Qualitative Research

Session 3:
Data gathering

Prof Jan Nieuwenhuis
Data gathering in qualitative research

To understand society you have to -
• gain access to the way people attribute meaning to what goes on around them,
• find out how they react to and make meaning to things that happens.
Four ways of doing it:
• Watch them do it
• Talk to them about it
• Read what they have written [e.g. diaries]
• Study the artefacts produced
How you collect data depends on
• why you need it (purpose) and
• what you need
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploratory(^a)</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Explanatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeks to investigate an underresearched aspect of social life</td>
<td>Seeks to richly describe an aspect of social life</td>
<td>Seeks to explain an aspect of social life</td>
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</table>

\(^a\) Some qualitative researchers refer to this as Discovery.
Van Maanen’s view of what research is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fieldwork (enacting methods)</th>
<th>Headwork</th>
<th>Textwork</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>constructing representations of the objects of inquiry (methodically producing data) by...</td>
<td>thinking about...</td>
<td>producing texts, stories, narratives including, for example...</td>
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<tr>
<td>• listening to (and/or interrogating) informants</td>
<td>• methodological issues – theories, analyses, and criticisms of how research should proceed</td>
<td>• testimonies to field work and head work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• observing behaviours</td>
<td>• epistemological issues – theories of knowledge (and their adequacy) and justificatory strategies</td>
<td>• critiques and/or alternative readings of other texts</td>
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<td>• examining historical records and traces</td>
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</table>
Don’t be a bull in a china shop – prefigure your data collection
Prefiguring

Analysis of qualitative data begins before it is collected. It starts with:
1. Framing and posing a research question or problem
2. Knowing the theoretical positions available on the topic
Finding the blind spots, gaps and omissions in literature
Knowing your own preconceptions and biases
Avoid the self-fulfilling research
Design in checks and balances to make sure research is believable, trustworthy and credible [Sandelowski 1986].
Make sure sampling is purposive
16 types of purposive samples
Patton (1990)

- **Stratified purposive sampling** - selecting participants based on pre-defined sub-groups according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question.
- **Criterion sampling** - decide at the design stage of a study the typical characteristics (criteria to be met) by the participants.
- **Snowball sampling** – chain referral sampling – is a method whereby participants with whom contact has already been made is used to penetrate their social networks to refer the researcher to other participants.
- **Convenience sampling** means choosing participants that are easiest to reach.
Important:
You need to explore what is going on *where* it is going on. This often means building a close rapport with participants by staying close to the field in which they operate. The more and longer you are immersed in field the better the depth of data
Size matters in qualitative research but in different ways (Cousins, 2013)
Data collection as iterative process

Collect data

Reflect on data

Interim data analysis

Identify gaps in data
Plan next step in data collection
Two important objectives in data gathering

Saturation of data – no new ideas/data emerge

Thick descriptions – “to make meaning clear”
Data collection methods

Interviewing

An interview is a two-way conversation where the interviewer asks questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behaviours of the participant.

Qualitative interviews allow you to see the world through the eyes of the participant.

Qualitative interviews range from open conversation to a structured approach.

A semi-structured interview entails a set of open-ended questions in a particular order.
FOCUS GROUP & GROUP INTERVIEWS

- Assumption - group interaction is productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience, and releasing inhibitions

- Focus group is not a group interview

- Focus group = discussion focused on a particular topic; encourage debate/even conflict; group dynamics assist in data generation

- Stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and mourning

- Purpose: in-depth qualitative data (perceptions, attitudes, and experiences)

- Sampling vital (heterogeneous/homogeneous)

- Group dynamics can be the single most important asset – BUT could be the single greatest threat

- Groupthink phenomenon
Recording data from interviews

Write up the transcript immediately following the session (tape or video recorded).
Transcript should be written question-by-question format to capture what was said regarding each question.
Add field notes taken
What is observation?

The act of noticing or noting a fact or occurrence of some scientific or other special purpose. Observation is an everyday activity. We use our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting), but also our intuition to gather bits of data on which we based our reaction to what we have observed.

Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of people, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them.
Four types of participant observation to choose from:

(a) *Complete observer.*
(b) *Observer as participant.*
(c) *Participant as observer.*
(d) *Complete participant.*
Two Components: Description and Reflection

Description – thick descriptions of what actually takes place; non judgmental;

Reflection – the researcher’s thoughts or ideas about the meaning of what was observed

How do I know that what I have observed was in fact what happened?

Member checking – verify our observations with those observed.

