TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: MAKING THE PATH CLEAR

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OBJECTIVES

- Define trustworthiness
- Detail the story that lead to this discussion
- Discuss how we might make the trustworthiness path clearer.
- Present an example of a matrix
- Ask questions about how we might use this matrix/protocol/plan to strengthen trustworthiness within qualitative research.
- Discuss potential collaboration

LINCOLN AND GUBA (1985)

- There are several approaches to trustworthiness and rigor in the literature as it relates to qualitative research.
- For the purpose of this presentation, a classic rendition of Lincoln and Guba (1985) is forwarded for discussion.

WHAT IS TRUSTWORTHINESS?

- "The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple:
- How can the inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of,
- What arguments are mounted?,
- What criteria invoked?,
- What questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?" p. 290. Lincoln and Guba (1985)

THE CLEAR PATH: BEGINNINGS

- Story: In the Summer of 2014, I reviewed a PHD student's dissertation proposal. There was no information about trustworthiness within the document. I asked the question, where is your section on trustworthiness? She said, we have not discussed that but I am ready to discuss this. Her other question was, why didn't my chair discuss this with me? I could not answer that question. I reported to her, as a qualitative researcher, I could not sign her proposal until we discussed this idea and that the information needed to be added to her proposal before I would sign. The caveat here is that the student did not speak to me for almost a year because of her anger about finding about this just before proposal acceptance. We had known one another for several years and through several degrees, and she wondered why I would stop her at such an important point in her dissertation path. I asked her to make an appointment with me and we would discuss what this is and how to incorporate this concept into her dissertation.

- We spent the next full summer learning trustworthiness and it's importance. Then we discussed how to incorporate it into her proposal. I gave her several text to review, my dissertation, other dissertations, and we met for several times over summer.
- At the same time, several of my students had some of the same questions. We created charts for many of these dissertation proposal.

- To make the path clear for her, she created a detailed chart about what she should do and when. Her question was: when do I do each of these things in the chart? So we added another column with preliminary timelines for each activities.
- She was so impressed by what she had learned and it's importance that we decided together to publish an article for other students.

FOUR USEFUL POINTS

- 1. Truth Value—establishing confidence in the truth of the findings
- 2. Applicability—extent to which the findings have usefulness in other context
- 3. Consistency—these findings can be repeated
- 4. Neutrality—the degree to which the findings are determined by the subjects and not the researcher. p.290 (Lincoln & Guba)

OUR WORK

- Our job, so to speak, to produce research that aligns with these precepts.
- New and novice researchers are not likely to understand this process if not given guidance.
- The discussion point today is that given the details of this process, a student/novice research would need background information as well as a protocol to assist with the creation of a “clear path”.

- If you think of quantitative research, everything is concrete and directive.
- However, in qualitative research, we do not have as a clear path.
- Our discussion point here is to create a clearer path for qualitative researchers.

VALUE OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

- Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the value of a research study is strengthened by its trustworthiness.

As established by Lincoln and Guba in the 1980s, trustworthiness involves establishing:

- Credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings
- Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts
- Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated
- Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

ETHICAL ISSUES

- "Establishing rigor (trustworthiness) or research quality in qualitative research is an ethical issue, because poorly designed studies may lead to misinterpretations that affect client treatment or risk harm to participants (Angen, 2000; Wester, 2011)."
- In Hayes, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins (2016)

FOUR CATEGORIES WITH ACTIVITIES OF THE RESEARCHER

- *Credibility* Peer debriefing, member checks, journaling
- *Transferability* Thick description, journaling
- *Dependability* Inquiry audit with audit trail
- *Confirmability* Triangulation, journaling

NEXT STEP AND THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP

- The next step and the most important step, in my view is this.
- What….and the Why….this we have….
- When?
- How?
- Where?
- Who?
- I believe this is where the confusion is for our novice researchers and dissertation students.

WHEN DO WE START TRUSTWORTHINESS PROCESS? AND WHO DECIDES?

- If indeed we have planned our trustworthiness process, we are better able to answer those questions.
- If we say we should be able to track (validity) or audit the process then, how would we do this if is there is no clear path?
- How and when do we decide the ending of the process?
- The purpose of this webinar/workshop was to present the idea of creating a clear path of trustworthiness such that those who read and acclaim our work have a path to follow our reasoning and conclusions.

ANSWER: PROTOCOL FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS WITHIN QUALITATIVE STUDIES

- Today, I put for the argument that qualitative studies should contain a Trustworthiness Protocol.
- This would give direction to new and novice qualitative researchers along with dissertation students.
- It would provide a clear path for trustworthiness.

