

# CHAPTER 10

## Qualitative Data Analysis

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*I was at lunch standing in line and he [another male student] came up to my face and started saying stuff and then he pushed me. I said . . . I'm cool with you, I'm your friend and then he push me again and calling me names. I told him to stop pushing me and then he push me hard and said something about my mom. And then he hit me, and I hit him back. After he fell I started kicking him.*

—Morrill et al. (2000:521)

Unfortunately, this statement was not made by a soap opera actor but by a real student writing an in-class essay about conflicts in which he had participated. But then you already knew that such conflicts are common in many high schools, so perhaps it will be reassuring to know that this statement was elicited by a team of social scientists who were studying conflicts in high schools to better understand their origins and to inform prevention policies.

The first difference between qualitative and quantitative data analysis is that the data to be analyzed are text, rather than numbers, at least when the analysis first begins. Does it trouble you to learn that there are no variables and hypotheses in this qualitative analysis by Morrill et al. (2000)? This, too, is another difference between the typical qualitative and quantitative approaches to analysis, although there are some exceptions.

In this chapter, I present the features that most qualitative data analyses share, and I will illustrate these features with research on youth conflict and on being homeless. You will quickly learn that there is no one way to analyze textual data. To quote Michael Quinn Patton (2002), “Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe. Direction can and will be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when—and if—arrived at” (p. 432).

I will discuss some of the different types of qualitative data analysis before focusing on computer programs for qualitative data analysis; you will see that these increasingly popular programs are blurring the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative approaches to textual analysis.

## 2 Features of Qualitative Data Analysis

The distinctive features of qualitative data collection methods that you studied in Chapter 9 are also reflected in the methods used to analyze those data. The focus on text—on qualitative data rather than on numbers—is the most important feature of qualitative analysis. The “text” that qualitative researchers analyze is most often transcripts of interviews or notes from participant observation sessions, but text can also refer to pictures or other images that the researcher examines.

What can the qualitative data analyst learn from a text? Here qualitative analysts may have two different goals. Some view analysis of a text as a way to understand what participants “really” thought, felt, or did in some situation or at some point in time. The text becomes a way to get “behind the numbers” that are recorded in a quantitative analysis to see the richness of real social experience. Other qualitative researchers have adopted a hermeneutic perspective on texts—that is, a perspective that views a text as an interpretation that can never be judged true or false. The text is only one possible interpretation among many (Patton 2002:114).

The meaning of a text, then, is negotiated among a community of interpreters, and to the extent that some agreement is reached about meaning at a particular time and place, that meaning can only be based on consensual community validation.

From a hermeneutic perspective, a researcher is constructing a “reality” with his or her interpretations of a text provided by the subjects of research; other researchers, with different backgrounds, could come to markedly different conclusions.

You can see in this discussion about text that qualitative and quantitative data analyses also differ in the priority given to the prior views of the researcher and to those of the subjects of the research. Qualitative data analysts seek to describe their textual data in ways that capture the setting or people who produced this text

on their own terms rather than in terms of predefined measures and hypotheses. What this means is that qualitative data analysis tends to be inductive—the analyst identifies important categories in the data, as

**Emic focus** Representing a setting with the participants' terms and from their viewpoint.

**Etic focus** Representing a setting with the researchers' terms and from their viewpoint.

well as patterns and relationships, through a process of discovery. There are often no predefined measures or hypotheses. Anthropologists term this an **emic focus**, which means representing the setting in terms of the participants and their viewpoint, rather than an **etic focus**, in which the setting and its participants are represented in terms that the researcher brings to the study.

Good qualitative data analyses also are distinguished by their focus on the interrelated aspects of the setting, group, or person under investigation—the case—rather than breaking the whole into separate parts. The whole is always understood to be greater than the sum of its parts, and so the social context of events, thoughts, and actions becomes essential for interpretation. Within this framework, it doesn't really make sense to focus on two variables out of an interacting set of influences and test the relationship between just those two.

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins as data are being collected rather than after data collection has ceased (Stake 1995). Next to her field notes or interview transcripts, the qualitative analyst jots down ideas about the meaning of the text and how it might relate to other issues. This process of reading through the data and interpreting them continues throughout the project. The analyst adjusts the data collection process itself when it begins to appear that additional concepts need to be investigated or new relationships explored. This process is termed **progressive focusing** (Parlett & Hamilton 1976).

**Progressive focusing** The process by which a qualitative analyst interacts with the data and gradually refines her focus.

We emphasize placing an interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings. Initial research questions may be modified or even replaced in mid-study by the case researcher. The aim is to thoroughly understand [the case]. If early questions are not working, if new issues become apparent, the design is changed. (Stake 1995:9)

Elijah Anderson (2003) describes the progressive focusing process in his memoir about his study of Jelly's Bar.

Throughout the study, I also wrote conceptual memos to myself to help sort out my findings. Usually no more than a page long, they represented theoretical insights that emerged from my engagement with the data in my field notes. As I gained tenable hypotheses and propositions, I began to listen and observe selectively, focusing on those events that I thought might bring me alive to my research interests and concerns. This method of dealing with the information I was receiving amounted to a kind of a dialogue with the data, sifting out ideas, weighing new notions against the reality with which I was faced there on the streets and back at my desk (pp. 235–236).

Carrying out this process successfully is more likely if the analyst reviews a few basic guidelines when he or she starts the process of analyzing qualitative data (Miller & Crabtree 1999b:142–143):

- Know yourself, your biases, and preconceptions.
- Know your question.
- Seek creative abundance. Consult others and keep looking for alternative interpretations.

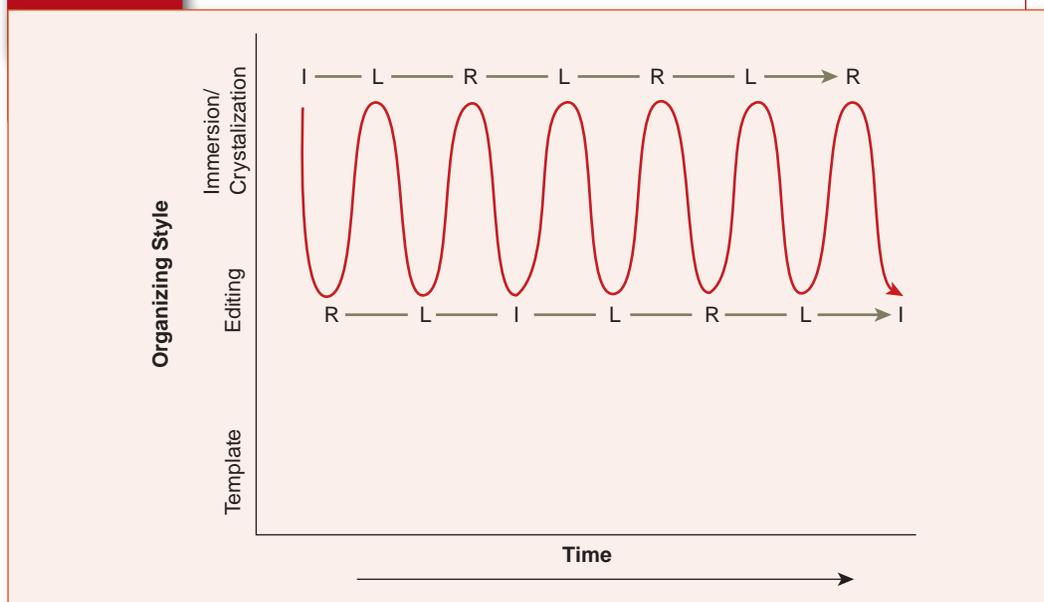
- Be flexible.
- Exhaust the data. Try to account for all the data in the texts, then publicly acknowledge the unexplained and remember the next principle.
- Celebrate anomalies. They are the windows to insight.
- Get critical feedback. The solo analyst is a great danger to self and others.
- Be explicit. Share the details with yourself, your team members, and your audiences.

## Qualitative Data Analysis as an Art

If you find yourself longing for the certainty of predefined measures and deductively derived hypotheses, you are beginning to understand the difference between setting out to analyze data quantitatively and planning to do so with a qualitative approach in mind. Or, maybe you are now appreciating better the contrast between the positivist and interpretivist research philosophies that I summarized in Chapter 3. When it comes right down to it, the process of qualitative data analysis is even described by some as involving as much “art” as science—as a “dance,” in the words of William Miller and Benjamin Crabtree (1999b) (Exhibit 10.1):

Interpretation is a complex and dynamic craft, with as much creative artistry as technical exactitude, and it requires an abundance of patient plodding, fortitude, and discipline. There are many changing rhythms; multiple steps; moments of jubilation, revelation, and exasperation. . . . The dance of interpretation is a dance for two, but those two are often multiple and frequently changing, and there is always an audience, even if it is not always visible. Two dancers are the interpreters and the texts. (pp. 138–139)

**Exhibit 10.1** Dance of Qualitative Analysis



Miller and Crabtree (1999b) identify three different modes of reading the text within the dance of qualitative data analysis:

1. When the researcher reads the text literally, she is focused on its literal content and form, so the text “leads” the dance.
2. When the researcher reads the text reflexively, she focuses on how her own orientation shapes her interpretations and focus. Now, the researcher leads the dance.
3. When the researcher reads the text interpretively, she tries to construct her own interpretation of what the text means.

