

Qualitative Research and the IRB

A Primer for Researchers

Patricia Condon, University of New Hampshire

Andrew Hedrick, The Ohio State University

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Introductions

Andrew Hedrick, MPA, CIP
Senior IRB Protocol Analyst
The Ohio State University



Patricia Condon, PhD
Research Data Services Librarian
University of New Hampshire



Disclosure Statement: Patricia Condon

I have no relevant personal/professional/financial relationship(s) with respect to this educational activity

Disclosure Statement: Andrew Hedrick

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Agenda

- Overview of qualitative research approach
- Assessing merit and trustworthiness
- Ethical issues presented by qualitative research
- Strategies for researchers to minimize harm to participants
- Q&A

Research Approach to Qualitative Inquiry

Subjectivist
Approaches



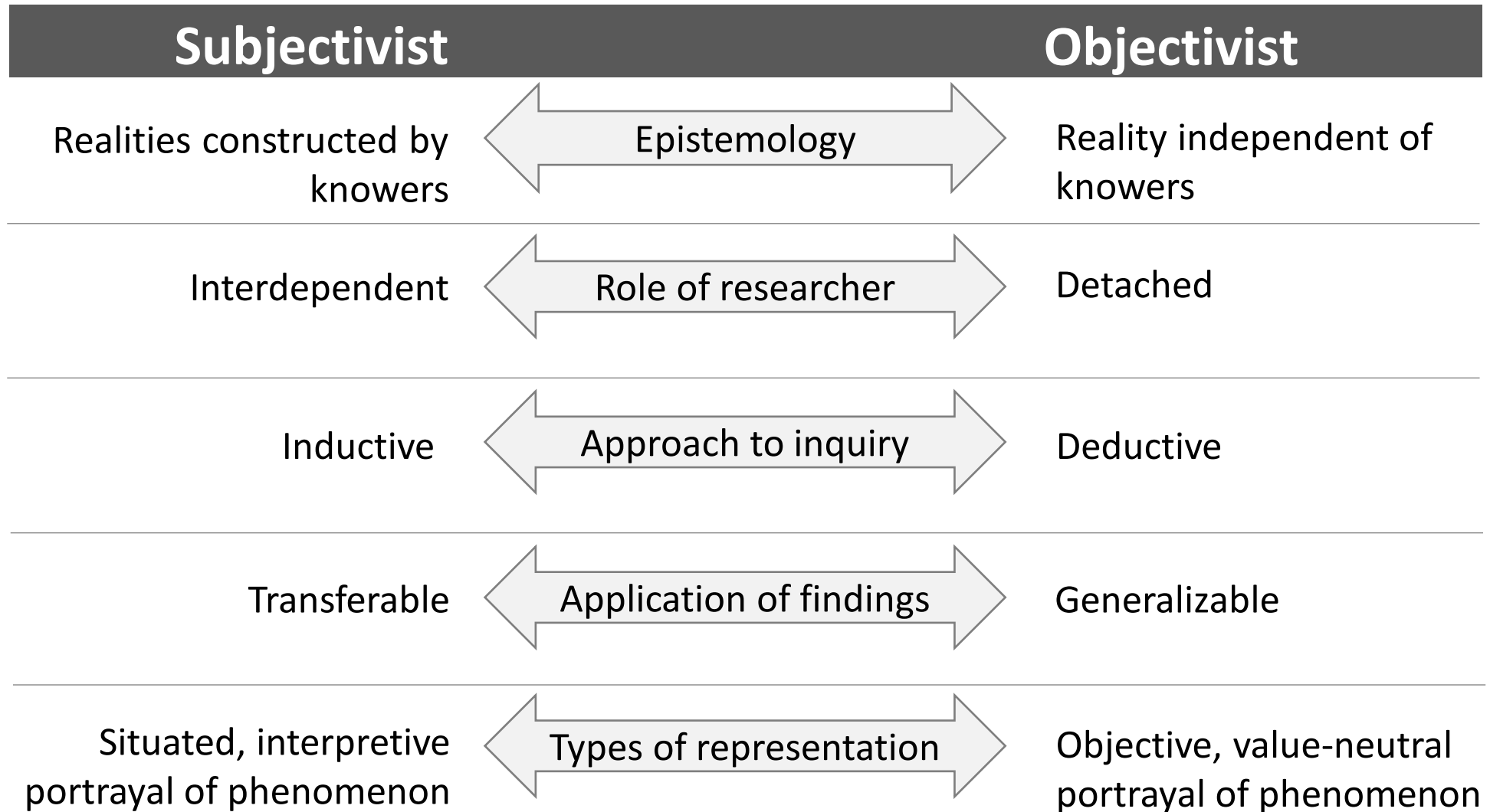
Objectivist
Approaches

Qualitative
Approaches



Quantitative
Approaches

Philosophical Assumptions



Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Qualitative		Quantitative
Understand phenomena	Purpose of study	Measure phenomena or explain causes
Study phenomena in context	Approach to study	Isolate phenomena from context
Inductive	Approach to inquiry	Deductive
Purposive and small sample size	Sampling	Representative and large sample size
Detailed descriptions of phenomena	Outcomes	Generalizable knowledge

Example: Studying Domestic Violence

Qualitative approach

Qualitative research question

- In what ways do people who witness domestic violence understand how it affects their current relationships?

