

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

# **Qualitative Review: Challenges and Opportunities**

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# A Personal Introduction

- Context
- Reflexivity

## Seminar Aims

- Brief historical overview
- Do we need qualitative systematic review?
- What methods of review are best suited to qualitative research?
- Discuss some methodological considerations
- Concluding recommendations

# Systematic Review, Qualitative Research & the Evidence Based Movement

- Exponents
  - Cochrane Qualitative Methods Group
  - Campbell Collaboration
  - EPPI Centre
  - The Joanna Briggs Institute
- Dissenters
  - Myopic, exclusionary (Morse, 2006)
  - Fallible (Hamersley, 2001)

## Are conventional SR methods suited to qualitative research?

*‘To summarise qualitative findings is to destroy the integrity of the individual projects on which such summaries are based, to thin out the desired thickness of particulars... and ultimately to lose the vitality, viscerality and vicarism of the human experiences represented in the original studies’*

*(Sandelowski, 1997: 366).*

# Fundamental methodological considerations for qualitative research

## Types or levels of review

- Qualitative research in quantitative reviews
- Stand alone qualitative reviews
- Mixed methods reviews

## What's in a name?

Meta-synthesis

Meta-ethnography

Narrative review

Narrative synthesis

Thematic synthesis

Systematic literature review

Bayesian meta-analysis

Critical Interpretive Synthesis (CIS)

## Stages of Search Process, Study Selection & Review.

1. Research Question
2. Research Searching
3. Research Screening
4. Research Appraisal (Review)
5. Research Synthesis (Analysis)



1. Formulate Research Question (and Protocol)

2. Search Databases (identify papers)

Remove Duplicates

3. Screen Papers by title/abstract

Exclude Papers

4. Full text Review

Exclude Papers

5. Analysis of included papers

# A worked exemplar from Shaw, Booth, et al., 2004

1. Support for Breast Feeding

2. Search Databases = 3912

Plus hand-searches

Remove Duplicates = 7420

3. Screen Papers by title/abstract

Exclude Papers (including non-human)

4. Full text Review

Exclude Papers = 262

5. Analysis of included papers (*not shown as focus was on evaluating research strategies*)

## Study Selection

1. Research Question
  - a. Often evolving, iterative & responsive
  - b. A compass not an anchor
  
2. Research Searching
  - a. No hierarchy of evidence
  - b. Poor indexing

## 11. Qualitative Filters

- McMaster University Health Information Research Unit Evidence-Based Health Informatics Search Filters for MEDLINE in Ovid Syntax and the PubMed translation  
[http://hiru.mcmaster.ca/hiru/HIRU\\_Hedges\\_MEDLINE\\_Strategies.aspx](http://hiru.mcmaster.ca/hiru/HIRU_Hedges_MEDLINE_Strategies.aspx)
- Hawaii Medical Library evidence-based filters for CINAHL (Ovid)  
<http://hml.org/WWW/filtrcin.html#qr-long>

## **3. Research Appraisal**

### Appraisal Instruments for Qualitative Research

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#### Appraisal Instruments for Qualitative Research

- **CASP** - Critical Appraisal Skills Programme
- **RATS** – Qualitative research review guideline
- **LSTM** - Criteria for evaluating qualitative studies
- **BSAMedSoc** – Criteria for evaluating qualitative research
- **JBI-QUARI** - Joanna Briggs Institute Quality Assessment & Review Instrument
- **Cabinet Office** – Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A Framework for assessing research evidence

## Quality summary score for qualitative studies

Downe et al, 2007: adapted from Jackson, unpublished

### Key to quality rating

- A – No or few flaws: The study credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability is high
- B – Some flaws, unlikely to affect the credibility, transferability, dependability, and/or confirmability of the study
- C – Some flaws, which may affect the credibility, transferability, dependability, and/or confirmability of the study
- D – Significant flaws, which are very likely to affect the credibility, transferability, dependability, and/or confirmability of the study

## 4. Research Synthesis

1. Descriptive reviews
2. Summative reviews
3. Interpretive reviews
  - Meta-ethnography (Nicky Britten et al.)
  - Critical Interpretive Synthesis (CIS) (Dixon-Woods et al.)
  - Qualitative Research Synthesis (see Major & Savin-Baden, 2010).



## Developing Third Order Interpretations

- Major & Savin-Baden, 2010 '*Learning spaces, agency and notions of improvements: Influencing thinking and practice about teaching and learning in higher education*'.

In An Introduction to Qualitative Research Synthesis.  
Routledge. Page 67

Overarching theme	Second order theme/interpretation	Third order interpretation/theory
Theme 1 =>		
Theme 2 =>	Composite theme =>	
Theme 3 =>		
Theme 4 =>		
Theme 5 =>	Composite theme =>	Interpretation
Theme 6 =>		
Theme 7 =>		
Theme 8 =>	Composite theme =>	
Theme 9 =>		

Overarching theme Reciprocal	Second order theme/interpretation Refutational	Third order interpretation/theory 'A line of argument'
Practice	Improving practice	Identity
	Changing practice	Agency
	The impact of innovation	Disjunction
	Creation of theory	Academic stances
	Understanding students	Notions of improvement
	Staff experiences	Learning spaces
Community	Disciplinary communities	Academic cultures
	Online/e-learning communities	Communities of practice
	Educational development communities	
	Inquiry-based learning communities	
Transfer	Transfer for shared practice	
	Transfer related to policy	<b>My Thanks to Major &amp; Savin-Baden, 2011: 67</b>

## In Summary

*“A qualitative synthesis uses qualitative methods to synthesize existing qualitative studies to construct greater meaning through an interpretive process .... it involves using a rigorous and methodologically grounded approach for analysis that is filtered through an interpretive lens ... deriving meaning from translation”*

*(Major & Savin-Baden, 2012:27)*

## Conclusions

Qualitative review or synthesis may

- provide new evidence;
- advance theory and knowledge;
- promote dialogue and debate;
- add further depth to existing qualitative studies;
- be cost effective;
- demonstrate impact & accountability – including ethical issues; and,
- ideally contribute to policy & practice

## However

- DO NOT underestimate time & resources involved
- Be explicit about your position
- Be explicit about your methods
- Beware that it can limit your wider understanding of the field or conversely overwhelm you with data
- Your findings in conducting an interpretive review are not necessarily reproducible
- Qualitative research synthesis or review may still be accused of lack of precision; propensity for subjectivity and inherent bias
- Don't forget the importance of intellectual endeavour and the amount of time it takes!

Thank you  
*Any Questions?*

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