Qualitative Analysis

For quantitative analysis, it's usually fairly simple. Because you start with mean, and you do some significance testing, and you end up with regression or more complex models.

But for qualitative analysis, these choices are way more difficult because there are different methodologies, such as Property Space Analysis, Framework analysis, Ethnography, Conversation analysis, Analytic induction, Grounded theory, AMOR methodology, phenomenology and many, many others.

But all methodologies use three aspects. And those are the three aspects, described by Wolcott (1994), but based on classical phenomenology because all methodologies need description. All methodologies need analysis and all methodologies need interpretation. And some are relying a bit more on analysis, whereas others are relying a bit more on description. But they all use all three.

Therefore, every method you are going to use in qualitative research consist of **description, analysis and interpretation**.

(I) Deductive Approaches

In this lesson we will discuss two approaches that put high relevance on the use of codes. With both approaches this is often done top-down, using a predefined coding scheme: Content Analysis and Framework Analysis.

(i) Content Analysis

For many qualitative researchers, code and retrieve is synonym to doing qualitative analysis. Especially for people that use Content Analysis. In Content Analysis, you code for themes in text. Those text could be any kind of text. Those text could be transcripts, interview transcripts, documents you gathered during your participant observation, twitter messages, or any other social media text. Or photos probably, maybe even films. And what you do when you do content analysis, you try to look for things in this text, and you try to organize them. And usually this organization is done by using codes.

Hsieh and Shannon make a distinction between three different forms of content analysis. The first form is Conventional Content Analysis. And in conventional content analysis, you simply start by reading texts and then coding texts. You don't start with a theoretical framework or something like it. You start to read and try to develop codes and themes from the text. So bottom up, more inductively. And they call it conventional.

A second form of content analysis they recognize is Directed Content Analysis. In directed content analysis, you bring in a coding scheme or a coding system. You bring it in from theory. From other research, or other researchers. Or probably your own conventional content analysis that you did beforehand. And then, you apply it to a number of tests.

When starting content analysis, you have to think what kind of themes do I want from this text? Are these themes more manifest, or more latent? So can I read them directly, or do I need to read between the lines? Or do I need to combine it? A little bit of both. And if I look

at manifest meanings and manifest themes, do I need to code them exactly as they're worded? Or can I use more abstract codes? These are aspects you have to think about when doing any form of content analysis.

Now, how to organize it then? I could look at those interviews and just compare those interviews. But it works way more easy when you put it in a matrix. Using a matrix it looks a bit like what people used to do in more quantitative analysis, but it definitely is a qualitative analysis form, quote and retrieve.

(ii) Framework Analysis

Framework analysis is a variant of content analysis. It is a case and theme-based approach, just as any form of content analysis using a matrix. These themes are very often used in a hierarchy. So, with themes and sub-themes. And the most important characteristic of framework analysis is this, the summarization. Because in comparison to directed content analysis or conventional content analysis, in framework analysis we do not use fragments or codes. But we use summaries, and we try to synthesize the data rather than just code it, or label it, or just pick some fragments from it. And what people try to do when doing framework analysis is they try to retain the links to the data. So to the original data. Whether those are interviews or field notes, doesn't really matter what kind of data you use, but you try to retain the links to it. So you use a summary, but you try to link it to your original data.

So what are these nice small steps you take in framework analysis? Well, the first step is called familiarization. And it's simply reading your transcripts, or listening to your audio files, or watching your videos. Or reading your field notes again and again and again. So try to get involved in your data. Deep hanging out, as anthropologists would call it.

The second step is when doing this, you'll probably identify some key themes. And probably some sub-themes. You identify this thematic framework from literature, or from the company you are doing, or the organization you are doing this research for. So you work with a framework and then you start indexing, and this indexing means selecting the interesting fragments. The fragments where the themes are talked of or where the sub-themes come forward and you code them. So, you select the fragments and you code the fragments. That's called indexing. Then, you start to do the summarizing. You start to summarize what people tell you. And what you do in the end is you create a huge matrix. And you put these summaries in a matrix as you would do in content analysis with your codes and fragments. And, then you can start comparing over a theme and within a case. So, when you create this matrix, you start to do your interpretation. And that's step five in the five steps of framework analysis, mapping and interpretation.

How does this interpretation work? Well, at first it starts with description. As I said, all forms of analysis have analysis, description, and interpretation. And here we see the description in this framework analysis. When describing the cases, and when describing the themes, you can create typologies, and the typologies are case based, so types of people you've interviewed. The themes you organize in categories. So you have themes, with sub-themes. But probably you can see categories within these themes, or between themes. And those categories are your third step in the theme-based part. You try to link the cases, the typologies,

with the categories. You try to link the type of people with the type of themes that come up during those interviews or observations. You try to map them to develop some interpretations and explanations of what is going on in the cases you are studying.

(II) Inductive Approaches

(i) Analytic Induction

The steps you take in analytic induction:

First, you specify the outcome, or your phenomenon you are going to research. And then, you collect data on a small number of cases with that specific outcome. So you have some dependant variable and you look for cases with that dependant variable. And then you start to identify commonalities between these different cases. And you try to formulate a hypothesis, a starting point for your theory about this phenomenon, about this outcome.

