

**How qualitative (or interpretive or critical)
is qualitative synthesis
and
what we can do about this?**

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A Story about Meta-Ethnography

- An interpretation of interpretations
- Concepts as metaphors
- Synthesis as analogies of storylines

Qualitative?

Name some characteristics!

Spicer: Applied anthropology

- Emic
 - Researchers and synthesizer taken for granted assumptions?
- Historical
 - Situate studies and synthesis in time and context; changes in fields?
- Holistic
 - Resist reduction- preserve complexity and contexts?
- Comparative
 - textual multiple perspectives and multiple syntheses?

Patton's additions from his textbook

- Context
 - Contexts of the research studies? Researcher culture? Synthesis team contexts? Health care context?
- Meaning
 - How is sense made in texts and in synthesis?
- Connections
 - What are the mechanisms in the studies and in the synthesis?
- Reflexivity
 - Synthesize the authors' reflexivity? Synthesis team reflexivity?

Luttrell's QR as 'a social art form'

- Makes explicit the implicit
 - Seek out the implicit in studies and synthesis?
- Iterative
 - Track how interpretation came to be in studies and synthesis?
- Imaginative
 - What can be made of the studies beyond what they say?

Critical?

Carspecken's Critical Ethnography

- Be extremely precise about the relationship of power to research claims, validity claims, culture, and thought.
- "...make the fact/value distinction very clear and must have a precise understanding of how the two interact
- Be explicit about a theory of how symbols are used to represent reality, how this changes and how power is implicated in symbolic representation and changes in symbolic representations.

Do we do these in syntheses?

Gunzenhauser's Promises of Critical Ethnography

- Giving voice (to the less powerful)
- Uncovering power
- Identifying agency
- Connecting analysis to cultural critique

Post critical ethnography adds:

self-reflexivity

nonexploitation

Do these happen in meta-ethnographies?

Hytten: Post Critical Ethnographic Encounter

- Educative

Who benefits most from the synthesis?

- Emancipatory

Who is freed? Who becomes knowledgeable?

- Empowering

For whom? In what senses?

Noblit, Flores and Murrillo: Post Critical Ethnography

- Worries Positionality
 - Worries Reflectivity
 - Worries objectivity
 - Worries representation
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- How do we do these things?

Clifford: Predicament of Culture

- Polyphonic
- Interrogative
- Inventive
- Subjective
- Exegesis
- Partial
- Cultural critique

Do we embrace these as well?

Interpretation reveals taken for granted assumptions in scenes

Critique reveals how these are structured by power and ideology

Positionality allows reader to discern
your standpoint.

Methodological studies are needed.

Small on alternatives to representative cases

- Extending the extended case study
 - Nest studies to elaborate contexts
- Iterative readings and theorizing
 - Build the interpretation as we go.

Peter Van De Veer

“What has to be curbed is the quite understandable desire to say something general about, say, religion as a universal entity (as a cultural system) or a particular society’s religion in general (as in “the religion of Java) or about the general and comparable features of a world religion’s manifestations in different societies (“Islam observed”). The move from fragment to a larger insight is a conceptual and theoretical one and not a form of generalization. It does not come from mere observation, but is theory laden. Theory should here be taken in its original sense of observing and contemplating.” (pp. 2-3)