

Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture – 4
History of Qualitative Research

Welcome back to the NOC course titled Qualitative Research Methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I teach at the Indian Institute of Technology, in Kharagpur, West Bengal, India and I am helping you with this course. We were talking about in the previous classes, we have discussed, what qualitative research is, what qualitative researchers do and how qualitative research is different from quantitative research methods, very ideology, on a very philosophical level, how are the two different.

So today, in this class what we are going to talk about is, the history of Qualitative Research Methods, how did qualitative research methods acquire the shape they are in today, how did they come to be what they are today and this is again from the book by Denzin and Lincoln that I told you about right in the beginning, it is in the introductory chapter and you know the chapter deals with, how research, how qualitative research methods came to acquire this shape that there in today.

So Denzin and Lincoln divide up the entire period of the study of qualitative research or the use of qualitative research method in two methods into five different moments and those moments are what we are going to discuss today, okay.

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The First Moment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

The Traditional Period: Early 1900s to World War II

Focus: Researchers "... were concerned with offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings. [...] The *other* who was studied was alien, foreign and strange"

"The field worker during this period, was lionized, made into larger than life figure who went into and then returned from the field with stories about strange people."

This period was also called the period of the *Lone Ethnographer*.

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History of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln say that the first moment of the traditional period was from the early 1900s to World War II, see what happened was initially when people talk about qualitative research, they didn't even call it research, people document their experiences, people would write down what they experienced, and I have a background in child development and one of the first accounts of child development or the study of child development that we study, was you know baby biographies.

The Diaries that parents kept as far as there the growth and development of their children was concerned so and I have seen some of these baby biographies during my stay in the United States, during my PhD program, and I have referred to some of them for my PhD thesis also and it's an amazing document you will write what their children did at different points in time and so and so date my child said this word, so and so date my child stood up.

So and so date my child was able to walk, so and so date my childhood able to run or describing the activities they did, you know saying that that the child started with, you know blah blah blah and then went on to mama mama and I responded like this and the child, this is the way child responded, so detailed descriptions of what children did, you know as far as the activities were concerned and these very detailed and very meticulously kept diaries were known as baby biographies.

And these then came to be accepted as a tool for future research, for further research into the way children developed and what could be considered as the normal face of development of children and what, where would one say that okay my child needs help at this stage, because

the rest of the children are growing and the rest of the children are progressing, there able to start vocalizing, there able to start speaking there words and my child is not able to speak the words, at this particular age, or my child is not able to run at this particular age.

So what should, you know should I be worried, should I take the child for some help, that kind of things, that was, you know they served as the background materials, similar things happened with daily life people who wanted to study daily life, people wanted to study phenomena in daily life and this is was the traditional period and this lasted from the early 1900s to World War II.

Now the focus here was researchers, who were concerned with offering valid, reliable and objective interpretations in the writings and the other who was studied was alien, foreign and strange. So, one would not study one's own behavior, one would not study things from the perspective of an insider, one would actually distance oneself from the phenomenon, that was being studied and study things from the perspective of the outsider and then the object to study with labeled as the other.

So you know it was something totally disconnected with the researcher, it was something alien, someone alien, a phenomenon that was alien, a phenomenon that was strange, a phenomenon that the researcher could not relate to and so one pulled oneself out and the field worker during this period was lionized, that means made into larger than life figure, who went into and then returned from the field with stories about strange people.

