

Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods

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EDITION

Michael Quinn Patton



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- (e) informal discussions with program staff,
- (f) a review of student projects and other documents, and
- (g) 23 records from the files of each student (including employer evaluations of students, student products, test scores, and staff progress evaluations of students).

A set of guide questions was prepared for analyzing and reviewing each source (Fehrenbacher, Owens, and Haehnn 1976: 7-8). Information from all of these sources was integrated to produce a highly readable narrative that could be used by decision makers and funders to better understand what it was like to be in the program (Owens, Haehnn, and Fehrenbacher 1987). The evaluation staff of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory took great pains to carefully validate the information in the case studies. Different sources of information were used to cross-validate findings, patterns, and conclusions. Two evaluators reviewed the material in each case study to independently make judgments and interpretations about the content and meaning of the material in the case. In addition, an external evaluator reviewed the raw data to check for biases or unwarranted conclusions. Students were asked to read their own case studies and comment on the accuracy of fact and interpretation in the study. Finally, to guarantee the readability of the case studies, a newspaper journalist was employed to help organize and edit the final versions. Such a rigorous case study approach increases the confidence of readers that the cases are accurate and comprehensive. Both in its content and the process by which it was constructed, the Northwest Lab case study presented at the end of this chapter (Appen-

dix 8.2) exemplifies how an individual case study can be prepared and presented.

The same rigorous process would apply to case study data at the group or program level. For excellent examples of case studies in education, see Brizuela et al. (2000), Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1991), Perrone (1985), and Alkin, Daillak, and White (1979); for family research see Sussman and Gilgun (1996); for international development see Salmen (1987) and Searle (1985); in government accountability see Kloman (1979); and for a detailed example of conducting and presenting an evaluation case study, see Hébert (1986).

How one compares and contrasts cases will depend on the purpose of the study and how cases were sampled. As discussed in Chapter 5, critical cases, extreme cases, typical cases, and heterogeneous cases serve different purposes. Other excellent resources for qualitative case analysis include Stake (1995), Merriam (1997), Yin (1994), Hamel (1993), and the U.S. General Accounting Office (1987). To pursue case studies as stories that build on and display the elements of good storytelling, see Glesne (1999).

Once case studies have been written, the analytic strategies described in the remainder of this chapter can be used to further analyze, compare, and interpret the cases to generate cross-case themes, patterns and findings.

5 Pattern, Theme, and Content Analysis

The ability to use thematic analysis appears to involve a number of underlying abilities, or competencies. One competency can be called *pattern recognition*. It is the ability to see patterns in seemingly random information. (Boyatzis 1998:7)

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No precise or agreed-on terms describe varieties and processes of qualitative analysis. Content analysis, for example, sometimes refers to searching text for recurring words or themes. For example, a speech by a politician might be analyzed to see what phrases or concepts predominate, or speeches of two politicians might be compared to see how many times and in what contexts they used a phrase such as “global economy” or “family values.” Content analysis usually refers to analyzing text (interview transcripts, diaries, or documents) rather than observation-based field notes. **More generally, however, content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings.** Case studies, for example, can be content analyzed.

The core meanings found through content analysis are often called patterns or themes. Alternatively, the process of searching for patterns or themes may be distinguished, respectively, as pattern analysis or theme analysis. I’m asked frequently about the difference between a pattern and a theme. There’s no hard-and-fast distinction. The term *pattern* usually refers to a descriptive finding, for example, “Almost all participants reported feeling fear when they rappelled down the cliff,” while a theme takes a more categorical or topical form: *Fear*. Putting these terms together, a report on a wilderness education study might state:

The *content analysis* revealed a *pattern* of participants reporting being afraid when rappelling down cliffs and running river rapids; many also initially experienced the group process of sharing personal feelings as evoking some fear. Those patterns make “Dealing with fear” a major *theme* of the wilderness education program experience.

