

The Analysis of Qualitative Data: An Example from the Evaluation of a Community Reintegration Programme

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INTRODUCTION

The leisure experience is a complex personal and social construction. A construction is a way in which we make sense of an intangible (Guba and Lincoln, 1983, p. 318). As reported by many of our contemporary social-psychologists, leisure is subjective, intra- and inter-individualistic, dynamic, value laden, and so on. This is not to say that the leisure experience is so multifaceted that it is always in the eye of the beholder and that there is no single reality to it. It may be that there are multiple perspectives about leisure experiences, and for each there could be one reality. As Scriven (1983, p. 238) summarizes, "so although we may reject the existence of a single correct description, we should not abandon the idea that there is an objective reality, though it may be a rich one that cannot be exhaustively described". New insights about the experiencing of leisure will occur as our insights into meanings mature.

USING PHENOMENOLOGY IN LEISURE RESEARCH

The world presents a structure of its own (Harper, 1983) to phenomenological researchers and participants. Meanings are the visceral feelings had by human beings. Feelings are "had" or experienced before they are "known" (Dewey, 1934). Meanings may be made thematic by making them objects of intellectual inquiry. The lived world is the conscious lives of people and the manner in which the world is ordered and disclosed (Harper, 1983, p. 13). Thus, a viable way to understand the leisure experience is to elicit a first order, "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of what life/leisure is from those who are living and experiencing it. Further, should bias enter into a participant observation, conversationally-oriented interview, or the review of documents or records, then phenomenological researchers record and describe their feelings and include them as data in their analyses.

A positivistic research ideology (Scriven, 1983, p. 230) demands a role separation between the observer and the observed; is numerical in language (Guba and Lincoln, 1983); tests theory by predetermined hypotheses (Stake, 1983); and uses probability samples to provide statistical results generalizable for populations (Koppelman, 1983). Phenomenological research is self-referential in ideology (Scriven, 1983, p. 230) contending that the researcher is a part of the human experience he or she is observing; uses verbal language to build theory (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984) from which "working hypotheses" may emerge (Guba and Lincoln, 1983). Samples are purposive and analysis is recursive, resulting in a second order narrative description that synthesizes human meaning (Guba and Lincoln, 1983).

THE NOTION OF RECURSIVITY IN NATURALISTIC INQUIRY

The "scientific method", as a means of deductive reasoning, is well known. Its steps are rational and largely linear. The analysis component of an experiment often consists of the statistical manipulation of information that can be numerically symbolized. Statistical analyses are so familiar that there is a generally accepted "short hand" used to describe the statistics themselves and the results. Inductive analytical techniques are usually associated with observational or verbal data and typically recorded as verbatim or paraphrased "notes from the field". Naturalistic inquiries lack short hand techniques in part because findings contain meaning insofar as they appear in the participants' own language form. Being aware of positivists' standard of economy of words, phenomenological researchers attempt to report methods and findings with brevity, reducing evidence to the bare minimum and resultantly, challenging the confidence of the reader. Thus, this presentation describes a recursive, inductive qualitative data analysis process. This process is illustrated by research evaluating a Community Reintegration Programme (CRP).

A RECURSIVE QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS MODEL OR SCHEMA

This schema is a thought process that requires planning and structure, but not necessarily formal statements and preconceived abstract representations (Stake, 1983, p. 294). There are desirable (and defensible) variations within the schema. The implementation process as a whole reflexively (Denzin, 1978) affects the schema. Recursivity implies an unrolling inquiry or an unfolding of design and method as the study proceeds (Guba and Lincoln, 1983, p. 324). However, as a starting point, the researcher may determine a broad theoretical framework under which to operate from which issues or working research questions may be identified. Then a preordinate or responsive design is planned with the issues serving as advanced organizers. The more responsive the design, the more flexibility within the schema/issues (i.e. the principal stimuli are the responses of the participants and the ensuing dialogue) whereas in a preordinant design, the stimuli are standardized to behavioural objective statements, test items, questionnaire items, and so on (Stake, 1983, pp. 295-298).

Next, one selects purposively, seeking the "gate keeper" participant(s) or case and any "negative" or discrepant case(s), intensively collecting information from him or her. The researcher is free to enlarge or shrink the sample size depending on when the answers (or the participant) reach the point of exhaustion. (Not literal, physical exhaustion, although sometimes this happens to everybody in field studies, but information exhaustion. When nothing new is being said/seen).

Data are also "reduced" or thematized by being organized into categories or summarized. This occurs both after data have ceased being collected and while data are still being collected. Data collection may have a timed end or a natural end (saturation). Data may be initially organized by a data display which enables the visual inspection or graphic representation of key themes/findings. This is followed by the grounding of conclusions in lived experience and returning to the initial theoretical framework for building, consolidating, and so on. Findings, especially if there are not enough pages to present extensive verbatim material from each case, are oftentimes synopsized into narrative portrayals that give the reader a vicarious experience (Stake, 1983, p. 301).

ENUMERATION AND CONSTANT COMPARISON DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

In the evaluation of CRP, performed as a naturalistic inquiry, the qualitative data analysis techniques of enumeration (Goetz and LeCompte, 1982) and the constant comparison method of content analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) were used. As stated earlier, as data are collected, they must be organized. We used three strategies for the process of identifying the threads and links of the tapestry of information: open, selective, and axial coding. In open coding, there are two options: to use an overview approach in which the data are skimmed (macro view) or to use an intensive inspection approach in which a detailed (micro) view of the data are taken. Each yields information of a different *density*, providing a "feel" for or tacit impression of the data. Through selective coding, core *categories* of data are identified in preparation for further analysis. Axial coding goes a step beyond that by focusing on the *properties* of each category. Depending on the unit of analysis selected (words, words in context, or segments of text) and the coding system employed, data may be enumerated. The frequency of their appearance may be counted as an indicator of the strength of the presence of the term or phrase. Then, constant comparison may be used to distil *emic* (participant generated) or *etic* (researcher generated) patterns of responses or clusters of behavioural or sensorial categories. These categories may then be compared back to any initial theoretical frameworks, or may generate grounded theory ("new" theory whose basis is in lived reality).

So, within the phenomenological perspective, the researcher "takes" the role of the other and the experience of the other is deemed to be real, understandable, and valuable. The "mystery" of naturalistic inquiry/qualitative research perhaps lies in its intuitive or tacit knowing (Guba and Lincoln, 1983; Stake, 1983). That is, the idea of the "light" within. From the knowing self, the

knowledge within can emerge in answer. Answers lie within the participant as he or she speaks or acts. Concepts or theory are revealed from the researcher (as instrument) as he or she inductively analyzes these emergent data through his or her own tacit knowledge.

Illuminating the Black Box: The Use of the Analytic Memo

The Analytic Memo is a practical and replicable qualitative data recording and analysis tool, useful for the above described process. As a guidesheet for leisure researchers or evaluators, it is a vehicle for systematically recording and analyzing observational and verbal data from which theory may emerge (Koppelman, 1983).

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Editor/Le rédacteur: Bryan J. A. Smale

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