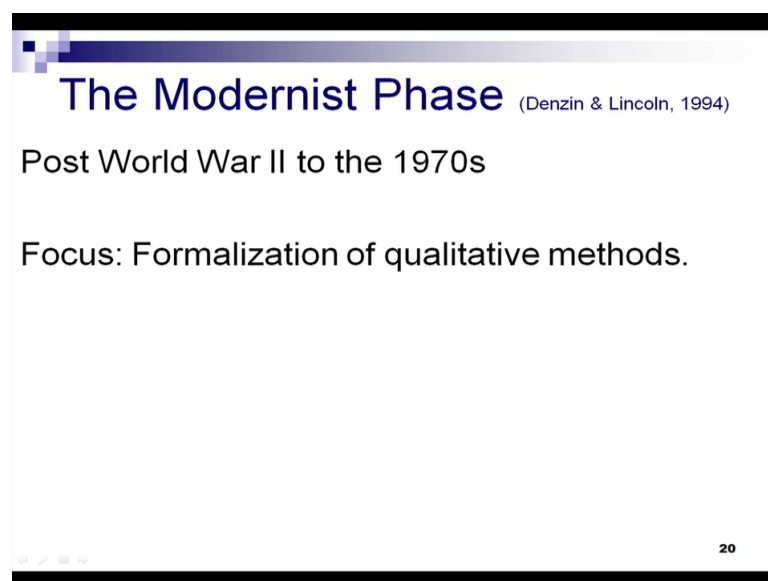
We are talking about a researcher who was treated like somebody very brave, somebody doing something very, very important, somebody who had the courage to go into a situation, study the situation from the perspective of an outsider, from the distancing oneself, from the phenomenon that one was studying and then describe it to people, who either did not have the time or the methods, or the courage, you know when we say lionized, we are also talking about courage.

This was test in the in the form of or from the perspective of somebody, who was courageous enough to take that risk, to go into an alien situations, study it and bring back this very vital, very new information about a phenomenon, that people did not know about and this period that is why because very few people were either able to, are willing to do it, this people who

did it, were treated as people were very courageous, who were willing to take risk and that is why this is treated or this is labeled as the period of the lone ethnographer.

It was also called the period of the lone ethnographer, the single ethnographer, an ethnographer who went in, who studied a phenomenon alone, who studied a phenomenon without support of eighteen people, who were there to help him or her, the person went in, got data and then came and analyzed it with the team of people, but while collecting data the person was on his or her own and had to have the courage to be able to take the risk of going into an alien situation and studying it.

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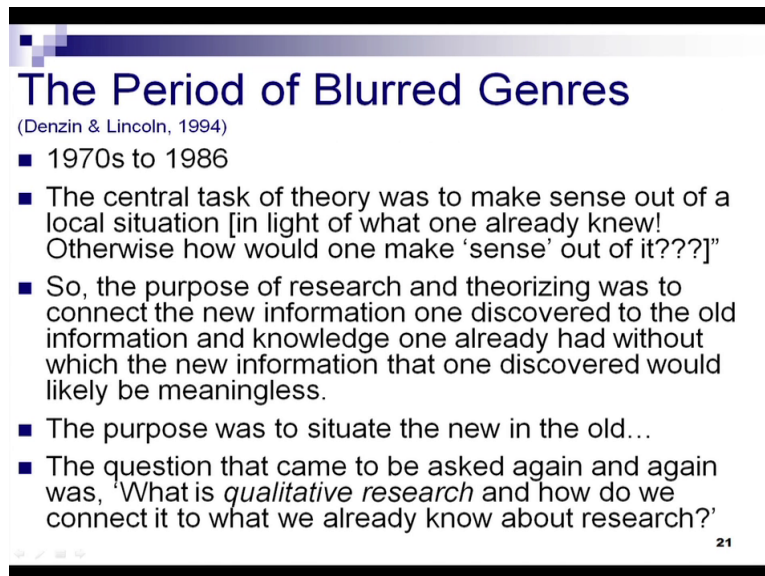
After this came the Modernist Phase, according to Denzin and Lincoln, there was the Modernist Phase and this lasted from the period just after World War II, well into the 1970s and the focus was the formalization of qualitative methods. So, people started realizing the value of the information that was brought back from the field, people started realizing, how much of information they got, how it could form the basis of the study, what you know, what how it could inform them about phenomena that they were new to.

And taking all of this and considering the realizing the significance of this, this method of study that they said okay, now we are all doing it in different ways, somebody's writing diaries, somebody's going in observing things, somebody is bringing back picture, somebody is bringing back audio recording, and we must also remember, that this was the time when Technology was developing very, very fast.

So the size of the cameras kept coming down, cameras became more portable, the size of audio recorder or the ability to record audio files or audio material became easier and easier as time went by and so you know all of this is also happening, so more and more people were had the courage to go into the field and bring back the data and once people who are brought back all this information had established themselves, as having contributed significantly to the body of knowledge, other people also became interested, other people also got the courage to do similar studies in a variety of situations.

