

Qualitative Inquiry In Higher Education & Student Affairs: An Introduction

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Background Information

This presentation was grant-funded by the ACPA Commission for Professional Preparation, 2011-2012. It focuses on the below reading and course. The presentation is available for download in the hopes that people might find it useful information for graduate preparation and professional development programs.

Article: Pasque, P. A. (in press, anticipated date 2013). (Re)membering and (re)living: A methodological exploration of postmodern and constructivist feminist approaches to interviewing women leaders in higher education. *Journal About Women in Higher Education*. 6(1).

Course: Pasque, P. A. (2008-2012). Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry in Adult and Higher Education. *Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, University of Oklahoma*.

Agenda



- **A Snapshot of History: Qualitative Inquiry**
 - Historical Information
 - Interactive Discussion
- **Relevant Definitions**
 - Epistemology, Ontology, & Axiology
 - Paradigms
 - Worldview Exercise
- **Methodology**
 - Functions of Methodology
 - Methodology vs. Method
 - Researcher Positionality & Reflexivity
 - Brainstorm of Methodologies
- **Connecting the Dots ...**
 - Discussion Questions 1-8
 - The Critical Lede
- **References**

A Snapshot of History...

In the ancient world, there were precursors to qualitative social inquiry. Herodotus, a Greek scholar writing in the 5th century B.C.E., had interests that were cross-cultural as well as historical. Writing in the 2nd century C.E., the Greek skeptical philosopher Sextus Empiricus conducted a cross-cultural survey of morality, showing what was considered right in one society was considered wrong in others. Both he and Herodotus worked from the accounts of travelers, which provided the primary basis for comparative knowledge about human lifeways until the late 19th century.

Frederick Erickson
(2011, p. 43)



The Distant History

- Qualitative research has been around for hundreds of years. Some regard sociologist Auguste Comte as its founder in 1842 and anthropology emerged into a discipline in 1871 through Edward Tylor's work *Primitive Culture* (Tesch, 1990).
- Vidich and Lyman (1994, 2000) have charted the history of qualitative research and how it was “born out of a concern to understand the ‘other’” (Vidich & Lyman, 2000, p. 38) where the “other” was exotic and concern for the “other” was in the vein of colonialization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
- Originally, social scientists imitated the natural sciences in order to gain credibility. This stance reflected positivism which refers to the “‘positive’ data of experience as the basis of all science” (Tesch, 1990, p. 9). As such, early qualitative scholars were deemed as anti-positivists (later post-positivists) as they focused on human experience and human engagement with people and society.



The Chicago School & Beyond

- The Chicago School of Sociology developed from 1920-1940 and established the importance of qualitative inquiry.
- The prevailing paradigm was still one of observer who went in to study the culture, habits and customs of the “other” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 2007).
- Education emerged as a discipline in the twentieth century (Tesch, 1990) and in 1971 Norm Denzin created the phrase “naturalistic inquiry.”
- Egon Guba (1978) built on this idea through his monograph, “Toward a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation” and “Naturalistic Inquiry” was entered into the subject index of the convention program in the American Educational Research Association (Tesch, 1990). At this point, naturalistic inquiry became the synonym for qualitative research.



Eight Moments in Qualitative Research

• Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have identified and defined eight moments in qualitative research. The author's argue that these moments overlap and also operate in the present across various fields and disciplines. The eighth and current moment is concerned with critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom and community.

1. *The traditional (1900-1950)*
2. *The modernist or golden age (1950-1970)*
3. *Blurred genres (1970-1986)*
4. *The crisis of representation (1986-1990)*
5. *The postmodern (1990-1995)*
6. *Postexperimental inquiry (1995-2000)*
7. *The methodologically contested present (2000-2004)*
8. *The fractured future (2005-present)*

Interactive Discussion

Discussion Questions:

1. The eighth moment is more than a focus on studying about critical issues; the eighth moment strives to operationalize qualitative methodologies and congruent methods that directly reflect an emancipatory approach to research. What does this mean to you?
2. In what ways does the eighth moment show up in or come into conflict with the foundational principles in higher education and student affairs?
3. See the ACPA Statement of Ethical Principles and Standards (<http://www2.myacpa.org/statement-of-ethical-principles-and-standards>). In what ways does the eighth moment show up in or come into conflict with this statement?
4. In what ways do you see this eighth moment in the research you read? In what ways is it absent?
5. In what ways do you see this eighth moment in your own research, if at all?