Sherry Turkle’s (2011) book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other*, provides many examples of this analytic dance, although of course in the published book we are no longer able to see that dance in terms of her original notes. She often describes what she observed in classrooms. Here’s an example of such a *literal* focus, reflecting her experience in MIT’s Media Lab at the start of the mobile computing revolution:

In the summer of 1996, I met with seven young researchers at the MIT Media Lab who carried computers and radio transmitters in their backpacks and keyboards in their pockets. . . . they called themselves “cyborgs” and were always wirelessly connected to the Internet, always online, free from desks and cables. (Turkle 2011:151)

Such literal reports are interspersed with *interpretive* comments about the meaning of her observations:

The cyborgs were a new kind of nomad, wandering in and out of the physical real. . . . The multiplicity of worlds before them set them apart; they could be with you, but they were always somewhere else as well. (Turkle 2011:152)

And several times in each chapter, Turkle (2011) makes *reflexive* comments on her own reactions:

I don’t like the feeling of always being on call. But now, with a daughter studying abroad who expects to reach me when she wants to reach me, I am grateful to be tethered to her through the Net. . . . even these small things allow me to identify with the cyborgs’ claims of an enhanced experience. Tethered to the Internet, the cyborgs felt like more than they could be without it. Like most people, I experience a pint-sized version of such pleasures. (p. 153)

In this artful way, the qualitative data analyst reports on her notes from observing or interviewing, interprets those notes, and considers how she reacts to the notes. These processes emerge from reading the notes and continue while editing the notes and deciding how to organize them, in an ongoing cycle.

## Qualitative Compared With Quantitative Data Analysis

With this process in mind, let’s review the many ways in which qualitative data analysis differs from quantitative analysis (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:8–10; Patton 2002:13–14). Each difference reflects the qualitative data analysts’ orientation to in-depth, comprehensive understanding in which the analyst is an active participant as compared to the quantitative data analysts’ role as a dispassionate investigator of specific relations among discrete variables:

- A focus on meanings rather than on quantifiable phenomena
- Collection of many data on a few cases rather than few data on many cases

- Study in depth and detail, without predetermined categories or directions, rather than emphasis on analyses and categories determined in advance
- Conception of the researcher as an “instrument,” rather than as the designer of objective instruments to measure particular variables
- Sensitivity to context rather than seeking universal generalizations
- Attention to the impact of the researcher’s and others’ values on the course of the analysis rather than presuming the possibility of value-free inquiry
- A goal of rich descriptions of the world rather than measurement of specific variables

You’ll also want to keep in mind features of qualitative data analysis that are shared with those of quantitative data analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis can involve making distinctions about textual data. You also know that textual data can be transposed to quantitative data through a process of categorization and counting. Some qualitative analysts also share with quantitative researchers a positivist goal of describing better the world as it “really” is, although others have adopted a postmodern goal of trying to understand how different people see and make sense of the world, without believing that there is any “correct” description.

## 2 Techniques of Qualitative Data Analysis

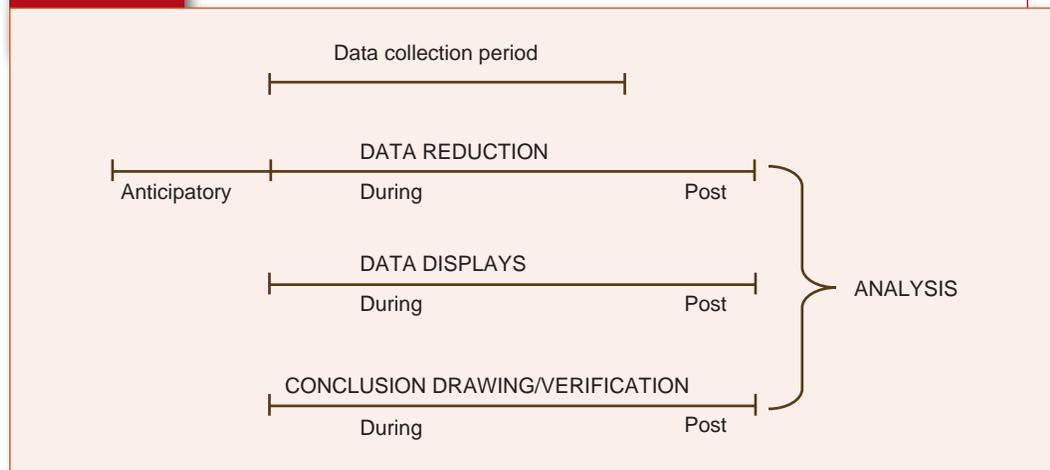
Exhibit 10.2 outlines the different techniques that are shared by most approaches to qualitative data analysis:

1. Documentation of the data and the process of data collection
2. Organization/categorization of the data into concepts
3. Connection of the data to show how one concept may influence another
4. Corroboration/legitimization, by evaluating alternative explanations, disconfirming evidence, and searching for negative cases
5. Representing the account (reporting the findings)

The analysis of qualitative research notes begins in the field, at the time of observation, interviewing, or both, as the researcher identifies problems and concepts that appear likely to help in understanding the situation. Simply reading the notes or transcripts is an important step in the analytic process. Researchers should make frequent notes in the margins to identify important statements and to propose ways of coding the data: “husband–wife conflict,” perhaps, or “tension-reduction strategy.”

An interim stage may consist of listing the concepts reflected in the notes and diagramming the relationships among concepts (Maxwell 1996:78–81). In large projects, weekly team meetings are an important part of this process. Susan Miller (1999) described this process in her study of neighborhood police officers (NPOs). Her research team met both to go over their field notes and to resolve points of confusion, as well as to dialogue with other skilled researchers who helped identify emerging concepts:

The fieldwork team met weekly to talk about situations that were unclear and to troubleshoot any problems. We also made use of peer-debriefing techniques. Here, multiple colleagues, who were familiar with qualitative data analysis but not involved in our research, participated in preliminary analysis of our findings. (p. 233)

**Exhibit 10.2** Flow Model of Qualitative Data Analysis Components

This process continues throughout the project and should assist in refining concepts during the report-writing phase, long after data collection has ceased. Let's examine each of the stages of qualitative research in more detail.

## Documentation

The data for a qualitative study most often are notes jotted down in the field or during an interview—from which the original comments, observations, and feelings are reconstructed—or text transcribed from audiotapes. “The basic data are these observations and conversations, the actual words of people reproduced to the best of my ability from the field notes” (Diamond 1992:7). What to do with all this material? Many field research projects have slowed to a halt because a novice researcher becomes overwhelmed by the quantity of information that has been collected. A 1-hour interview can generate 20 to 25 pages of single-spaced text (Kvale 1996:169). Analysis is less daunting, however, if the researcher maintains a disciplined transcription schedule.

Usually, I wrote these notes immediately after spending time in the setting or the next day. Through the exercise of writing up my field notes, with attention to “who” the speakers and actors were, I became aware of the nature of certain social relationships and their positional arrangements within the peer group. (Anderson 2003:235)

You can see the analysis already emerging from this simple process of taking notes.

The first formal analytical step is documentation. The various contacts, interviews, written documents, and whatever it is that preserves a record of what happened all need to be saved and listed. Documentation is critical to qualitative research for several reasons: It is essential for keeping track of what will be a rapidly growing volume of notes, tapes, and documents; it provides a way of developing and outlining the analytic process; and it encourages ongoing conceptualizing and strategizing about the text.

Miles and Huberman (1994:53) provide a good example of a contact summary form that was used to keep track of observational sessions in a qualitative study of a new school curriculum (Exhibit 10.3).

**Exhibit 10.3** Example of a Contact Summary Form

Contact type: \_\_\_\_\_ Site: Tindale  
 Visit \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_ Contact date: 11/28-29/79  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date: 12/28/79  
 (with whom) Written by: BLT

## 1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?

Interplay between highly prescriptive, “teacher-proof” curriculum that is top-down imposed and the actual writing of the curriculum by the teachers themselves.

Split between the “watchdogs” (administrators) and the “house masters” (dept. chairs & teachers) vis à vis job foci.

District curric, coord'r as decision maker re school's acceptance of research relationship.

## 2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this contact.

Question	Information
History of dev. of innov'n teachers	Conceptualized by Curric., Coord'r, English Chairman & Assoc. Chairman; written by teachers in summer; revised by following summer with field testing data
School's org'l structure	Principal & admin'rs responsible for discipline; dept chairs are educ'l leaders
Demographics emphasis	Racial conflicts in late 60's; 60% black stud. pop.; heavy on discipline & on keeping out non-district students slipping in from Chicago
Teachers' response to innov'n	Rigid, structured, etc. at first; now, they say they like it/ NEEDS EXPLORATION
Research access	Very good; only restriction: teachers not required to cooperate

## 3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?

Thoroughness of the innov'n's development and training.

Its embeddedness in the district's curriculum, as planned and executed by the district curriculum coordinator.

The initial resistance to its high prescriptiveness (as reported by users) as contrasted with their current acceptance and approval of it (again, as reported by users).