Inductive and Deductive Qualitative Analyses

Francis Bacon is known for his emphasis on *induction*, the use of direct observation to confirm ideas and the linking together of observed facts to form theories or explanations of how natural phenomenon work. Bacon correctly never told us how to get ideas or how to accomplish the linkage of empirical facts. Those activities remain essentially humanistic—you think hard. (Bernard 2000:12)

Bacon (1561-1626) is recognized as one of the founders of scientific thinking, but he also has been awarded “the dubious honor of being the first martyr of empiricism” (Bernard 2000:12). Still pondering the universe at age 65, he got an idea one day while driving his carriage in the snow in a farming area north of London. It occurred to him that cold might delay the biological process of putrefaction, so he stopped, purchased a hen from a farmer, killed it on the spot, and stuffed it with snow. His idea worked. The snow did delay the rotting process, but he caught bronchitis and died a month later. As I noted in Chapter 6, fieldwork can be risky. Engaging in analysis, on the other hand, is seldom life threatening, though you do risk being disputed and sometimes ridiculed by those who arrive at contrary conclusions.

Inductive analysis involves *discovering* patterns, themes, and categories in one’s data. Findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst’s interactions with the data, in contrast to *deductive analysis* where the data are analyzed according to an existing framework. Qualitative analysis is typically inductive in the early stages, especially when developing a codebook for content analysis or figuring out possible categories, patterns, and themes. This is often called “open coding” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:223) to emphasize the importance of being open to the

data. “Grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967) emphasizes becoming immersed in the data—being *grounded*—so that embedded meanings and relationships can emerge. The French would say of such an immersion process: *Je m’enracine*. “I root myself.” The analyst becomes implanted in the data. The resulting analysis grows out of that groundedness.

Once patterns, themes, and/or categories have been established through inductive analysis, the final, confirmatory stage of qualitative analysis may be deductive in testing and affirming the authenticity and appropriateness of the inductive content analysis, including carefully examining deviate cases or data that don’t fit the categories developed. Generating theoretical propositions or formal hypotheses after inductively identifying categories is considered deductive analysis by grounded theorists Strauss and Corbin (1998): “Anytime that a researcher derives hypotheses from data, because it involves interpretation, we consider that to be a deductive process” (p. 22). Grounded theorizing, then, involves both inductive and deductive processes: “At the heart of theorizing lies the interplay of making inductions (deriving concepts, their properties, and dimensions from data) and deductions (hypothesizing about the relationships between concepts)” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:22).

Analytic induction, in contrast to grounded theory, begins with an analyst’s deduced propositions or theory-derived hypotheses and “is a procedure for verifying theories and propositions based on qualitative data” (Taylor and Bogdan 1984:127). Sometimes, as with analytic induction, qualitative analysis is first deductive or quasi-deductive and then inductive as when, for example, the analyst begins by examining the data in terms of theory-derived sensitizing concepts or applying a theoretical frame-

work developed by someone else (e.g., testing Piaget’s developmental theory on case studies of children). After or alongside this deductive phase of analysis, the researcher strives to look at the data afresh for undiscovered patterns and emergent understandings (inductive analysis). I’ll discuss both grounded theory and analytic deduction at greater length later in this chapter.

Because, as identified and discussed in Chapter 2, inductive analysis is one of the primary characteristics of qualitative inquiry, we’ll focus on strategies for thinking and working inductively. There are two distinct ways of analyzing qualitative data inductively. First, the analyst can identify, define, and elucidate the categories developed and articulated by the people studied to focus analysis. Second, the analyst may also become aware of categories or patterns for which the people studied did not have labels or terms, and the analyst develops terms to describe these inductively generated categories. Each of these approaches is described below.

Indigenous Concepts and Practices

A good place to begin inductive analysis is to inventory and define key phrases, terms, and practices that are special to the people in the setting studied. What are the indigenous categories that the people interviewed have created to make sense of their world? What are practices they engage in that can be understood only within their worldview? Anthropologists call this *emic* analysis and distinguish it from *etic* analysis, which refers to labels imposed by the researcher. (For more on this distinction and its origins, see Chapter 6, which discusses emic and etic perspectives in fieldwork.) “Identifying the categories and terms used

by informants themselves is also called *in vivo* coding" (Bernard and Ryan 1998:608).

