

Siegle, D. (n.d.). Research Designs. Retrieved October 30, 2008 from <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/research/Qualitative/qualquan.htm>

I am amazed how often we hear qualitative researchers applying their standards to quantitative research or quantitative researchers applying their standards to qualitative research. Each functions within different assumptions. Finding fault with one approach with the standards of another does little to promote understanding. Each approach should be judges on its theoretical basis.

The Assumptions of Qualitative Designs

1. Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with **process**, rather than outcomes or products.
2. Qualitative researchers are interested in **meaning** how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world.
3. The qualitative researcher is the **primary instrument** for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.
4. Qualitative research involves **fieldwork**. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting.
5. Qualitative research is **descriptive** in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.
6. The process of qualitative research is **inductive** in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Arguments Supporting Qualitative Inquiry

- Human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs; thus one must study that behavior in situations. The physical setting, schedules, space, pay, and rewards and the internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables. Research must be conducted in the setting where all the contextual variables are operating.
- Past researchers have not been able to derive meaning...from experimental research.
- The research techniques themselves, in experimental research, [can]...affect the findings. The lab, the questionnaire, and so on, [can]...become artifacts. Subjects [can become]...either suspicious and wary, or they [can become]...aware of what the researchers want and try to please them. Additionally, subjects sometimes do not know their feelings,

interactions, and behaviors, so they cannot articulate them to respond to a questionnaire.

- One cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Researchers need to understand the framework. In fact, the "objective" scientist, by coding and standardizing, may destroy valuable data while imposing her world on the subjects.
- Field study research can explore the processes and meanings of events.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1980). *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Predispositions of Quantitative and Qualitative Modes of Inquiry

Quantitative Mode	Qualitative mode
<p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social facts have an objective reality • Primacy of method • Variables can be identified and relationships measured • Etic (outside's point of view) 	<p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality is socially constructed • Primacy of subject matter • Variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure • Emic (insider's point of view)
<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizability • Prediction • Causal explanations 	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextualization • Interpretation • Understanding actors' perspectives
<p>Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins with hypotheses and theories • Manipulation and control • Uses formal instruments • Experimentation • Deductive • Component analysis • Seeks consensus, the norm • Reduces data to numerical indices • Abstract language in write-up 	<p>Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ends with hypotheses and grounded theory • Emergence and portrayal • Researcher as instrument • Naturalistic • Inductive • Searches for patterns • Seeks pluralism, complexity • Makes minor use of numerical indices • Descriptive write-up
<p>Researcher Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detachment and impartiality • Objective portrayal 	<p>Researcher Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal involvement and partiality • Empathic understanding

Although some social science researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1989) perceive qualitative and quantitative approaches as incompatible, others (Patton, 1990; Reichardt & Cook, 1979) believe that the skilled researcher can successfully combine approaches. The argument usually becomes muddled because one party argues from the underlying philosophical nature of each paradigm, and the other focuses on the apparent compatibility of the research methods, enjoying the rewards of both numbers and words. Because the positivist and the interpretivist paradigms rest on different assumptions about the nature of the world, they require different instruments and procedures to find the type of data desired. This does not mean, however, that the positivist never uses interviews nor that the interpretivist never uses a survey. They may, but such methods are supplementary, not dominant....Different approaches allow us to know and understand different things about the world....Nonetheless, people tend to adhere to the methodology that is most consonant with their socialized worldview. (p. 9)

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Contrasting Positivist and Naturalist Axioms (Beliefs and Assumptions)

<i>Axioms About</i>	<i>Positivist Paradigm (Quantitative)</i>	<i>Naturalist Paradigm (Qualitative)</i>
<i>The nature of reality</i>	Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable.	Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic.
<i>The relationship of knower to the known</i>	Knower and known are independent, a dualism.	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
<i>The possibility of generalization</i>	Time- and context-free generalizations (nomothetic statements) are possible.	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible.
<i>The possibility of causal linkages</i>	There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects.	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
<i>The role of values</i>	Inquiry is value-free.	Inquiry is value-bound.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Research with Subjects (Quantitative)	Research with Informants (Qualitative)
1. What do I know about a problem that will allow me to formulate and test a hypothesis?	1. What do my informants know about their culture that I can discover?
2. What concepts can I use to test this hypothesis?	2. What concepts do my informants use to classify their experiences?
3. How can I operationally define these concepts?	3. How do my informants define these concepts?
4. What scientific theory can explain the data?	4. What folk theory do my informants use to explain their experience?
5. How can I interpret the results and report them in the language of my colleagues?	5. How can I translate the cultural knowledge of my informants into a cultural description my colleagues will understand?

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.