

Handout on Assessing Qualitative Research

For two great articles on appraising qualitative research see:

'Clear as Mud': Toward Greater Clarity in Generic Qualitative Research. By: Caelli, Kate; Ray, Lynne; Mill, Judy. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2003, Vol. 2 Issue 2, p1, 24p; (AN 10609923)

Elder, N. & Miller, W. (1995). Reading & evaluating qualitative research studies. *Journal of Family Practice*, 41 (37279.284.

(Available through the UI Library via: *International journal of qualitative methods*
from 03/01/2002 to present in *Academic Search Premier*
from 03/01/2002 to present in *Digital Library of the Commons*
from 2002 to present in *Directory of Open Access Journals*.)

Guidelines for Critiquing Qualitative Sampling Designs

1. Is the setting or study group adequately described?
2. Is the setting appropriate for the research question?
3. Are the sample selection procedures described?
4. What type of sampling strategy was used?
5. Given the information needs of the study, was the sampling approach appropriate?
6. Were dimensions of the phenomenon under study adequately represented?
7. Is the sample size adequate?
8. Did the researcher stipulate that information redundancy was achieved?
9. Do the findings suggest a richly textured and comprehensive set of data without any apparent "holes" or thin areas?

<http://connection.lww.com/Products/polit/documents/Box26-08.pdf>, retrieved September 6, 2005.

Guidelines for Evaluating Data Quality in Qualitative Studies

1. Does there appear to be a strong relationship between the phenomena of interest as conceptualized (i.e., as described in the introduction) and as described in the discussion of the data collection approach?
2. Does the report discuss efforts to enhance or evaluate the trustworthiness of the data? If not, is there other information that allows you to conclude that data are of high quality?
3. Which techniques (if any) did the researcher use to enhance and appraise data quality? Was the investigator in the field an adequate amount of time? Was triangulation used, and, if so, of what type? Did the researcher search for disconfirming evidence? Were there peer debriefings or member checks? Do the researcher's qualifications enhance the credibility of the data? Did the report include information on the audit trail for data analysis?
4. Were the procedures used to enhance and document data quality adequate?
5. Given the efforts to enhance data quality, what can you conclude about the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data? In light of this assessment, how much faith can be placed in the results of the study?

<http://connection.lww.com/Products/polit/documents/Box26-14.pdf>, retrieved September 6, 2005

Technical fixes used to confer rigour on qualitative analysis, the concerns they are thought to address, and their realistic potential

| Technical fix | Concerns addressed | Realistic potential |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Purposive sampling | Bias | Enhancing sample coverage and providing a framework for analysis |
| Grounded theory | Original theorizing | Developing existing theory or, occasionally, new theories |
| Multiple coding | Inter-rater reliability | Refining interpretations or coding frameworks |
| Triangulation | Confirmation or refutation of internal validity | Corroborating or, more often, refining findings |
| Respondent validation | Confirmation or refutation of interpretations | Corroborating or, more often, refining findings |

Barbour, R. S. (2001). Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: A case of the tail wagging the dog? *BMJ*, 322: 1115-1117.