

Introduction

Multiple Choice Questions

1. All of the following are approaches used by qualitative researchers *except* _____.
 - a) in-depth interviewing
 - b) participant observation
 - c) surveys that ask about frequency
 - d) document analysis
2. According to the textbook, qualitative methods are “powerful” because _____.
 - a) researchers are able to generate publishable data without actually talking to people
 - b) they allow the studied people to define what is central and important in their experience
 - c) they always uncover taken-for-granted truths
 - d) they allow human experience to be collapsed into easily analyzable numerical categories
3. According to the textbook, qualitative researchers often get their research ideas from _____.
 - a) reviewing the existing literature and identifying key “gaps”
 - b) using experiences from everyday life
 - c) students’ essays and assignments
 - d) the classic figures in sociology, such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber
4. The textbook suggests that the different body postures and positions of male and female students she observed in the university classroom demonstrate _____.
 - a) that the behaviour of males and females is identical
 - b) that little can be learned from casual observation
 - c) the presence of gender inequality is everywhere
 - d) how the use of space is gendered
5. Sociologist Shulamit Reinharz refers to her habit of “being extremely attentive” to her surroundings and noticing “patterns in the mundane experiences of everyday life” as _____.
 - a) scientific integrity
 - b) an occupational hazard
 - c) obsessive nosiness
 - d) a special gift that only sociologists have
6. The importance of ethical issues in qualitative research is _____.
 - a) demonstrated by the fact that a whole chapter in the textbook is devoted to the issue
 - b) vastly overstated
 - c) demonstrated by the fact that the textbook devotes little attention to the issue

- d) highly disputed
7. Qualitative studies _____.
 - a) explore the social worlds of very diverse groups
 - b) tend to focus on individuals who are considered deviant
 - c) mostly focus on powerful groups within society
 - d) about any topic are rather dry
 8. One of the most important conferences for qualitative research in Canada is called the _____.
 - a) Summit on Qualitative Research in Canada
 - b) Canadian Qualitative Analysis Conference
 - c) Annual Canadian Qualitative Researchers Meeting
 - d) Canadian Congress of Qualitative Methods
 9. When discussing research on widows' well-being, the textbook notes that qualitative methods _____.
 - a) help discover series of correlations that sum up how the women adjust to well-being
 - b) are less invasive than quantitative ones
 - c) enable the researcher to encourage the women to define their experiences
 - d) enable the researcher to discover objective expectations
 10. While conducting research, qualitative researchers need to be very aware of _____.
 - a) social interactions that occur in the environment they are in
 - b) who else is in their social environment
 - c) the geography of their physical environment
 - d) the physical and social environment they are in, who else is in it, and how they are acting and interacting
 11. Qualitative researchers refer to the people they interview or observe as _____.
 - a) subjects
 - b) friends
 - c) participants
 - d) attendees
 12. Which of the following research methods straddles the line between interviews and observation?
 - a) covert observation
 - b) document analysis
 - c) structured interviews
 - d) focus groups

True or False Questions

1. One of the advantages of qualitative methods is that they can often lead to the gaining of a deeper understanding of the participants than could be acquired through quantitative methods.

2. When a researcher uses a participatory approach with those interviewed or observed, the term *participant* is often used rather than *subject*.
3. What qualitative researchers uncover is much more than just common sense.
4. The author of the textbook often refers to her own research on the well-being of divorced people.
5. The textbook notes that it is virtually impossible to take an ethical approach to qualitative research.
6. Qualitative researchers are able to spot patterns because of an in-depth awareness of their environment and a sociologically informed attention to detail.
7. Qualitative researchers often succeed at keeping their professional lives entirely separate from their personal lives.

Short Answer Questions

1. Using the author's example of research on widowhood, explain the respective advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative methods.
2. Briefly discuss Candace West's work on dog parks and what this example demonstrates.
3. Without reading ahead in the textbook, identify a research topic that is full of ethical dilemmas and explain why.
4. Discuss issues related to personality and skill set that might make it difficult for someone to be a successful qualitative researcher. Feel free to talk about your own experience to apply ideas from the textbook.
5. Discuss why students mistakenly assume qualitative research is the same as common sense.

Essay Questions

1. The author suggests that the way university students use classroom space is gendered. Discuss examples of how public space is gendered and why/how you noticed.
2. Some topics are very difficult for students to study as part of a qualitative methods course assignment. Identify and discuss several reasons why that is the case.

Answer Key

Multiple Choice Questions

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|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. c (pp. 2–3) | 7. a (p. 2) |
| 2. b (p. 3) | 8. b (p. 1) |
| 3. b (p. 4) | 9. c (p. 3) |
| 4. d (pp. 4–5) | 10. d (pp. 4–5) |
| 5. b (p. 5) | 11. c (p. 4) |
| 6. a (p. 7) | 12. d (p. 8) |

True or False Questions

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. T (p. 3) | 5. F (p. 7) |
| 2. T (p. 4) | 6. T (p. 4) |
| 3. T (pp. 4–5) | 7. F (pp. 5–6) |
| 4. F (pp. 3–4, 9) | |