## 4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact with this site?

How do users really perceive the innov'n? If they do indeed embrace it, what accounts for the change from early resistance?

Nature and amount of networking among users of innov'n.

Information on “stubborn” math teachers whose ideas weren't heard initially—who are they? Situation particulars? Resolution?

Follow-up on English teacher Reilly's “fall from the chairmanship.”

Follow a team through a day of rotation, planning, etc.

CONCERN: The consequences of eating school cafeteria food two days per week for the next four or five months . . .

Stop

## Conceptualization, Coding, and Categorizing

Identifying and refining important concepts is a key part of the iterative process of qualitative research. Sometimes, conceptualizing begins with a simple observation that is interpreted directly, “pulled apart,” and then put back together more meaningfully. Robert Stake (1995) provides an example:

When Adam ran a pushbroom into the feet of the children nearby, I jumped to conclusions about his interactions with other children: aggressive, teasing, arresting. Of course, just a few minutes earlier I had seen him block the children climbing the steps in a similar moment of smiling bombast. So I was aggregating, and testing my unrealized hypotheses about what kind of kid he was, not postponing my interpreting. . . . My disposition was to keep my eyes on him. (p. 74)

The focus in this conceptualization “on the fly” is to provide a detailed description of what was observed and a sense of why that was important.

More often, analytic insights are tested against new observations, the initial statement of problems and concepts is refined, the researcher then collects more data, interacts with the data again, and the process continues. Anderson (2003) recounts how his conceptualization of social stratification at Jelly’s Bar developed over a long period of time:

I could see the social pyramid, how certain guys would group themselves and say in effect, “I’m here and you’re there.” . . . I made sense of these crowds [initially] as the “respectables,” the “nonrespectables,” and the “near-respectables.” . . . Inside, such non-respectables might sit on the crates, but if a respectable came along and wanted to sit there, the lower-status person would have to move. (pp. 225–226)

But this initial conceptualization changed with experience, as Anderson realized that the participants themselves used other terms to differentiate social status: *winehead*, *hoodlum*, and *regular* (Anderson 2003:230). What did they mean by these terms? The regulars basically valued “decency.” They associated decency with conventionality but also with “working for a living,” or having a “visible means of support” (Anderson 2003:231). In this way, Anderson progressively refined his concept as he gained experience in the setting.

Howard S. Becker (1958) provides another excellent illustration of this iterative process of conceptualization in his study of medical students:

When we first heard medical students apply the term “crock” to patients, we made an effort to learn precisely what they meant by it. We found, through interviewing students about cases both they and the observer had seen, that the term referred in a derogatory way to patients with many subjective symptoms but no discernible physical pathology. Subsequent observations indicated that this usage was a regular feature of student behavior and thus that we should attempt to incorporate this fact into our model of student-patient behavior. The derogatory character of the term suggested in particular that we investigate the reasons students disliked these patients. We found that this dislike was related to what we discovered to be the students’ perspective on medical school: the view that they were in school to get experience in recognizing and treating those common diseases most likely to be encountered in general practice. “Crocks,” presumably having no disease, could furnish no such experience. We were thus led to specify connections between the student-patient relationship and the student’s view of the purpose of this professional education. Questions concerning the genesis of this perspective led to discoveries about the organization of the student body and communication among students, phenomena which we had been assigning to another [segment of the larger theoretical model being developed]. Since “crocks” were also disliked because they gave the student no opportunity to assume medical responsibility, we were able to connect this aspect of the student-patient relationship with still another tentative model of the value system and hierarchical organization of the school, in which medical responsibility plays an important role. (p. 658)

This excerpt shows how the researcher first was alerted to a concept by observations in the field, then refined his understanding of this concept by investigating its meaning. By observing the concept's frequency of use, he came to realize its importance. Then he incorporated the concept into an explanatory model of student-patient relationships.

A well-designed chart, or **matrix**, can facilitate the coding and categorization process. Exhibit 10.4 shows an example of a coding form designed by Miles and Huberman (1994:93–95) to represent the extent to which

#### Exhibit 10.4 Example of Checklist Matrix

Presence of Supporting Conditions		
Condition	For Users	For Administrators
Commitment	<i>Strong</i> —"wanted to make it work."	<i>Weak</i> at building level. Prime movers in central office committed; others not.
Understanding	<i>Basic</i> ("felt I could do it, but I just wasn't sure how.") for teacher. <i>Absent</i> for aide ("didn't understand how we were going to get all this.")	<i>Absent</i> at building level and among staff. <i>Basic</i> for 2 prime movers ("got all the help we needed from developer.") <i>Absent</i> for other central office staff.
Materials	<i>Inadequate</i> : ordered late, puzzling ("different from anything I ever used"), discarded.	NA
Front-end training	<i>Sketchy</i> for teacher ("it all happened so quickly"); no demo class. <i>None</i> for aide ("totally unprepared. I had to learn along with the children.")	Prime movers in central office had training at developer site; none for others.
Skills	<i>Weak-adequate</i> for teacher. <i>None</i> for aide.	One prime mover (Robeson) skilled in substance; others unskilled.
Ongoing inservice	<i>None</i> , except for monthly committee meeting; no substitute funds.	<i>None</i>
Planning, coordination time	<i>None</i> : both users on other tasks during day; lab tightly scheduled, no free time.	<i>None</i>
Provisions for debugging	<i>None</i> systematized; spontaneous work done by users during summer.	<i>None</i>
School admin. support	<i>Adequate</i>	NA
Central admin. support	<i>Very strong</i> on part of prime movers.	Building admin. only acting on basis of central office commitment.
Relevant prior experience	<i>Strong</i> and useful in both cases: had done individualized instruction, worked with low achievers. But aide had no diagnostic experience.	<i>Present</i> and useful in central office, esp. Robeson (specialist).

**Matrix** A form on which can be recorded systematically particular features of multiple cases or instances that a qualitative data analyst needs to examine.

teachers and teachers' aides ("users") and administrators at a school gave evidence of various supporting conditions that indicate preparedness for a new reading program. The matrix condenses data into simple categories, reflects further analysis of the data to identify degree of support, and provides a multidimensional summary that will facilitate subsequent, more intensive analysis. Direct quotes still impart some of the flavor of the original text.

## Examining Relationships and Displaying Data

Examining relationships is the centerpiece of the analytic process, because it allows the researcher to move from simple description of the people and settings to explanations of why things happened as they did with those people in that setting. The process of examining relationships can be captured in a matrix that shows how different concepts are connected, or perhaps what causes are linked with what effects.

### Exhibit 10.5

#### Coding Form for Relationships: Stakeholders' Stakes

	Favorable	Neutral or Unknown	Antagonistic
High			
Moderate			
Low			

*Note:* Construct illustrative case studies for each cell based on fieldwork.

Exhibit 10.5 displays a matrix used to capture the relationship between the extent to which stakeholders in a new program had something important at stake in the program and the researcher's estimate of their favorability toward the program. Each cell of the matrix was to be filled in with a summary of an illustrative case study. In other matrix analyses, quotes might be included in the cells to represent the opinions of these different stakeholders, or the number of cases of each type might appear in the cells. The possibilities are almost endless. Keeping this approach in mind will generate many fruitful ideas for structuring a qualitative data analysis.

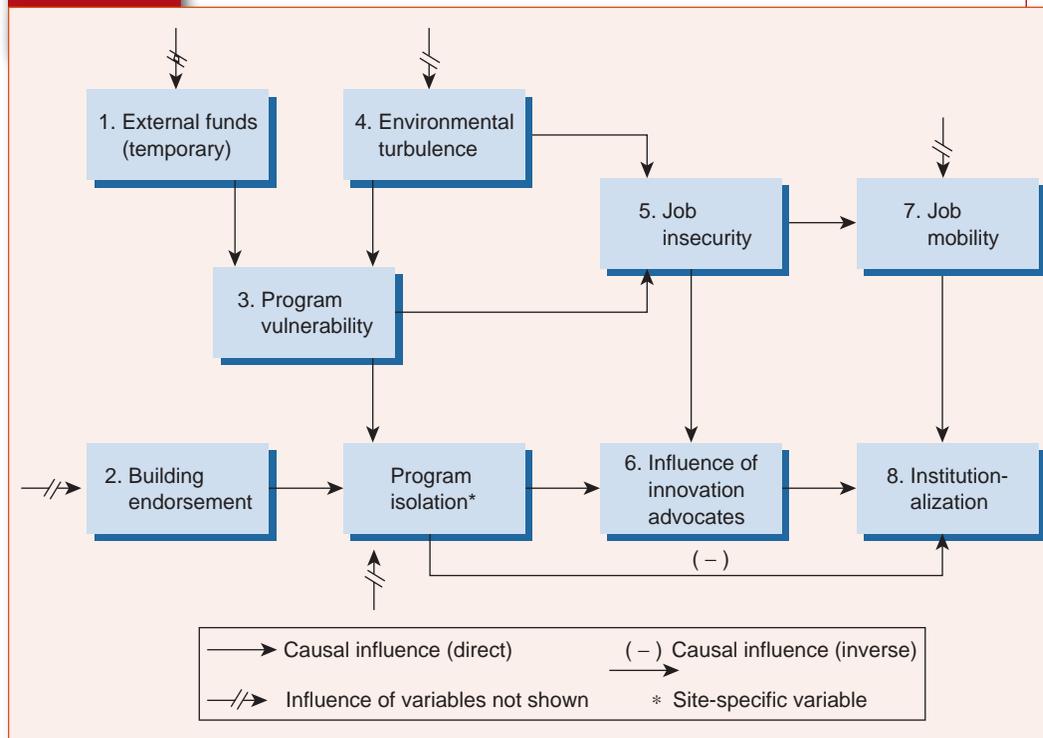
The simple relationships that are identified with a matrix like that shown in Exhibit 10.5 can be examined and then extended to create a more complex causal model.

