

School of Computing and Information

The Missing Link? Using Reflection to Advance Qualitative Evaluation and Assessment

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Outline

- Definitions of key terms and concepts (*see also* Corrall, 2017)
- Background
 - Reflective practice in libraries
 - Reflection and reflexivity in (qualitative) research
- Tools, models and frameworks facilitating reflectivity
 - Reflective process for developmental evaluation [handout]
 - Triangulated reflexive inquiry questions [handout]
 - Reading data three ways
 - Analytic memos reflection topics
- References

Acknowledgement

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Working Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

- **Developmental evaluation** – an evaluation where the focus is on change or innovation in complex dynamic environments
 - also known as real-time evaluation, emergent evaluation, action evaluation, and adaptive evaluation (Patton, 2016)
- **Reflection** – the ability to think about the past, in the present for the future (Carroll, 2009)
 - a form of mental processing that we use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome (Moon, 2006)
- **Reflexivity** – the ability to look both inwards and outwards to recognize connections with social and cultural understandings (Fook & Gardner, 2007)
 - thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent that your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see (Mason, 2002)



Reflective Practice in Libraries

- Widely recognized as essential for professional development
- Particularly associated with improving the competence of librarians as information literacy instructors/teachers
 - + supporting students as reflective learners (Corrall, 2017)
- Also described as a crucial component of what it takes to be an evidence-based practitioner-researcher (Wilson, 2016)
 - and a focus area for assessment librarians (Oakleaf, 2013)
- But significant deficiencies in the treatment of reflection in library literature on research, evaluation and assessment
 - coverage is poor when compared with cognate disciplines
 - offers little or no practical guidance on using reflection or on becoming a reflective and reflexive researcher



Reflection in (QUAL) Research and Evaluation

- Explicit integral part of classic four-step action research cycle
 - plan, act, observe, reflect
- Assumed dimension of conceptual/design phase of research
 - reflective inquiry (Hernon, Dugan & Nitecki, 2011)
- Also important in formulating questions, reviewing literature, interpreting results, and validating findings
- Core characteristic of qualitative research, particularly (concurrent) data collection/analysis and report-writing
 - especially ethnography, phenomenology and case studies



Reflexivity in Qualitative Research and Evaluation

- The qualitative researcher is the instrument of inquiry
 - your professional and/or personal background, interests, and motivations may have implications for your study

Are you an *outside* or *insider*? Are you an *expert* or *learner*?

Are you doing your research *on*, *for*, or *with* your participants?

- The report of a qualitative study should explain the position and perspective of the researcher to strengthen its validity

How are your experiences, thoughts, and feelings affecting how you conduct your study, what you see or hear in the field, and how you analyze, represent, and interpret your data?

- Qualitative researchers should reflect on such questions, and record their responses in field notes and/or analytic memos
 - *memoing* facilitates the transition from *coding* to *reporting*



