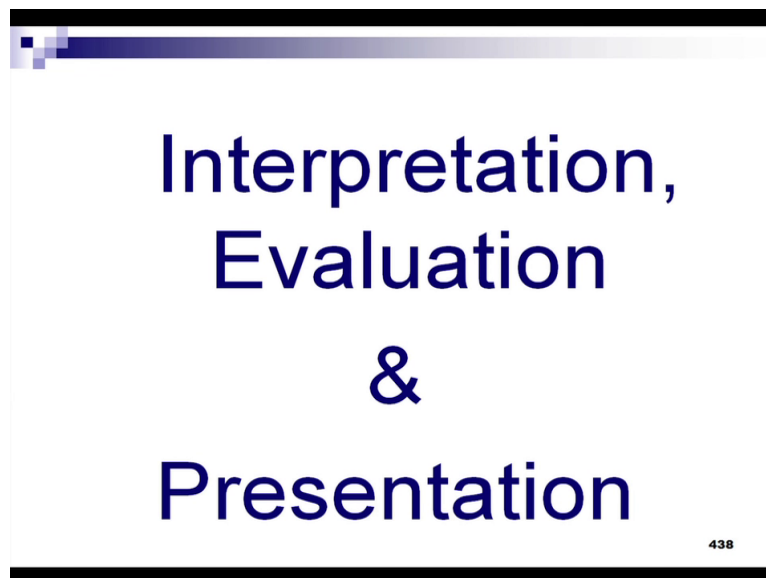


Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 39
Problem of Criteria

Welcome back to the NOC course on qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with this course and in this class we will move on to the last unit, the last block or the last module in this course and that is interpretation, evaluation and presentation.

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we discussed a lot of things about qualitative research, we discussed what qualitative research means, we discussed you know how data is collected and how inquiry is conducted and we discussed Paradigms and etc., we also in the previous class we discussed the role of software and qualitative research, Now we will start with the real you know evaluation interpretation evaluation and presentation, the nuts and bolts we are going to get down to it.

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The problem of criteria

(Smith & Deemer, 2000)

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So today we are going to talk about the problem of criteria now, we have covered the inputs, we talked about criteria from a variety of perspectives, I am just going to do a brief revision of that with you.

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Historical background (Smith & Deemer, 2000)

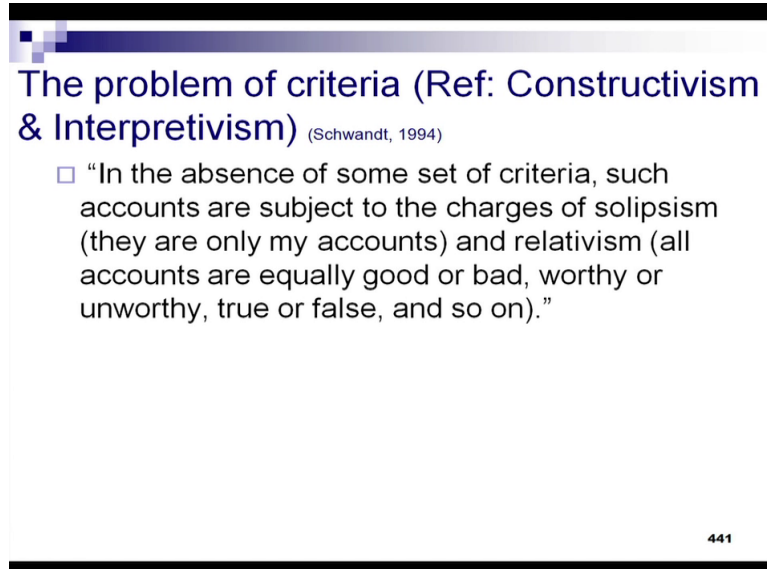
- Primary concern: Subjectivity of the research procedure
 - "... the theory, hypothesis, framework, or background knowledge held by an investigator can strongly influence what is observed" (Hanson, 1958, in Smith & Deemer, 2000)

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We talked about the problem of criteria and we talked about the historical background or sorry the historical background here for this is the primary concern in the problem of criteria is subjectivity of the research procedure, so most people say that the research, the most critics say that the procedure of qualitative research is subjective. "The theory hypothesis framework of background knowledge held by an investigator can strongly influence what is observed."

