Using Qualitative Methods in Your Evaluation

HOW ARE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYZED?

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Webinar produced for Washington State University Extension

October 28th, 2015

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Analysis of Data

- The intent of the qualitative process is to classify and categorize the material collected, interpret the findings, and draw conclusions
  - Marshall & Rossman, 2006

A Quick Survey Question

- Thinking back to your first job, how successful were you in your first position?
    a) Very successful
    b) Somewhat successful
    c) A little successful
    d) Not a all successful

- Thinking back to your first job, how successful were you in your first position?
    o Why?

Overview of Presentation

- Data analysis methods
  - Transcribing
  - Coding
  - Themes
- Reporting
  - Participant voice
- Challenges
  - Avoiding pitfalls

An opportunity to ask questions will be available at the conclusion of each section

Analysis of Data

How do we analyze the information we have collected?

- Complete Transcription
  - Data must be in a reviewable format, hard copy or electronic
- Conduct a Review
  - Examine and read all of the data
- Develop Codes
  - Identify pieces of data that are similar
- Identify Patterns and Themes
  - Determine the commonalities across the data

Coding Process: Overview

Coding is a process the involves purposefully interpreting information:

What is/are the intent and meanings of the individuals involved?

What is the context of the situation?

Codes are based on:

Important keywords and phrases, critical evaluation concepts and topics, participant behavior, etc.

Only relevant data is coded

Creating and using a code book helps to keep track of work

Coding Process

- ## Deductive Coding
  - Prior to beginning coding, you create a list of codes to use when analyzing your data
  - Pre-set themes/codes/categories
    - Provides direction to how you break the data into snippets or chunks
    - Based on previously known information, theory, data, etc.
    - Known as "a priori" codes
      - From generality to a particular instance

Coding Process

- Inductive Coding
  - More commonly known as Grounded Analysis
    - Codes are developed as you read through your data and think about what it says
    - Codes emerge from the data
  - Typically involves three types of coding
    - Open coding
      - Use the text to find concepts and categories within the data
    - Axial coding
      - Use your concepts and categories while re-reading the text
      - Confirm accuracy and explore relationships
    - Selective Coding
      - Review with the intent to eliminate and/or combine codes

Coding Process

- Steps in the coding process
  - Code
    - Read through data
    - Systematically mark similar types or strings of text with the same code name
      - Apply codes to groupings of text (snippets, blocks, chunks)
  - Categorize
    - Overall intent is to identify categories and meanings within the text
    - Group codes and concepts together
      - Look for connections between codes
    - Read for commonalities and differences

Coding Process

- Steps in the coding process, continued:
  - Analyze
    - Systematically retrieve pieces of text that are related
    - Identify patterns in data
      - Look for themes
    - Draw conclusions
  - Finish
    - Done when saturation is reached of codes, concepts, and themes

Coding Process

- Berkowitz (1997) suggests considering six questions when coding and analyzing qualitative data:

  ○ What common themes emerge in responses about specific topics? How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to illuminate the broader central question(s)?

  ○ Are there deviations from these patterns? If so, are there any factors that might explain these deviations?

  ○ How are participants' environments or past experiences related to their behavior and attitudes?
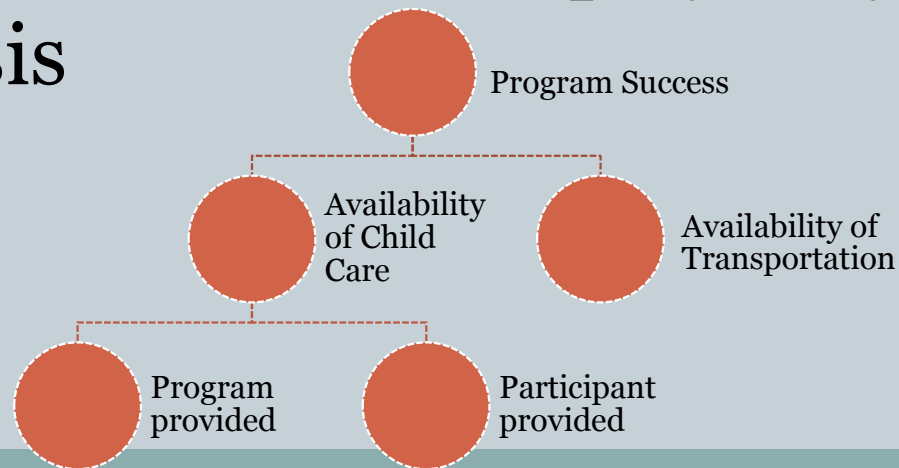
Coding Process

- Berkowitz's six, continued:
  - What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How do they help illuminate the central question(s)?
  - Do any of these patterns suggest that additional data may be needed? Do any of the central questions need to be revised?
  - Are the patterns that emerge similar to the findings of other studies on the same topic? If not, what might explain these discrepancies?

Coding Process

- ## The coding process is not lateral
  - You will likely code and re-code
  - You should group codes together
  - As you code, you will be looking for themes
  - Time consuming process

- ## Creating a visual matrix or display may help with the analysis

Program Success

Availability of Child Care

Availability of Transportation

Program provided

Participant provided

Coding Process

- ## Computer-assisted coding
  - Advantages to having data on the computer
    - Provides you with the ability to more easily manipulate / handle / play with the data
    - Allows for organization and re-organization
    - Able to create and explore different possibilities of data analysis and interpretation
  - Ways to make use
    - Highlight groups of text in color
    - Insert memos and notes
    - Link codes and themes by moving data around

Qualitative Reporting

HOW ARE QUALITATIVE DATA REPORTED?

Reporting the Findings

- Using qualitative methods allow for the added advantage of including participants' voices through the use of quotes
  - Direct quotes give you the ability to illustrate your findings in a much more powerful way:
    - "How can I be expected to get to the literacy program on-time when the bus doesn't show up at the same time each day. It isn't reliable, so I can't rely on it."

Reporting the Findings

- Important to document your methods for the reader
  - Choice of the method and how the analysis is completed are critical parts of your evaluation
  - This is especially true for qualitative evaluation, due to the variety of options to collect, code, and analyze
    - Options many are not familiar with

Challenges

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR…

Challenges of Qualitative Data

- Lots (and lots) of data
  - Data reduction is an ongoing goal during and following data collection
    - Thoroughly and extensively coding helps with data management
  - Collect enough to meet your evaluation goals and stop
    - Known as saturation

- The clock doesn't stop
  - Be sure to allow for a realistic time frame for collecting data, transcribing (if necessary), coding, and writing
  - Qualitative process is time consuming

Challenges of Qualitative Data

- Why are we here again?
  - Align your method choice with the evaluation objectives
    - Collect data in a way that:
      - Provides answers to what you are seeking
      - Matches what is available to you
  - Create a data plan at the beginning of your evaluation and keep it

Challenges of Qualitative Data

- Is this qualitative evaluation data strong enough?
  - Triangulation
    - Cross-check your data to reduce bias
    - Use multiple methods of data collection, gather multiple viewpoints, etc.
  - Validation
    - Also called 'member checking'
    - Some participants are given the opportunity to review copies of the transcribed data and the results section

Questions?

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