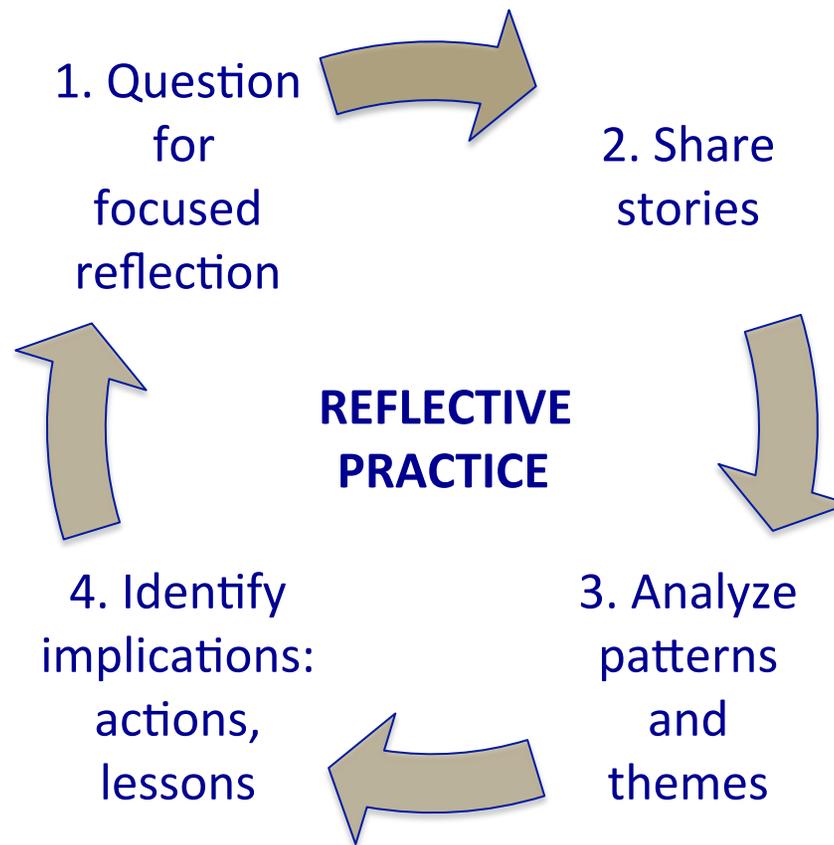
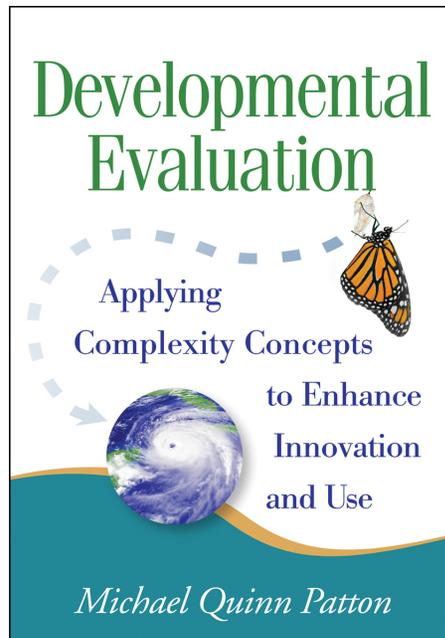
Using Reflective Practice to Investigate an Issue or Evaluate an Initiative

A Data-Based, Story-Based, Engagement-Based Interactive Approach

- Reflective Practice Process for Developmental Evaluation (Patton, 2011)



Reflective Practice Cycle for Ongoing Developmental Evaluation



(Patton, 2011, p. 269)



Reflective Practice for Developmental Evaluation

1. Identify a focus for inquiry and learning that provides direction and vision to the desired change.
 2. Turn the concept, idea, value, or vision into an experiential inquiry question.
 3. Share personal experiences that respond to the question.
 4. Group members can ask short clarifying questions.
 5. Participants identify patterns and themes in the stories.
 6. If there is more than one group, each group reports their themes and patterns to the full group.
 7. The group picks one or two themes for discussion that have important implications (and lessons) for the work at hand.
 8. Generate action agreements and next steps for reflection.
- cf. What? So What? Now What? (Driscoll/Rolfe in Corral, 2017)



Reflective Practice Process: Examples and Guidelines

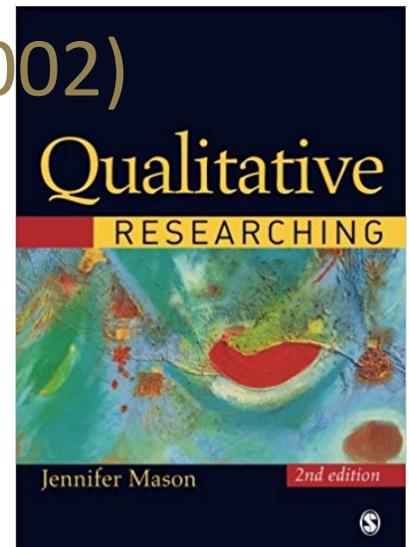
1. **Identify a focus:** Transforming academic liaison from a service-as-support to an engagement or partnership model
2. **Formulate a question:** What experiences have you had of successfully engaging or partnering with students or faculty?
3. **Share personal experiences:** Must use firsthand experiences and tell the story in 3-5 minutes (don't explain or analyze)
4. **Ask clarifying questions:** Agree confidentiality, be prepared for emotions/strong feelings, and enforce time sensitively.
5. **Identify patterns and themes:** Common specific observations and more categorical general topical cross-cutting meanings.
6. **Report patterns and themes:** Identify person(s) to report out.
7. **Discuss and analyze implications:** Look for lessons learned.
8. **Agree actions and next steps:** Formulate another question...