So, what happened was, that in order to organize all of these very diverse, very rich descriptive studies, the researchers, the Scholars in the field or the Scholars who were using qualitative research methods said, well maybe we need to now decide and formulize the methods used to collect all this information from the field and that is what to focus was on. Okay.

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The slide has a dark blue header bar with a small graphic on the left. The title 'The Period of Blurred Genres' is in a large, bold, blue font. Below the title is the citation '(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)' in a smaller font. The main content consists of four bullet points, each preceded by a small blue square. The slide number '21' is in the bottom right corner.

The Period of Blurred Genres

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

- 1970s to 1986
- The central task of theory was to make sense out of a local situation [in light of what one already knew! Otherwise how would one make 'sense' out of it???"
- So, the purpose of research and theorizing was to connect the new information one discovered to the old information and knowledge one already had without which the new information that one discovered would likely be meaningless.
- The purpose was to situate the new in the old...
- The question that came to be asked again and again was, 'What is *qualitative research* and how do we connect it to what we already know about research?'

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After this came the period of Blurred Genres, now this period lasted from the 1970s to 1986. And the central task in this period, of the central tasks theory was to make sense out of a local situation in light of what one already knew! So the focus was no longer getting brand new information, the focuses on linking the new information to what one already knew, in order to improve the significance of this new body of knowledge.

Why do we need to know something new? Why do we need to bring back this information? How is it relevant? in the light of what we know earlier and in the light of what we are going to know in future, so the connections started being made in this period, so all of this

everybody agreed that this was a rich information, but then why is it even important at this stage, how do we understand it, we understand it in the light of something that, we already know.

So the purpose of research and theorizing was to connect the new information one discovered to the old information and knowledge one already had without which the new information that one discovered would likely be meaningless. The purpose in this phase was to situate the new in the old, so why is this information important? What are we going to do with it? Why should we spend time understanding this information, yes somebody is doing something in some part of the world.

But why should we be so concerned? Why should we even study it? Are they going to continue doing it in future? Have they done it in the past? How does it relate to their life in the past? How does it inform as researchers about what we already know, about research into similar phenomena elsewhere in the world. So, the connections were being made and the question that came to be asked again and again was what is qualitative research after all and how do we connect it to, what we already know about research?

So people were again confused, people again become confused, why qualitative research? Why is it important? Why do we need to describe things? Why can't we just quantify it and we are being done with? Why can't be categorized and we are being done with it? Why describe things that we quantify already.

Because what happened was the things that did not fit into these quantifiable categories were the ones that started being described in greater details and in order for these descriptions to make sense, one had to connect them with one, what one already knew in the context of quantified categorized information and knowledge.

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Crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

- "In writing, the field-worker makes a claim to moral and scientific authority. These claims allow to function as sources of validation for an empirical science. They show, that is, that the world of real lived experience can still be captured, if only in the writer's memoirs, fictional experimentations, or dramatic readings. [...] As a series of writings, the field worker's texts flow from the field experience, through intermediate works, to later work, and finally to the research text that is the public presentation of the ethnographic and narrative experience. Thus do fieldwork and writing blur into one another. There is, in the final analysis, no difference between writing and fieldwork."
- Writing is an interpretation of fieldwork - fieldwork guides writing, and writing an understanding of the fieldwork that has been conducted, then guides further fieldwork that can continue making sense in line of what has already made sense in light of past knowledge.

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Period after this, the period after this was labeled the Crisis of Representation and how does one interpret, how does one present this and I know there's a lot of text on the Slide, but I'm going to read from here and please try and follow this, In writing the field-worker makes claim to moral and scientific authority. These claims allowed to function as sources of validation for an empirical science. They show, that is, that the world of real lived experience can still be captured, if only in the writer's memoirs, fictional experimentations, or dramatic readings.

As a series of writings, the field workers text flow from the field experience, through intermediate works, to later work, and finally to the research text that is the public presentation of the ethnographic and narrative experience. Thus do field work and writing blur into one another. There is, in the final analysis, no difference between writing and field work.