And hence it is subjective, we have covered the discussion on or we have discussed the problem of criteria overtime, now we talked about it when, we were talking about constructivism and interpretivism.

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The problem of criteria (Ref: Constructivism & Interpretivism) (Schwandt, 1994)

- “In the absence of some set of criteria, such accounts are subject to the charges of solipsism (they are only my accounts) and relativism (all accounts are equally good or bad, worthy or unworthy, true or false, and so on).”

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We talked about this and I'm revising this is the same slide that we had shown that time “in the absence of some set of criteria, such accounts are subject to the charges of solipsism which is these are only my accounts, it is my interpretation and if I evaluated in this point, you know at this point in time, in this context.

This holds good and relativism all accounts are equally good or bad, worthy or unworthy, true or false and so on so.” You know this is the problem of criteria, we will run the risk of these input or these critiques.

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Resolution of the problem of criteria

(Schwandt, 1994)

- Methodology: “The notion of an appeal to procedural criteria as grounds for judging the goodness of interpretations is strong.”
- Arguments for subtle realism:
 - “The intuition is that the truth, worth, or value of a claim, theory, interpretation, construction, and so forth is ultimately determined by something *beyond* the claim, theory, interpretations, construction.”
 - “... there can be ‘multiple, non-contradictory descriptive and explanatory claims about any phenomenon,’ ‘without denying that if those interpretations are accurate they must correspond in relevant aspects to the phenomena described’.” (Hammersley, 1992, p. 135 & 194, in Schwandt, 1994)
- “[To acknowledge] that a human inquirer is permanently engaged in a discourse with his or her own object. [...] [&] to give up the worry about a separation of mind and world and focus instead on intentional, meaningful behaviour that is by definition historically, socially, and culturally relative.”

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We also talked about this you know the resolution for this was suggested by Schwandt in 1994, again this is from the book by Schwandt. The methodology for this “notion of an appeal to procedural criteria as ground for judging the goodness of interpretations is strong.” So it is you know this critique is well accepted, well acknowledged.

The argument for subtle realism: were that “the intuition is that the truth, worth, or value of a claim, theory, interpretation, construction, and so forth is ultimately determined by something beyond the claim, theory, interpretation, and Constructions. “There can be multiple, non-contradictory descriptive and explanatory claims about any phenomenon”, without denying that if those interpretations are accurate they must correspond in relevant aspects to the phenomena described.

So “to acknowledge that human inquirer address permanently engaged in discourse with his or her own subject and to give up the worry about a separation of mind and world and focus instead on intentional, meaningful behavior that is by definition historically, socially and culturally relative.” So these were the responses to the problem of criteria as far as constructivism and interpretivism were concerned.

We said yes, we acknowledge that there is a problem, but we also acknowledge that it's important for the researcher to engage with the environment and that assumption that knowing fully well that that is going to happen we interpret our findings in light of that, okay.

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Characteristics of critical theory (Contd.)

(Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

■ *Criteria for judging the goodness or quality of inquiry:*

- “Historical situatedness of the inquiry”
- Call to action by the inquiry “... to [facilitate/ stimulate] the transformation of the existing structure.”

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Characteristics we also talked about it, when we were talking about critical theory so we talked about criteria for judging the goodness of quality of inquiry, in the context of critical theory and we said that this depends on the “historical situatedness of the inquiry” and call to action by the inquiry, which is what to be ultimately want to achieve as a result of this inquiry is a measure of or is indicative of how good the qualitative research has been.

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Criteria for evaluating a grounded theory

(Glaser, 1978, 1992, in Charmaz, 2000)

- Fit: “... categories must explain the data they [include].”
- Work: “... [GT] must provide a useful conceptual rendering & ordering of the data that explains the studied phenomena.”
- Relevance: “... [GT must offer] analytic explanations of actual problems & basic processes in the search setting.”
- Durability: “... [GT must account] for variation.”
- Modifiability: “... [GT allows researchers to] modify their emerging or established analyses as conditions change or further data are gathered.”

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Then we also talked about this in terms of in the with reference to grounded theory, we talked about various criteria for evaluating a grounded theory, we talk about fit, we talked about work, we talked about relevance, we talked about durability and modifiability.

