

Qualitative Data Analysis Quick Start Sheet to Open Coding

Once your data is organized and transcribed, you might decide whether to hand- or computer-analyze it. Once you know how to hand-analyze data, you will quickly see how a computer can aid you in the process.

1. Focus your attention on your data and notice interesting things related to answering your research question

Hints:

- Read a section many times
- As you notice things pertinent to answering your research question, you name or 'code' them in the margin, like underlining in a book and making margin notes.
- You could call them A, B, C, D, but you will probably use a more descriptive naming scheme, like a paraphrase, phrase, heading or label.
- Could be new observations and insights, not just from literature.
- Try to code as a novice to the topic, with no pre-conceived ideas.
- Focus on the data, not relating it to theories you already know about.
- Keep a running list of your codes

2. The next step is grouping and sorting.

Hints:

- Grouping and sorting - Like working a 1000 piece puzzle, sort all the sky pieces, the outside pieces, the grass pieces
- Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units.
- With facts broken down into manageable pieces the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes.
- The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion.

(Jorgensen, 1989: 107)

Developing Themes – without software

- Make a copy of your coded data.
- Cut out (with scissors) sections of transcript that have been coded.
- Sort the coded data into piles according to topics, putting chunks of data that have same/similar labels together.
- Label each pile with a word/phrase that captures the gist
- Keep the piles together (in envelope or laid out)

Conceptual Schema –without software

- Ties the data together, answers the research question, is coherent, and goes beyond the obvious.
- Critical step that will allow you to add to the body of knowledge
- You want to move the themes into a theory and not just wind up with a list of themes.
- Talk with others.
- This could take awhile. Be patient. Don't settle for the obvious.
- Experiment with different ways to organize the themes.

Major/minor?
Significant narrative?
Use a metaphor?
Describe steps in a process?

Adapted from: Qualitative Data Analysis, John V. Seidel (1998)