

Multiple Transformations of Qualitative Data April 11th 2014

Concluding Comments and Challenges
Iain Williamson
De Montfort University, Leicester

Who Is This and Why Is She Relevant?



Mary Poppins' Magic Carpet Bag



A World of Possibilities 1

- Qualitative research is over-reliant on 'snatch and grab' one-off individual interviews and we tend to reify this method.
- We have an ever-expanding tool-box to explore the social world both in how we collect and analyse data– today has showcased some of these
- Mixing qualitative methods can provide unique and synergistic understandings - think beyond 'triangulation'
- Certain methods can open up participation opportunities that are less intrusive, burdensome and researcher-driven (audio-diaries?)

A First Word of Caution

- “Rather than innovation for innovation's sake... or fetishizing methods to the point that they drive the research, adapted methods are most successful when they have a clear methodological purpose that is consistent with the substantive study goals and conceptual underpinnings.” (Gibson *et al.*, 2013: 396)

A World of Possibilities 2

- The use of technology to increase participation...
- The dynamic world of the internet allows us potentially to access to data in the real world as they develop *in real time* and with little/no researcher input.
- It may allow us access to perspectives/experiences that would be very difficult to attain via other methods.

Exploring on-line accounts of Hajj and Ramadan (Williamson & Jamal, 2013)



A Second Word of Caution

- We need to approach the idea of 'naturally occurring data' carefully. Data are crafted? All human interactions (blogging, tweeting etc.) are motivated and performative. Mixing epistemologies remains one of our biggest challenges to answering the questions we need to ask
- Internet-based methods open up new ethical concerns where 'best practice' is less well established (BPS, 2013) – Dangers of voyeurism and 'exoticisation'

Qualitative with a BIG Q! Politics with a small 'p'?

- Should we aim to be scholar-activists?
- Participants can inform, develop and lead the research agenda (including choosing methods)
- Qualitative research is uniquely positioned to be engaging and beneficial for all parties in research partnerships
- Power dynamics need considering very carefully at all stages of the research process?

Right back where we started: Transformation

- Qualitative research can transform in so many ways for researchers, participants and the worlds we inhabit...
- *Bring passion, curiosity and care to your work. In the end, you will transform our images of studied life, and your research journey will transform you.*
(Kathy Charmaz, 2004: 991)

Thank You and Good Night...

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