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Principles of social interaction ... (Contd.) (Ref: Observation)

(Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000)

■ Criteria for validation:

- “Participant validate the cues generated by others in the setting by internal and/ or external criteria.” (Internal & external criteria refer to the intra & inter-group norms respectively), i.e. they ask whether what they are doing is in conformity with the rules within the group & universally as well.
- In order for the research to be complete, a researcher needs to validate & capture every aspect of the situation & phenomenon exactly as it means to people within & outside the situation & then convey the meaning exactly in the same format in the report. (Wolf, 1992, in Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000)

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Then we also discussed this in the context of observation as a strategy of inquiry and we talked about criteria for validation in which “participants validate the cues generated by others in the setting by internal and or external criteria.” So that was one the other is in order for the research to be complete, a researcher needs to validate and capture every aspect of the situation exactly as it means to the people within and outside the situation.

And then convey meaning exactly in the same formatting the report. So as long as the stakeholders say, as long as the stakeholders you know are on the same page as the researchers, it is okay it is good. so that was the response to it.

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Criteria of utility (Ref: Ethnography)

(Chambers, 2000)

- Accessibility of research findings: “... the knowledge be available in an appropriate manner to those who have a stake in a program of change.”
- “Applied ethnography should also be relevant to the goals & prescribed activities of stakeholders & clients.”
- “...[applied ethnography] also needs to be responsive to different claims upon the significance of a course of action.”
- “... applied ethnography should meet a criterion of credibility in terms of being responsive to those standards of evidence & proof that are favored by clients & stakeholders.”
- Applied research needs to address matters of prospect & judgement([...] to understand that stakeholders & clients are often more interested in what could be, or even in what should be, than they are in what currently is).”

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We also talked about it with reference to ethnography; we talked about access ability of research findings: that the knowledge needs to be made available to the people who need it in

an appropriate manner to the stakeholders. The other aspect is applied ethnography should also be relevant to the goals and prescribed activities of stakeholders and clients, people should be able to use the results.

It should be available, it should be accessible, people should be able to acquire it, people should have access to it, people should also be able to understand what is written, secondly it should be relevant to the goals and prescribed activities, it should be given they should be able to use what is given, then they also needs to be applied at ethnography order this also needs to be responsive to different claims upon the significance, so we need to understand what people want and we need to be able to give it to them in an through research.

We also talked about applied ethnography meeting a criterion of credibility in terms of being responsive to those standards of evidence and proof that are favored by clients and stakeholders and the last one here was applied research need to address matters of prospect and judgments that is to understand the stakeholders and clients are often more interested in what could be.

They don't want to know what is, they want to know what could be if things have changed, what could be what would have happened if things were different, people understand, people in the situation understand what is going on, the question is what is going to happen or if things changed what would be different, how would they be benefited if things were different, primarily that.

So research should be in that direction and that as to the body of knowledge that if the situation changes this is what one could arrive at. So this is how one situation could change.

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Bases for the discussion of criteria in qualitative research (Smith & Deemer, 2000)

- “There is no possibility of theory-free observation & knowledge
- The duality of subject & object is untenable
- No special epistemic privilege can be attached to any particular method or set of methods
- We cannot have the kind of objective access to an external, extralinguistic referent that would allow us to adjudicate from among different knowledge claims.”

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Now bases for the discussion of criteria in Qualitative research are one: “there is no possibility of theory-free observation and knowledge, so why do we need to have criteria, because we understand and accept that whatever we find out as to be related to, has to be rooted in theory. The duality of subject and object is untenable. No special epistemic privilege can be attached to any particular method or set of methods.

We cannot have the kind of objective access to an external, extralinguistic referent that we allow us to adjudicate from among knowledge claims.” So these are the bases for the discussion of criteria in Qualitative research.

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Quasi-foundationalist response

(Smith & Deemer, 2000)

- Relativism (Schwandt, 1997): “... the doctrine that denies that there are universal truths.”
- Realism (Schwandt, 1997): “... the doctrine that there are real objects that exist independently of our knowledge of their existence.”

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Quasi-foundationalist response to this is, you know there are two aspects to this response and that is relativism. Relativism is “the doctrine that denies that there are universal truths”. And

you know truths are rooted in context and contextually whatever exist is true that is relativism. Realism is “the doctrine that there are real objects that exist independently of our knowledge of their existence.”