EXAMPLE: PROTOCOL FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

Criterion	Activities/Technique	Actual Activity	Evidence of Activity	Dates planned and actually completed
Credibility	Member checks	Meaning/ purpose	Describe the process	Start/end dates Discussion with team

FINDINGS WRITE UP: POSSIBLE SUGGESTIONS

- Protocol for trustworthiness within the document.
- Section of the proposal within methods section related to plans for trustworthiness.
- Findings to include a summary of activities around trustworthiness.
- Table documenting trustworthiness activities
- At the very least a paragraph sighting evidence of activities related to trustworthiness
- Appendices with journal sampling etc.

FINALLY: STRIVING FOR TRANSPARENCY

- The goal in creating a protocol/matrix/chart for transparency and clarity.
- I think it clears the path and directs the researcher.
- I think this is the missing link for the trustworthiness path.
- We know what to do but we do not have clear direction on how, when, where or why to complete activities related to our trustworthiness actions.

1. CREDIBILITY PLANS/ACTIONS (IN DETAIL) USE THIS INFORMATION TO WRITE YOUR PROTOCOL

- Peer debriefing/debriefer Suggested activities/plan/protocol Recommended activities/plan
- 1. Write plan within proposal. 2. Commission a peer to work with researcher during the time of interviews and data collection. 3. This person must complete an attestation form to work with researcher. Plan to meet with this person after each interview. 4. During visits with the peer debriefer, research and peer discuss interviews, feelings, actions of subjects, thoughts, and ideas that present during this time. Discuss blocking, clouding and other feelings of researcher. Discuss dates and times needed for these activities. Will meet once a week for 30 minutes to an hour.
- 5. Journal these meetings. Write about thoughts that surfaced and keep these dated for research and evaluation during data analysis. 6. Need to be computer files so that you may use this information within data analysis.
- Member Checks 1. Outline different times and reasons you plan to conduct member checks or collect feedback from members about any step in the research process. 2. Member checks will consist of communication with members after significant activities. 3. These activities may include interviews, data analysis, and other activities. 4. Within two weeks of the interview, send members a copy of their interview so that they can read it and edit for accuracy. 5. Within two weeks of data analysis completion, member will review a copy of the final themes. 6. Members are asked the question, "Does the interview transcript reflect your words during the interview?" 7. Choose negative cases and cases that follow pattern. 8. Be sure these check are recorded and are computer files so that you may use this information in data analysis.
- Journaling plans 1. Journaling will begin with the writing of the proposal. 2. Journaling will be conducted after each significant activity. These include each interview, weekly during analysis, after peer debriefing visits, and theme production. 3. Journals will be audited by research auditor. 4. Journals will include dates, times, places and persons on the research team. 5. Journals need to be computer files so that you may use them in data analysis.

- Solomon, S., & Amankwaa, L

2.TRANSFERABILITY PLANS/ACTIONS (IN DETAIL) USE THIS INFORMATION TO WRITE YOUR PROTOCOL

- Thick description is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way of achieving a type of external validity. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people.
- The term thick descriptions was first used by Ryle (1949) and later by Geertz (1973) who applied it in ethnography.
- **Thick descripton** refers to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Holloway, 1997).

3.DEPENDABILITY/ PLANS/ACTIONS (IN DETAIL) USE THIS INFORMATION TO WRITE YOUR PROTOCOL

- External audits are conducted to foster the accuracy or validity of a research study.
- External audits provide an opportunity for an outsider to challenge the process and findings of a research study. This can provide:
- an opportunity to summarize preliminary findings
- an opportunity to assess adequacy of data and preliminary results
- important feedback that can lead to additional data gathering and the development of stronger and better articulated findings
- (Reference : http://www.qualres.org/HomeRefl-3703.html)

4. CONFIRMABILITY/ PLANS/ACTIONS (IN DETAIL) USE THIS INFORMATION TO WRITE YOUR PROTOCOL

- Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 319-310) cite Halpern's (1983) categories for reporting information when develop an audit trail:
- **Raw data** - including all raw data, written field notes, unobstrusive measures (documents)
- **Data reduction and analysis products** - including summaries such as condensed notes, unitized informaiton and quantitative summaries and theoretical notes
- **Data reconstruction and synthesis products** - including structure of categories (themes, definitions, and relationships), findings and conclusions and a final report including connections to existing literatures and an integration of concepts, relationships, and interpretations
- **Process notes** - including methodological notes (procedures, designs, strategies, rationales), trustworthiness notes (relating to credibility, dependability and confirmability) and audit trail notes
- **Materials relating to intentions and dispositions** - including inquiry proposal, personal notes (reflexive notes and motivations) and expectations (predictions and intentions)
- **Instrument development information** - including pilot forms, preliminary schedules, observation formats
- (Reference: http://www.qualres.org/HomeRefl-3703.html)

