

Chapter 13

Qualitative Data Analysis

Read: 370-381

Qualitative data analysis –examining social research data without converting it to numeric format

Linking Theory & Analysis

In the book it is stated that in qualitative research theory it is more difficult to lose sight of your theory than in quantitative research

In quantitative research it is very easy to get caught up with the data collection, and analysis – you will lose sight of your underlying theoretical perspective

Discovering Patterns

Ways to examine qualitative data

1. frequencies – how often does a certain phenomenon or ‘thing’ occur?
2. magnitudes – how intense or how much does the phenomenon happen
3. structures – what are the various types of the phenomenon under study
4. processes – is there order among the elements of structure? is there escalation?
5. causes – what causes the phenomenon under study
6. consequences – what, if any, consequences are there to the phenomenon

the book gives the example of child sex abuse

you could analyze how often it occurred - frequency

you might examine the level of abuse or brutality – magnitude

you could try to discover different types of abuse – mental, physical (structures)

when analyzing qualitative data you need to look for patterns appearing across several observations

there are 2 strategies for doing this

1. variable oriented analysis – you aim to provide a partial, general explanation using relatively few variables

if you were trying to predict who would be most likely to attend college you would examine other variables such gender, socioeconomic status, peer involvement

this is more nomothetic in nature

2. case oriented analysis – this is more idiographic in nature

you as a researcher would examine one case – one individual- very closely in an effort to determine why they made their particular decision

3. cross case analysis – a research will examine other cases or subjects very intensely

the researcher would pay special attention to the variables that had a large impact for the first case and then see what impact those variables had for the other cases

Grounded Theory Method – theories are generated solely from an examination of data

Hence the theory is ‘grounded’ in the data

A researcher would collect qualitative data and then identify relevant variables and search for explanations for what was observed

This is inductive – general principles are developed from specific observations

Researchers using grounded theory methodology want replication to verify their perspective or theory – they want others to replicate their research

Semiotics – concerned primarily with symbols and meanings

Very commonly associated with content analysis

Semiotics states that meaning is not inherent – meaning resides in the mind

We derive meaning based on culture

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that tall, larger people make more money – there is a social meaning attached to being tall and larger (not fat)

People think taller or larger people are more adept or competent

Women with short hair make more money – there is a social meaning attached to having long hair

Women with short hair are seen as more competent, masculine, assertive, and professional

Research has also demonstrated that a person's name has a social meaning attached to it

Black sounding names were turned down for college admission at one institution but using the same credentials with a different white sounding name the person was admitted

The same is true for dress, accents, beauty

Conversation Analysis

The aim of conversation analysis is the same as in ethnomethodology

An ethnomethodologist aims to discover the implicit, unspoken assumptions existing in society

In conversation analysis a researcher would analyze discrete fragments to uncover the meaning of what was said

Not simply the meaning of the words but the underlying, implicit meaning

Words are contextual – they have different meanings in different situations

If I used the word 'sick' in the context of a conversation with Dr. Dumestre we would be understanding an illness

But if I used the word 'sic' with people who surf or skate they would take the meaning not as an illness but as something daring and risky and cool

Slang words have different contextual meaning

I sat in a class with a member of the Giancana crime family – her meaning of the word 'hit' was a bit different than the instructor's

Cool, phat, sic, bitchin', fuct, blow, coke, ollie, whack, hit

Qualitative Data Processing

Your book gives the warning that this section is as much art as science

Very true – you can be creative and your results will be more demonstrative

Try something new or innovative and you might find something really interesting

Coding – you must code your text or observations numerically (usually) in order to do any meaningful data processing

Computers make this much simpler than in the past

Coding can keep you better organized

Coding can be as simple as 1=male, 2=Asian

Or as complicated as 1=violent content in a piece of literature
2=no violence