Is graduate student qualitative methods instruction adequate? Results from exploratory research

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When did you have your first opportunity to analyze qualitative data?

How was instruction about analysis delivered?

What specific methods were taught?

What data did you practice with?

In comparison, when did you have your first opportunity to analyze quantitative data?

How was instruction delivered? What methods? What data?

How many qualitative courses were provided/required? How many quantitative/statistics courses?

Things impacting formal instruction on qualitative inquiry

- Influenced by:
  - Institution
  - Discipline
  - Faculty
- Assumptions:
  - Anyone can do qualitative without instruction (e.g., epidemiology background needed for contact tracing)
  - Qualitative inquiry is “student” work (but a statistician is needed for quantitative research)
  - It is just reading and words (isn’t there an algorithm that does this?)
- The usual criticisms
  - Bias
  - Nonscientific
  - Cannot establish cause
  - Primarily used to create survey items
  - Etc.

We knew how we learned, but what were others' experiences?

- Qualtrics online survey
- Distributed via online forums, institutional contacts, other local and regional contacts
- November - December 2020
- 196 responses
- Results also summarized in:
  - Chatfield, S.L. & Debois, K.A. Strategies for collaborative classroom practice in qualitative data analysis. In J.C. Richards, A. Skukauskaitė, & R. Chenail (eds). *Engaging students in socially constructed qualitative research pedagogies* (2022, Brill)

First opportunity for qualitative data analysis.

RESPONSE	RESULTS
During first/introductory class	100(51.0%)
During subsequent/advanced qualitative class	37(18.9%)
During thesis/dissertation or other independent research	47(24.0%)
Other	12(6.1%)

How was the instruction delivered?

Response	Results
In a group setting, by a course instructor	137(69.9%)
In a one-on-one setting, by my advisor/research mentor	16(8.2%)
I taught myself to conduct analysis	39(19.9%)
Other	4 (2.0%)

Methods on which instruction was provided

Response	Results
Coding, without specialized software	101(51.%)
Thematic analysis	91(46.4%)
Grounded theory coding methods (e.g., line-by-line, axial)	62(31.%)
Coding, with specialized software	42(21.4%)
Other	15(7.7%)

Types of data utilized during first experience

Response	Results
I gathered and analyzed my own data	112(57.1%)
I used my instructor’s data	47(24.0%)
I analyzed content from other sources	18(9.2%)
I used open access data	7(3.6%)
Other	3(1.5%)

Other findings

- Some qualitative course instructors did not have extensive experience with qualitative inquiry
  - *[the instructor] had no experience or interest in conducting qualitative research*
- It was more challenging to learn analysis during a class than during one-on-one instruction
  - *It was confusing in class but made logical sense in a one-on-one setting.*
- Students who aimed to complete dissertations using a different approach than taught in courses, engaged in training outside of their academic program, including self-training, contracting with a consultant, enrolling in a workshop or other course offered outside of the primary institution
  - *I attended a 10 day intensive summer workshop and it was wonderful!*
- Current instructors consider their own less than ideal experiences when developing their own teaching strategies
  - *I am teaching the course I wish I had.*

Factors impacting development of qualitative instruction in PH

FACILITATORS:

- PH accreditation as of 2016 places equal value on qualitative and quantitative
- Learnings from COVID experiences
  - Contact tracing is a qualitatively driven process
  - Infection rates can be quantitatively calculated but exposure and transmission is associated with individual behaviors and perceptions
- New generation of qualitative and mixed methods researchers
  - More texts and journals
  - TQR community
  - QDAS make qualitative feel contemporary
  - Much “big data” begins as unstructured/qualitative data

CHALLENGES

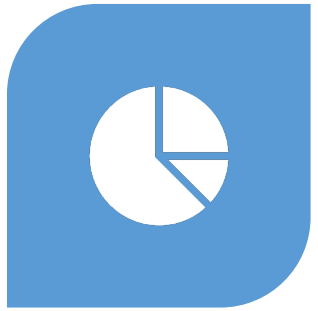
- Long history of priority on quantitative methods
- Mystique and glamor associated with statistical skills
- Differential value and compensation
- Proficiency with quantitative software (SPSS, R) is common; QDAS less so
- Automated language processing is appealing and presumed advancements suggest person-driven process skills will not be useful in the near future [I’m not saying I agree with this]

