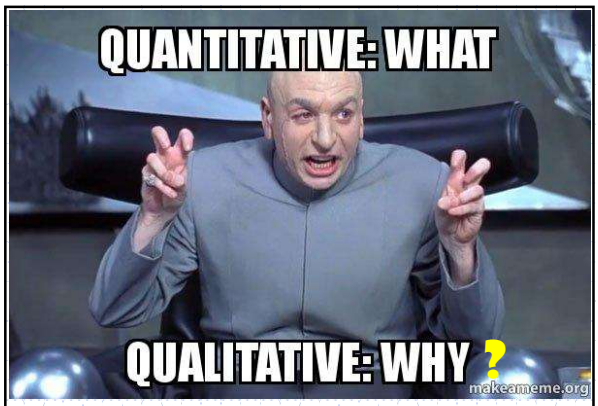


SOC497/L: SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative Methods & Qualitative Research

Ellis Godard

So far this class is…

1. Among the best ever — 20%
2. Better than average — 27%
3. About average — 37%
4. Below average — 15%
5. Among the worst ever — 2%

Outline for Today

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Qualitative *Methods*
  - Modes, Strengths, & Weaknesses
- Qualitative *Research*
  - Meaning & Problems
  - Methodological & Epistemological Jungles
  - Quantitative vs. Qualitative
- Jaywalking Lab

Class so far, & Where we are…

DEADLINES			LECTURE		LABS				
Date	Things Due	Reading (15th)	Category	TOPIC	Lab #	Lab Assignment	Type	T	R
Tue Jan 21			Orientation	Orientation					
Thu Jan 23		chapt. 1	Orientation	Inquiry & Research	2	Empirical Claims	Topical		2
Tue Jan 28		chapt. 4	Orientation	Research Design	(2)	Mini-Design	Solo	1, (2)	
Thu Jan 30			Orientation	SPSS Intro	3	Computing (intro)	Data		29, 3
Tue Feb 4	HW1 Article Review	chapt. 2	Orientation	Explanation & Theory	4	Writing Hypo	Topical	3,4	
Thu Feb 6		ch 17 & p 421	Orientation	Researching Research (gssw)	5	Recoding (colleges)	Data		4, 5
Tue Feb 11		pp. 124-137	Orientation	Conceptualization	(6)	Measuring Love	Solo	5, (6)	
Thu Feb 13	HW2 Annotations	pp. 194-214	Measurement	Operationalization	7	Internal Validity	Topical		(6), 7
Tue Feb 18		pp. 421-426	Measurement	Elementary Stats	8	Univariates (gssub)	Data	7, 8	
Thu Feb 20		chapt. 3	Orientation	Misuses of Research	EC1	Ethics (extra credit)	Solo		8, EC1
Tue Feb 25	HW3 Dataset Basics	p.415-420, 434-438	Measurement	Quantitative Analysis	9	Coding Heroes	Topical	EC1, 9	
Thu Feb 27		ch 6 & 427-430	Measurement	Indices & Scales	10	Lab (absent)	Data		9, 10
Tue Mar 4		pp. 249-256	Measurement	Surveys: Wording	11	Draft Survey Questions	Topical	10, 11	
Thu Mar 6	HW4 Welfare Analysis	chapt. 7	Measurement	Sampling & Errors	(12)	Apartments	Data		11-12(2)
Tue Mar 11		p.426-427, 429-433	Description	Crosstabs	13	Crosstabs (gss94)	Data	(12), 13	
Thu Mar 13	MID TERM			Project Overview (mandatory lecture)					13
Tue Mar 18				Review Session					
Thu Mar 20				Survey Design					
Tue Mar 25	HW5 Indices	pp. 256-263	Measurement	Surveys: Format	14	Draft Survey Format	Topical	14	
Thu Mar 27			Description	Testing (Ordinal) Association	15	Testing Tests (US Destiny)	Data		14-15
Tue Apr 1		chapt. 8	Observation	Experimental Research	16	Review Survey Draft	Topical	15, 16	
Thu Apr 3	HW 6 Proposal		Description	Three Interval Tests	17	T Tests	Data		16, 17
Tue Apr 8		pp. 263-269	Observation	Surveys: Mode	(18)	Conduct Survey	Solo	17, (18)	
Thu Apr 10		pp. 433-434	Description	Multivariate & Modeling	19	Multiple R (multireg)	Data		(18), 19
Tue Apr 15	HW7 Three Tests	ch 13 & 428-429	Orientation	Qualitative Analysis	(20)	Jaywalking Study	Solo	19, (20)	
Thu Apr 17		pp. 420-421	Observation	Data Entry	(21)	Data Entry	Solo		(20), (21)
Tue Apr 22		chapt. 10	Observation	Fieldwork & Ethnography	(22)	Grounded Theory	Solo	(21), (22)	
Thu Apr 24	HW8 Experiment	chapt. 15	Description	Control Variables & Elab	EC2	Elaboration (extra credit)	Data		(22), EC2
Tue Apr 29		chapt. 11	Observation	Unobtrusive Research	23	Content Analysis	Topical	EC2, 23	
Thu May 1	HW9 Survey Analysis	pp. 316-318	Observation	Focus Groups	24	Evaluation Design	Topical		23, 24
Tue May 6		chapt. 12	Description	Oral Presentations	(25)	Oral Presentations Eval	Solo	24, (25)	(25)
Thu May 8									
Thu May 15	Final Exam			(no class meeting - due 5pm, firm!)					