So writing is an interpretation of fieldwork, we do feel work, but then we do not have the ability know it is beyond the human capacity, to capture the information about each and every aspect of a phenomenon, one is studying, fieldwork guides writing, writing is an interpretation of fieldwork and fieldwork guides writing and writing an understanding of the fieldwork that has been conducted. So, we conduct field work and we represent it in the form of are written work.

We tell people this is what I understood from the field, so writing is a method of representation, so writing is an interpretation of fieldwork, fieldwork guides writing and

writing an understanding of the field work that has been conducted, then guides further field work that can continue making sense, in line of what has already made sense in light of past knowledge, this seems very, very difficult. So please pause your screen and read it for a second.

So whatever we do in the field, we bring back and we bring back and then we write it up, so that people can understand, we use language, language is a great method of expression, it's a great tool of expression, but it also limits us. We can only write about or we can only use the vocabulary that we have to explain phenomena, that we are encountering a fresh. You see the problem here, we may encounter phenomenon that we have no vocabulary for.

I may never have seen snow in my life and I go in to a place, where there is lots snow, maybe I go and visit Alaska, now I go there and the local Eskimos, In the Northern part of Alaska the Eskimos have over 200 words for different types of snow and I may just have experience snowfall, as a tourist in someplace have not, have seen a lot of snow in different varieties, but my vocabulary still limits me to four or five words for snow.

The Inuit, in Alaska have over 200 words to describe, the different varieties snow if I am describing my experience as a tourist in Alaska, for the benefit of other people, who have not lived in colder places, who want to give go and live in very cold places like Alaska, then I will use the words that I know to describe snow, that what I say. I may not be able to capture the essence that the Inuit, the people who are living in that region are able to capture when they describe different varieties of snow.

So there's wet snow, so there is less wet snow, there is more wet snow, there is snow that had contains, that also contains tiny very tiny hailstones, there is snow mixed with rain. You know various varieties are there and that is what we are trying to say here, that when we do our field work our ability to capture the information we bring back is limited, by our ability to express it in the form of the written word and when express, what we bring back in the form of the written word, that written documentation and that written representation then forms the basis for future study and this was the period, where writing became important, very, very important. Okay

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A double crisis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

- “ A double crisis of representation and legitimation confronts qualitative researchers in the social sciences. This linguistic turn makes problematic two key assumptions of qualitative research.”
 - Representational crisis: “... qualitative researchers can directly capture lived experience.”
 - Legitimation crisis: “... involves a serious rethinking of such terms as *validity*, *generalizability*, and *reliability* [...] This crisis asks, ‘How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the poststructural moment?’ ”
- “...any representation must now legitimate itself in terms of some set of criteria that allows the author (and the reader) to make connections between the text and the world written about.”

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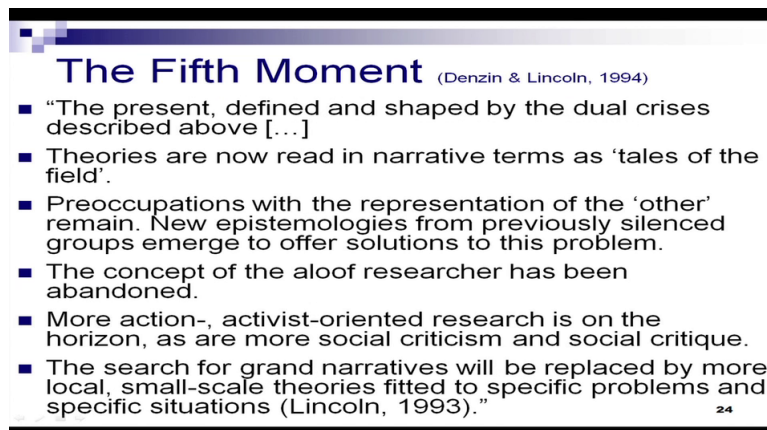
Then came the, double crisis. A double crisis of representation and legitimation confronts qualitative researchers in social sciences; This linguistic turn makes problematic two key assumptions of qualitative research. So in the double crisis, we have two types of crisis, we have the representational crisis, where qualitative researchers can directly capture lived experience. We make an assumption that qualitative researchers have the ability to directly capture lived experience.