Short Answer Questions

1. One of the justifications for using qualitative approaches is that a quantitative approach to this sort of social phenomenon would be too “dry.” The author uses the example of the survey question “How often?” to demonstrate how little social meaning (beyond a direct and literal answer to the question) could be gleaned. A qualitative approach would allow widows to define their experiences in their own terms. The author notes how quantitative researchers would offer response categories, such as “never,” “often,” “very often” and then shows how qualitative research allows for a more descriptive and complete answer that includes respondents’ subjective understanding and the meanings they attribute to something. She demonstrates how, using a qualitative approach, she was able to uncover the process of *negotiation*—which she did not pursue directly but, rather, grew unexpectedly and spontaneously out of her participants’ responses. (pp. 3–4)
2. The author’s main point through this example is how sociological knowledge and human experience contribute to the way we understand and interpret what is going on in our daily lives. The answer should describe the dog park story, specifically, how the new man at the park had a conversation with the author in which he asked questions she felt were inappropriate for the setting. Intuitively suspecting that something was “different” or even “wrong,” the author ultimately discovered that the man was an animal control officer working undercover. Her unexpected experience allowed her to write an ethnographic account based on this experience, in which she considers things like making assumptions in fieldwork and how to negotiate potentially “tricky” relationships. (p. 5) Stronger students will demonstrate knowledge of citation norms by incorporating the original publication (West 1999), rather than merely relying on the summary provided in the

textbook. For instance, they would refer to it as “West (1999) as cited in van den Hoonaard (2014).”

3. Professors should keep in mind that students’ understanding of research ethics is limited at this point and that their answer may be related to an incomplete and/or inaccurate understanding of the issue. Many students will rely on individual understandings of morality (i.e., what they consider right and wrong) rather than methodological understandings of ethics. Asking students to explore this provides an opportunity for the professor to gauge students’ understanding of ethical issues to help them decide what to focus on in Chapter 4. Topics students may mention include sensitive ones, such as past and current sexual behaviour, as well as various activities and behaviours that may be considered illegal (e.g., vandalism) and/or deviant according to various social norms, such as “swinging,” complete abstinence, etc. Various forms of victimization may also be included, such as male victims of domestic violence. Ethical dilemmas include difficulties in locating respondents and securing their continued voluntary participation because of fear of embarrassment, reprisal, self-incrimination, etc.
4. Answers should mention some of the following issues: a person’s or their in/ability to listen (“active listening”), talk to strangers, be organized, delegate tasks, multitask, work under time and money constraints, be open and non-judgmental, not get embarrassed easily, act “professionally,” be able to communicate effectively, be empathetic, etc. Students may discuss qualitative researchers’ lack of success in separating personal and professional lives since the topic is reinforced throughout the chapter. Various learning differences may also be mentioned, such as dyslexia, which might mean that the person may not be assigned the task of analyzing written documents (content analysis) without appropriate accommodations (refer to your university’s accommodation policy and recommendations where appropriate). Note that this question asks about qualities regarding a good qualitative researcher, which is different from number 4 in the Questions for Critical Thought (p. 10), which asks about the virtues associated with ethical research. While these are not specifically mentioned in the chapter, this is an opportunity for students to showcase their critical thinking skills and what they retained from an introductory research methods course they might have taken.
5. Strong answers will make an attempt to refer to or directly quote Glassner and Hertz (1999:x) who note that “the job of the scholar is to take the ordinary events and make them extraordinary and to demonstrate how the extraordinary is routine.” In terms of topics, qualitative researchers often use experiences from everyday life to develop their research ideas and use what they have learned as qualitative researchers to go about their daily lives. For these reasons, people sometimes mistakenly assume that qualitative research is easy and the patterns and meaning that qualitative researchers uncover and describe is only common sense. (pp. 4–5)

Essay Questions

1. Using the discussion on pages 4–5 as a basis, students should draw on their everyday life experiences and provide examples of how a person’s gender may impact their behaviour in a public space. Examples of such a space include a shopping centre, a pub, coffee shop or restaurant, a public area (downtown) or park, a public event (e.g., music concert, exhibition, party), etc. Examples of behaviours include some stereotypical gendered

behaviours, such as differences in washroom behaviour (why do women go in groups?) and shopping behaviours with children in tow, interactions between and within gender groups (e.g., if/why do women and men interact separately at house parties), as well as decisions where to sit, stand, and walk, non-verbal communication, etc. Students are expected to bring in their subjective experiences and perceptions. An excellent answer will incorporate references to research not mentioned in the textbook.

2. The two biggest constraints when conducting qualitative research are time and money. Students have less than four months to start and complete the project. Most qualitative research projects take longer than that. Often, before data can be collected, a significant amount of time is spent on designing the project, including what to ask and look for and how, identifying and locating possible participants, and having them volunteer. Conducting numerous interviews and transcribing them and engaging in observations takes a lot of time, too, as does the analysis and write-up. Additionally, there might be financial costs associated with the data collection, such as having to pay for access to and acquisition of the data, paying interviewees, and the purchase of equipment (digital data recorder, etc.) and software. Furthermore, it might be necessary for the researcher to travel, in which case there will be transportation and accommodation costs. For this answer, students will need to extrapolate from entire chapter. Stronger students will also discuss the need to hone a sociologically informed attention to environment and detail through experience—something with which the students will have much less experience than seasoned researchers and faculty members. (pp. 4–5)