Becoming a Reflective and Reflexive Researcher

Frameworks/Models/Tools You Can Use

- Triangulated Inquiry: Reflexive Questions (Patton, 2015)
- Reading Data: Three Levels (Mason, 2002)
 - Literally, Interpretively, Reflexively
- Analytic Memos: Reflection Topics (Saldaña, 2015)





Reflexive Questions: Triangulated Inquiry

People in the setting being studied:

How do they know what they know?

What shapes and has shaped their worldview?

How do they perceive me?

Why? How do I know that?

How do I perceive them?

Reflexive Screens:

culture, age, gender, class, social status, education,

family, political praxis,

language, values

Audiences for the study:

How do they make sense of what I give them?

What perspectives do they bring to the findings I offer?

How do they perceive me?

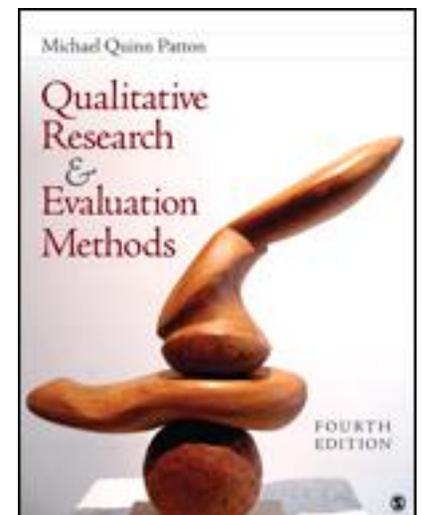
How do I perceive them?

Myself, as inquirer:

How do I know what I know?

What shapes and has shaped my perspective?

(Patton, 2015, pp. 72, 604-605)





How Do You Intend to “Read” Your Data? (Mason, 2002)

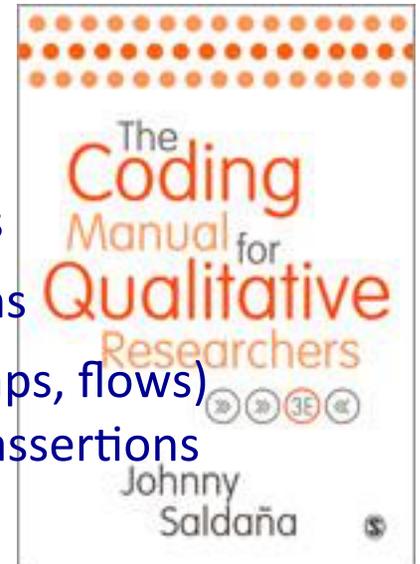
- A **literal** reading will focus on elements such as form, content, structure, sequence, style, and layout
 - form and structure of dialogue, words and language used
- An **interpretive** reading will go *through or beyond* the data to construct/document what you think they mean or represent
 - not only what is contained in a document or image, but what or who is not there; also the context of production, consumption, interpretation and use
- A **reflexive** reading will locate you as part of the data and explore your role, perspective, and influence in their generation and interpretation (e.g., via triangulated inquiry)

Your intentions have implications for how you collect/generate your data and fieldnotes, and represent them as text or graphics



Reflection Topics: Reactive or Proactive Memo-Writing

- How you personally relate to the participants and/or the phenomenon
- Your study's research questions
- Your code choices and their operational definitions
- The participants' routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships
- Emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions
- The possible networks and processes (links, connections, overlaps, flows) among the codes, patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions
- An emergent or related existent theory
- Any problems with the study
- Any personal or ethical dilemmas with the study
- Future directions for the study
- The analytic memos generated thus far
- The final report for the study



Memos as
*Conversations
with Yourself or
Letters to a Friend*
(Saldaña, 2015)

Coding Data \leftrightarrow Understanding Phenomena: Reciprocal Relationship



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