# Introduction to qualitative research

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# The nature of research

## Quantitative research

- Understanding and describing reality – “laws” (e.g. in nature)
- Testing and manipulating variables and measuring results
- Often using statistics to communicate results
- Focus on cause and effect
- Research is a clearly defined process

## Qualitative research

- Understanding and describing people’s interpretation of reality
- Looking at natural settings and what is happening there
- Trend to use excerpts from transcripts to communicate results
- Focus on description, interpretation
- Research is flexible, developing

# What to think about/of when doing qualitative research…

- What is your research topic and what are your research questions?
- Which data collection methods do you use?
  interview, focus group, questionnaire, observation…
- What are the advantages and drawbacks of these methods?
- What is your data? How do you record that data?
- What are the ethical and practical implications?

# What to think about/of when doing qualitative research…

- Who are your participants? How do you select them? – sampling, ethics
- How much data do you need? – saturation
- How do you analyse your data? – approaches to analysis
- How do you evaluate your research? – beware of quantitative concepts

  triangulation, validity, reliability, objectivity, generalisability vs.

  (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010)

# Qualitative research in reality and practice…

- Research process unpredictable and messy and life gets in the way
- Data is not good or not what you expected
- Participants drop out
- Topic is sensitive, difficult, emotive – ethics of care
- A situation you are not prepared for – what to do next?

# Ethics and consent

- Who do you ask for consent?
- What do you do (research focus), why (justification) and how (methods)?
- What data will you collect? And how will you store it?
- What will you do to make sure individuals are not recognisable?
- What will you do with the data?
- What if someone wants to drop out?

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