

Appendix A

Qualitative Analysis Assignment

Introduction

Students will be asked to identify a small collection of extant qualitative data related to their professional interests and conduct a content analysis designed to identify significant themes. A set of directions for completing the qualitative data analysis assignment will be made available on the course website during the weeks devoted to qualitative data analysis.

Learning Outcomes

This assignment is designed to address the following course learning outcomes:

- Distinguish between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods methods of inquiry
- Describe methodological designs employed in basic and applied research
- Explain ethical, cultural and procedural issues related to conducting inquiries

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to engage in one form of analysis (content analysis) that is employed frequently to analyze qualitative data. You are asked to select a topic of your choice, identify sources of existing qualitative data on your topic (in the form of first-person narratives), select a sample of the qualitative data, code the data, and identify and describe themes that emerge from the data.

Begin with a topic of professional interest. I would encourage you to select a topic where it is highly likely that you will be able to locate several pages of first-person narrative data in text format (i.e., people describing their own experiences in their own words). For example, you may be interested in examining

- How students from under-represented groups describe their experiences on college campuses
- How employers describe their workplaces with respect to inclusion of individuals with disabilities
- How individuals describe living with a disability

A list of possible topics would be endless; the examples provided above are simply to illustrate a few possibilities. As you begin to identify a topic for this assignment, I would encourage you to share your idea with me so that we can discuss your thoughts about finding appropriate data for the assignment.

Identify your data. Three to five single-spaced pages of text should be sufficient for this assignment. More is permissible, but it may take you considerably longer to complete the assignment. Trying to work with less than the recommended amount of qualitative data may place you in a position where the data is not rich or detailed enough to extract meaningful themes. You can make use of three to five pages of data that originates from several different individuals or all from the same individual. The analysis exercise should focus upon identifying and describing the most prominent themes embedded in the personal statements.

Here are some potential sources of first-person narrative data. You are free to use these data sources for your assignment or use them as examples of the types of data that would be suitable for this assignment. Note that in each case the data consists of statements made by individuals speaking about their personal experiences:

- [Experiences of individuals with learning disabilities](#)
- [Experiences of individuals with mental health disabilities](#)
- [College students with intellectual disabilities](#)

Code your data. Once you have identified a suitable source of data, use an open-coding approach to divide the text into segments of meaning and apply preliminary codes to conceptual units of meaning in your text data. Once you have completed the open coding process (i.e., your first pass through the data), create a list of your codes accompanied by a short, written description of each code.

Save a copy of the list of open codes and then go back through your open codes and determine if any codes should be combined into a single code, or if any existing codes should be separated into two or more distinct codes. You may find that you need to repeat this process a few times until you are comfortable with your list of codes. Save a copy of your final list of codes – you will be asked to submit both your open codes and your final codes.

Once you have completed the coding process, identify relationships between your codes. What connections are evident among your codes? How can they be meaningfully grouped together? I would suggest that you strive for three to five groupings of codes, although this is not a firm rule. Your data may suggest a larger or smaller number of groupings than the recommended figure. After grouping your codes together, describe what it is that binds each group of codes together – these are your themes. Once you have completed this process (the axial coding process), create a list of the themes that emerged from your analysis. Each theme should include a brief description of the theme and a list or table of the codes associated with each theme (see sample on the following pages). If any of your open codes were not associated with a theme, please indicate the codes that were not incorporated into a theme.

Submit your work. Please submit the following five items:

- A copy of the raw text data that you analyzed
- A list of your open codes (first set of codes) after your first pass through the data
- A list of your final (revised) open codes
- A list or table of the themes that emerged from your axial coding efforts
- A brief narrative description of each theme