CONFIRMABILITY 2

- Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identify four types of triangulation:
- **Methods triangulation** - checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods.
  - It is common to have qualitative and quantitative data in a study
  - These elucidate complementary aspects of the same phenomenon
  - Often the points were these data diverge are of great interest to the qualiatitive researcher and provide the most insights
- **Triangulation of sources** - examining the consistency of different data sources from within the same method. For example:
  - at different points in time
  - in public vs. private settings
  - comparing people with different view points
- **Analyst Triangulation** - using multiple analyst to review findings or using multiple observers and analysts
  - This can provide a check on selective perception and illuminate blind spots in an interpretive analysis
  - The goal is not to seek consensus, but to understand multiple ways of seeing the data
- **Theory/perspective triangulation** - using multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret the data
- (Reference: http://www.qualres.org/HomeRefl-3703.html)

CONFIRMABILITY 3

- *Steps to foster reflexivity and reflexive research design*
- **Designing research that includes multiple investigators** -- This can foster dialogue, lead to the development of complementary as well as divergent understandings of a study situation and provide a context in which researchers' - often hidden - beliefs, values, perspectives and assumptions can be revealed and contested.
- It is worth noting that the idea of involving multiple investigators in a study and fostering a reflexive dialogue is most often not to reach consensus and foster reliability.
- **Develop a reflexive journal** (c.f. Lincoln and Guba). -- This is a type of diary where a researcher makes regular entries during the research process. In these entries, the researcher records methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflection upon what is happening in terms of one's own values and interests. Diary keeping of this type is often very private and cathartic.
- **Report research perspectives, positions, values and beliefs in manuscripts and other publications**. - - Many believe that it is valuable and essential to briefly report in manuscripts, as best as possible, how one's preconceptions, beliefs, values, assumptions and position may have come into play during the research process.
- (Reference: http://www.qualres.org/HomeRefl-3703.html)

QUESTIONS FOR ATTENDEES

- Do you think that a protocol/matrix/chart would make the "path clearer" for novice qualitative researchers?
- Is this protocol/matrix/chart idea too limiting for qualitative research?
- Is this idea something that you believe other researchers need to know?
- Would you suggest a text that focused on this topic only?
- Are current literature references enough to keep the trustworthiness "path clear"?
- Are you interested in collaborating on a text or article about this topic?

QUESTIONS FOR DR. LINDA?

- Do you have questions for Dr. Linda
- Contact information
- Lcamankwaa@bellsouth.net

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

Dr. Linda Amankwaa

COLLECTION OF REFERENCES ON TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Next 4 Slides Contain…..
- Historical References
- Websites
- Books
- Articles

REFERENCES FROM PAPER

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- Pay close attention to this site. http://www.qualres.org/HomeLinc-3684.html

ONLINE REFERENCES TO TRUSTWORTHINESS/RIGOR

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- http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php
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- Ethical Issues and Trustworthiness
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EXAMPLE

Credibility	**Establishing a homogeneous sample.** **Conducting the research using qualitative methodology and established online guidelines.** **Using member checking during the online focus group discussion to clarify participant statements, use of emoticons, and use of language.** **The use of printed discussion threads for IPA.** **The use of researcher's reflective diary.** **Peer debriefing between the researcher and the peer reviewer.** **(Houghton et al., 2013; Morse et al., 2002; Thomas & Maglivy, 2011)**

Transferability	**Stating the population, account of the context, and research methods being studied using thick descriptions.** **Purposive sampling.** **Providing examples of raw data.** **Research findings could be used for the recruitment and retention of male RNs increasing the diversity within the nursing profession.** **The online focus group is used in marketing and advertisement research and can be applied to other healthcare groups, such as female nurses and patients.** **The use of the researcher's reflective diary.** **(Houghton et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Perry et al., 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011)**

Dependability	**Development of an audit trail by the researcher.** **The use of the researcher's reflective diary.** **Review of audit trail and researcher's reflective diary by an auditor.** **The use of NVivo 10® to confirm the audit trail.** **The use of NVivo 10® to confirm themes.** **The implementation of a pilot study.** **(Houghton et al., 2013; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011)**

Confirmability	**The researcher developing a reflective diary during the course of the online focus group noting personal feelings, insights, and methodological decisions.** **Asking online focus group participants for clarification of language, slang, emoticons, and abbreviations.** **Member checking.** **Development of an audit trail.** **Review of audit trail and researcher's reflective diary by an auditor.** **(Houghton et al., 2013; Perry et al., 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011)**