Stories are Data: Analyzing and Reporting Qualitative Evaluation

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Chat question
How frequently do you use qualitative data in your evaluations?

What is qualitative evaluation?

Chat question
Would you describe yourself as a researcher or a storyteller? Or a researcher-storyteller?
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**Researcher - Storyteller**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Storyteller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
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"Evaluation case studies have all the elements of a good story. They tell what happened when, to whom, and with what consequences."  
*(Patton, 2004, p. 33)*

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**Clearing misconceptions**

- The NSF considers stories a form of data!
- You can include stories and qualitative data in your NSF annual reports and in your evaluation reports!
- Qualitative data can contribute to the generation of knowledge and evidence!

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**Brief examples**

**Quantitative Oriented Evaluation Report**

- Project served 23 first-generation college students
- 4 of which were black, 4 Hispanic
- 65% of students said they were satisfied with the program
- 70% of students remained in STEM program after two years
- None of those students were black or Hispanic

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**Qualitative Oriented Evaluation Report**

"The program staff were supportive and friendly. I probably would have dropped out if it wasn’t for them."  
Jim, a first-generation college student who identifies as white, continued on to graduate with a STEM degree.  
However, Aron didn’t have the same connection to the project staff.  
"It just never felt like I belonged there. I couldn’t see myself working in the field. I wish there were more mentors like me."

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**Constructivist paradigm**

- Multiple socially constructed realities
- Meaningful dialogue and reflection to create knowledge
- Evaluator aware of own values and those of others

*(Mertens & Wilson, 2019)*
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Not just for the ivory tower

Assessing your paradigm

Paradigms Exposed

Activity companion slides

Activity companion slides
Paradigms Exposed

1. What was your experience in completing the questionnaire? Was it difficult? If yes, why?
2. Did your score surprise you? Why or why not?
3. How does your personal paradigm leaning or your evaluation practice align with a qualitative evaluation approach?

Questions?

1. What is your experience in completing the questionnaire? Was it difficult? If yes, why?
2. Did your score surprise you? Why or why not?
3. How does your personal paradigm leaning or your evaluation practice align with a qualitative evaluation approach?

Qualitative analysis

There is no single right way to analyze qualitative data; equally, it is essential to find ways of using the data to think with.

(Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 2)

Data collection methods

- Observations
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Document review
- Media review

Qualitative approaches

- Ethnography: Holistic account of cultural themes, context, and connections
- Phenomenology: Descriptive data, key statements, vicarious experience of being “there”
- Grounded Theory: Codes, categories, and frameworks to build theories and propositions
**Qualitative approaches**

1. What are the characteristics of a group of people/culture/sub-culture?
   - Ethnography

2. What is the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon for individuals?
   - Phenomenology

3. What theory or explanation emerges from an analysis of the data collected?
   - Grounded Theory

- Holistic account of cultural themes, context, and connections
- Descriptive data, key statements, vicarious experience of being "there"
- Codes, categories, and frameworks to build theories and propositions

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**Questions to ask yourself throughout analysis process**

1. What patterns/common themes emerge around specific items in the data?
2. Are there any deviations from these patterns?
3. What interesting stories emerge from the data?
4. Do any of the patterns/emergent themes suggest that additional data needs to be collected?
5. Do the patterns that emerge support the findings of other corresponding qualitative analyses that have been conducted?

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**Thematic analysis**

- **Qualitative data**
- **Codes**
- **Themes**

**From codes and categories to themes**

- (Saldana, 2016, p. 14)

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**Inductive coding**

- Start with data
- Group into themes
- Develop codes from the data and themes

**Deductive coding**

- Start with codes
- Find excerpts that fit the codes
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**Types of codes**

- In Vivo Coding
  - Using the participant’s own words
- Process Coding
  - Capturing an action
- Open Coding
  - An initial round of loose and tentative coding
- Descriptive Coding
  - Summary of the context of the text into a description
- Values Coding
  - Excerpts that pertain to the participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs

**Memo writing**

- Mapping research activities (documentation of the decision-making process of research design and implementation as an audit trail)
- Extracting meaning from the data (analysis and interpretation, concepts, assertions, theories)
- Maintaining momentum (researcher perspectives and reflexivity throughout the evolutionary journey of the study)
- Opening communication (for research team member exchanges)

**Qualitative software**

- NVivo
- MAXQDA
Qualitative software

Familiarize yourself with your data before you start coding.
Be vigilant about documenting decisions around codes, themes, or general reactions.
Change or re-structure codes as needed. It’s part of the process!
Be okay feeling lost in your data. It’s going to happen at some point.
Step back and consider your reporting structure.

Questions?

Rapid coding activity
Rapid qualitative techniques

Activity Companion Slides

Activity Companion Slides

Activity Companion Slides

Activity Companion Slides
Questions?

What is the most difficult part about reporting qualitative data?

Chat question

Reporting qualitative data

Trustworthiness

1. Trustworthiness and transparency
2. Positionality statement
3. Strategies for reporting qualitative data

Trustworthiness

Credibility: Confidence in the data accuracy
Dependability: Stability of data over time and conditions
Transferability: Applicability of the data to other contexts
Confirmability: Ability to follow the decision trail used by evaluator
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Trustworthiness

- Credibility
- Dependability
- Transferability
- Confirmability

Positionality statement

A statement included in evaluation reports that identifies the author’s identity and position in relation to the participants and evaluation project.

Questions to consider:

1. What is your personal identity in relation to society and the evaluation topic? (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status)
2. What beliefs do you hold about evaluation and the evaluation process?
3. What are your beliefs on this topic?
4. What is your connection to your participants?
5. Anything else that is important for the reader to know about you in relation to this evaluation?

Chat question

Have you ever included a positionality statement in an evaluation report?

Strategies for reporting qualitative data

- Word clouds
- Call out boxes
- Highlight quotes
- Tables
- Annotated graphs
- Photos
- Icons
- Journey maps
- Mind maps

Word clouds

Call out box

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Mind map

For more...

Strategies for reporting qualitative data
- Word clouds
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Questions?

Activity Companion Slides

Reporting activity
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Questions?
FEEDBACK SURVEY
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