Relevant Definitions

In order to understand one's own approach to qualitative research, we feel it is important to understand the genealogy of qualitative inquiry through an exploration of the history, definitions, contradictions, tensions, and dilemmas.

*Penny A. Pasque, Rozana Carducci,
Aaron Kuntz, and Ryan Evely Gildersleeve
(2012)*



What is Epistemology?

- Epistemology asks researchers “How do you know what you know?”
- It is related to the origins of and assumptions about the acquisition of knowledge and justification. For example, René Decarte’s concept “cogito ergo sum” or “I think, therefore I am” provides epistemological certainty.
- The rationalist epistemology argues that knowledge follows from reason and in this way, conceptualizes epistemology with a capital “E”.
- In contrast, the perspective that researchers do the best they can based on fallible human judgment abandons the upper case “E” and utilizes the lower case “e” which reflects various perspectives about what it means to know.

(Schwandt, 2007)



What is Ontology?

- Ontology poses the question “What is the nature of reality?”
- It asks researchers to consider their perspective(s) on the nature or structure of reality or existence.
- For example, Cartesian Dualism (1641) structures reality with a separation of the mind and body whereas others, such as Derrida (1930-2004), argue against such a dualistic approach and for a holistic nature of reality thereby unmasking binary thinking found in Western metaphysics.

(Schwandt, 2007)



What is Axiology?

- Axiology asks “What is the role of values” and focuses on an ideology of ethics that informs the inquiry.
- Some scholars also place methodology into this overarching philosophical approach as it invites researchers to consider “What is the process of research?”
- In this case, this is different from the term “method” which focuses on specific data collection techniques, procedures for analysis, and/or steps in the research process, albeit some researchers use these terms interchangeably.

(Schwandt, 2007)



Conceptualizations of Paradigms in Qualitative Inquiry

- Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify five different paradigms:
 - **positivism** (*reality exists*)
 - **post-positivism** (*imperfect reality exists*)
 - **critical theory** (*a virtual reality is shaped by historical, social, political, cultural, economic and gender values and crystallized over time*)
 - **constructivism** (*co-constructed realities*)
 - **participatory** (*participative reality where subjective and objective reality are co-created*).
- Crotty (2004) refers to a paradigm as a philosophical stance informing methodology and methods and includes positivism, constructionism, interpretivism, critical inquiry, feminism, and postmodernism.
- Such alternate meanings of paradigms may be difficult to conceptualize for researchers because not all scholars agree on definitions and meanings.



The Assumptions of Paradigms

- All aspects of a researcher's philosophical approach (ontology, epistemology, axiology) are connected. They build upon and inform each other: The nature of reality is informed by and simultaneously informs assumptions and values about knowledge.
- Research cannot be conducted without conscious or unconscious use of underlying theoretical principles (Broido & Manning, 2002). As such, even studies that seem void of theoretical underpinnings enact some semblance of philosophical and theoretical principles.
- Conscious or unconscious, these philosophical assumptions are inextricably linked to the approach a researcher takes in any research process. As such, a scholar may perpetuate dominant research paradigms or seek to disrupt them.

Worldview Exercise

Instructions (30 Minutes)

This exercise is meant to be informative for someone who might be new to qualitative research, various terms, and conceptualizations. After reading the below statement, write your thoughts about reality (10 minutes) and then discuss in small or large groups.

Reality is:

1. A physical and observable event (positivism and post-positivism).
2. Constructed through local human interaction (interpretive, constructivism, and constructionism).
3. Shaped by social, political, economic, and other values established over time (subjectivism, subjectivist, and critical science).

(Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 5)

Worldview Exercise

Discussion Questions

1. Which statement about “reality” spoke to you and why?
2. After reading Penny Pasque’s article “(Re)membering and (Re)living”, which reality would you guess that she uses to view the world? Why?
3. Approaches are not optional; a researcher may not “put on” or “take off” a paradigmatic lens, like a pair of eyeglasses through which to view the world, as they flow directly from one’s epistemological, ontological, and axiological perspectives. Why do you dis/agree with this statement?
4. Some argue that an exercise like the Worldview Exercise is essentializing and reductive. Do you feel that way? Why or why not?
5. Was it useful (or not useful) to participate in this exercise and discussion?

Methodologies

[Methodologies are] a theory of how inquiry should proceed. It involves analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (that, in turn, governs the use of particular methods).

Thomas Schwandt
2007 (p. 193)



Functions of Methodologies

Methodologies explicate and define:

- The kinds of problems that are worth investigating.
- What comprises a researchable problem.
- How to frame a problem in such a way that it may be investigated using particular designs and procedures (i.e., who suffers?).
- How to understand what constitutes a legitimate and warranted explanation.
- How to judge matters of generalizability, if relevant at all.
- How to select or develop appropriate means of generating “data”.
- How to develop the logic and argument linking the problem, relevant literature, research question/s, research design, analysis, discussion and implications.



Methodologies vs. Methods

- Methods or steps in the “data” collection and/or analysis process follow directly from the methodology and provide direction on the level of abstraction or concreteness of the process (Creswell, 2011; Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006).
- In this way, methodology is quite different from the term “method” which focuses on specific data collection techniques, procedures for analysis, and/or steps in the research process, albeit some researchers use these terms interchangeably.
- As Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) offer, “the assumption that simply stating the method (interview) and providing the results (analysis of themes) will lead to a thorough and worthy research process... is erroneous” (p. 83).



Researcher Positionality & Reflexivity

- Notably absent in many journal articles is the concept of researcher positionality which includes attention to assumptions researchers have about the topic, their relationships to the topic, and reflexivity about their own identities and/or feelings connected to the topic.
- Milner (2007) discusses how ignoring positionality may be dangerous to communities of color and researchers. He describes the ways in which researcher positionality may help to address these dangers.
- As such, the push for “objectivity” in research continues to marginalize non-dominant perspectives.
- In the past, theorists within the fields of feminist and cultural studies have drawn our attention to issues of power and positionality in order to address the silencing of underrepresented groups. Such work reminds us that the ways in which we represent the participants of our studies and ourselves as researchers within our studies, matters.

Methodology Brainstorm

Exercise (15 minutes):

Brainstorm a list of qualitative methodologies you have read about, heard about, or utilized in your own research.

Questions:

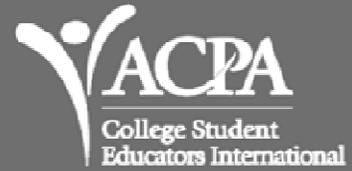
- What methodologies do you know about already?
- What methodologies do you want to learn more about?
- How will you go about obtaining information and learning more about a particular methodology?
- What are your own identities and the identities of your (current or potential) participants? What are your own perspectives about the issues related to your study? What positionality and reflexivity considerations are needed for your research?

Connecting The Dots...

In *The Handbook of Feminist Research:
Theory and Praxis*,

Hesse-Biber (2007) encourages an exploration of the interconnections of epistemology, methodology and method as she argues that “feminist research disrupts traditional ways of knowing to create rich new meanings” (p. 3).

Connecting The Dots Exercise



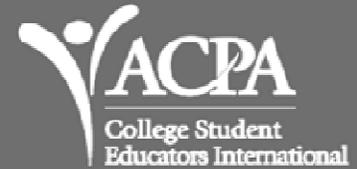
➤ Read the Article:

Pasque, P. A. (in press, anticipated date 2013). (Re)membering and (re)living: A methodological exploration of postmodern and constructivist feminist approaches to interviewing women leaders in higher education. *Journal About Women in Higher Education*. 6(1).

