What is Qualitative Research?

- Identification vs. Measurement
- “Nature” vs. Amount

“Objectivity”

- Objectification
- Causality
- Empirical Risk

Foundations

- Verstehen
- Process Participation
- Subjectivity

Myths

- “Qualitative methods are inherently progressive; quantitative methods are inherently conservative.”
- “Qualitative and Quantitative methods are inherently incompatible.”
- “Quantitative [or Qualitative] research is the dominant paradigm in Social Work.”

Field Research - Selecting a Topic

- Set a Goal
- Decide What Group to Study
  - Theoretical Interest
  - Personal Interest
  - “Overstudied” Groups
Field Research - Choosing a Site and Gaining Access

- Establishing Legitimacy
  - Existing Relationship
  - Affiliation
  - Credentials
  - Identification Letter
- Open and Closed Groups
- Entry by Stages

Field Research: Participant Observation

- Complete Participant - conceal role as researcher
- Participant Observer - role as researcher is made clear to subjects

Closeness vs. "Respectful Distance"

- Closeness
  - Enhance Understanding
- "Respectful Distance"
  - Protection Against "Going Native"
  - Reduction of Observer Effects

Finding Informants

- Direct Recruitment
- Use of a "Middleman"
Field Research - Recording Observations

- Record ASAP after observation
- Recording will take as long as observation
- Dictating is acceptable; writing is preferable
- Typing is preferable to writing
- Make at least two copies of notes

Field Research - Dealing with Crises

- Weak and Humble
- Powerful and Prestigious
- Align with the Most Powerful