And the legitimation crisis, legitimation crisis involves a serious rethinking of such terms as validity, generalizability, which is something that qualitative researchers shy away from and reliability, this crisis asks How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the post structural moment? So we need to now be able to legitimize our studies, they need to be valid, which means that the questions, that we are asking need to be answered, through the methods be used to answer that question, the findings need to be generalizable, across the category.

So again, you know if you are really into qualitative research, you will cringe when I say generalizability, because qualitative researchers feel that whatever is generalizable, is outside the realm of qualitative research. Generalizability is restricted to or can be quantified and whatever cannot be quantified, falls into the realm of qualitative research. And reliability with another person studying the same phenomenon, at another you know, at the same time or will another person be able to capture the same kind of descriptive information by studying the same phenomenon, using the same methods that one researcher has been able to capture.

Validity refers to the ability of the tools that are used to answer the question, to answer the question that is being asked and reliability refers to the replicability of results. So that is very, very important and this is the double crisis. 1. Are we assuming that qualitative researchers are really able to capture all the information they go to capture and 2. Whatever we are saying, is whatever we are saying really legitimate, Can it be verified? Can it be generalized? Is it reliable? Is it valid? Is it really pertaining to whatever we think it is pertaining to? Is it really answering questions we have asked? Okay, so after the crisis of representation, came this double crisis.

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The Fifth Moment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

- "The present, defined and shaped by the dual crises described above [...]"
- Theories are now read in narrative terms as 'tales of the field'.
- Preoccupations with the representation of the 'other' remain. New epistemologies from previously silenced groups emerge to offer solutions to this problem.
- The concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned.
- More action-, activist-oriented research is on the horizon, as are more social criticism and social critique.
- The search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations (Lincoln, 1993)."

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And then came The Fifth Moment, the present defined and shape by the dual crises described above. Theories are now read in narrative termed as tales of the field. So, then researchers realize, that there is a fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research focuses on generalizability, on categorization, on replicability of results, to the extent possible as far as human behavior is concerned, this is slightly dicey situation.

Then, Preoccupation with the representation of the other remain. We still want to be as objective as possible. In qualitative research that may not be possible, we admit as far as qualitative research is concerned, we accept that the researcher is influenced, by the phenomena that he or she studies. But research, quantitative research says or the basic philosophy of research as it is accepted today, is that one needs to be objective, one needs to distance oneself from the phenomenon that one is studying and treat the phenomenon being studied as the other, as something alien and something new, as something strange. Okay.

The concept new epistemologies from previously silenced groups emerge to offers solutions to this problem. So new ways of knowing the world come out, in order to study this phenomenon the concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned. Researchers are slowly accepting that this is one more fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative researcher.

The quantitative research is really aloof, is really outside, completely detached, from the phenomenon that she is studying. The qualitative research on the other hand, immerses himself or herself into the phenomenon, immerses himself or herself into the phenomenon that one is studying understands, that this phenomenon is likely to affect him or her, understands that there may be filters that one uses, to capture the information, that one needs to capture, assumes these things, acknowledges these things, notes them down, conveys them through what one writes, saying that, these are the filters that I, that may have influenced, what I set out to study and then present representation of what one has studied. Okay.

So that the person receiving that information knows, understands the context that information is situated in, understands the contact that this information is coming from, envelope in the context that the phenomenon took place in, envelope in the context that the researcher was studying the phenomenon from, enveloped in the biases and filters that the researchers representation came from.

More action- activist-oriented research is on the horizon, as are more social criticism and social critiques. The search for grand narrative will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situation. So this is the time, when more action and activist oriented research is coming to be accepted, where people are saying okay.

It's nice to be able to study this phenomena, let's study phenomena as they are happening and see how the information, we gotten during the course of the study, can feed back into the phenomenon its self and facilitate the movement of this phenomenon in a desired direction, for the benefit of humanity, to the extent possible. Okay.

And then the search for grand narratives, the search for the stories of the alien world are likely to be replaced by more local, more small scale, more, more applicable theories that are fitted to specific problems and specific situation and that is The Fifth moment and that is all

we have time for in this lecture, we will continue with some more information, some more insight into the field of qualitative research in the next lectures. Thank you very much for listening.