More than one observer observing

Triangulation – compare observations with other data collected.
Recording data

A. Anecdotal record - short, basic action, exact words, more objective, one incident.
B. Running record - longer, more detailed, continuous or sequential account, more environmental information, evidence
C. Checklist - numerical form, can have large amounts of information
D. Category systems – pre-set behaviours to look for
Memoing

The sorts of things included are –
1. The identification of patterns;
2. Working out the limitations, exceptions and variations present in whatever is being investigated;
3. Generating tentative explanations for the patterns and seeing if they are present or absent in other settings or situations;
4. Working explanations into a theoretical model;
5. Confirming or modifying the theoretical model;

What makes qualitative data analysis dynamic, exciting and intellectually challenging is the iteration between generation and analysis and within the different types of analytical work.
Qualitative Research

Session 4:
Data analysis
The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid.
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Start with you as the instrument

Describe your own your perspective
Describe your theoretical orientation and personal interest in the research
Good to declare your values, interests, commitments, assumptions, expectations, and the role these played in the study
It postulates the lens that you have used opens possibility of indicating what strategies employed to counter biases (member checking, more than 1 analyst)
Describe realised sample i.t.o age, sex, occupation, education or marital status, etc.
Place the data in its context -- who were the participants, what made you decide to choose them?
Who took part in the focus group discussions? How were the participants of the groups selected and how representative are they for your study population?
For observations: under what circumstances were they carried out? Who were observed, and by whom?
Take ethical commitments into account (anonymity, etc.)
Unless this type of information is provided, interpretation of data may appear haphazard.
DATA ANALYSIS

Types of data

Text
  Documents
    e.g. diaries

Narrative
  Interview

Visual
  Observational Field notes
  Photographs
  Video
Preparation of data

Prepare all data (notes and transcripts)
- Cutting and sorting – ID participants
- Read and reread
- Memoing - journaling
- Do quality check (blind, blank, thin spots)

Key question: Have I saturated my data?
Qualitative research often employs a general strategy that provides the backbone for the analysis. Qualitative research requires flexibility during the analysis phase. Constant critical self-reflection and challenging scepticism with regard to the analysis methods and the emerging results. Checking and auditing all steps of the analysis is a natural part of the qualitative research. Careful archiving of each step of the analysis. Analysis has to be systematic and organised, so the researcher can easily locate information the data set and can trace provisional results.
Content analysis is defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding.

Three types:

- **Conventional content analysis**, coding categories are derived directly from the text data (inductive).
- **Directed approach**, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes (a-priori coding) (deductive).
- **Summative content analysis** involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context.
Types of QDA

Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous research methods used to analyse text data. Other methods include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical research. Discourse analysis
Critical discourse analysis
Conventional content analysis (in vivo coding)

Divide data into distinctive meaning units -- meaning units are usually parts of the data that communicate sufficient information to provide a piece of meaning to the reader (labelling)
Code every meaning unit
Find an overall organising structure for the meaning units (domains)
Orphaned codes – don’t force them into domains (sock bag)
If you are working inductively (using Grounded Theory) codes emerge from the data
Sorting the data into domains that provide a conceptual framework for the data is referred to in grounded theory as axial coding
Interviewer Ms Vasi in our previous interview we talked about your experience as a teacher. In today’s interview I would like us to focus on that first year of teaching. Can you talk me through your experiences during that first year?

Ms Vasi: Wow.. was that a wake-up call! I wanted to be a teacher since I was a little girl and then when I started out I just wanted to run away…

Interviewer What made you want to run away?

Ms Vasi: I think I had an unrealistic expectation about learners and school discipline. I though that if I ask them to take out their workbooks that they would do it, that they would do their homework, etc, but all I got was blank expressions and complaints of me expecting them to do too much work. It was awful!

Interviewer: So how did you deal with the situation?

Ms Vasi: Pain is sometimes a good teacher. (laughs)

Interviewer: I’m not sure what you mean… can you explain it to me….

Ms Vasi: I mean there is nothing like a good spanking to get children’s attention.
Conventional content analysis
(in vivo coding)

Iterative process of organising meaning units in terms of literature and critical reflection (sense making of data)

Identify categories - creation of categories is an interpretive process on the part of the researcher

Write a short description/definition for each category - give examples/quotes from the text that illustrates the meaning of the category

A key aspect of the categorisation is a delineation of the relationships between the categories.

The relationships among categories are often pictured in the form of figures or diagrams.
**Structuring your analysed data**

Study your categories and identify links between categories - links are based on commonalities in meanings/assumed relationship.

Write your categories on note cards/flipcharts/post-its and spread them across a table.

Draw lines to indicate how they are connected – diagrams/mind-maps/matrixes.

Work across all your analysed data sources.

Consider alternative links.

