

HOW DO WE ANALYSE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

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To RECAP:

1. Qualitative research is the study of subjective experience [SE].
2. There are five elements or components of [SE], Material forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness
3. Events in any of these have multi-factorial causes.
4. To understand why and how things are the way they are, you must understand the patterns of causality - how the elements work together to determine experience, choices, decisions, action.
5. Those patterns may not be accessible to casual scrutiny, particularly if they contain anything ignoble, repressed, hidden or secret.
6. You may not achieve perfect analysis, but a genuine reflection informed by practice & theory will get you closer to the truth than 'note & quote'.

To help out, let's return to that old guy, Buddha, once more:

*In the doctrine of **Dependent Arising** the Buddha shows why any accurate analysis of experience must take into account a whole set of factors rather than simply any one cause leading to one effect. He points out that it is the ignorance of the contingency of conditions and their layers that gives rise to our ignorance on many matters of causality. We need a deeper and more subtle picture of the chain of events that gives rise to occurring.*

This remains easily the most credible and intuitively correct way of thinking about how things come to be.

So what is this Dependent Arising and how do we work with it?

Dependent arising is the most fundamental law underlying every process and event that can occur. It is a law that is beginning-less and endless, a law that has no external grounds and requires no support. This law which sustains every event, the structural principle that underlies all phenomena, this is **the law of conditionality**. It is the law that holds that whatever arises, arises dependent on conditions. Everything that comes into being comes into being through the force of conditions. Everything that exists, exists is dependent on conditions. Without the force of the conditions the given phenomena will not arise and will not be able to remain in existence.

The basic formula runs like this:

'when there is this, that comes to be, with the arising of this, that arises. When there is not this, that ceases to be.'

To give an example: the apple tree exists in dependence on the apple seed. If there is no seed, the tree cannot come to be. It is when B exists dependent on A, then in the absence of A, B cannot occur. If A ceases, then B will cease.

If the seed is destroyed there can be no growth of the tree. This is the law of conditioned arising of phenomena. This law embraces all existing phenomena, everything from a particle of dust to a galaxy, from a fleeting thought to a civilization. If the conditions do not exist, then the phenomena will not exist. If there is no product in your shop you may not be able to buy it! If you have no money or credit card, likewise - and so on.

This conditionality is not a creation of the Buddha: it is a law that is always operative. **This principle of conditionality is what the Buddha calls 'Actual Reality'.**

Because we do not probe the conditions that give rise to an event in any perceptive way, we tend to remain ignorant of the conditionality of most phenomena. In qualitative research we aim to uncover the most relevant, influential and controllable of those conditions and make them available to our clients and their agents. Additionally, we seek to explain how various elements of these conditions work together or in conflict to understand how to influence choice.