Consider the practice among traditional Dani women of amputating a finger joint when a relative dies. The Dani people live in the lush Baliem Valley of Irian Java, Indonesia's most remote province on the western half of New Guinea. The joint is removed to honor and placate ancestral ghosts. Missionaries have fought the practice as sinful and the government has banned it as barbaric, but many traditional women still practice it.

Some women in Dani villages have only four stubs and a thumb on each hand. In tribute to her dead mother and brothers, Soroba, 38, has had the tops of six of her fingers amputated. "The first time was the worst," she said. "The pain was so bad, I thought I would die. But it's worth it to honor my family." (Sims 2001:6)

Analyzing such an indigenous practice begins by understanding it from the perspective of its practitioners, within the indigenous context, in the words of the local people, in their language, within their worldview.

According to this view, cultural behavior should always be studied and categorized in terms of the inside view—the actors' definition—of human events. That is, the units of conceptualization in anthropological theories should be "discovered" by analyzing the cognitive processes of the people studied rather than "imposed" from cross-cultural (hence, ethnocentric) classifications of behavior. (Pelto and Pelto 1978:54)

Anthropologists, working cross-culturally, have long emphasized the importance of preserving and reporting the indigenous categories of people studied. Franz Boas (1943) was a major influence in this direction: "If it is our serious purpose to under-

stand the thoughts of a people, the whole analysis of experience must be based on their concepts, not ours" (p. 314).

In an intervention program, certain terms may emerge or be created by participants to capture some essence of the program. In the wilderness education program I evaluated, the idea of "detoxification" became a powerful way for participants to share meaning about what being in the wilderness together meant (Patton 1999a:49-52). In the Caribbean Extension Project evaluation, the term *liming* had special meaning to the participants. Not really translatable, it essentially means passing time, hanging out, doing nothing, shooting the breeze—but doing so agreeably, without guilt, stress, or a sense that one ought to be doing something more productive with one's time. *Liming* has positive, desirable connotations because of its social, group meaning—people just enjoying being together with nothing that has to be accomplished. Given that uniquely Caribbean term, what does it mean when participants describe what happened in a training session or instructional field trip as primarily "liming"? How much liming could acceptably be built into training for participant satisfaction and still get something done? How much programmatic liming was acceptable? These became key formative evaluation issues.

In evaluating a leadership training program, we gathered extensive data on what participants and staff meant by the term *leadership*. Pretraining and posttraining exercises involved participants in writing a paragraph on leadership; the writing was part of the program curriculum, not designed for evaluation, but the results provided useful qualitative evaluation data. There were small group discussions on leadership. The training included lectures and group discussions on leadership, which we observed. We participated in and took notes on informal

discussions about leadership. Because the very idea of "leadership" was central to the program, it was essential to capture variations in what participants meant when they talked about leadership. The results showed that ongoing confusion about what leadership meant was one of the problematic issues in the program. Leadership was an indigenous concept in that staff and participants throughout the training experience used it extensively, but it was also a *sensitizing concept* because we knew going into the fieldwork that it would be an important notion to study.

Sensitizing Concepts

In contrast to purely indigenous concepts, sensitizing concepts refer to categories that the analyst brings to the data. Experienced observers often use sensitizing concepts to orient fieldwork, an approach discussed in Chapter 6. These sensitizing concepts have their origins in social science theory, the research literature, or evaluation issues identified at the beginning of a study. Sensitizing concepts give the analyst "a general sense of reference" and provide "directions along which to look" (Blumer 1969: 148). Using sensitizing concepts involves examining how the concept is manifest and given meaning in a particular setting or among a particular group of people.