Quantitative approach

Quantitative research question

- How does witnessing domestic violence impact a child's romantic relationships in adulthood?

Example: Studying Disease in a Community

Qualitative approach

Qualitative inquiry might involve

- interviews/focus groups of patients & providers
- observation in various settings
- documenting media coverage

Quantitative approach

Quantitative inquiry might involve

- surveying community members & health professionals
- analyzing medical records
- collecting community level data

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

- Direct personal experience in real-world settings
- Sensitive to context & attentive to particulars
- Inductive - generally, ends with principles/relationships/grounded theory
- Seeking patterns, pluralism, and complexity
- Emergent, descriptive, and interpretive
- Using the researcher as the data collection instrument
- Small sample sizes
- Often non-linear

Assessing Scientific Merit

- Scientific merit or rigor is the scientific soundness of the study
- It is applicable to both quantitative & qualitative research
- Review for ethical issues may involve questions about the science

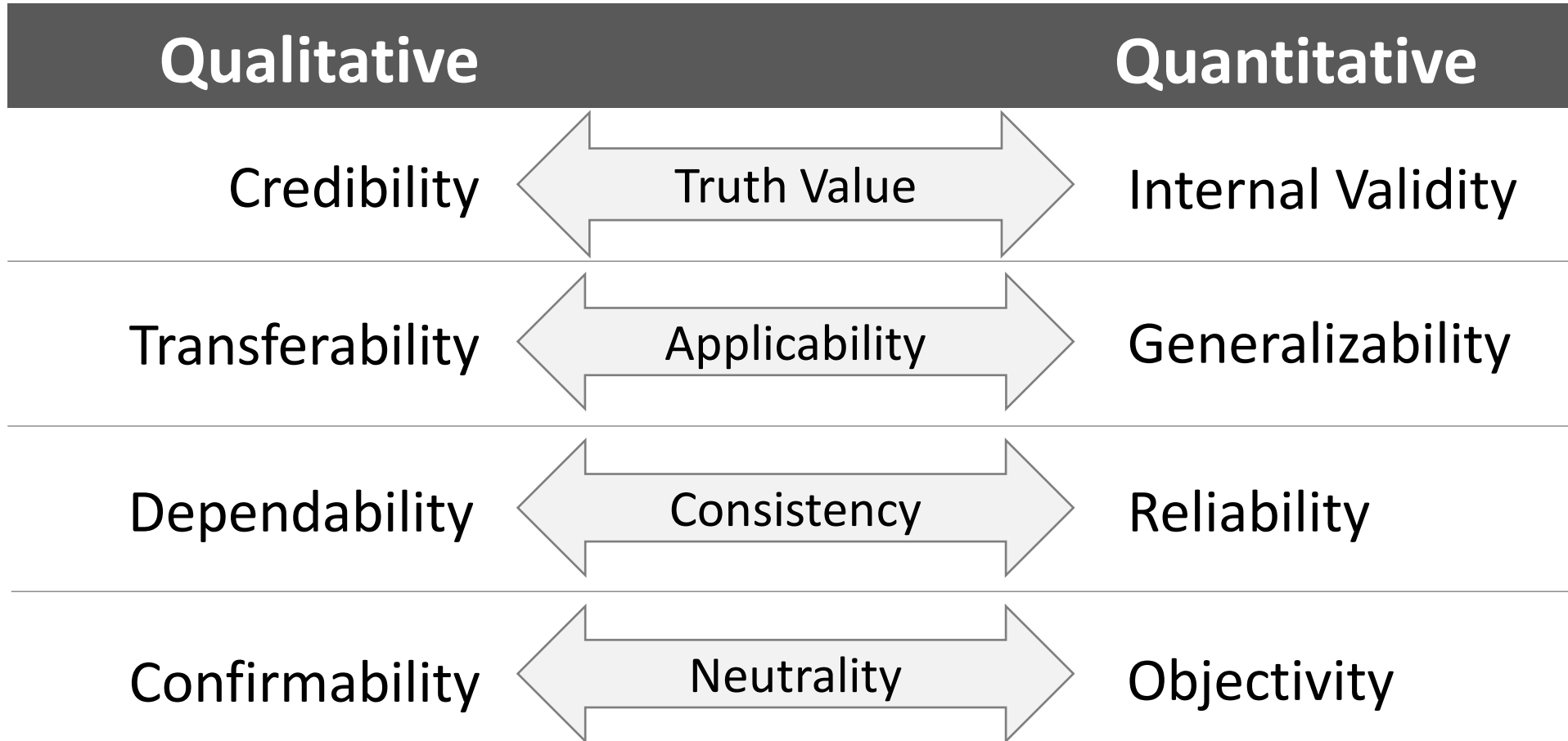
Assessing Quantitative Research

- Generalizability
- Internal validity
- Reliability
- Representative sample

Assessing Qualitative Research

- Fittingness or transferability
- Comparability & translatability
- Trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility

Comparison of Criteria for Assessment of Rigor



Strategies for Rigorous Qualitative Research

- Triangulation of data sources
- Extensive time in the field
- Negative case analysis
- Thick description
- Feedback from others
- Respondent validation

Ethical Issues

Research Involving Human Subjects

1. Do no harm
2. Minimize risk & maximize benefit
3. Treat people fairly
4. Obtain informed consent
5. Protect privacy
6. Maintain confidentiality
7. Keep promises
8. Be trustworthy

Ethical Issues

Things to think about

1. Gaining access
2. Establishing rapport
3. Impression management
4. Role management
5. Informed consent
6. Deception
7. Relationships with participants
8. Conflicting obligations
9. Making the private public
10. Disengaging from the field

Ethical Issues

1. General
2. Recruitment
3. Informed consent
4. Privacy & confidentiality
5. Online spaces
6. Risks

Ethical Issues

General

1. Appropriateness of study design & data collection methods
 - a. Is the study design appropriate?
 - b. Is the data collection method appropriate for the type of data?

Ethical Issues

General

1. Effect of research participation on participants' everyday life/environment
 - a. Assessing if the research may impact participants' lives and if so, how?
 - b. What does ending the study mean in terms of a researcher's relationship with participants?
 - c. As study winds down, start preparing participants for researcher's departure/change in role

Ethical Issues

Recruitment

1. Access to participants
 - a. Is it related to researcher's position?
 - b. Is there a gatekeeper and if so, what role does that person play?
 - c. Is this your site, or an external site?
 - d. Invasion of privacy? Public versus private information?
2. Researcher's relationship with participants
 - a. Existing or new
 - b. Role conflict—to close, exploitation?
 - c. Misinterpretation/misunderstanding by participants
 - d. Power differentials

Ethical Issues

Informed Consent

1. Participant understanding of “research”
2. From whom?
3. Method
4. Emergent nature of study

Ethical Issues

Privacy & Confidentiality

Privacy: Access to the person and/or their information. This is everything leading up to and during the act of data collection:

Confidentiality: The protection of specimens/data once collected.

Ethical Issues

Privacy & Confidentiality

1. Participant understanding of “research”
2. Access to data & protection of raw data
3. Making promises that cannot be kept (subpoena, mandatory reporting)
4. Identifiers in field notes & recordings
5. Use of quotations
6. Balancing confidentiality when reporting detailed information
7. Small “samples,” unique individuals, & demographics
8. Pseudonyms vs. identifying participants in reporting
9. Identifying study sites
10. Making the private public
11. Responsible data sharing – (agency requirements, consent)
12. Re-identifiability

Ethical Issues Online Spaces

1. Public space versus private space
2. Obtaining permission & gaining entry
3. Authenticity; who is the person on the other end?
4. Integrity of data
5. Consent
6. Privacy/Confidentiality
7. “Interpreting” emotion/text/words/jargon
8. Ability to intervene with participants during study

Ethical Issues Risks

- They can be real, and serious
- Largely tied to breaches of confidentiality
- Can be psychological, social, financial, criminal, cultural
- Can apply to an individual or a group (group harm)

Ethical Issues

Strategies for Researchers to Minimize Harm

- Be reflective throughout study
- Do not make promises that cannot be kept
- Identify potential issues and think about contingency plans
- Ensure you explain how you will minimize participant confusion about research & role conflicts--Informed consent
- Set boundaries for data collection

Ethical Issues

Strategies for Researchers to Minimize Harm

- Consider different requirements for consent for different levels of participation
- Use one-on-one methods for sensitive data collection
- Be realistic about impacts of making the private public
- Adhere to The Belmont Report principles & the tenets of the Golden Rule
- When deemed necessary, make consent as an ongoing, active process

Attribution & Thank You

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Thank You!

Questions?

Resources - Journals

1. Qualitative Research ~ <http://qrj.sagepub.com/>
2. The Qualitative Report ~ <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/web.html>
3. Qualitative Sociology Review ~
http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/index_eng.php
4. Qualitative Health Research ~
<http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200926>
5. International Journal of Qualitative Methods ~
<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index>
6. Journal of Mixed Methods Research ~
<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/mmr>

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