really hurt you. When in doubt, ask us. That's what we here for. If you have questions, just let us know that you don't understand something. and also, keep your advisors informed of your progress. It's really important that you us know on this, especially when you're abroad, that you let us know what's going on. That's why we have the blogs and so forth. Your advisors, they're there to help guide you through this.

But to be honest, guys, we kind of worry about you sometimes. We don't hear about you, we start going, where are they? I haven't heard from them for three, four weeks. Where are they? Are they OK? So we worry. So let us know what's going on so we don't have to worry about you guys.

And focus on what's important. That's kind of a no-brainer. But it's easy to get distracted. Hey, I know-- grad school, a lot of times, I just wanted to go out. I used to be so frustrated. I'd be down in the computer lab tapping away, and I'd look out the window and I'd see kids out there throwing Frisbees and running around. And I was like, man, why am I in here? I want to be out there.

But the goal is to get this thing done, so stay focused. And the most important thing, obviously, is to stay positive. Because sometimes you get a little negative when things aren't going quite right. But keep that positive attitude, and things will work out.

These are some of the references. I have four of them up here. They're a little dated, mostly all back in the last century. But some of these are classic works, meaning once they wrote these, it's hard to improve upon something that's pretty thorough already. Some of them may have been updated. Of course, there are probably newer ones out there. But this is from my own personal library.

You've got Bryman and Burgess, who wrote a book on analyzing qualitative data. Cresswell, he's kind like the premier person in qualitative research. He wrote a book called *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choose Among the Five Traditions*. Kruger wrote a book on focus groups, very good book, a practical guide to applied research. And that's what qualitative research is, pretty much-- applied research. You're applying that research, you're working directly with people. And then Patton is another very famous qualitative researcher who has a book on the methods of evaluation.