Such a model represents the multiple relationships among the constructs identified in a qualitative analysis as important for explaining some outcome. A great deal of analysis must precede the construction of such a model, with careful attention to identification of important variables and the evidence that suggests connections between them. Exhibit 10.6 provides an example of these connections from a study of the implementation of a school program.

## Authenticating Conclusions

No set standards exist for evaluating the validity, or *authenticity*, of conclusions in a qualitative study, but the need to carefully consider the evidence and methods on which conclusions are based is just as great as with other types of research. Individual items of information can be assessed in terms of at least three criteria (Becker 1958):

1. *How credible was the informant?* Were statements made by someone with whom the researcher had a relationship of trust or by someone the researcher had just met? Did the informant have reason to lie? If the statements do not seem to be trustworthy as indicators of actual events, can they at least be used to help understand the informant's perspective?
2. *Were statements made in response to the researcher's questions, or were they spontaneous?* Spontaneous statements are more likely to indicate what would have been said had the researcher not been present.

**Exhibit 10.6** Example of a Causal Network Model

3. *How does the presence or absence of the researcher or the researcher's informant influence the actions and statements of other group members?* Reactivity to being observed can never be ruled out as a possible explanation for some directly observed social phenomenon. However, if the researcher carefully compares what the informant says goes on when the researcher is not present, what the researcher observes directly, and what other group members say about their normal practices, the extent of reactivity can be assessed to some extent (pp. 654–656).

A qualitative researcher's conclusions should also be assessed by his or her ability to provide a credible explanation for some aspect of social life. That explanation should capture group members' **tacit knowledge** of the social processes that were observed, not just their verbal statements about these processes. Tacit knowledge—"the largely unarticulated, contextual understanding that is often manifested in nods, silences, humor, and naughty nuances"—is reflected in participants' actions as well as their words and in what they fail to state but nonetheless feel deeply and even take for granted (Altheide & Johnson 1994:492–493). These features are evident in Whyte's (1955) analysis of Cornerville social patterns:

**Tacit knowledge** In field research, a credible sense of understanding of social processes that reflects the researcher's awareness of participants' actions as well as their words, and of what they fail to state, feel deeply, and take for granted.

The corner-gang structure arises out of the habitual association of the members over a long period of time. The nuclei of most gangs can be traced back to early boyhood. . . . Home plays a very small role in the group activities of the corner boy. . . . The life of the corner boy proceeds along regular and narrowly circumscribed channels. . . . Out of [social interaction within the group] arises a system of mutual obligations which is fundamental to group cohesion. . . . The code of the corner boy requires him to help his friends when he can and to refrain from doing anything to harm them. When life in the group runs smoothly, the obligations binding members to one another are not explicitly recognized. (pp. 255–257)

Comparing conclusions from a qualitative research project to those other researchers obtained while conducting similar projects can also increase confidence in their authenticity. Miller's (1999) study of NPOs found striking parallels in the ways they defined their masculinity to processes reported in research about males in nursing and other traditionally female jobs:

In part, male NPOs construct an exaggerated masculinity so that they are not seen as feminine as they carry out the social-work functions of policing. Related to this is the almost defiant expression of heterosexuality, so that the men's sexual orientation can never truly be doubted even if their gender roles are contested. Male patrol officers' language—such as their use of terms like “pansy police” to connote neighborhood police officers—served to affirm their own heterosexuality. . . . In addition, the male officers, but not the women, deliberately wove their heterosexual status into conversations, explicitly mentioning their female domestic partner or spouse and their children. This finding is consistent with research conducted in the occupational field. The studies reveal that men in female-dominated occupations, such as teachers, librarians, and pediatricians, over-reference their heterosexual status to ensure that others will not think they are gay. (p. 222)

## Reflexivity

Confidence in the conclusions from a field research study is also strengthened by an honest and informative account about how the researcher interacted with subjects in the field, what problems he or she encountered, and how these problems were or were not resolved. Such a “natural history” of the development of the evidence enables others to evaluate the findings and reflects the interpretivist philosophy that guides many qualitative researchers (see Chapter 3). Such an account is important first and foremost because of the evolving and variable nature of field research: To an important extent, the researcher “makes up” the method in the context of a particular investigation rather than applying standard procedures that are specified before the investigation begins.

Barrie Thorne (1993) provides a good example of this final element of the analysis:

Many of my observations concern the workings of gender categories in social life. For example, I trace the evocation of gender in the organization of everyday interactions, and the shift from boys and girls as loose aggregations to “the boys” and “the girls” as self-aware, gender-based groups. In writing about these processes, I discovered that different angles of vision lurk within seemingly simple choices of language. How, for example, should one describe a group of children? A phrase like “six girls and three boys were chasing by the tires” already assumes the relevance of gender. An alternative description of the same event—“nine fourth-graders were chasing by the tires”—emphasizes age and downplays gender. Although I found no tidy solutions, I have tried to be thoughtful about such choices. . . . After several months of observing at Oceanside, I realized that my field notes were peppered with the words “child” and “children,” but that the children themselves rarely used the term. “What do they call themselves?” I badgered in an entry in my field notes. The answer it turned out, is that children use the same practices as adults. They refer to one another by using given names (“Sally,” “Jack”) or language specific to a given context (“that guy on first base”). They rarely have occasion to use age-generic terms. But when pressed to locate themselves in an age-based way, my informants used “kids” rather than “children.” (pp. 8–9)

Qualitative data analysts, more often than quantitative researchers, display real sensitivity to how a social situation or process is interpreted from a particular background and set of values and not simply based on the situation itself (Altheide & Johnson 1994). Researchers are only human, after all, and must rely on their own

senses and process all information through their own minds. By reporting how and why they think they did what they did, they can help others determine whether, or how, the researchers' perspectives influenced their conclusions. "There should be clear 'tracks' indicating the attempt [to show the hand of the ethnographer] has been made" (Altheide & Johnson 1994:493).

Anderson's (2003) memoir about the Jelly's Bar research illustrates the type of "tracks" that an ethnographer makes as well as how the researcher can describe those tracks. Anderson acknowledges that his tracks began as a child:

While growing up in the segregated black community of South Bend, from an early age, I was curious about the goings-on in the neighborhood, particularly the streets and more particularly the corner taverns where my uncles and my dad would go to hang out and drink. . . . Hence, my selection of a field setting was a matter of my background, intuition, reason, and a little bit of luck. (pp. 217–218)

After starting to observe at Jelly's, Anderson's (2003) tracks led to Herman:

After spending a couple of weeks at Jelly's, I met Herman. I felt that our meeting marked an important step. We would come to know each other well . . . something of an informal leader at Jelly's. . . . We were becoming friends. . . . He seemed to genuinely like me, and he was one person I could feel comfortable with. (pp. 218–219)

So we learn that Anderson's observations were to be shaped, in part, by Herman's perspective, but we also find out that Anderson maintained some engagement with fellow students. This contact outside the bar helped shape his analysis: "By relating my experiences to my fellow students, I began to develop a coherent perspective, or a 'story' of the place that complemented the accounts I had detailed in my accumulating field notes" (Anderson 2003:220).

In this way, the outcome of Anderson's analysis of qualitative data resulted, in part, from the way in which he "played his role" as a researcher and participant, not just from the setting itself.

## 2 Alternatives in Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analyst can choose from many interesting alternative approaches. Of course, the research question under investigation should shape the selection of an analytic approach, but the researcher's preferences and experiences also will inevitably have an important influence on the method chosen. The alternative approaches I present here (ethnography, and its new online cousin, *netnography*); ethnomethodology; qualitative comparative analysis; narrative analysis; conversation analysis; case-oriented understanding; and grounded theory) give you a good sense of the different possibilities (Patton 2002).

### Ethnography

**Ethnography** is the study of a culture or cultures that a group of people share (Van Maanen 1995:4). As a method, it is usually meant to refer to the process of participant observation by a single investigator who immerses himself or herself in the group for a long period of time (often one or more years), gradually establishing

**Ethnography** The study of a culture or cultures that some group of people shares, using participant observation over an extended period of time.

trust and experiencing the social world as do the participants (Madden 2010:16). Ethnographic research can also be called *naturalistic*, because it seeks to describe and understand the natural social world as it really is, in all its richness and detail. This goal is best achieved when an ethnographer is fluent in the local language and spends enough time in the setting to know how people live, what they say about themselves and what they actually do, and what they value (Armstrong 2008:55).