And a perfect example you know this means that just because we cannot see it, we cannot feel it, we don't know about its existence, it doesn't exist that is not true, that objects in outer space, in the depths of the ocean, in the core of the earth, that exist without us knowing them. We have yes our telescopes you know have seen or have found the existence of extra terrestrial bodies like the black hole, like far of galaxies, like the objects found on other planets in our solar system.

But we don't know, just because we haven't seen it, it doesn't mean that it does not exist, there could be a number of new species of plants and animals in the depths of the ocean, there could be one never knows what one may find in the depths of the earth, so just because we have not seen it, we haven't touched, we haven't got there yet, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, so that is realism.

There are real objects that can exist without us knowing them and that means that everything we do doesn't have to be rooted in theory, theory is what came out in historically, but qualitative research says yes we do understand the need to connect to theory, but we also realize that in order to find out something new, we must keep our eyes and ears open. We need to know you know we need to have the courage to and we need to take the risk to go out and find things that we may never have thought existed, okay.

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Non-foundationalist response

(Swandt, 1996, in Smith & Deemer, 2000)

- “We must learn to live with uncertainty, with the absence of final vindications, without the hope of solutions, in the form of epistemological guarantees. Contingency, fallibilism, dialogue, & deliberation mark our way of being in the world. But these ontological conditions are not the equivalent to eternal ambiguity, the lack of commitment, the inability to act in the face of uncertainty.”

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Then Non-foundationalist response to this is “we must learn to live with uncertainty, with the absence of final vindications, without hope of solutions, in the form of epistemological guarantees, contingency, fallibilism, dialogue, and deliberation mark our way of being in the world. But these ontological conditions are not the equivalent to eternal ambiguity, the lack of commitment, inability to act in the face of uncertainty.” And we need to accept that uncertainty exists and we cannot just let go of uncertainty.

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Non-foundationalist response (Contd.)

(Swandt, 1996, in Smith & Deemer, 2000)

- Problem: “... [making & defending] judgments when there can be no appeal to foundations or to something outside of the social processes of knowledge construction.”
- Response:
 - “... is it the case that relativism is self-refuting?”
 - “Does it matter [...] that relativism is self-refuting?”
 - “To say [that the judgements based on a relativistic approach] cannot be grounded extra-linguistically does not mean we are exempt from engaging in as open & unconstrained dialogue as possible in order to attempt to justify our assessments.”

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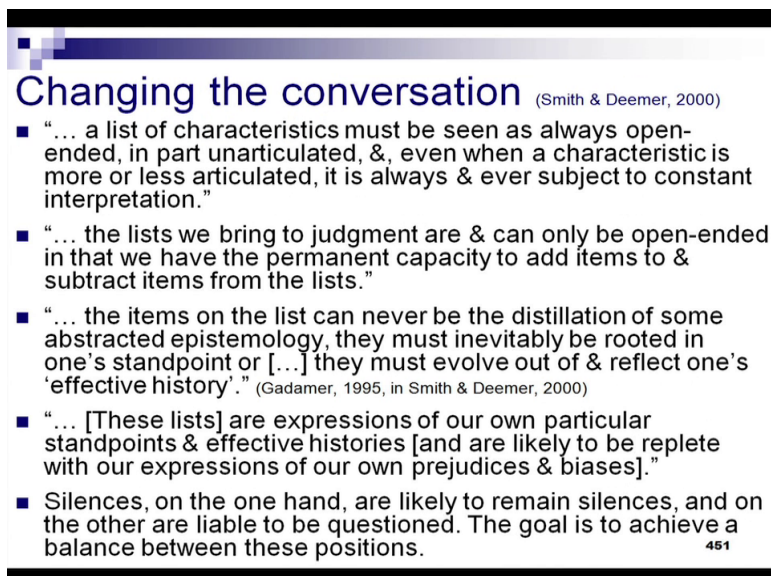
The problem here is “making and defending judgments when there can be no appeal to foundations or to something outside of the social processes of knowledge construction.” That is the main problem how can we find out what is out there, how can we describe something that is not rooted to what you already know, how what to we categorize it, what do we classify it as, you know what do we connect it to.

