Lecture 14B

Qualitative Data Analysis

The nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships.

A continuing interplay between data collection and theory.

“Plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts”

Qualitative research can be descriptive; reporting in detail what is observed.

It can also be explanatory, trying to identify causal mechanisms.

Structure to investigate and identify patterns.

1) What is the **frequency** of the phenomena or phenomenon under investigation?

2) What is the **magnitude** of occurrences?

3) What are the different **types (structures**) of occurrences?

4) How do the different types relate to each other in an ordered **process,** or is there no recurring pattern?

5) What are the **causes** we can identify and are they related to patterns and heterogeneity in the population?

6) What are the **consequences** we can identify? Are there short run and long run differences? Do different types have different consequences?

If you have different cases under consideration, you can think of one observation being a case. You can contrast them by conducting cross case analysis.

Variable related cross case analysis. Look at the variables that go with each case, contrast the difference in outcomes across cases, and assess the extent to which variation in the variables might explain differences in outcomes. Here we are looking for generalizable lessons.

Case oriented analysis more fully goes beyond the surface variables and thinks about the chronology and in depth history. This looks closely and in detail at an individual case without a focus on drawing out the generalizable implications.

Grounded theory as an inductive research method.

1) Comparing incidents applicable to each category. Trying to find concepts that recur in different cases you are considering. You are trying to specify the nature and dimensions of the concepts revealed by looking at the data in the cases.

2) Note relationships among the concepts.

3) Delimiting the theory; now that you have a better sense of the concepts and how they relate to each other, you can revisit your theory to reduce the number of concepts to the most important and make the theory simpler.

4) Now you have inductively investigated the data set and have arrived at a theory. The last step is to write it down and explain what you have discovered.

Semiotics. The science of signs.

Conversation analysis.

Conversation is a socially constructed activity. As such, it has implicit rules. You are figuring out what those rules are, at times by breaking them and seeing what happens.

A conversation has a context. The same words might mean different things in a different context. “thanks a lot”.

Not just the words, but the pauses, the ‘ums’ and improper word use.

Qualitative data processing.

First step is coding; classifying your individual pieces of data. You need to do this with a recognition that you will need to have some kind of system of retrieval to recall and sift through your observations later. Color coded post-it notes here are one possible approach.

What are we coding? What is the unit of analysis under consideration? Here we are coding by concept rather than by uniform unit. Uniform unit; mission statement. Uniform concept; mission.

The physical act of coding. Moving the colored sticky post it notes into groups. Cutting up text and putting pieces in folders.

Open coding; data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences. Trying to break things apart and reassemble them in terms of concepts.

Axial coding is when we take the results of the open coding and looks for more analytic concepts. A regrouping of the data into a refined set of concepts.

Selective coding identifies the central concept that organizes the other concepts that have been identified.

Memoing is a technique where you write notes to yourself.

Code notes identify the code labels and their meanings.

Theoretical notes consider the relationships between concepts and the meaning of the concepts.

Operational notes recall data collection specifics that help understand the context or do things like indicate more follow up information is needed.

Concept mapping. A model of how the concepts relate to each other in your theory with arrows of causality thought through as well as the interconnected nature of these relationships.