As you learned in Chapter 9, anthropological field research has traditionally been ethnographic, and much sociological fieldwork shares these same characteristics. But there are no particular methodological techniques associated with ethnography, other than just “being there.” The analytic process relies on the thoroughness and insight of the researcher to “tell us like it is” in the setting, as he or she experienced it.

*Code of the Street*, Anderson’s (1999) award-winning study of Philadelphia’s inner city, captures the flavor of this approach:

My primary aim in this work is to render ethnographically the social and cultural dynamics of the interpersonal violence that is currently undermining the quality of life of too many urban neighborhoods. . . . How do the people of the setting perceive their situation? What assumptions do they bring to their decision making? (pp. 10–11)

The methods of investigation are described in the book’s preface: participant observation, including direct observation and in-depth interviews, impressionistic materials drawn from various social settings around the city, and interviews with a wide variety of people. Like most traditional ethnographers, Anderson (1999) describes his concern with being “as objective as possible” and using his training as other ethnographers do, “to look for and to recognize underlying assumptions, their own and those of their subjects, and to try to override the former and uncover the latter” (p. 11).

From analysis of the data obtained in these ways, a rich description of life in the inner city emerges. Although we often do not “hear” the residents speak, we feel the community’s pain in Anderson’s (1999) description of “the aftermath of death”:

When a young life is cut down, almost everyone goes into mourning. The first thing that happens is that a crowd gathers about the site of the shooting or the incident. The police then arrive, drawing more of a crowd. Since such a death often occurs close to the victim’s house, his mother or his close relatives and friends may be on the scene of the killing. When they arrive, the women and girls often wail and moan, crying out their grief for all to hear, while the young men simply look on, in studied silence. . . . Soon the ambulance arrives. (p. 138)

Anderson (1999) uses this description as a foundation on which he develops the key concepts in his analysis, such as “code of the street”:

The “code of the street” is not the goal or product of any individual’s action but is the fabric of everyday life, a vivid and pressing milieu within which all local residents must shape their personal routines, income strategies, and orientations to schooling, as well as their mating, parenting, and neighbor relations. (p. 326)

Anderson’s report on his Jelly’s Bar study illustrates how his ethnographic analysis deepened as he became more socially integrated into the Jelly’s Bar group. He thus became more successful at “blending the local knowledge one has learned with what we already know sociologically about such settings” (Anderson 2003:236):

I engaged the denizens of the corner and wrote detailed field notes about my experiences, and from time to time I looked for patterns and relationships in my notes. In this way, an understanding of the setting came to me in time, especially as I participated more fully in the life of the corner and wrote my field notes about my experiences; as my notes accumulated and as I reviewed them occasionally and supplemented them with conceptual memos to myself, their meanings became more clear, while even more questions emerged. (Anderson 2003:224)

A good ethnography like Anderson's is only possible when the ethnographer learns the subtleties of expression used in a group and the multiple meanings that can be given to statements or acts (Armstrong 2008:60–62). Good ethnographies also include some reflection by the researcher on the influence his or her own background has had on research plans, as well as on the impact of the research in the setting (Madden 2010:22–23).

## Netnography

Communities can refer not only to people in a common physical location, but also to relationships that develop online. Online communities may be formed by persons with similar interests or backgrounds, perhaps to create new social relationships that location or schedules did not permit, or to supplement relationships that emerge in the course of work or school or other ongoing social activities. Like communities of people who interact face-to-face, online communities can develop a culture and become sources of identification and attachment (Kozinets 2010:14–15). And like physical communities, researchers can study online communities through immersion in the group for an extended period. **Netnography**, also termed *cyberethnography* and *virtual ethnography* (James & Busher 2009:34–35), is the use of ethnographic methods to study online communities.

In some respects, netnography is similar to traditional ethnography. The researcher prepares to enter the field by becoming familiar with online communities and their language and customs, formulating an exploratory research question about social processes or orientations in that setting, selecting an appropriate community to study. Unlike in-person ethnographies, netnographies can focus on communities whose members are physically distant and dispersed. The selected community should be relevant to the research question, involve frequent communication among actively engaged members, and have a number of participants who, as a result, generate a rich body of textual data (Kozinets 2010:89).

The netnographer's self-introduction should be clear and friendly. Robert Kozinets (2010:93) provides the following example written about the online discussion space, alt.coffee:

I've been lurking here for a while, studying online coffee culture on alt.coffee, learning a lot, and enjoying it very much . . . I just wanted to pop out of lurker status to let you know I am here . . . I will be wanting to quote some of the great posts that have appeared here, and I will contact the individuals by personal e-mail who posted them to ask their permission to quote them. I also will be making the document on coffee culture available to any interested members of the newsgroup for their perusal and comments—to make sure I get things right.

A netnographer must keep both observational and reflective field notes, but unlike a traditional ethnographer can return to review the original data—the posted text—long after it was produced. The data can then be coded, annotated with the researcher's interpretations, checked against new data to evaluate the persistence of social patterns, and used to develop a theory that is grounded in the data.

**Netnography** The use of ethnographic methods to study online communities. Also termed *cyberethnography* and *virtual ethnography*.



## In the News

### Research in the News

#### READERS' ONLINE FEEDBACK CAN BE VICIOUS

After a woman published an article in an online magazine about postpartum post-traumatic stress disorder following a traumatic delivery experience with her baby boy, the nasty comments started to pour in to the area reserved for reader responses. She was told not to have any more babies and that she would be a bad mother. In a similar incident, an uninsured woman who had written of her inability to function after a car accident was told to “Get a minnie mouse bandage and go to sleep.” Why do some people get so vicious on the Internet? One social scientist suggested that it is because of the lack of face-to-face interaction, which provides constant feedback about others’ feelings through body language and gestures.

*Source:* Brodessa-Akner, Taffy. 2010. “E-Playgrounds Can Get Vicious (Online Feedback From Readers).” *The New York Times*, April 22:E8.

## Ethnomethodology

**Ethnomethodology** A qualitative research method focused on the way that participants in a social setting create and sustain a sense of reality.

**Ethnomethodology** focuses on the way that participants construct the social world in which they live—how they “create reality”—rather than on describing the social world itself. In fact, ethnomethodologists do not necessarily believe that we can find an objective reality; it is the way that participants come to create and sustain a sense of reality that is of interest. In the words of Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (1997), in ethnomethodology, as compared with the naturalistic orientation of ethnography,

the focus shifts from the scenic features of everyday life onto the ways through which the world comes to be experienced as real, concrete, factual, and “out there.” An interest in members’ methods of constituting their world supersedes the naturalistic project of describing members’ worlds as they know them. (p. 41)

Unlike the ethnographic analyst, who seeks to describe the social world as the participants see it, the ethnomethodological analyst seeks to maintain some distance from that world. The ethnomethodologist views a code of conduct like that described by Anderson (2003) not as a description of a real normative force that constrains social action, but as the way that people in the setting create a sense of order and social structure (Gubrium & Holstein 1997:44–45). The ethnomethodologist focuses on how reality is constructed, not on what it is.

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967) developed ethnomethodology in the 1960s and first applied it to the study of gender. Focusing on a teenage male-to-female transsexual who he termed “Agnes,” he described her “social achievement of gender” as

the tasks of securing and guaranteeing for herself the ascribed rights and obligations of an adult female by the acquisition and use of skills and capacities, the efficacious display of female appearances and performances, and the mobilizing of appropriate feelings and purposes. (p. 134)

The ethnomethodological focus on how the meaning of gender and other categories are socially constructed leads to a concern with verbal interaction. In recent years, this concern has led ethnomethodologists and others to develop a more formal approach, called *conversation analysis*.

## Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis is a specific qualitative method for analyzing the sequential organization and details of conversation. Like ethnomethodology, from which it developed, conversation analysis focuses on how reality is constructed, rather than on what it is. From this perspective, detailed analysis of conversational interaction is important because conversation is “sociological bedrock”: . . . “a form of social organization through which the work of . . . institutions such as the economy, the polity, the family, socialization, etc.” is accomplished (Schegloff 1996:4).

. . . it is through conversation that we conduct the ordinary affairs of our lives. Our relationships with one another, and our sense of who we are to one another is generated, manifest, maintained, and managed in and through our conversations, whether face-to-face, on the telephone, or even by other electronic means. (Drew 2005:74)

Three premises guide conversation analysis (Gubrium & Holstein 2000:492):

1. Interaction is sequentially organized, and talk can be analyzed in terms of the process of social interaction rather than in terms of motives or social status.
2. Talk, as a process of social interaction, is contextually oriented—it is both shaped by interaction and creates the social context of that interaction.
3. These processes are involved in all social interaction, so no interactive details are irrelevant to understanding it.

Consider these premises as you read the following excerpt from Elizabeth Stokoe’s (2006:479–480) analysis of the relevance of gender categories to “talk-in-interaction.” The dialogue is between four first-year British psychology students who must write up a description of some photographs of people (Exhibit 10.7). Stokoe incorporates stills from the video recording of the interaction into her analysis of both the talk and embodied conduct in interaction. In typical conversation analysis style, the text is broken up into brief segments that capture shifts in meaning, changes in the speaker, pauses, nonspeech utterances and nonverbal actions, and emphases.