Moving forward

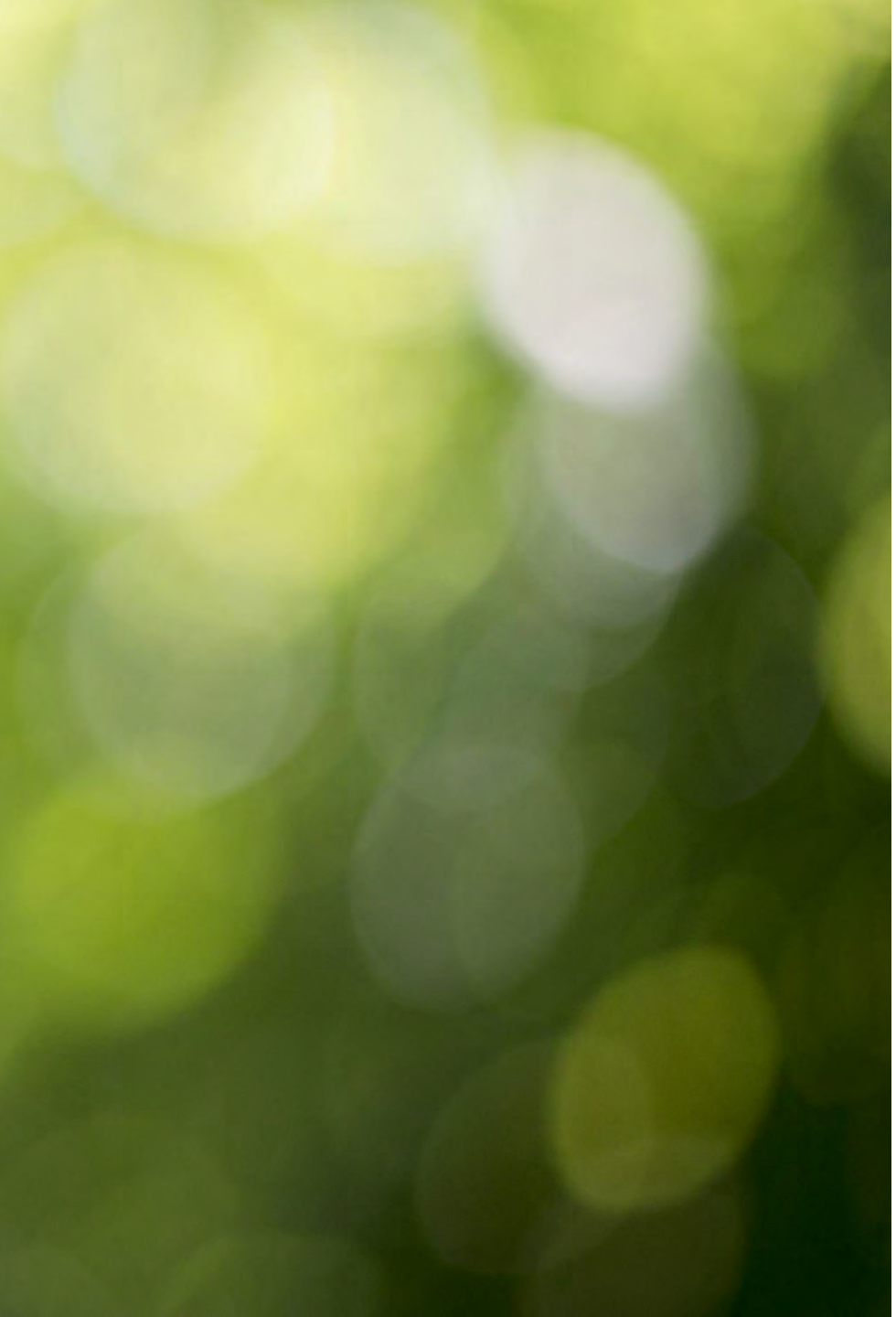
NETWORKING WITHIN ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

CONTINUING (LOCALLY) TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTION, ADVOCATING FOR REQUIREMENTS AT VARIOUS LEVELS

EXPLORING PARTNERSHIPS TO RECRUIT POSTGRADUATES, INCLUDING PHD, MPH, MD, TO ENHANCE RESEARCH SKILLS



GATHER QUALITATIVE DATA!



Questions, comments, contact

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