Research Series Session 1: Qualitative Assessment
Introduction

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Purpose of the Training

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Why Qualitative Research?

- Qualitative inquiry allows us to ask different types of questions that surveys alone might not be appropriate for.
- Important to remember that this data is just as good as qualitative data, it is just another kind of information.
- An accessible introduction to this type of research might allow for your offices to expand their thinking to more deeply explore student needs.
Purpose (continued)

For example...

• A survey question might present a statement such as: “Attending [event] enhanced my understanding of diversity.” Then the respondent would fill in their answer on a scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

However, a qualitative question might ask:

• “How was your understanding of diversity affected by attending [event]?”
Expanding thinking:

- The purpose of exploring questions in a qualitative manner is to give us data that we might not be able to get from quantitative methods alone.

This training...

- Is designed to get past the initial hesitations with this type of research by providing a simple introduction to the way qualitative research questions could help your office.
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(Brief) Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry

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Definition of qualitative research:

- “A situated activity that locates the observer in the world...consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pg. 3).

So what does this mean?

- Methods such as case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews (such as focus groups), artifacts, cultural texts and productions, observations, historical accounts, and visual texts are just some of the ways in which qualitative methods are explored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
The researcher as creator:

- Since there are many methodological practices in qualitative research, one becomes a “bricoleur” or “quilt-maker” (pg. 4).
- Multiple methods are used in trying to understand qualitative data, and the researcher can invent new ways to combine these methods to understand data.
Validity?

What about validity?

• In qualitative research, the use of multiple methods is called triangulation, which is an alternative to validation (Flick, 2002).

• Elements such as the “methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers”, when combined, form a strategy that can add greater understanding to any inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
What about Generalizability?

• In qualitative research, generalizability is not the same as in quantitative research.
• Instead, transferability is the degree to which the results of a qualitative design can be transferred to other contexts.
• The researcher, through explicit description of the assumptions and context, can insure good transferability of the research findings.
The Lens One Uses...

**Personal History is an Important Factor:**

- The researcher brings a set of values to the analysis of qualitative data, specifically, the perspective shaped by their “class, gender, race, culture, and ethnic community” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pg. 21).

- The research analysis, then, is affected by the lens that the researcher uses to analyze the data.
Phases of Research

Basic Phases of the Qualitative Research Process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)

- The Researcher
- Interpretive Paradigms
- Research Strategies
- Methods of Collection and Analysis
- The Art, Practices, and Politics of Interpretation and Evaluation
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Qualitative Research Design and Student Life

Daniel Newhart
Graduate Research Associate
Examples:

- Landerman, Rasmussen, King and Xinquan (2007): phenomenological research on university educators in charge of developing multicultural initiatives.
Examples at Ohio State:

- Experiences of Undergraduate African-American males at Ohio State, Focus Group Project
  - Ability to make specific recommendations derived from the contributions from the participants.
  - Student Life staff can use these recommendations to improve upon current programs or create new ones.
Office Specific Design Ideas:

- How could qualitative research help your office with your assessment activities?
- What would it look like?
- Finally, how would you implement your findings to inform your practice and more effectively serve students?
Presentation Title

Conclusion(s)

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When Should One Use Qualitative Research?

- When surveys or other types of collection methods may not paint the “whole picture.”
- When seeking to understand various student populations from their viewpoint, in order to find out more about their:
  - Specific needs
  - How Student Life staff can best support them
  - Higher Education experience
Consider the Ways in Which Your Office can Use Qualitative Research

- Homework: Think of at least two ways to integrate what you have learned today into the Student Life activities you manage.
- Future presentations will deal with different methods of qualitative research, so the task will be to identify which method(s) you might use.
Presentation Title

Upcoming Presentations

Daniel Newhart
Graduate Research Associate
Upcoming Work

**Qualitative Research Series**
- Session 2 – Focus Groups (Nov. 12\textsuperscript{th}, 10:00 – 12:00, RPAC meeting room #1)
- Session 3 – Qualitative Data Analysis (Jan. 21\textsuperscript{st}, time, location TBA)

**Quantitative Research Series**
- Session 4 – Introduction to Survey Research (Feb. 18\textsuperscript{th}, time, location TBA)
- Session 5 – Statistical Analysis and Survey Research (Apr. 15\textsuperscript{th}, time, location TBA)
- Session 6 – SPSS application (May 13\textsuperscript{th}, time, location TBA)
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