

You have to code all your data to know what is relevant and what is irrelevant to your question. Keep in mind that information that contradicts an expected finding is not irrelevant. It must be included and discussed. Remember, these contradictions are often the beginnings of new ways of looking at old problems.

- *When feasible, work with a team.* As with quantitative research, inter-rater reliability is useful in qualitative research. Have another colleague on the research team independently code the data. This separate review of the data will help solidify the codes on which you agree and will require you to clarify codes on which you disagree. Including colleagues will help in developing theories and determining meaning from the data.

Use *member checks*, which are similar to the team approach. You can arrange to have “member” or the study participants review your findings and interpretations. This strategy improves the validity, accuracy, and credibility of data in qualitative research. While many researchers conduct member checks as they write their final report, there is no universally accepted point in the research process for this activity. Member checks can be done during the interview process, to confirm the data’s accuracy. It can also be done during analysis to confirm the validity of the findings and/or after the report is written to provide a point of closure for the participants and researchers. There is an important caveat to conducting member checks. You should remind respondents that the findings are the aggregate of all the responses and therefore may not exactly reflect their comments or points of view. However, if a respondent feels strongly that an important point has been omitted—or conversely, overemphasized—you may follow up and verify the concern. This situation makes a case for conducting member checks *before* writing the final report.

Computer-Assisted Data Analysis

With technology as prevalent as it is, computer software may be used to help with data analysis. While the steps are the same, software programs can often further classify and organize data. There are several qualitative research software packages, such as HyperRESEARCH, QSR Nvivo, and Atlas.ti. Each software package has features that will help create order to the data, such as list the codes, code the text of transcripts, count code frequencies, and write memos for future reference. Currently available software may cost more than an organization is prepared to spend. Not to worry: Word processing packages can accomplish the same tasks. You can use the search function, change text colors, and insert comments as you track changes. By using word processing software, you can avoid purchasing special software, especially if the quantity of qualitative research does not justify the cost.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This chapter discusses how to analyze data obtained using qualitative methods. While analyzing these data may be a bit overwhelming at the outset, their potential for providing additional

detail, assessing operational validity, and increasing credibility is worthwhile. Qualitative research done well can provide a glimpse into the whys and wherefores of larger trends, provide

explanations that are not readily apparent, and explore uncharted territory. Qualitative data analysis must be done systematically and carefully. The process of analysis includes preparing the data; reading responses to become familiar with the data; coding; classifying themes, concepts, behaviors, and phrases; and finally exploring the interactions between codes to interpret meaning.

Two major points are essential for you as a researcher or manager to remember: First, understand that this is a process and second, watch out for biases. Data analysis is an iterative process that does not lend itself to simplistic conclusions and determinations. It cannot be done quickly; its findings are not unambiguous, and it requires you to engage with the data. To truly reap the benefits of

qualitative data, you must continually ask “what does this (what all these people have said) actually mean?” and seek understanding from all those words. You will have to think about and reflect on the emerging themes and often adapt and change your previous assumptions as you interact with the data. The theories that emerge as you collect and analyze the data should be challenged and refined throughout the process.

Also remember that while there are lots of electronic tools (e.g., recorders, computer-assisted software) to help in the data analysis process you are the main interpretive tool. Therefore, you have to be careful not to let your “stuff and baggage” taint the lens through which you interpret the data.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Gibbs, G., *Analyzing qualitative data*. The Sage Qualitative Research Kit (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007).

Rapley, T., *Doing conversation, discourse and document analysis*. The Sage Qualitative Research Kit (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007).

Patton, M. Q., *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2002).

Saldana, J., *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009).

CHAPTER 10 EXERCISES

This chapter contains two exercises.

- Exercise 10.1: Nonprofit Lobbying asks you to analyze a transcript to learn why nonprofits do not lobby.
- Exercise 10.2: Learning from Others—Making a Public Apology instructs you how to craft a public apology. This exercise asks you to locate and analyze transcripts to help you design an effective risk management strategy.

