

Thinking Qualitatively

An introduction to qualitative research
in primary care

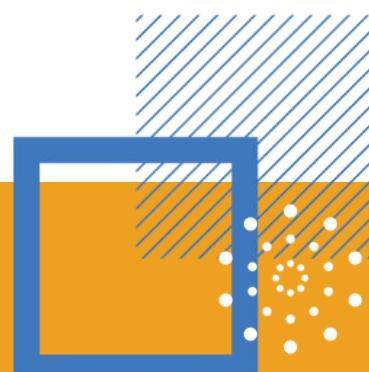
NAPCRG

Introductions

- Dr Martina Kelly, University of Calgary
- Dr Patty Thille, University of Manitoba
- And you?

Why qualitative research matters in primary care

- Because human beings are complex, different, messy and change
- Even within the same culture, people experience the world differently
- There is no location outside of culture; we are all shaped by our beliefs and actions, which have roots in our cultures
- Qualitative research delves into human experience and perspective and contexts, capturing information often lost in numerical translation



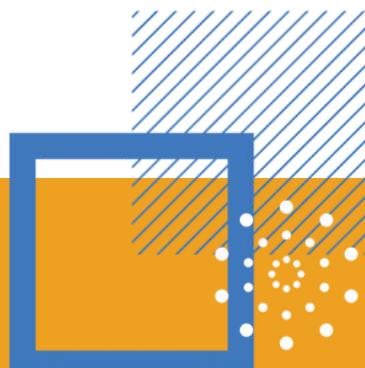
Learning objectives

Today:

- Describe foundational understandings that underpin qualitative research
 - Reflexivity
 - Context is crucial
 - Paying attention to the specific
 - Iterative and flexible

The series:

- Engage with qualitative methods with confidence

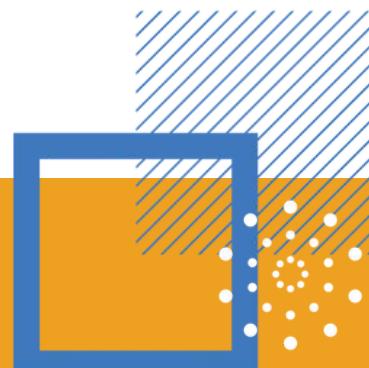


NAPCRG

Start with story

We emphasize that research methods and study designs must be responsive to the research question and the story of experience that motivated it

(Crabtree & Miller, 2023, pg 1)



NAPCRG

Foundational concept: Reflexivity (subjectivity)

“To be reflexive means that we are fully conscious of the lenses through which we view the world”

“The essence of reflexivity is to understand how our worldview is both shaped and constrained by our own subjectivity.”

(Kaufman, 2013, p 71)

Why reflexivity matters: by understanding ourselves better, we can:

Better perceive and address power differentials within a study

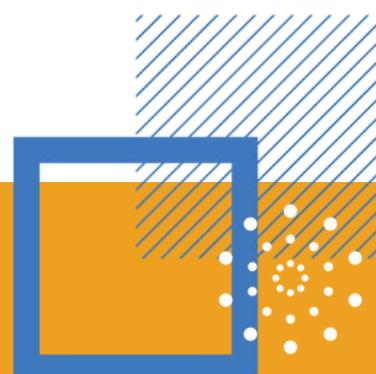
Prevent reliance on common tropes or stereotypes

Engage deeply with your dataset

[and more]

Pause & reflect

Questions?



NAPCRG

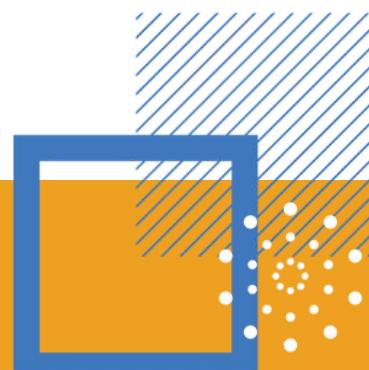
Foundation 2: Context is Crucial

Qualitative research is about immersing oneself in a scene and trying to make sense of it....
Meaning cannot be separated from thick contextual description
(Tracy, 2013)

What is going on here?

Qualitative questions tend to be 'hows and whys' instead of how many or how much

Why we do, what we do



NAPCRG

Key concept 3: Paying attention to the specific

Understanding is the specific is the goal (not generalizability)

Context is never neutral or generalizable

- People
- Politics
- Power
- History

Key concept 4: Qualitative research is Iterative

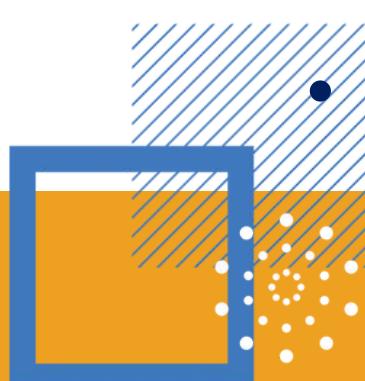
No pre-packaged research design

Iterative discovery and interpretation

- Responsive
- Organize
- Connect
- Corroborating

Emergence (doesn't mean 'appears from nowhere')

- Construction
- Interpretation
- Creative/imaginative variation
- Bricolage



NAPCRG

Recap:

Foundational understandings that underpin varied
qualitative traditions of research

Recap and practice points

You are part of a research team, think about:

Reflexivity What's your own story?

 What do you bring to the research?

 What values, culture, experiences shape the way you see the world?

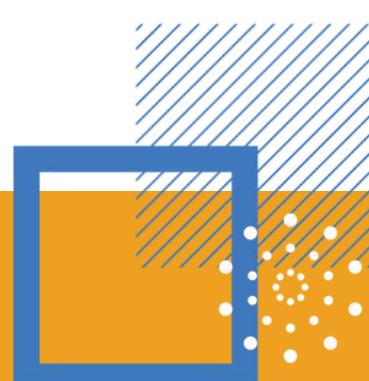
Context What contexts shape your story?

Specific Is your story the same as other peoples' stories?

 Where do they overlap, where do they differ?

Iterative Rewrite your story with different characters, in a different time and place?

 Revisit your story at the end of this lecture series!



Questions?

What's your Muddiest Point from today's presentation?



Contact us

Martina Ann Kelly makelly@ucalgary.ca

Patricia Thille Patty.Thille@umanitoba.ca

References

Crabtree B and Miller W. (2022) Doing Qualitative Research, 3rd Ed, Sage

Kaufman, Peter. 2013. "Scribo Ergo Cogito: Reflexivity through Writing". *TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology*, January. Washington DC: American Sociological Association.
[https://trails.asanet.org/article/view/scribo-ergo-cogito-reflexivity-through-writing.](https://trails.asanet.org/article/view/scribo-ergo-cogito-reflexivity-through-writing)

Lim, W. M. (2025). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2), 199-229.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact. 1st ed. John Wiley & Sons.

Tracy, S. J. (2024). Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact. 2nd ed. John Wiley & Sons.