Conroy (1987) used the sensitizing concept "victimization" to study police officers. Innocent citizens are frequently thought of as the victims of police brutality or indifference. Conroy turned the idea of victim around and looked at what it would mean to study police officers as victims of the experiences of law enforcement. He found the sensitizing concept of victimization helpful in understanding the isolation, lack of interpersonal affect, cynicism, repressed anger, and sadness observed among police officers.

He used the idea of victimization to tie together the following quotes from police officers:

As a police officer and as an individual I think I have lost the ability to feel and to empathize with people. I had a little girl that was run over by a bus and her mother was there and she had her little book bag. It was really sad at the time but I remember feeling absolutely nothing. It was like a mannequin on the street instead of some little girl. I really wanted to be able to cry about it and I really wanted to have some feelings about it, but I couldn't. It's a little frightening for me to be so callous and I have been unable to relax.

I am paying a price by always being on edge and by being alone. I have become isolated from old friends. We are different. I feel separate from people, different, out of step. It becomes easier to just be with other police officers because they have the same basic understanding of my environment, we speak the same language. The terminology is crude. When I started I didn't want to get into any words like "scumbags" and "scrotos," but it so aptly describes these people.

I have become isolated from who I was because I have seen many things I wish I had not seen. It's frustrating to see things that other people don't see, won't see, can't see. I wish sometimes, I didn't see the things. I need to be assertive, but don't like it. I have to put on my police mask to do that. But now it is getting harder and harder to take that mask off. I take my work home with me. I don't want my work to invade my personal life but I'm finding I need to be alone more and more. I need time to recharge my batteries. I don't like to be alone, but must. (Conroy 1987:52)

Two additional points are worth making about these quotations. First, by presenting

the actual data on which the analysis is based, the readers are able to make their own determination of whether the concept "victimization" helps in making sense of the data. By presenting respondents in their own words and reporting the actual data that was the basis of his interpretation, Conroy invites readers to make their own analysis and interpretation. The analyst's constructs should not dominate the analysis, but rather should facilitate the reader's understanding of the world under study.

Second, these three quotations illustrate the power of qualitative data. The point of analysis is not simply to find a concept or label to neatly tie together the data. What is important is understanding the people studied. Concepts are never a substitute for direct experience with the descriptive data. **What people actually say and the descriptions of events observed remain the essence of qualitative inquiry.** The analytical process is meant to organize and elucidate telling the story of the data. Indeed, the skilled analyst is able to get out of the way of the data to let the data tell their own story. The analyst uses concepts to help make sense of and present the data, but not to the point of straining or forcing the analysis. The reader can usually tell when the analyst is more interested in proving the applicability and validity of a concept than in letting the data reveal the perspectives of the people interviewed and the intricacies of the world studied.

Having suggested how singular concepts can bring focus to inductive analysis, the next level of analysis, constructing typologies, moves us into a somewhat more complex analytical strategy.

Indigenous Typologies

Typologies are classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspect of

the world into parts along a continuum. They differ from *taxonomies*, which completely classify a phenomenon through mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, like the biological system for classifying species. Typologies, in contrast, are built on ideal-types or illustrative endpoints rather than a complete and discrete set of categories. Well-known and widely used sociological typologies include Redfield's folk-urban continuum (*gemeinschaft/gesellschaft*) and Von Wiese's and Becker's sacred-secular continuum (for details, see Vidich and Lyman 2000:52). Sociologists classically distinguish ascribed from achieved characteristics. Psychologists distinguish degrees of mental illness (neuroses to psychoses). Political scientists classify governmental systems along a democratic-authoritarian continuum. Economists distinguish laissez-faire from centrally planned economic systems. Systems analysts distinguish open from closed systems. In all of these cases, however, the distinctions involves matters of degree and interpretation rather than absolute distinctions. All of these examples have emerged from social science theory and represent theory-based typologies constructed by analysts. We'll examine that approach in greater depth in a moment. First, however, let's look at identifying indigenous typologies as a form of qualitative analysis.

