

Qualitative Approaches and Methods in Social Research

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All research involves interpretation. Qualitative research often foregrounds this feature, but this does not mean that qualitative analysis is arbitrary. Rather it is informed by the theoretical position and/or the methodological approach that is being adopted and by what grounded theorists refer to as the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. Qualitative researchers generally do not deploy random or even representative sampling, because they are usually not claiming to be able to generalise from a sample to a population. Rather, they are seeking to identify processes and structures within a particular setting or settings, an understanding of which may inform further research or practice in the field or in related fields. In this session I will attempt to illustrate this through a presentation of different approaches and methods used in qualitative research and by the practical analysis—in a workshop format—of a visual/verbal text that will be made available in advance of the session.

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