Can you see how the social interaction reinforces the link of “woman” and “secretary”? Here, in part, is how Elizabeth Stokoe (2006) analyzes this conversation:

In order to meet the task demands, one member of the group must write down their ideas. Barney’s question at the start of the sequence, “is somebody scribing” is taken up after a reformulation: “who’s writin’ it.” Note that, through a variety of strategies, members of the group manage their responses such that they do not have to take on the role of scribe. At line 05, Neil’s “Oh yhe:ah.” treats Barney’s turn as a proposal to be agreed with, rather than a request for action, and his subsequent nomination of Kay directs the role away from himself. . . . At line 08, Neil nominates Kay, his pointing gesture working in aggregate with the talk to accomplish the action (“She wants to do it.”), whilst also attributing agency to Kay for taking up the role. A gloss [interpretation] might be “Secretaries in general are female, you’re female, so you in particular are our secretary.” (p. 481)

**Exhibit 10.7** Conversation Analysis, Including Pictures

1. UT-23

01 N: D' you reckon she's an instructor then.  
 02 N: (0.2)  
 03 N: Of some sort,  
 04 B: → Is somebody scribing. Who's writin' it. =  
 05 N: =Oh yhe:ah.  
 06 N: (0.8)  
 07 M: Well you can't [ read my ] =  
 08 N: [((pointing to K)) She wants to do it.]



09 M: =writin' once I've [wri:ttten it.]  
 10 K: [.hehhhh]  
 11 N: We:ll secretary an' female.  
 12 → (0.3)  
 13 K: .Hh heh heh heh ((nodding, picks up pen and paper))



14 (0.4)  
 15 M: It's uh::,  
 16 K: Yeah: I'm wearing glasses I must be the secretary.=

Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe (2006:61–62) used a conversation between three friends to illustrate key concepts in conversation analysis. The text is prepared for analysis by numbering the lines, identifying the speakers, and inserting ↑ symbols to indicate inflection and decimal numbers to indicate elapsed time.

- 104 **Marie:** ↑ Has ↑ anyone- (0.2) has anyone got any really non:  
 105                   sweaty stuff.  
 106 **Dawn:** Dave has, but you'll smell like a ma:n,  
 107                   (0.9)  
 108 **Kate:** Eh [ ↑ huh heh]  
 109 **Marie:** [Right has] anyone got any ↑ fe:minine non sweaty stuff.

The gap at line 107, despite being less than a second long, is nevertheless quite a long time in conversation, and indicates an interactional glitch or trouble. As Kate starts to laugh, Marie reformulates her request, from “↑ has ↑ anyone got any really non: sweaty stuff,” to “right has anyone got any, ↑ fe:minine non sweaty stuff.” The word *really* is replaced by *feminine*, and is produced with an audible increase in pitch and emphasis. This replacement, together with the addition of *right*, displays her understanding of the problem with her previous question. For these speakers, smelling like a man (when one is a woman) is treated as a trouble source, a laughable thing and something that needs attending to and fixing. In this way, conversation analysis can uncover meanings in interactions about which the participants are not fully aware (Antaki 2008:438).

## Narrative Analysis

Narrative methods use interviews and sometimes documents or observations to “follow participants down their trails” (Riessman 2008:24). Unlike conversation analysis, which focuses attention on moment-by-moment interchange, narrative analysis seeks to put together the “big picture” about experiences or events as the participants understand them. **Narrative analysis** focuses on “the story itself” and seeks to preserve the integrity of personal biographies or a series of events that cannot adequately be understood in terms of their discrete elements (Riessman 2002:218). Narrative “displays the goals and intentions of human actors; it makes individuals, cultures, societies, and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes” (Richardson 1995:200). The coding for a narrative analysis is typically of the narratives as a whole, rather than of the different elements within them. The coding strategy revolves around reading the stories and classifying them into general patterns.

**Narrative analysis** A form of qualitative analysis in which the analyst focuses on how respondents impose order on the flow of experience in their lives and thus make sense of events and actions in which they have participated.

For example, Calvin Morrill and his colleagues (2000:534) read through 254 conflict narratives written by the ninth graders they studied and found four different types of stories:

1. *Action tales*, in which the author represents himself or herself and others as acting within the parameters of taken-for-granted assumptions about what is expected for particular roles among peers.
2. *Expressive tales*, in which the author focuses on strong, negative emotional responses to someone who has wronged him or her.
3. *Moral tales*, in which the author recounts explicit norms that shaped his or her behavior in the story and influenced the behavior of others.
4. *Rational tales*, in which the author represents himself or herself as a rational decision maker navigating through the events of the story.

In addition to these dominant distinctions, Morrill et al. (2000:534–535) also distinguished the stories in terms of four stylistic dimensions: (1) plot structure (e.g., whether the story unfolds sequentially), (2) dramatic tension (how the central conflict is represented), (3) dramatic resolution (how the central conflict is resolved), and (4) predominant outcomes (how the story ends). Coding reliability was checked through a discussion between the two primary coders, who found that their classifications agreed for a large percentage of the stories.

The excerpt that begins this chapter exemplifies what Morrill et al. (2000) termed an *action tale*. Such tales

unfold in matter-of-fact tones kindled by dramatic tensions that begin with a disruption of the quotidian order of everyday routines. A shove, a bump, a look . . . triggers a response . . . Authors of action tales typically organize their plots as linear streams of events as they move briskly through the story's scenes . . . This story's dramatic tension finally resolves through physical fighting, but . . . only after an attempted conciliation. (p. 536)

You can contrast this action tale with the following narrative, which Morrill et al. (2000) classify as a *moral tale*, in which the students “explicitly tell about their moral reasoning, often referring to how normative commitments shape their decisionmaking” (p. 542):

I . . . got into a fight because I wasn't allowed into the basketball game. I was being harassed by the captains that wouldn't pick me and also many of the players. The same type of things had happened almost every day where they called me bad words so I decided to teach the ring leader a lesson. I've never been in a fight before but I realized that sometimes you have to make a stand against the people that constantly hurt you, especially emotionally. I hit him in the face a couple of times and I got [the] respect I finally deserved. (pp. 545–546)

Morrill et al. (2000:553) summarize their classification of the youth narratives in a simple table that highlights the frequency of each type of narrative and the characteristics associated with each of them (Exhibit 10.8). How does such an analysis contribute to our understanding of youth violence? Morrill et al. (2000) first emphasize that their narratives “suggest that consciousness of conflict among youths—like that among adults—is not a singular entity, but comprises a rich and diverse range of perspectives” (p. 551).

Theorizing inductively, Morrill et al. (2000:553–554) then attempt to explain why action tales were much more common than the more adult-oriented normative, rational, or emotionally expressive tales. One possibility is Gilligan's (1988) theory of moral development, which suggests that younger students are likely to limit themselves to the simpler action tales that “concentrate on taken-for-granted assumptions of their peer and wider cultures, rather than on more self-consciously reflective interpretation and evaluation” (Morrill et al. 2000:554). More generally, Morrill et al. (2000) argue, “We can begin to think of the building blocks of cultures as different narrative styles in which various aspects of reality are accentuated, constituted, or challenged, just as others are deemphasized or silenced” (p. 556).

In this way, Morrill et al.'s (2000) narrative analysis allowed an understanding of youth conflict to emerge from the youths' own stories while also informing our understanding of broader social theories and processes.

Narrative analysis can also use documents and observations and focus more attention on how stories are constructed, rather than on the resulting narrative (Hyvärinen 2008:452). Narrative analyst Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008:67–73) describes the effective combination of data from documents, interviews, and field observations to learn how members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) developed a group identity (Cain 1991). Propositions that Carole Cain (1991:228) identified repeatedly in the documents enter into stories as guidelines

**Exhibit 10.8** Summary Comparison of Youth Narratives\*

Representation of	Action Tales (N = 144)	Moral Tales (N = 51)	Expressive Tales (N = 35)	Rational Tales (N = 24)
Bases of everyday conflict	Disruption of everyday routines & expectations	Normative violation	Emotional provocation	Goal obstruction
Decision making	Intuitive	Principled stand	Sensual	Calculative choice
Conflict handling	Confrontational	Ritualistic	Cathartic	Deliberative
Physical violence†	In 44% (N = 67)	In 27% (N = 16)	In 49% (N = 20)	In 29% (N = 7)
Adults in youth conflict control	Invisible or background	Sources of rules	Agents of repression	Institutions of social control

\*Total N = 254.

†Percentages based on the number of stories in each category.

for describing the progression of drinking, the desire and inability to stop, the necessity of “hitting bottom” before the program can work, and the changes that take place in one’s life after joining AA.

