Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis

Judging quality requires criteria

Traditional scientific research criteria
- Objectivity of the inquirer attempting to minimize bias
- Validity of the data
- Systematic rigor of fieldwork procedures
- Triangulation for consistency of findings across methods and data sources
- Reliability of codings and pattern analyses
- Correspondence of findings with reality
- Generalizability (external validity)
- Strength of evidence supporting causal hypotheses
- Contributions to theory

Social construction and constructivism
- Subjectivity acknowledged (discusses and takes into account biases)
- Trustworthiness
- Authenticity
- Triangulation (capturing and respecting multiple perspectives)
- Reflexivity
- Praxis
- Particularity (doing justice to the integrity of unique cases)
- Enhanced and deepened understanding
- Contributions to dialogue

Critique the quality judgment criteria intersect with audience inquiry purposes

Artistic and evocative criteria
- Opens the world to us in some way
- Creativity
- Aesthetic quality
- Interpretive vitality
- Flows from self; embedded in lived experience
- Stimulating
- Provocative
- Connect with and moves the audience
- Voice distinct, expressive
- Feels true or authentic or real

Critical change criteria
- Critical perspective: increases consciousness about injustices
- Identifies nature and sources of inequalities and injustices
- Represents the perspective of the less powerful
- Makes visible the ways in which those with more power exercise and benefit from power
- Engages those with less power respectfully and collaboratively
- Builds the capacity of those involved to take action
- Identifies potential change-making strategies
- Praxis
- Clear historical and values context
- Consequential validity

Evaluation standards and principles
- Utility
- Feasibility
- Propriety
- Accuracy (balance)
- Systematic inquiry
- Evaluator competence
- Integrity/honesty
- Respect for people (fairness)
- Responsibility to the general public welfare (taking into account diversity of interests and values)
Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis

Credibility

Depends on

Inquiry elements:
- Rigorous methods
- Credibility of the researcher
- Philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry

Such as

- Fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry
- Purposeful sampling
- Qualitative methods
- Holistic thinking
- Inductive analysis

Techniques

- Searching for alternative themes, divergent patterns and rival explanations
- Negative cases

Triangulation types

- Methods triangulation
- Triangulation of sources
- Analyst triangulation
- Theory/perspective triangulation

- Time in the field
- Understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data

Report any personal and professional information that may have affected the study

Considering investigator effects

- Reactions of those in the setting
- Changes in the fieldworker
- The predispositions, selective perceptions and/or biases of the inquirer

Technical rigor in analysis

Supported by

- Researchers incompetence
- Knowledgeable, experienced fieldworker

Keeping data in context

What does Patton have to say about these topics?

1. **Triangulation – what is and why would you employ it?**

   Triangulation refers to multiple ways of data collection such as interviewing, observation, and document analysis to increase credibility. It is in data analysis that the strategy of triangulation has more benefits. Four kinds of triangulation can contribute to verification and validation of qualitative analysis;

   - **Methods triangulation** in which the researcher verifies the consistency of finding generated by multiple data collection methods
   - **Triangulation of sources** in which the researcher checks out the consistency of different data sources within the same method
   - **Analyst triangulation** that occurs when multiple analysts review the findings and
   - **Theory/perspective** triangulation, in which multiple perspectives or theories are used to interpret the data.

2. **How a novice qualitative researcher can hope to be judged as credible?**

   There are several ways in which a novice qualitative researcher can be judged as credible. Some strategies are searching for rival explanations, explaining negative cases, triangulation, keeping data in context, and technical rigor in analysis.

   Assessing rival conclusions includes a systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns and rival explanations by looking into other ways. Explaining negative cases refers to once patterns and trends have been identified, our understanding of those is increased by considering the instances and cases that do not fit within the pattern. Triangulation refers to multiple ways to verify the data collection and analysis. Other aspects the researcher may report include any personal data and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation. One more factor to consider and report concerns how the presence of an observer or evaluator may have affected what was observed. This factor can be diminished by spending more time in the field.

3. **The impact of the research question**

   The impact of the research question should be reflected by the appropriate method that will fulfill the purposes, questions and issues; and not universally advocate a single methodological approach for all inquiry situations.

4. **The concept of generalizability**

   Patton cites Shadish (1995) who argued that the core principles of generalization apply to experimental and qualitative methods in general, sharing that both of them are highly localized. Finding from a study experimental or naturalistic in design can be generalized according to five principles: a) The principle of proximal similarity, which refers when we generalize to applications where treatments, settings, populations, outcomes, and times are most similar to those in the original search, b) The principle of Heterogeneity of irrelevances where generalization is done when a research finding continues to hold over variations in persons, settings, treatments, outcome measures, and times that are presumed to be conceptually irrelevant, c) the principle of discriminant validity, where we generalize when we can show that it is the target construct, and not something else, that is necessary to produce a research finding, d) the principle of empirical interpolation and extrapolation applied when we generalize when we can specify the range of persons, settings, treatments, outcomes, and times over which the finding holds more strongly, less strongly, or not at all and e) the principle of explanation applied when we can specify completely and exactly which parts of one variable are related to which parts of another variable through which mediating process with which salient interactions for then can transfer only those essential components to the new application to which we wish to generalize.