1. Which software program(s) is/are useful for *qualitative* analysis of text?

1. Mathematica — 2%
2. nVivo, Dedoose, or NUDIST — 56%
3. Stata or SAS — 7%
4. SPSS — 29%
5. All of the above — 5%

Qualitative vs. Quantitative

- Generally, differences in methods used
  - Quantitative means something counted
  - Qualitative gen. not *concerned* w/ counting
    - Not based on numbers
    - Purports to investigate something uncountable
      - e.g. look at how people experience their lives subjectively
- But that distinction's somewhat spurious
  - Almost always need both concepts and counts
  - To describe effectively, need comparisons
    - you need categories (values) and counts (cases)
- More important: Qual vs Quant Research

Methodological Jungle, cont'd

- Conversation analysis
  - Semiotics - Matching signs and meanings
- Ethnography
  - Extensive/holistic study via emersion in native setting
- Constant comparative method
  - Checking & rechecking against your data and findings
- Grounded theory*
  - inductively built from data, grounded in observations
  - not set up to confirm or deny hypotheses
    - True of most qualitative work

2. What method did Glaser & Strauss develop to study medical sociology?

1. Case Study 5%
2. Conversation Analysis 3%
3. Ethnometholodogy 0%
4. Grounded Theory 90%
5. Participant Observation 3%

3. What approach considers the relationship(s) between signs and their meanings?

1. Semantics 3%
2. Semiotics 97%
3. Symbiosis 0%
4. Symbolics 0%
5. Sybianese 0%

Methodological Jungle

- Case study
  - idiographic, chiefly descriptive
- Direct observation *
- Participant observation
  - Roles vary: covert/overt, how much participate
- In-depth interviewing
  - less structured than standardized instruments
  - aka "guided conversation"
  - Focus Groups *

About Qualitative *Methods*

- Babbie's tips / Lofland & Lofland
- Measurement quality varies
  - Any potentially *can* get valid data
  - Don't typically get *reliable* measurements
- Goals differ
  - Aren't typically used for *testing* ideas
    - But *could* be used for hypothesis-testing
    - Also *could* generate quantitative data
      - Even if "just" more/less

4. Which is not a form of qualitative analysis Babbie discusses?

1. Coding
   0%
2. Contexting
   0%
3. Memoing
   3%
4. Meandering
   95%
5. Babbie discussed all of these as possible data analysis strategies
   3%

0

Biggest Methods Q: Sampling

- How to identify what to observe?
  - no hypotheses to guide measurement
  - entire endeavor can be aimless, even fruitless
    - See Lofland & Lofland list, p. 298
- Risk of only recording confirmatory evidence
  - Be aware of that risk, and take steps to reduce it
  - Use quantitative measures when you can
  - Enlist the assistance of others for advice & review

Strengths of Qual. *Methods*

- Exploratory
  - good for identifying new questions/areas
- More valid (?)
  - vs. "superficiality" of surveys, experiments
  - May tell us more about real world (more what?)
- Flexibility
- Study nuances
- Inexpensive? (depends)

Biggest Epistemological Q: Why?

- Qual *methods* means you aren't counting something (?)
- Anything can be counted, including…
  - The presence or absence, degree, frequency, or amplitude of anything regarded as a "quality"
  - Anything observed or measured in any qualitative study
  - Anything claimed or discovered anywhere about anything
- Meanwhile, "Quantitative" doesn't require counting, per se
  - "more" and "less" are quantities, but imprecise ones – not counts
- **Answer: "Qualitative *Research*"** (not just *Methods*)
  - "Qualitative" oft means case studies, an important component of anthropological data collection, which in aggregate lends counts
  - But also almost always means *ideological*, which isn't as scientific as it could be (if it is at all) – not just *methods*, but qual *research*

Weaknesses of Qual. *Methods*

- Epistemological
  - Objectivity problems (reliable? replicable?)
- Practical
  - Time consuming
  - Can be expensive
- Methodological
  - Not large population
  - Less reliable
    - often personal; also, personnel differences
  - Harder to test relationships w/ qualitative data
    - More complex than statistics; understanding v. rote memory
    - Arguably, not about "testing relationships" (?)