➤ Consider the following table (from the article).

➤ Talk or write about the various discussion questions on each slide that are related to this particular journal article (or other relevant articles).

Table 1: *Research Approaches.*



	Stage I	Stage II
Lens	Postmodern	Constructivist
Theoretical Perspective	Postmodern Feminism	Liberal Feminism
Design / Methodology	Situational Grounded Theory	Constructivist Grounded Theory
Data Collection	Postmodern Interviewing via Interactive Focus Groups	Constructivist Interviewing via Conference Calls
Data Analysis	Situational Mapping	Focused Coding through an Emergent Process
Findings	<p>(Re)Living the Experience while (Re)Membering the Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-construction of memory through the discourse of storytelling. • Co-construction of an analysis of organizational politics. • Affirmation and support of each other. • Intergenerational connections. 	<p>(Re)Membering the Unique Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of stories in an in-depth and detailed manner. • Recollection of what happened, but often “I don’t quite remember the details.” • Affirmation and support was constructed through memory. Different perspectives of the same situation or event. • Connections between women from the same cohort sustained over the years.
Reflexivity	Researcher / participant role were extremely blurred. Discussions went back and forth between all participants and researcher. Researcher de-centered.	Researcher / participant role was traditional. Researcher centered as instrument, participant as constructor of reality.



Discussion Question One

On page 1, Penny Pasque argues that unconscious theoretical and methodological lenses perpetuate “hidden” research agendas that impact ethics, power, and politics in educational research.

What does she mean by that statement?



Discussion Question Two

How does Penny Pasque's "stitching" back and forth between epistemology, methodology and methods relate to Hesse-Biber's (2007) notion of feminist research quoted below?

Feminist research is committed to getting at the subjugated knowledge that often lies hidden from mainstream knowledge building... [and] are particularly interested in issues of social justice and social change for women and other oppressed groups. (p. 147)



Discussion Question Three

In what research contexts would postmodern interviewing techniques be useful for researchers? Does Adele Clarke's Situational Mapping, as a tool for analysis, mirror this type of interview? Why or why not?



Discussion Question Four

In what research contexts would semi-structured interviewing techniques be useful for researchers? Does Kathy Charmaz's constructivist data analysis process of themeing, separating, & sorting reflect a particular craft rather than a skill (as she argues)? How so? Why is an iterative process useful for qualitative researchers?



Discussion Question Five

- How do you define in/congruent research?
- Why do some scholars argue that this concept is imperative for researchers to consider?
- Some scholars “might” argue that “methodology” as defined in the Pasque study is reduced to the level of “method”. Stated another way, researchers cannot change their worldview – can they switch between different methodologies, or if they do (as in this case) are they really just focused on differences in terms of method and tools for analysis. What are your thoughts?



Discussion Question Six

Penny Pasque went back to participants from the focus groups and interviews to ask their perceptions of the respective interview process in relation to the initial findings.

- What did the participants say?
- Why is this step relevant to this particular research design?
- Might a member-checker ever lie or revise transcripts to make sure they are seen in the best light?
- How might member-checking complicate research?



Discussion Question Seven

Describe the finding regarding how women (re)membered and (re)lived the experience. Do you think this finding would have been uncovered or realized if only one method for interviewing was used? Why or why not?



Discussion Question Eight

What does it mean that
research is political?

Exercise: The Critical Lede by Drs. Myers & Rowe

<http://www.thecriticallede.com>

Instructions (1 hour):

- The Critical Lede is an online resource that offers podcast discussions on qualitative inquiry. Listen to one of the podcasts and then discuss your thoughts of the discussion.

Examples Include:

- **Silence & Pedagogy:**

http://www.thecriticallede.com/The_Critical_Lede/The_Critical_Lede_Podcast/Entries/2011/8/17_067__Silence_and_Pedagogy.html

- **Discussion on “Being Critical”:**

http://www.thecriticallede.com/The_Critical_Lede/The_Critical_Lede_Podcast/Entries/2011/4/27_Entry_1.html

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