Illuminating indigenous typologies requires an analysis of the continua and distinctions used by people in a setting to break up the complexity of reality into distinguishable parts. The language of a group of people reveals what is important to them in that they name something to separate and distinguish it from other things with other names. Once these labels have been identified from an analysis of what people have said during fieldwork, the next step is to identify the attributes or characteristics that distinguish one thing from another. In describing this

kind of analysis, Charles Frake (1962) used the example of a hamburger. Hamburgers can vary a great deal in how they are cooked (rare to well-done) or what is added to them (pickles, mustard, ketchup, lettuce), and they are still called hamburgers. However, when a piece of cheese is added to the meat, it becomes a cheeseburger. The task for the analyst is to discover what it is that separates "hamburger" from "cheeseburger," that is, to discern and report "how people construe their world of experience from the way they talk about it" (Frake 1962:74).

An analysis example of this kind comes from a formative evaluation aimed at reducing the dropout rate among high school students. In observations and interviews at the targeted high school, it became important to understand the ways in which teachers categorized students. With regard to problems of truancy, absenteeism, tardiness, and skipping class, the teachers had come to label students as either "chronics" or "borderlines." One teacher described the chronics as "the ones who are out of school all the time and everything you do to get them in doesn't work." Another teacher said, "You can always pick them out, the chronics. They're usually the same kids." The borderlines, on the other hand, "skip a few classes, waiting for a response, and when it comes they shape up. They're not so different from your typical junior high student, but when they see the chronics getting away with it, they get more brazen in their actions." Another teacher said, "Borderlines are gone a lot but not constantly like the chronics."

Not all teachers used precisely the same criteria to distinguish chronics from borderlines, but all teachers used these labels in talking about students. To understand the program activities directed at reducing high school dropouts and the differential impact of the program on students, it became important to observe differences in how bor-

derlines and chronics were treated. Many teachers, for example, refused even to attempt to deal with chronics. They considered it a waste of their time. Students, it turned out, knew what labels were applied to them and how to manipulate these labels to get more or less attention from teachers. Students who wanted to be left alone called themselves "chronics" and reinforced their "chronic" image with teachers. Students who wanted to graduate, even if only barely and with minimal school attendance, cultivated an image as "borderline."

Another example of an indigenous typology emerged in the wilderness education program I evaluated. During the second year of the project, one subgroup's members started calling themselves the "turtles." They contrasted themselves to the "truckers." On the surface, these labels were aimed at distinguishing different styles of hiking and backpacking, one slow and one fast. Beneath the surface, however, the terms came to represent different approaches to the wilderness and different styles of experience in relation to the wilderness and the program.

Groups, cultures, organizations, and families develop their own language systems to emphasize distinctions they consider important. Every program gives rise to a special vocabulary that staff and participants use to differentiate types of activities, kinds of participants, styles of participation, and variously valued outcomes. These indigenous typologies provide clues to analysts that the phenomena to which the labels refer are important to the people in the setting and that to fully understand the setting it is necessary to understand those terms and their implications.

Analyst-Constructed Typologies

Once indigenous concepts, typologies, and themes have been surfaced, the analyst

BEYOND NAMING PROBLEMS: HOLISTIC AND BROADLY GAUGED ANALYSES

Excerpts in Reflections of Philosophers by John Minnich

United States readers for cringes or popular culture. Such as Robert Putnam's Bowling Alone, tend to respond with enthusiasm to easily grasped analyses of what is wrong with us, from whatever left/middle/right stance they come—viz. to pick just a few that otherwise differ radically, the popularity of 50's analyses of the organization man, and the ugly American, of Baldwin's The Fire Next Time, Friedan's the problem that has no name, or The Feminine Mystique, Barbara Ehrenreich's The Other America, Bellah et al.'s Habits of the Heart, Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind, William Bennett's, and Cornel West's politically opposite diagnoses of a moral crisis that is besetting the nation.