Be mindful and explore possible contradictions, paradoxes, conflicting themes, and evidence that seem to challenge your interpretations.
Directed content analysis (a-priori analysis)

Using existing theory or prior research identify key concepts or variables as initial coding categories. Provide operational definitions for each category using theory. Interview schedule based on categories in theory - start open-ended question followed by targeted questions about predetermined categories. Coding – read the transcript and highlight all text based on categories. The next step in analysis would be to code all highlighted passages using the predetermined codes. Any text that could not be categorized with the initial coding scheme would be given a new code. The findings from a directed content analysis offer supporting and non-supporting evidence for a theory.
MARKET BASKET ANALYSIS

98% of people who purchased items A and B also purchased item C
Summative content analysis

The purpose is to understand the contextual use of the words or content.
Frequency of use of words
This quantification is an attempt not to infer meaning but, rather, to explore usage.
A summative approach to qualitative content analysis goes beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis. Latent content analysis refers to the process of interpretation of content.
In this analysis, the focus is on discovering underlying meanings of the words or the content.
Links to discourse analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Content Analysis</th>
<th>Study Starts With</th>
<th>Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords</th>
<th>Source of Codes or Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional content analysis</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Codes are defined during data analysis</td>
<td>Codes are derived from data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed content analysis</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Codes are defined before and during data analysis</td>
<td>Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative content analysis</td>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Keywords are identified before and during data analysis</td>
<td>Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT IS DISCOURSE ANALYSIS?

Discourse refers to expressing oneself using words. Discourses are ever-present ways of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the world. Discourses are used in everyday texts for building power and knowledge. DA is concerned with studying and analysing written texts and spoken words to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, economic, political, and historical contexts. It tries to illuminate ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favour their interests.
The objective of DA is to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of our written text or oral speech in order to resist and overcome various forms of power “over” or to gain an appreciation that we are exercising power “over,” unbeknownst to us

Three tenets of DA:

(a) Discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity and gender)

(b) Discourse is shaped and constrained by culture.

(c) Discourse (the words and language we use) helps shape and constrain our identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs.
An analysis of the interaction (language used) in focus groups can reveal:

The shared language on the topic, what was taken for granted and what was asked for clarification by other participants.

The beliefs and myths about the topic that are shared, taken for granted, and which ones are challenged.

The arguments which participants call upon when their views are challenged.

The sources of information people call upon to justify their views and experiences and how others respond to these.

The arguments, sources and types of information that stimulate changes of opinion or reinterpretation of experiences.

The tone of voice, body language, and degree of emotional engagement is involved when participants talk to each other about the topic.
How do we approach discourse analysis?

1) Approach a text in an uncritical manner, like an ordinary, undiscerning reader. Price (2002) noted that *engagement without estrangement* is to submit to the power of the text, regardless on one’s own position, thereby accepting the reading and offering unquestioning support of the status quo.

2) Come at it a second time with a critical hat on. Revisiting the text at different levels, raising questions about it, imagining how it could have been constructed differently, mentally comparing it to related texts.

3) Do not start to decipher the text word by word; rather, one should place the text in its genre - each genre-orientation has a style of its own set of characteristics that identify it—a template of sorts.

4) Still looking at the text as a whole, check out what sort of perspective is being presented—what angle, slant or point of view. This is called *framing*.

5) Analyse sentences, phrases, and words to understand various forms of power.
WHAT QUESTIONS DO I ASKED IN ANALYSING THE TEXT?

How is this text shaped by what it does in the world, what it is about, how it is related to the world of the audience?

How is this text shaped by what human language is like, in general, and by what the text-builders' particular language is like?

How is this text shaped by who the audience is, who the speaker is, what the relationships between speaker and hearer are, who else is listening, how speaker and audience are related to them?

How is this text shaped by what people expect to hear in this context, how they expect it to be said, what they expect it to be meant to mean?

How is this text shaped by its medium? What sorts of differences can it make whether people are interacting face-to-face or at a spatial or temporal or social distance?

How is the text shaped by purpose, intention, telos, by what speakers hearers and audiences are trying to accomplish?
Deconstructing the message

1. *Topicalization*: In choosing what to put in the topic position, the writer creates a perspective or slant that influences the reader’s perception.

2. Who is depicted as in power and over whom? Who is depicted as powerless and passive?

3. Nominalization (converting a verb into a noun) and the use of passive verbs

4. Persuasive rhetoric which can be used to convey the impression that what an agent of power says carries more weight

5. Insinuations are slyly suggestive, carrying double meanings.

6. Connotations associated with one word, or through metaphors and figures of speech, can turn the uncritical viewer’s mind.

7. The tone of the text is set with the use of specific words to convey the degree of certainty and authority (called modality).

8. *Register*--do the words spoken ring true? Writers can deceive readers by affecting a phony register, one that induces mistrust and scepticism.
CDA tries to unite, and determine the relationship between, three levels of analysis:

(a) the actual text;
(b) the discursive practices (text is a record of an event where something was communicated and involves the presentation of facts and beliefs (often ideological), the construction of identities of participants discussed in the communication, and strategies to frame the content of the message) and
(c) the larger social context that bears upon the text and the discursive practices (Fairclough, 2000).
Crystallization
What has emerged from my data?

1. Reflect and analyse the possible fit of the categories
2. What is the emerging reality in my data?
3. How does it corroborate theory?
4. What new insights are brought to the fore?
5. Does it provide an answer to my research question and sub-questions?
6. What are my main findings?
7. What are the limitations of my data?
8. What is the contribution to the body of knowledge?
9. Recommendations
10. Conclusion