Analysing Interview Data

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Show of hands...
Aims of the session

- To reflect on the nature and purpose of interviews as a form of qualitative data
- To introduce different processes, techniques and theories for analysing and synthesising interview data
- To explore different techniques for analysing and coding data
- Quasi-statistical
- Qualitative to quantitative
- Content analysis
- Hypothesis testing approach

- Understand meaning
- No or few priori codes
- Typologies/frameworks
- Researcher interpretation

- Immersion
- Reflection
- Form hypothesis to fit data
Qualitative analysis approaches and traditions

- Ethnography
- Life history
- Case study
- Content analysis
- Conversation analysis
- Discourse analysis
- Analytical induction
- Grounded theory
Qualitative analysis process

- Data collection and management
- Organising and preparing data
- Coding and describing data
- Conceptualisation, classifying, categorising, identifying themes
- Connecting and interrelating data
- Interpretation, creating explanatory accounts, providing meaning
General process of analysis

- Initial codes
- Add comments/reflections = memos
- Look for patterns, themes, relationships, sequences, differences
- Explore patterns...
- Elaborate, small generalisations
- Link generalisations to body of knowledge to construct theory
Grounded theory

- Systematic approach to enquiry
- Simultaneous data collection and analysis
- Inductive, comparative, iterative and interactive
- Driven by data
- Process of looking for relationships within data
- Remaining open to all possibilities
- Can be influenced by pre-existing theory, previous empirical research, own expectations
Interviews as a form of qualitative data

- Interview data as one among various forms of qualitative data
- Interview data versus ‘naturally occurring data’
- Transferability of data analysis techniques
Aim of the interviews as qualitative data

What do you want out of the analysis?
- Description
- Substantive or formal theory
- Theory testing
“The final product of building theory from case studies may be concepts, a conceptual framework, or propositions or possibly mid-range theory... On the downside, the final product may be disappointing. The research may simply replicate prior theory, or there may be no clear patterns within the data.” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 545).
Data analysis: description and conceptualisation

- Description – providing an account of the case or cases considered
- Conceptualisation – the generation of general, abstract categories from the data and establishing how they help to explain the phenomenon under study
- Both valuable and necessary but...
# Description: an example

## Table 9. Staff turnover as a non-issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Type of labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Company</td>
<td>High rotation of workers within the industry. However, mentioned that this is not problematic since there is little investment in training or attracting people and no qualifications are necessary.</td>
<td>Low skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Company</td>
<td>Used to employing staff seasonally. Drivers that work one season might come back the next.</td>
<td>Skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Park</td>
<td>Reported low levels of staff turnover. However, they recruit on short-term contracts and this calculation is based on people completing their contract. They do not rely on renewing employees contracts.</td>
<td>Low skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Indoor and Outdoor Complex</td>
<td>Retention not an issue in positions where they employ young people since the job doesn’t require high levels of training and they are used to employing them for a few hours per week. They may ‘come and go’ and this is not a problem to the business.</td>
<td>Low skilled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Lincolnshire Employer Study*
“There were some cases where high staff turnover rates were not seen as problematic by the employer (see Table 9). For vacancies involving low-skilled labour on short-term contracts, retention seemed to be a non-issue because businesses were used to dealing with the situation. As can be seen in Table 9, of those businesses that experienced high labour turnover but seemed unconcerned about it only Transport Company employed skilled staff. In the remaining businesses, two employed migrant labour (Recruitment Company and Holiday Park), and the other employed young people aged 14 to 18 years (Family Indoor and Outdoor Complex). For these companies the cost of lowering labour turnover was greater than the costs imposed on them by churn in the workforce. For them, and indeed for many of their employees, labour retention problems were largely a non-issue.”
Conceptualisation

- Thinking about categories,
- their properties, and
- how they relate to each other...
The Social Loss of Dying Patients

“Perhaps the single most important characteristic on which social loss is based is age. Americans put high value on having a full life. Dying children are being cheated of life itself, a life full of potential contributions to family, an occupation and society. By contrast, aged people have had their share in life. Their loss will be felt less if they were younger. Patients in the middle years are in the midst of a full life, contributing to families, occupations and society. Their loss is often felt the greatest for they are depended on the most...”

(Glaser, 1964: 399)
Properties of conceptual categories, some examples:

- Conditions
- Causes
- Consequences
- A continuum
- Opposites
- Hierarchies

- Contexts
- Contingencies
- Mediating factors
- Covariances
- Etc.
Getting started

- Starting to analyse data from day one
  - All is data – don’t have to wait for interview data!
  - Complementary sources of data: newspaper articles, blogs, official records, archival data, etc.
  - Other people’s data, e.g., Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) [www.esds.ac.uk](http://www.esds.ac.uk)
  - As soon as interview data is collected
Starting to analyse early may:

- suggest new questions to ask in the interviews
- suggest what to focus on during the interviews
- give an indication of relevant and non-relevant constructs
Using existing literature

- The grounded theory approach
- The case study approach
- All is data...
GT: The constant comparative method

1. Comparing incidents
2. Integrating categories and their properties
3. Delimiting the theory
4. Writing the theory

“Although this method of generating theory is a continuously growing process – each stage after a time is transformed into the next – earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously during the analysis...”

(Glaser, 1967: 105)
How is it done in practice…

- Coding
- Memo writing
- Theoretical sampling
Coding

- “What is this incident about?”
- “What category does this incident indicate?”
- “What property of what category does this incident define?”
- “What is the ‘main concern’ of the participants?”
Memo writing

- Noting ideas as they occur
- Grammar/syntax/presentation
- Aim: to store ideas for further comparisons and refinement
- Raising questions...
Theoretical sampling

- Looking for further data to compare
  - Within available data?
  - Further data collection?
  - Beyond the initial unit of analysis?
Theoretical saturation

- Suggests the end of the process
- When further analyses make no, or only marginal improvements to the theory
Writing the theory

- Sorting memos
- Outlining the theory
- The role of examples and verbatim quotes
Assessing data quality

- Representative
- Weighting evidence
- Checking outliners
- Use of extreme cases
- Cross-check codes
- Check explanations
- Look for contradictions
- Gain feedback from participants
Validating qualitative analysis

- Data collection and management
- Organising and preparing data
- Coding and describing data
- Conceptualisation, classifying, categorising, identifying themes
- Connecting and interrelating data
- Interpretation, creating explanatory accounts
Problems with data analysis

- Reliance on first impressions
- Tendency to ignore conflicting information
- Emphasis on data that confirms
- Ignoring the unusual or information hard to gain
- Over or under reaction to new data
- Co-occurrence interpreted as correlation
- Too much data to handle
Use of software packages

It does not do the analysis for you!
Use of software packages

**Advantages**
- Beneficial to analytic approach
- Coding, memos, annotation, data linking all supported
- Efficient search and retrieval
- Able to handle large amounts of data
- Forces detailed analysis of text

**Disadvantages**
- Software can dictate how analysis is carried out
- Takes time to learn
- Reluctance to change codes/categories
Interview data retracted
Alternatives to software packages

Need good organisational skills and record keeping!

- Coloured pens, stickers, photocopying
- Combine Word, Access and Excel
Theoretical concepts

Thematic coding

Focused coding, conceptualisation and category development

Initial and open coding
Any questions?

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Practical workshop

Research Exchange, Library

4-6pm
References