When you do that, you start to collect more data, more cases. You look at more cases. And then you look very specifically for deviant cases in order to do either one of these two things. First you can redefine the outcome or the phenomenon, wait a second this case is deviant, does it mean we have to redefine what is going on? Probably yes. Or you have to redefine your hypothesis. So, either your dependent variable or your explanation. And, after that, you look for more cases. More deviant cases, hopefully, and if not afterwards, you start looking for new cases again. Hopefully, deviant cases, but if not, it doesn't really matter because after a while, when you only find new cases that fit within your theory, fit within your hypothesis, then maybe your hypothesis is right.

What you try to do in analytic induction is to incorporate all cases until your theory fits.

(ii) Grounded Theory

The most cited work in qualitative analysis definitely is The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Discovery of Grounded Theory was written by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. And it has become really popular throughout the qualitative analysis landscape. Why it's so popular is because of its influential key concepts. Several key concepts in Grounding Theory, several key elements in Grounding Theory were really revolutionary, new, and triggered the sociological imagination of many researchers. Second reason why it is so popular is because, it was one of the first books in which the complete book was about a certain specific methodology. And was highly detailed, so it would help you in giving rules, how to go about in your research, and to help you in taking small steps to your interpretation and still grounded to data. And lastly, the last 20 years have become really popular due to software. Software developers found out that Grounded Theory was ideal to translate into software tools. Key concepts from Grounded Theory, key rules in Grounded Theory, were pretty easily transposed to software. And therefore, new qualitative researches that, the touch upon qualitative analysis started with this software and then ended up with doing or reading about Grounded Theory. So, therefore, Grounded Theory is extremely popular nowadays.

Grounded Theory was revolutionary because it didn't say, we are going to do theory, or we are going to do data analysis. No, what they said was, we are going to link data analysis with

theory. And Grounded Theory was inductive, as opposed to much of the deductive work. Grounded Theory was also revolutionary because what they said was, data analysis takes place during data collection. It was also revolutionary because they were very much against a hypothetical, deductive view of science that was pretty popular at that time.

And they were also revolutionary because they said, we need qualitative analysis, not for description. We need qualitative analysis because of the deficit of this hypothetical deductive view. We need qualitative analysis in order to create theories, we need to build theories.

The most important concept in Grounded Theory is constant comparison. What is this constant comparison? Well, I will show you. For an instance, you interviewed this first hippie. You interview him about his views on the world, about love and peace. And then you go about and interview the second person. And what you do is, you compare them. And in order to do so, you have to reach a higher level. Because always when you compare, especially when you compare three, four, five different interviews. You have to reach a higher level in order to do this comparison. You need a more abstract level. So, you reach concepts. So when comparing this interview with other interviews, you start to talk about similarities and differences. And these are on a more abstract level. So, at first, you're comparing data with data. And then later on, you start comparing these concepts with new data. And then new data again. And new data again, and again. So, what you do is compare data with data, data with concepts, concepts with data, and then, you start to compare concepts with concepts. So, these are little steps you take. Constantly, you're comparing data, data, data concepts, concepts, concept. And that's revolutionary.

Second key element of Grounded Theory is, its strong focus on the research process, as a process. They use the concept of Blumer (1954) about sensitizing concepts. Every concept is temporary, and they are provisional, they give some guidance, but that's it. You should not pin them down. Concepts are temporary, and you develop them throughout your research. So it's a processual approach. A third aspect of this focus on process is the writing of memos. Way more important than coding is the writing of memos in Grounded Theory, in order to build your theory.

The third key element of Grounded Theory, and the third revolutionary aspect of Grounded Theory is that, sampling in Grounded Theory is completely different from sampling in survey research. In survey research, you take some samples with which you're trying to say something about the population. In qualitative analysis, you try to have theoretical saturation. And theoretical saturation, you reach when your theory is so sophisticated that every new data point, every new interview does not lead to more refinement of your concepts or your categories that you have created.

The fourth key element of Grounded Theory is the creation of a theory. Theories that are connected, grounded in the data. You can use interviews, you can use observation, you can use advertisements. You can use anything that is relevant for you. So all is data. And then, when you do this constant comparison, you compare data with data, and concepts will arise. And not just a single concept, but many concepts. And from these concepts, new categories arise, and these categories, they do not arise automatically. Now, they arise because you

compare a concept with a concept. And you say, well, maybe they fit in. Maybe this is a sub form of this category. So you try to organize all these different concepts into categories. Many people would call these codes. And then, you try to link those categories to certain properties, probably some conditions or consequences, or any other properties of these categories. And you try to link these categories to each other by relations, or theses, or theorems. And in the end, you try to create a core category, a single category that is the most important aspect. All of your complete theory, and you try to build the storyline around this core category.

Now this core category is very important in thinking about different levels of theories, different types of theories. The goal of a Grounded Theory in the long run, is to get to more formal level theories.