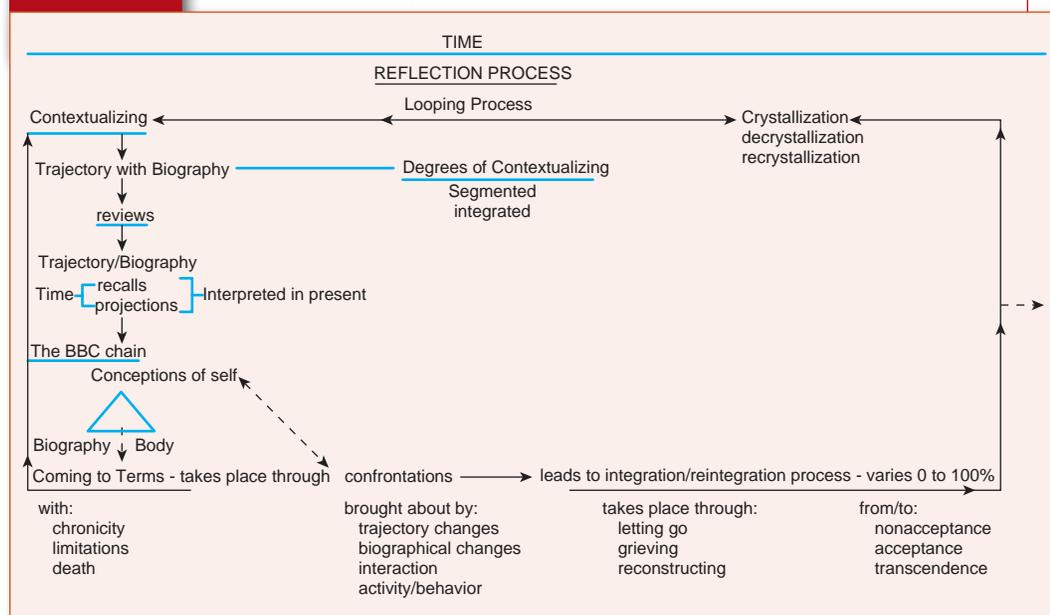
Cain then found that this same narrative was expressed repeatedly in AA meetings. She only interviewed three AA members but found that one who had been sober and in AA for many years told “his story” using this basic narrative, while one who had been sober for only 2 years deviated from the narrative in some ways. One interviewee did not follow this standard narrative at all as he told his story; he had attended AA only sporadically for 20 years and left soon after the interview. Cain (1991) explains,

I argue that as the AA member learns the AA story model, and learns to place the events and experiences of his own life into the model, he learns to tell and to understand his own life as an AA life, and himself as an AA alcoholic. The personal story is a cultural vehicle for identity acquisition. (p. 215)

## Grounded Theory

Theory development occurs continually in qualitative data analysis (Coffey & Atkinson 1996:23). Many qualitative researchers use a method of developing theory during their analysis that is termed **grounded theory**, which involves building up inductively a systematic theory that is *grounded* in, or based on, the observations. The grounded theorist first summarizes observations into conceptual categories, and tests the coherence of these categories directly in the research setting with more observations. Over time, as the researcher refines and links the conceptual categories, a theory evolves (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Huberman & Miles 1994:436). Exhibit 10.9 diagrams the grounded theory of a chronic illness “trajectory” developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990:221). Their notes suggested to them that conceptions of self, biography, and body are reintegrated after a process of grieving.

**Grounded theory** Systematic theory developed inductively, based on observations that are summarized into conceptual categories, reevaluated in the research setting, and gradually refined and linked to other conceptual categories.

**Exhibit 10.9 A Grounded Theory Model**

As observation, interviewing, and reflection continue, grounded theory researchers refine their definitions of problems and concepts and select indicators. They can then check the frequency and distribution of phenomena: How many people made a particular type of comment? How often did social interaction lead to arguments? Social system models may then be developed, which specify the relationships among different phenomena. These models are modified as researchers gain experience in the setting. For the final analysis, the researchers check their models carefully against their notes and make a concerted attempt to discover negative evidence that might suggest that the model is incorrect.

Heidi Levitt, Rebecca Todd Swanger, and Jenny Butler (2008:435) used a systematic grounded method of analysis to understand the perspective of male perpetrators of violence on female victims. Research participants were recruited from programs the courts used in Memphis to assess and treat perpetrators who admitted to having physically abused a female intimate partner. All program participants were of low socioeconomic status, but in other respects Levitt and her colleagues (2008:436) sought to recruit a diverse sample.

The researchers (Levitt et al. 2008:437–438) began the analysis of their interview transcripts by dividing them up into “meaning units”—“segments of texts that each contain one main idea”—and labeling these units with terms like those used by participants. They then compared these labels and combined them into larger descriptive categories. This process continued until they had combined all the meaning units into seven different clusters. Exhibit 10.10 gives an example of two of their clusters and the four categories of meaning units combined within each (Levitt et al. 2008:439).

Here is how Levitt and her colleagues (2008) discuss the comments that were classified in Cluster 2, Category 3:

Accordingly, when conflicts accumulated that could not be easily resolved, many of the men (5 of 12) thought that ending the relationship was the only way to stop violence from recurring. (p. 440)

**Exhibit 10.10 Clusters and Categories in a Grounded Theory Analysis**

Clusters (endorsement)	Categories (endorsement)
<p>1. The arrest incident is a hurdle or a test from god that I alone have to deal with, although the responsibility for the abuse was not all my own. (10)</p>	<p>1. If alcohol or drugs had not been in the picture, we wouldn't have come to blows: Substance use is thought to increase the rate of IPV (2)</p> <p>2. I don't want to get involved in conflict because I don't want to deal with its consequences (9)</p> <p>3. Joint responsibility in conflict depends on who did more fighting (8)</p> <p>4. How women cause IPV: Being treated as a child through nagging and being disrespected (5)</p>
<p>2. Passive avoidance and withdrawal from conflict is the best way to prevent aggression and to please god. (10)</p>	<p>1. DV thought to be "cured" by passively attending classes and learning anger management (6)</p> <p>2. Religious interventions have been vague or guilt producing, we need explicit advice and aren't getting it (9)</p> <p>3. Intimate partner violence can be stopped by cutting off relationships, but this can be a painful experience (5)</p> <p>4. Should resolve conflict to create harmony and avoid depression—but conflict may increase as a result (10)</p>

I don't deal with anybody so I don't have any conflicts. . . . It makes me feel bad because I be lonely sometime, but at the same time, it's the best thing going for me right now. I'm trying to rebuild me. I'm trying to put me on a foundation to where I can be a total leader. Like I teach my sons, "Be leaders instead of followers." (cited in Levitt et al. 2008:440)

Although this interviewee's choice to isolate himself was a strategy to avoid relational dependency and conflict, it left him without interpersonal support and it could be difficult for him to model healthy relationships for his children. (p. 440)

With procedures such as these, the grounded theory approach develops general concepts from careful review of text or other qualitative materials and can then suggest plausible relationships among these concepts.

## Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Daniel Cress and David Snow (2000) asked a series of very specific questions about social movement outcomes in their study of homeless social movement organizations (SMOs). They collected qualitative data from about 15 SMOs in eight cities. A content analysis of newspaper articles indicated that these cities represented a range of outcomes, and the SMOs within them were also relatively accessible to Cress and Snow due to prior contacts. In each of these cities, Cress and Snow used a snowball sampling strategy to identify the homeless SMOs and the various supporters, antagonists, and significant organizational bystanders with whom they interacted. They then gathered information from representatives of these organizations, including churches, other activist organizations, police departments, mayors' offices, service providers, federal agencies, and, of course, the SMOs themselves.

To answer their research questions, Cress and Snow (2000) needed to operationalize each of the various conditions that they believed might affect movement outcomes, using coding procedures that were much more systematic than those often employed in qualitative research. For example, Cress and Snow defined “sympathetic allies” operationally as

the presence of one or more city council members who were supportive of local homeless mobilization. This was demonstrated by attending homeless SMO meetings and rallies and by taking initiatives to city agencies on behalf of the SMO. (Seven of the 14 SMOs had such allies.) (p. 1078)

Cress and Snow (2000) also chose a structured method of analysis, **qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)**, to assess how the various conditions influenced SMO outcomes. This procedure identifies the combination of factors that had to be present across multiple cases to produce a particular outcome (Ragin 1987). Cress and Snow (2000) explain why QCA was appropriate for their analysis:

QCA . . . is conjunctural in its logic, examining the various ways in which specified factors interact and combine with one another to yield particular outcomes. This increases the prospect of discerning diversity and identifying different pathways that lead to an outcome of interest and thus makes this mode of analysis especially applicable to situations with complex patterns of interaction among the specified conditions. (p. 1079)

Exhibit 10.11 summarizes the results of much of Cress and Snow’s (2000) analysis. It shows that homeless SMOs that were coded as organizationally viable used disruptive tactics, had sympathetic political allies, and presented a coherent diagnosis and program in response to the problem they were protesting were very likely to achieve all four valued outcomes: (1) representation, (2) resources, (3) protection of basic rights, and (4) some form of tangible relief. Some other combinations of the conditions were associated with increased likelihood of achieving some valued outcomes, but most of these alternatives less frequently had positive effects.

The qualitative textual data on which the codes were based indicate how particular combinations of conditions exerted their influence. For example, one set of conditions that increased the likelihood of achieving increased protection of basic rights for homeless persons included avoiding disruptive tactics in cities that were more responsive to the SMOs. Cress and Snow (2000) use a quote from a local SMO leader to explain this process:

We were going to set up a picket, but then we got calls from two people who were the co-chairs of the Board of Directors. They have like 200 restaurants. And they said, “Hey, we’re not bad guys, can we sit down and talk?” We had been set on picketing . . . Then we got to thinking, wouldn’t it be better . . . if they co-drafted those things [rights guidelines] with us? So that’s what we asked them to do. We had a work meeting, and we hammered out the guidelines. (p. 1089)

In Chapter 12, you will learn more about qualitative comparative analysis and see how this type of method can be used to understand political processes.