Such analyses give us the relief of names to attach to widespread concerns; they catch on like a new kind of pill for a real social ill that, whether the catchily named pill works or

not, gives us some sense that at least someone knows about our pain.

It is because they come into the vicinity of where we are hurting that we respond so strongly; poke my wound, even to help me heal it, and I will react. But this "poking" is also not as healing as it could be insofar as it remains too narrow in ways that constrain and may misdirect the holistic help we want. Like many analysts before them, what they have done is to focus on where a problem becomes readily evident. But as analyses of wife beating that focus on the victims tend to lead to proposals (often formulated by entirely other people than the analysts) that also focus on the women, excluding from the picture the male perpetrators and the systems that empower them, this won't do. We need other analyses and broader gauge ones. (Minnich 1999:8,11)

moves to a different task of induction—looking for patterns, categories, and themes for which the analyst can construct a typology to further elucidate findings. Such constructions must be done with considerable care to avoid creating things that are not really in the data. The advice of biological theorist John Maynard Smith (2000) is informative in this regard: Seek models of the world that make sense and whose consequences can be worked out, for “to replace a world you do not understand by a model of a world you do not understand is no advance” (p. 46).

Constructing ideal-types or alternative paradigms is one simple form of presenting qualitative comparisons. Exhibit 1.3 in

Chapter 1 presented my ideal-typical comparison of coming-of-age paradigms that contrasts tribal initiation themes with contemporary coming-of-age themes (Patton 1999a). A series of patterns is distilled into contrasting themes that create alternative ideal-types. The notion of “ideal-types” makes it explicit that the analyst has constructed and interpreted something that supersedes purely descriptive analysis.

In creating analyst-constructed typologies through inductive analysis, you take on the task of identifying and making explicit patterns that appear to exist but remain unperceived by the people studied. The danger is that analyst-constructed typologies impose a world of meaning on the participants

that better reflects the observer's world than the world under study. One way of testing analyst-constructed typologies is to present them to people whose world is being analyzed to find out if the constructions make sense to them.

The best and most stringent test of observer constructions is their recognizability to the participants themselves. When participants themselves say, "yes, that is there, I'd simply never noticed it before," the observer can be reasonably confident that he has tapped into extant patterns of participation. (Lofland 1971:34)

Exhibit 8.6, using the problem of classifying people's ancestry, shows what can happen when indigenous and official constructions conflict, a matter of some consequence to those affected.

A good example of an analyst-generated typology comes from an evaluation of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, done by Robert L. Wolf and Barbara L. Tymitz (1978). This has become a classic in the museum studies field. They conducted a naturalistic inquiry of viewers' reactions to the "Ice Age Mammals and Emergence of Man" exhibit. From their observations, they identified four different kinds of visitors to the exhibit. These descriptions are progressive in that each new category identifies a person more serious about the exhibit hall.

- *The Commuter:* This is the person who merely uses the hall as a vehicle to get from the entry point to the exit point. . . .
- *The Nomad:* This is a casual visitor, a person who is wandering through the hall, apparently open to becoming interested in something. The Nomad is not really sure why he or she is in the hall and

not really sure that s/he is going to find anything interesting in this particular exhibit hall. Occasionally the Nomad stops, but it does not appear that the nomadic visitor finds any one thing in the hall more interesting than any other thing.

- *The Cafeteria Type:* This is the interested visitor who wants to get interested in something, and so the entire museum and the hall itself are treated as a cafeteria. Thus, the person walks along, hoping to find something of interest, hoping to "put something on his or her tray" and stopping from time to time in the hall. While it appears that there is something in the hall that spontaneously sparks the person's interest, we perceive this visitor has a predilection to becoming interested, and the exhibit provides the many things from which to choose.
- *The V.I.P.—Very Interested Person:* This visitor comes into the hall with some prior interest in the content area. This person may not have come specifically to the hall, but once there, the hall serves to remind the V.I.P.'s that they were, in fact, interested in something in that hall beforehand. The V.I.P. goes through the hall much more carefully, much slower, much more critically—that is, he or she moves from point to point, stops, examines aspects of the hall with a greater degree of scrutiny and care. (Wolf and Tymitz 1978: 10-11)