The responses that “is it the case that relieve it is it says that relativism is self refuting? When we say relativism? Are we you know contradicting what relativism proposes? “Does it matter that relativism is self refuting?” So what if you are contradicting ourself, so what, does it really matter, does that not open new avenues for research.

“To say that the judgments based on relativistic approach cannot be grounded extra-linguistically which means outside the realms, outside of our capacities to explain them, to describe them, in a language that we are using, does not mean or the language that we know does not mean that we are exempt from engaging in as open and unconstrained in as open and unconstrained dialogue as possible in order to attempt to justify your assessments.”

So we need to develop a language, if there's no language to describe what we are finding out that does not connect to theory, we need to create a language for it, we need to create representations in terms of words, phrases, etcetera, to talk about it okay.

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Changing the conversation (Smith & Deemer, 2000)

- “... a list of characteristics must be seen as always open-ended, in part unarticulated, &, even when a characteristic is more or less articulated, it is always & ever subject to constant interpretation.”
- “... the lists we bring to judgment are & can only be open-ended in that we have the permanent capacity to add items to & subtract items from the lists.”
- “... the items on the list can never be the distillation of some abstracted epistemology, they must inevitably be rooted in one's standpoint or [...] they must evolve out of & reflect one's 'effective history'.” (Gadamer, 1995, in Smith & Deemer, 2000)
- “... [These lists] are expressions of our own particular standpoints & effective histories [and are likely to be replete with our expressions of our own prejudices & biases].”
- Silences, on the one hand, are likely to remain silences, and on the other are liable to be questioned. The goal is to achieve a balance between these positions.

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Changing the conversation “a list of characteristics must be seen as always open ended, in part unarticulated, and even when a characteristic is more or less articulated, is always and ever subject to constant interpretation.” We have these characteristics of criteria in qualitative research, so it must we must be open to changing them, we must be open to revise them in the light of what we are finding out through the course of research.

“The list of characteristics we bring to judgment are and can only be open-ended it in that we have the permanent capacity to add items to subtract items from the list.” “The items on the list can never be the distillation of some abstracted epistemology, they must inevitably be rooted in one’s standpoint or they must be out of and reflect one’s effective history. So they must be rooted in what we are trying to find out, we must know what it is that we are after, we must be clear about that in our minds, we cannot just go aimlessly.

But once we know that they can be rooted in, is what we believe we are trying to find out, I am trying to find bodies in X in outer space, I’m trying to find new species of plants in the depths of the ocean, of weeds in the depths of the ocean, I am trying to find out new species of crustaceans in the depth of oceans, so there is some link to theory, when we talk with you and of course I may find some life at the very core, I’m trying to find some life in the ocean.

So when I say life yes there is a definition, it is still rooted to my believe, that some life exists and not saying that okay, I will go to the depths of the ocean and see what I can find, great that’s one way going about it, but then I will need to connect it, however tangentially to something that I know, so it can be and they must evolve out of and if I really find something like that and I must have the power to describe it.

“These lists are expressions of our own particular standpoints and effective histories and are likely to be replete with our expressions of our own prejudices and biases.” And that is okay, it is absolutely okay, what I do as a researcher is a function of what I was trained to do as a researcher, is a function of what I have learnt to do as a researcher, is a function of what I am able to express in my capacity as a researcher, it is all limited by human capacity and that is okay. It is important to acknowledge our limitations.

Silences is, on the other hand, are likely to remain silences and on the other hand are liable to be questioned. So we take silences, on the one hand they are likely to remain silences, that are things that we don’t know about, but we should also have the power to question, what it is that we don’t know about and why don’t we know about it, okay so the goal is to achieve a balance between these positions and that is I mean all of this you know I hope is stimulated some ideas regarding the problem of criteria in your mind.

So we need to you know when you look at this whole list of how we can, of ideas of points that can help us change the conversation regarding criteria, I would like to stimulate the discussion among you all because, you heard me talk about various things, difficult things here, so I want you to ponder on each of these points and think about what, how you can explore more.

I wanted to the big all of this particular lectures specifically was to put questions in your mind, just question everything, why are we going in these direction? Why not another directions? And so on. Thank you very much for listening, that's all we have time for today, will continue with some more discussion on qualitative research methods in the next class, thank you.