

Chapter 3: Qualitative Research Design and Data Collection

Glossary:

Accumulative techniques: checking within and across contexts for the same findings; integrating findings from a number of studies to enable wider conclusions to be made.

Debriefing: part of ethical procedures; discussing the full aims of the research with participants after they have taken part in a study; ensuring participants receive appropriate aftercare and information following participation in research.

Epistemological reflexivity: the process of reflecting upon the ways in which the epistemological and theoretical frameworks utilised by the researcher have affected the research process and phenomenon under investigation.

Focused observation: the identification of a particular aspect of a phenomenon as the focus for intensive observation; goes beyond pure description; the researcher is able to test out theoretical ideas against reality.

Hypothesis: a claim that is typically derived from existing theory which can be tested against empirical evidence; a hypothesis can either be rejected or retained

Informed consent: part of ethical procedures; providing participants with full information about the research process so that they can give their consent to take part in the research before any data collection takes place.

Interview agenda: typically a small number of open-ended questions to facilitate an interview; used to provide triggers to enable participants to share their views and experiences.

Methodological notes: a form of notes taken during participant observation; notes written about the process of observation itself, reflecting on the researcher's role during the research and their relationship with other participants, noting any problems encountered in the field.

Naturalistic data: data that is not coded, summarised, categorised or 'reduced' at the point of data collection; the type of data most suited to qualitative research.

Participant observation: a method of data collection that often takes place in natural settings; the observations tend not to be systematic, and require the researcher to engage in a variety of activities including participation, documentation, informal interviewing and reflection.

Participant validation: obtaining feedback from participants on a study's findings to increase a study's validity

Personal reflexivity: the process of reflecting upon the ways in which a researcher's own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped their research

Reflexivity: the practice by which researchers reflect upon their own standpoint in relation to the phenomenon they are studying and attempt to identify the ways in which such a standpoint has shaped the research process and findings.

Reliability: obtaining the same results on different occasions; when the same data is collected and analysed by different researchers and the same findings are generated.

Representativeness: ensuring that participants in a study share the same characteristics as the general population to enable generalisations

Research question: typically open-ended, requiring detailed description and/or explanation of a phenomenon; cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

Semi-structured interviewing: the questions asked by the researcher function as triggers that encourage participants to talk; provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear participants talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience

Substantive notes: a form of notes taken during participant observation; notes concerning the observations made including description of settings, events and people, quotations and/or summaries of what people have said.

Validity: the extent to which the research describes, measures or explains what it aims to describe, measure or explain.