This typology of types of visitors became important in the full evaluation because it permitted analysis of different kinds of museum experiences. Moreover, the evaluators recommended that when conducting interviews to get museum visitors' reactions to exhibits, the interview results should be dif-

EXHIBIT 8.6**Qualitative Analysis of Ancestry at the U.S. Census**

To count different kinds of people—the job of the Census Bureau—you need categories to count them in. The long form of the 2000 census, given to 1 in 6 households, asked an open-ended, fill-in-the-blank question about “ancestry.” Analysts then coded the responses into categories, 1 of 604 categories, up from 467 in 1980. The government doesn’t ask about religion, so if people respond that they are Jewish, they don’t get their ancestry counted. However, those who write in that they are Amish or Mennonite do get counted because those are considered cultural categories.

Ethnic minorities that cross national boundaries, such as French and Spanish Basques, and groups affected by geopolitical change, such as Czechs and Slovaks or groups within the former Yugoslavia, are counted in distinct categories. The Census Bureau, following advice from the U.S. State Department, differentiates Taiwanese Americans from Chinese Americans, a matter of political sensitivity.

Can Assyrians and Chaldeans be lumped together? When the Census Bureau announced that it would combine the two in the same ancestry code, an Assyrian group sued over the issue, but lost the lawsuit. Assyrian Americans trace their roots to a biblical-era empire covering much of what is now Iraq and believe that Chaldeans are a separate religious subgroup. A fieldworker for the Census Bureau did fieldwork on the issue.

“I went into places where there were young people playing games, went into restaurants, and places where older people gathered,” says Ms. McKenney. . . . She paid a visit to Assyrian neighborhoods in Chicago, where a large concentration of Assyrian Americans live. At a local community center and later that day at the Assyrian restaurant next door, community leaders presented their case for keeping the ancestry code the same. Over the same period, she visited Detroit to look into the Chaldean matter. . . .

“I found that many of the people, especially the younger people, viewed it as an ethnic group, not a religion,” says Ms. McKenney. She and Mr. Reed (Census Bureau ancestry research expert) concurred that enough differences existed that the Chaldeans could potentially qualify as a separate ancestry group.

In a conference call between interested parties, a compromise was struck. Assyrians and Chaldeans would remain under a single ancestry code, but the name would no longer be Assyrian, it would be Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac—Syriac being the name of the Aramaic dialect that Assyrians and Chaldeans speak. “There was a meeting of the minds between all the representatives, and basically it was a unified decision to say that we’re going to go under the same name,” says the Chaldean Federation’s Mr. Yono. (Kulish 2001:1)

ferentially valued depending on the type of person being interviewed—commuter, nomad, cafeteria type, or VIP.

A different typology was developed to distinguish how visitors learn in a museum:

“Museum Encounters of the First, Second, and Third Kind,” a take-off on the popular science fiction movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, which referred to direct human contact with visitors from outer space.

- *Museum Encounters of the First Kind:* This encounter occurs in halls that use display cases as the primary approach to specimen presentation. Essentially, the visitor is a passive observer to the “objects of interest.” Interaction is visual and may occur only at the awareness level. The visitor is probably not provoked to think or consider ideas beyond the visual display.
- *Museum Encounters of the Second Kind:* This encounter occurs in halls that employ a variety of approaches to engage the visitor’s attention and/or learning. The visitor has several choices to become active in his/her participation. . . . The visitor is likely to perceive, question, compare, hypothesize, etc.
- *Museum Encounters of the Third Kind:* This encounter occurs in halls that invite high levels of visitor participation. Such an encounter invites the visitor to observe phenomena in process, to create, to question the experts, to contribute, etc. Interaction is personalized and within the control of the visitor. (Wolf and Tymitz 1978:39)
- *Skidders:* Most often women, typically in their 30s, grew up middle or upper class but “skidded” into homelessness as divorced or separated parents.
- *Street people:* Mostly men, often veterans, rarely married; highly visible net and know how to use the resources of the street.
- *Wingnuts:* People with severe mental problems, occasionally due to longterm alcoholism, a visible subgroup.
- *Transitory workers:* People with job skills and a history of full-time work who travel from town to town, staying months or years in a place, and then heading off to greener pastures.