EXERCISE 10.1 Nonprofit Lobbying

Section A: Getting Started

1. Recently interviews were conducted as part of a study about why nonprofit organizations do not lobby their legislators for programmatic and fiscal policy. Take a moment to develop a list of preset codes you will use to code the interviews. Write a definition or brief phrase explaining each code. Do this by considering the varied reasons nonprofit organizations might refrain from lobbying.
2. Read the following excerpt from an interview transcript. Using the margins, code the data using your list of preset codes. If additional codes emerge, note

them on your list of codes and provide a definition for each new code. Make five copies of your code list.

INTERVIEWER: I am going to record our conversation so that I can actually pay attention to what you're saying and then can actually listen rather than scribble notes. Is that okay with you?

RESPONDENT: Okay. I give my permission to be audio-taped.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. And if you could just state your full name and your title for the recording, and then we can go ahead and get started.

RESPONDENT: Okay. I'm Stephanie Martine. I'm executive director of Family Services Nonprofit in South Raleigh, North Carolina.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you. What we'd like to do today is to just have a brief conversation with you about the status of nonprofit lobbying and advocacy. We wanted to start off the conversation by asking, when I say "nonprofit lobbying and advocacy," what comes to mind for you?

RESPONDENT: I guess it's making sure that the laws are supportive of nonprofit agencies in the United States.

INTERVIEWER: And is there a difference between lobbying and advocacy as you see it?

RESPONDENT: [Pause] Lobbying deals more with the laws. Advocacy would be more dealing with rights.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And does your organization, as you think about what you do, do you feel like you engage in lobbying and advocacy?

RESPONDENT: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And what keeps you from doing that?

RESPONDENT: We're a very small agency. We have all part-time staff.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what's the size of your organization?

RESPONDENT: We have four part-time staff.

INTERVIEWER: And your position is also part-time?

RESPONDENT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And so it's really a time issue for you?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, any extra time I have I'm writing grant proposals to keep going. [Laughs]. I feel like I just run to keep my head above water. And I think our board has a fear of being misquoted, misrepresented, and so there's an attitude of "stay under the wire" there. [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER: So fear is a major issue?

RESPONDENT: And then there's also a fear that if we publicize what we do too much we don't want to create waiting lists. We don't want to be in a position where we have more demand for our services than we have services available.

INTERVIEWER: What would make it easier for you?

RESPONDENT: Hmm . . . to make things as quick and easy as possible for people to respond to, adding your name to a petition is easier than sitting down and writing your own letter and sending it. Even when somebody sends you a prewritten letter sometimes that's even hard. Whereas if I can hit "reply" and say "Yes, me, too." You know?

INTERVIEWER: Tell me more about that.

RESPONDENT: I don't know. I mean, sometimes I walk away feeling guilty because I wanted to, and I felt that way, too. But I just didn't have one more second to attend to it. I would think it's time.

INTERVIEWER: Any other reasons?

RESPONDENT: Time, and of course money. Not having the money to hire a lobbyist, or garner all the resources that it would take. But also fear, just kind of being afraid of the whole idea. I think that that has merit. And I do think there's some misinformation, miseducation of what you can or can't do in regards to lobbying or speaking out for things. People just don't understand, or they've never been given specifically, "Well, here's how you can do it." And so maybe that's the fear. I mean I guess I have the fundamental belief that our politicians want to hear from us. They want to know what's going on, and they're relying on the public to keep them informed.

INTERVIEWER: In a perfect world, beyond time and money, what would help you to lobby?

RESPONDENT: Knowing the rules. I just am not sure what we can do and what we can't. It gets so frustrating. You go to workshops and get conflicting information so that's just a waste of time too.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else?

RESPONDENT: To be honest, sometimes I'm a little intimidated by going to the legislature, especially in Washington, D.C. All those people in their high powered positions. Their slick suits and shiny shoes. I'm just a part-time director. We can't grease their palms like those lobbyist do. [Deep sigh] We're not in the same league.

Section B: Class Inter-rater Reliability

In groups of three to five provide copies of your code list and code definitions to your group members.

1. Compare the code lists. Come to group consensus on the list of codes and their definitions.
2. Write or draw out the interconnections of the themes. Be sure to
 - a. condense codes to develop larger themes;
 - b. identify any temporal codes;
 - c. identify any embedded codes.