Quality and Rigor in Qualitative Research

Elizabeth Pope, PhD
University of West Georgia
epope@westga.edu
Learning Outcomes

• Make the paradigm shift necessary to understand quality and rigor in qualitative research.
• Know how quantitative approaches to validity and reliability do not apply to qualitative research.
• Understand the different approaches to establishing quality in qualitative research.
• Recognize what methods are needed to have a rigorous qualitative study.
Assessing Quality in Qualitative Research

- Various scholars = various opinions on appropriate terminology. For example:
  - Lincoln & Guba (2011) – depends on paradigm
    - Positivism & Postpositivism – rigor (external validity, reliability, & objectivity)
    - Critical Theories – historical situatedness, erosion of ignorance and misapprehensions, action stimulus
    - Constructivism – trustworthiness and authenticity
  - Tracy (2010) – 8 “Big-Tent” Criteria
“Validity”

- Validity is a contentious term
- Q: “Are these findings sufficiently authentic that I may trust myself in acting on their implications?” (p. 120)
2 Simultaneous Arguments

Validity through research methods
- Methodological criteria to establish validity like good interviews, prolonged time in the field, etc.
- Positivist & post-positivist

Validity through interpretation
- Are we interpretively rigorous?
- Can our co-created constructions be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon?
- Do our findings point to action that can be taken on the part of research participants to benefit themselves?
- Constructivist
Shifting Our Thinking from Validity to Trustworthiness

• More rigor = more trustworthy findings
• Concept developed by Lincoln & Guba in 1985
• “Trustworthiness provides qualitative researchers with a set of tools by which they can illustrate the worth of their project outside the confines of the often ill-fitting quantitative parameters” (Given & Saumure, 2008, p. 895)
Establishing Trustworthiness: A Translation of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Conventional Term</th>
<th>Naturalistic Term</th>
<th>Naturalistic Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truth value</td>
<td>Internal validity</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Prolonged engagement Persistent observation Triangulation Referential adequacy Peer debriefing Member checks Reflexive journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability</td>
<td>External validity</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Thick description Purposive sampling Reflexive journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Dependability audit Reflexive journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Confirmability audit Reflexive journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 133)
Authenticity

- Fairness
- Ontological authenticity
- Educative authenticity
- Catalytic authenticity
- Tactical authenticity

**Photo Source**
Ethical Relationships

- Positionality
- Arbiters of quality
- Voice
- Critical subjectivity
- Reciprocity
- Sacredness
- Sharing of privileges
8 “Big Tent” Criteria

- Worthy topic
- Rich rigor
- Sincerity
- Credibility
- Resonance
- Significant contribution
- Ethics
- Meaningful coherence

Photo Source
Strategies to Establish Quality

- Triangulation
- Member checking
- Thick description
- Reflexivity and clarification of bias
- Prolonged time in the field
- Peer debriefing
Resources


