Oral History Methods

Sources

- *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research, by Patricia Leavy (2011)*
- *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide, by Donald A. Ritchie (2003)*
- *Oral History Theory, by Lynn Abrams (2010)*

Grounded Theory

- Generally, oral history researchers in the social sciences and humanities apply a grounded theory approach, or some version of it, to their data analysis. A grounded theory approach is an open approach to data analysis where codes are generated directly out of the data. Grounded theory approaches are useful for building theory out of your data.

Grounded Theory Approach

- collect a small sample of oral history interviews;
- transcribe and code those interviews;
- immersion in data;
- based on early analytical findings, conduct additional oral history interviews;
- repeat this process until you have reached the data saturation point.
- saturation point means that the collection of additional data does not further serve the research purpose.

Qualitative Interview Continuum

- Most Structured to most open ended
    - Structured interview
    - In-depth interview
    - Oral history
    - Biography interview/Life story

Qualitative Interview Continuum

- Structured interview:
    - Larger pool of participants,
    - breath valued over depth,
    - high levels of comparison,
    - highly structured and tested questions

Qualitative Interview Continuum

- In-depth interview:
  - focused topic,
  - interview session with participant,
  - interview guides,
  - continuum of structure from interview to interview,
  - depth valued over breath.

Qualitative Interview Continuum

- Oral history:
  - Open ended;
  - taps into process;
  - micro-macro links;
  - bearing witness/ filling in historical record;
  - participant - researcher collaboration;
  - emphasizes participant points of view.

Qualitative Interview Continuum

- Biography interview/Life story:
  - most open-ended,
  - minimal passive interviewing techniques,
  - extensive sessions,
  - narrative inducing questions

Qualitative Interview Continuum: Oral History

- Tapping into process
  - historical processes,
  - agency within shifting contexts, and
  - holistic understandings of life experiences.

Qualitative Interview Continuum: Oral History

- Micro-macro links — Filling in historical record
    - Understanding people's subjective experiences of historical events.
    - Understanding people's subjective experiences of historical periods or periods of social change.
    - Understanding people's subjective experiences of current or recent events.
    - Contributing to understanding of topical areas.
    - Gaining "community" experiential knowledge.

Qualitative Interview Continuum: Oral History

- Participant and researchers co-creators
- Attend to position and identity of the researcher
- shared authority
- Emphasis on participants, rights
- empowerment and social activism

Oral History Project?

- Example 1: The purpose of this research is to study divorce.

- Example 2: The purpose of this research is to study the experience of divorce for stay-at-home mothers. This research is intended to fill a gap in our knowledge about identity formation.

Sample Size

- How do you intend to use your data or transfer the findings from one context/group to another? Do you intend to make generalizations based on your data? Do you intend to build theory out of your data, or support an existing theory?
- How do you plan to balance breadth and depth?
- How have you framed your guiding research questions, and who can help you best answer them?
- What format do you plan to use to represent your data (article, book, essay, arts-based piece, transcript only)?
- How important is diversity (race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, age)? What kind of sample allows for a thorough/ comprehensive study of the topic?

"Snowball Sampling"

- each participant may lead the researcher to other potential participants. This is often true in oral history, because the topics covered include locating members of disenfranchised groups who may not be easily located, people who have experienced something sensitive or private (i.e., sexual assault), or people with concealable identities (i.e., LGBT community).

Open-Ended, Listen

- show unwavering and sincere interest.
- use verbal cues such as "go on," "please tell me more," "uh-huh," and so on, as well as picking up on "markers" and asking the participant to return to them.
- Nonverbal cues such as eye contact, head nodding, alert posture,
- Active listening
- Note markers (mental or written) do not disturb participant

Data Analysis Process in Oral History

- Recursive process
  - Immersion into data
  - Coding/Memos
  - Categories
  - Theory (emergent or supporting existing or both)

Metadata

- "Data about data"

- Metadata is a piece of information describing a resource. (Examples of resources are books, web sites, and videos). Metadata can describe a wide variety of information such as:
  - the subject matter of the resource,
  - the creators of the resource,
  - the technical information to store and access the resource,
  - and/or the legal rights to the resource.

- The term "meta" comes from a Greek word that denotes something of a higher or more fundamental nature. Metadata, then, is data about other data.

- The term refers to any data used to aid the identification, description and location of networked electronic resources

*WendyDuff

FOI 2013


REMOVE FOIL SEAL
UNDER CAP
Low Sodium • No Caffeine
Nutrition Facts
Serving Size 8 fl oz (240ml)
Servings Per Container 2.5
Amount Per Serving
Calories 50
% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g 0%
Sodium 110mg 5%
Potassium 30mg 1%
Total Carbohydrate 14g 5%
Sugars 14g
Protein 0g
Not a significant source of Calories from Fat, Saturated Fat, Cholesterol, Dietary Fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium, Iron.
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.
Nutrition F
Calories 380
Total Fat 11g
Saturated Fat 5g
Cholesterol 15mg
Sodium 1370mg
Total Carbohydrate 55g
Dietary Fiber 9g
Sugars 7g
Protein 15g
Vitamin A 15%

FOI 2013

- Metadata can tell you what the information is about, how to use it, and if you need permission to use it

- Metadata makes searching more meaningful

- Metadata helps you get your information to the right audience

- Metadata, most important, supports your research

- **Descriptive** metadata tells what the subject matter of an object is, describes its form, tells who created it

- **Administrative** metadata tells who or what owns and or/maintains the item. **Rights** metadata describes copyright and terms of rights

- **Technical** metadata tells how it is stored, preserved, and what system specifications you need to use it

- Does data about data mean anything?

- Librarians equate it with a complete bibliographic record

- Information technologists equate it to database schema or definitions of the data elements

- Archivists include context information, restrictions and access terms, index terms, etc.

- Providing a description of the information package along with other information necessary for management and preservation
- Encoding
- Providing access to this description
- ***Predominantly discovery and retrieval and use***

—Gilliland-Swetland (1998) explains “metadata also documents how that objects behaves, its functions and use, relationship to other objects and how it should be managed”.

Where does it come from?

- Automatically generated
- Supplied by 3rd party
- Supplied by creator of resource
- Supplied by content expert

Dublin Core

- **Simplicity**
- **Semantic Interoperability**
- **International Consensus**
- **Extensibility**
- **Metadata Modularity on the Web**

Dublin Core

- **Content**
  - Coverage
  - Description
  - Type
  - Relation
  - Source
  - Subject
  - Title

Dublin Core

- **Content**
  - Coverage
  - Description
  - Type
  - Relation
  - Source
  - Subject
  - Title
- **Intellectual Property**
  - Contributor
  - Creator
  - Publisher
  - Rights

Dublin Core

- **Content**
  - Coverage
  - Description
  - Type
  - Relation
  - Source
  - Subject
  - Title
- **Intellectual Property**
  - Contributor
  - Creator
  - Publisher
  - Rights
- **Instantiation**
  - Date
  - Format
  - Identifier
  - Language

- Dublin Core (Cross-disciplinary)
- DDI- (Social Science data)
- EAD (Archives)
- FGDC (Geographic)
- IMS (Education)
- MARC (Libraries)
- METS (Structural metadata)
- TEI (Text encoding-Humanities)
- VRA (Visual resources)
- ONIX (Publishers and booksellers)
- LOM (Learning Object Metadata)