Transcript

Chapter 14: Analysing Qualitative Data

So, qualitative data tends to be quite complex - and one of the main difficulties students encounter when attempting to analyse their data is the amount of time and effort that is necessary to do it properly. Often it will involve organising data in some way, and then working with concepts or theories in order to try and understand what is going on. This is not usually a ‘one-off’ event, and you might have to analyse a single piece of data a number of times before the process is complete. And all of this is why it is important to plan the process of your analysis, and make sure that you give yourself enough time to do it thoroughly. Leaving it to the last minute often results in poor quality work that is overly descriptive in nature.

Now, there are also many different forms of qualitative analysis. Whilst some of these techniques might share some properties, others will be quite different in terms of focus and process. And not all can be used *post-hoc* data collection either, so having a good working knowledge of the type of analysis you intend to use is important to develop before you start data collection itself.

Now, given the ‘in-depth’ nature of qualitative analysis - and what I mean by that is that it has both surface and deeper qualities that makes the process quite intellectually challenging - it is also a very good idea to familiarise yourself with data at regular intervals. This will help you see trends and patterns across what can be quite wide ranging material. So:

* Make sure you fully understand the type of analysis that you plan to use before you start data collection
* Plan an adequate amount of time to analyse your data thoroughly ( and be generous in this respect!)
* Familiarise yourself with your data before you begin the formal process of analysis

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