Categories of how homeless people spend their time:


- Hanging out
- Getting by
- Getting ahead

As these examples illustrate, the first purpose of typologies is to distinguish aspects of an observed pattern or phenomenon *descriptively*. Once identified and distinguished, these types can later be used to make interpretations and they can be related to other observations to draw conclusions, but the first purpose is description based on an inductive analysis of the patterns that appear in the data.

Here’s a sample of a quite different classification scheme, this one developed from fieldwork by sociologist Rob Rosenthal (1994) as “a map of the terrain” of the homeless.

The Intellectual and Mechanical Work of Analysis

Coding Data, Finding Patterns, Labeling Themes, and Developing Category Systems

lassification is Ariadne’s clue through the labyrinth of nature.

—George Sand, *Nouvelles Lettres d’un Voyageur*, 1869

Thus far, I've provided lots of examples of the fruit of qualitative inquiry: patterns, themes, categories, and typologies. Let's back up now to consider how you recognize patterns in qualitative data and turn those patterns into meaningful categories and themes. This chapter could have started with this section, but I think it's helpful to understand what kinds of findings can be generated from qualitative analysis before delving very deeply into the mechanics, especially because the mechanics vary greatly and are undertaken differently by analysts in different disciplines and working from divergent frameworks. That said, some guidance can be offered.

Raw field notes and verbatim transcripts constitute the undigested complexity of reality. Simplifying and making sense out of that complexity constitutes the challenge of content analysis. **Developing some manageable classification or coding scheme is the first step of analysis.** Without classification there is chaos and confusion. Content analysis, then, involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data. This essentially means analyzing the core *content* of interviews and observations to determine what's significant. In explaining the process, I'll describe it as done traditionally, which is without software, to highlight the thinking and mechanics involved. Software programs provide different tools and formats for coding, but the principles of the analytical process are the same whether doing it manually or with the assistance of a computer program.

I begin by reading through all of my field notes or interviews and making comments in the margins or even attaching pieces of paper or Post-it notes that contain my notions about what I can do with the different parts of the data. This constitutes the first cut

at organizing the data into topics and files. Coming up with topics is like constructing an index for a book or labels for a file system: You look at what is there and give it a name, a label. The copy on which these topics and labels are written becomes the indexed copy of the field notes or interviews. Exhibit 8.7 shows a sampling of codes from the field note margins of the evaluation of the wilderness education program I described in the chapter on observation.

The shorthand codes are written directly on the relevant data passages, either in the margins or with an attached tab on the relevant page. Many passages will illustrate more than one theme or pattern. The first reading through the data is aimed at developing the coding categories or classification system. Then a new reading is done to actually start the formal coding in a systematic way. Several readings of the data may be necessary before field notes or interviews can be completely indexed and coded. Some people find it helpful to use colored highlighting pens—color coding different idea or concepts. Using self-adhesive colored dots or Post-it notes offers another option. Some use a color printer to print out transcripts in different colors to make it easy to track the source of a quote when cutting and pasting different quotes into a theme.

If sensing a pattern or "occurrence" can be called *seeing*, then the encoding of it can be called *seeing as*. That is, you first make the observation that something important or notable is occurring, and then you classify or describe it. . . . [T]he *seeing as* provides us with a link between a new or emergent pattern and any and all patterns that we have observed and considered previously. It also provides a link to any and all patterns that others have observed and considered previously through reading. (Boyatzis 1998:4)