Qualitative *Research* (vs Methods)

- Narrower - in a sense
  - Limited methods*, implemented iteratively
  - Different goals* – focus on subjectification, "giving voice"
  - Not generalizable – comparable to Trump's anecdotes
- Broader – lack of boundaries
  - Purportedly Epistemological* - but w/ no clear Epistemology
  - Typically Ideological (which is non-/anti-scientific)
  - No clear criteria for evaluation* – anything goes & all good

** another slide…*

Qualitative *Research*: Methods

- Practically: Limited methods
  - Typically case studies and interviews
  - Sometimes, ethnographies or content analysis
- Methodologically: an *iterative* process
  - Interplay between data collection and theory
    - e.g. may revise interview schedule between respondents
  - But… All science is iterative in some sense
    - Changing IV schedules has costs (reliability? Validity?)

Qual. *Research:* Weaknesses

- Purpose of qualitative *research* not clear
  - No clear criteria for evaluation
- Not clear how it's *different*
  - How is this not scientific? …
- Unclear what much of it *means*
  - Methodological Jungle
  - Epistemological Jungle

Qual. *Research*: Goals

- Phenomenology
  - Including subjective in addition to objective
  - Aim to discover natives experiences, including meanings acribed by participants
- Interpretivism
  - Focus on *how* the subject understandgs
  - Don't just describe meanings, but also allow respondents to identify which descriptions are important
- Hermenuetics
  - *Process* of understanding, which unfolds through the process of discovery

Lab Exercise: Observing Jaywalkers

SOLO LAB

- **Observe social dynamics of jaywalking**
  - defined narrowly: pedestrians crossing street *against* light *at intersection*
- **Pick 2 intersections, & observe at *each* for 20 minutes.**
- Notes and analysis should focus on two questions:
  - **Who jaywalks and who doesn't?**
    - What characteristics describe each group?
  - **Who *stimulates* jaywalking by others?**
    What are the characteristics of those, when they jaywalk, who seem to be followed by people who were previously waiting for the light to change?
- **Submit raw notes & a short (1-page) summary** of observations.
- Be prepared to say something about what you found
  - if I call on you in class or ask anything about the exercise on an exam.

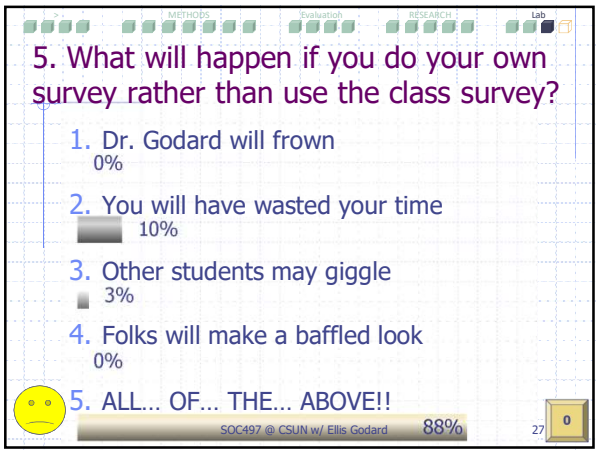
Adapted from Wagenaar & Babbie, Guided Activities for the Practice of Social Research, p. 196

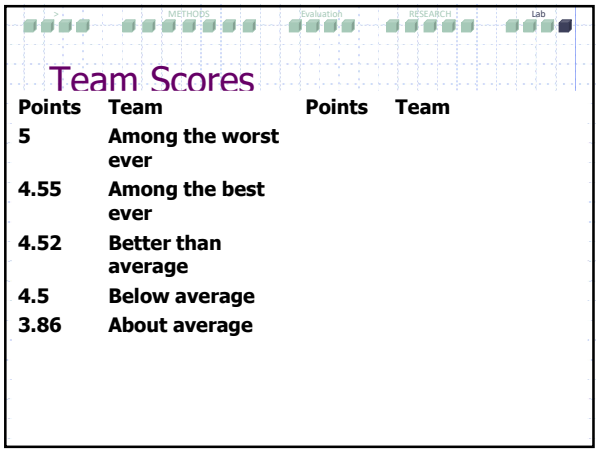
Qualitative *Research*: Epistemology

- Theory = part of data gathering
  - Observation generates theory not "just" data
    - Not unique – quant methods generate theory
    - And data is useful
      - Clear data is more easily evaluated, compared, etc.
      - Permits multiple theories, tests, etc.
  - "Theory" here often doesn't mean same thing
    - Not a comprehensive set of testable statements
  - Strategy of explanation is different (?)
    - Seek to *understand* (?), rather than "explain"

Lab Exercise: Tips RE Jaywalking

- Qualitative vs. quantitative
- Make sure you follow instructions
  - Raw observation notes?
  - 2nd intersection?
  - Stimulators?


METHODS
Evaluation
RESEARCH
Lab
5. What will happen if you do your own survey rather than use the class survey?
1. Dr. Godard will frown
0%
2. You will have wasted your time
10%
3. Other students may giggle
3%
4. Folks will make a baffled look
0%
5. ALL... OF... THE... ABOVE!!
88%
SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard
27
0


METHODS
Evaluation
RESEARCH
Lab
Team Scores
Points Team Points Team
5 Among the worst ever
4.55 Among the best ever
4.52 Better than average
4.5 Below average
3.86 About average