## Case-Oriented Understanding

Like many qualitative approaches, a **case-oriented understanding** attempts to understand a phenomenon from the standpoint of the participants. The case-oriented understanding method reflects an interpretive research philosophy that is not geared to identifying causes but provides a different way to explain social phenomena. For example, Constance Fischer and Frederick Wertz (2002) constructed such an explanation of the effect of being criminally victimized. They first recounted crime victims’ stories and then identified common themes in these stories.

**Exhibit 10.11** Multiple Pathways to Outcomes and Level of Impact

Pathways	Outcomes	Impact
1. VIABLE * DISRUPT * ALLIES * DIAG * PROG . . . . .	Representation, Resources, Rights, and Relief	Very strong
2. VIABLE * disrupt * CITY * DIAG * PROG . . . . .	Representation and Rights	Strong
3. VIABLE * ALLIES * CITY * DIAG * PROG . . . . .	Resources and Relief	Moderate
4. viable * DISRUPT * allies * diag * PROG . . . . .	Relief	Weak
5. viable * allies * city * diag * PROG . . . . .	Relief	Weak
6. viable * disrupt * ALLIES * CITY * diag * prog . . . . .	Resources	Weak

*Note:* Uppercase letters indicate presence of condition and lowercase letters indicate the absence of a condition. Conditions not in the equation are considered irrelevant. Multiplication signs (\*) are read as “and.”

Their explanation began with a description of what they termed the process of “living routinely” before the crime: “**he/she . . . feels that the defended against crime could never happen to him/her.**” “. . . I said, ‘nah, you’ve got to be kidding’” (pp. 288–289, emphasis in original).

In a second stage, “being disrupted,” the victim copes with the discovered crime and fears worse outcomes: “You imagine the worst when it’s happening . . . I just kept thinking my baby’s upstairs.” In a later stage, “reintegrating,” the victim begins to assimilate the violation by taking some protective action: “But I clean out my purse now since then and I leave very little of that kind of stuff in there.” (p. 289)

Finally, when the victim is “going on,” he or she reflects on the changes the crime produced: “I don’t think it made me stronger. It made me smarter.” (p. 290)

You can see how Fischer and Wertz (2002:288–290) constructed an explanation of the effect of crime on its victims through this analysis of the process of responding to the experience. This effort to “understand” what happened in these cases gives us a much better sense of why things happened as they did.

**Case-oriented understanding** An understanding of social processes in a group, formal organization, community, or other collectivity that reflects accurately the standpoint of participants.



For about 150 years, people have been creating a record of the social world with photography. This creates the possibility of “observing” the social world through photographs and films and of interpreting the resulting images as a “text.” You have already seen in this chapter how Elizabeth Stokoe’s conversation analysis of “gender talk” (2006) was enriched by her analysis of photographs. In the previous chapter, you learned how Robert Sampson and Stephen Raudenbush (1999) used systematic coding of videotaped observations to measure the extent of disorder in Chicago neighborhoods. Visual sociologists and other social researchers have been developing methods like these to learn how others “see” the social world and to create images for further study. Continuous video recordings help researchers unravel sequences of events and identify nonverbal expressions

of feelings (Heath & Luff 2008:501). As in the analysis of written text, however, the visual sociologist must be sensitive to the way in which a photograph or film “constructs” the reality that it depicts.

An analysis by Eric Margolis (2004) of photographic representations of American Indian boarding schools gives you an idea of the value of analysis of photographs (Exhibit 10.12). On the left is a picture taken in 1886 of Chiricahua Apaches who had just arrived at the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The school was run by a Captain Richard Pratt, who, like many Americans in that period, felt tribal societies were communistic, indolent, dirty, and ignorant, while Western civilization was industrious and individualistic. So Captain Pratt set out to acculturate American Indians to the dominant culture. The second picture shows the result: the same group of Apaches looking like Europeans, not Native Americans—dressed in standard uniforms, with standard haircuts, and with more standard posture.

Many other pictures display the same type of transformation. Are these pictures each “worth a thousand words”? They capture the ideology of the school management, but we can be less certain that they document accurately the “before and after” status of the students.

Captain Pratt “consciously used photography to represent the boarding school mission as successful” (Margolis 2004:79). While he clearly tried to ensure a high degree of conformity, there were accusations that the contrasting images were exaggerated to overemphasize the change (Margolis 2004:78). Reality was being constructed, not just depicted, in these photographs.

Darren Newbury (2005:1) cautioned the readers of his journal, *Visual Studies*, that “images cannot be simply taken of the world, but have to be made within it.” **Photo voice** is a method of using photography to engage research participants in explaining how they have made sense of their social worlds. Rather than using images

**Photo voice** A method in which research participants take pictures of their everyday surroundings with cameras the researcher distributes, and then meet in a group with the researcher to discuss the pictures’ meaning.

from other sources, the researcher directing a photo voice project distributes cameras to research participants and invites them to take pictures of their surroundings or everyday activities. The participants then meet with the researcher to present their pictures and discuss their meaning. In this way, researchers learn more about the participants’ social worlds as they see it and react to it. The photo voice method also engages participants as part of the research team themselves, thus enriching the researcher’s interpretations of the social world.

Lisa Frohmann (2005) recruited 42 Latina and South Asian women from battered women’s support groups in Chicago to participate in research about the meaning of violence in their lives. Frohman used photo voice methodology, so she gave each participant a camera. After they received some preliminary instruction, Frohmann invited participants to take about five to seven pictures weekly for 4 to 5 weeks. The photographs were to capture persons, places, and objects that represent

### Exhibit 10.12

#### Pictures of Chiricahua Apache Children Before and After Starting Carlisle Indian School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1886



the continuums of comfort-discomfort, happiness-sadness, safety-danger, security-vulnerability, serenity-anxiety, protection-exposure, strength-weakness, and love-hate (Exhibit 10.13). Twenty-nine women then returned to discuss the results.

With this very simple picture, one participant, Jenny, described how family violence affected her feelings:

This is the dining room table and I took this picture because the table is empty and I feel that although I am with my children, I feel that it is empty because there is no family harmony, which I think is the most important thing. (cited in Frohmann 2005:1407)

The image and narrative represent Jenny's concept of family: a husband and wife who love each other and their children. Food and eating together are important family activities. Part of being a mother and wife, of caring for her family, is preparing the food. Her concept of family is fractured (Frohmann 2005:1407).

**Exhibit 10.13** Picture in Photo Voice Project



## 2 Mixed Methods

Different qualitative methods may be combined to take advantage of different opportunities for data collection and to enrich understanding of social processes. Researchers may also combine qualitative with quantitative methods in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of different types of interrelated social processes. These combined approaches are all termed **mixed methods**, but they differ in the relative emphasis given to one or the other method and in the sequencing of their use in a research project (Cresswell 2010:57).

### Combining Qualitative Methods

Qualitative researchers often combine one or more of these methods. Elif Kale-Lostuvali (2007) enriched his research by using a combination of qualitative methodologies—including participant observation and intensive interviewing—to study the citizen-state encounters after the Izmit earthquake.

One important concept that emerged from both the observations and the interviews was the distinction between a *mağdur* (sufferer) and a *depremzade* (son of the earthquake). This was a critical distinction, because a *mağdur* was seen as deserving of government assistance, while a *depremzade* was considered to be taking advantage of the situation for personal gain. Kale-Lostuvali (2007) drew on both interviews and participant observation to develop an understanding of this complex concept:

A prominent narrative that was told and retold in various versions all the time in the disaster area elaborated the contrast between *mağdur* (sufferer; that is, the truly needy) and *depremzades* (sons of the earthquake) on the other. The *mağdur* (sufferers) were the deserving recipients of the aid that was

being distributed. However, they (1) were in great pain and could not pursue what they needed; or (2) were proud and could not speak of their need; or (3) were humble, always grateful for the little they got, and were certainly not after material gains; or (4) were characterized by a combination of the preceding. And because of these characteristics, they had not been receiving their rightful share of the aid and resources. In contrast, *deprenzades* (sons of the earthquake) were people who took advantage of the situation. (p. 755)

The qualitative research by Spencer Moore and his colleagues (2004) on the social response to Hurricane Floyd demonstrates the interweaving of data from focus groups and from participant observation with relief workers.

Reports of heroic acts by rescuers, innumerable accounts of “neighbors helping neighbors,” and the comments of HWATF [task force] participants suggest that residents, stranded motorists, relief workers, and rescuers worked and came together in remarkable ways during the relief and response phases of the disaster.

Like people get along better . . . they can talk to each other. People who hadn’t talked before, they talk now, a lot closer. That goes, not only for the neighborhood, job-wise, organization-wise, and all that. . . . [Our] union sent some stuff for some of the families that were flooded out. (Focus Group #4) (pp. 210–211)

## Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Conducting qualitative interviews can often enhance the value of a research design that uses primarily quantitative measurement techniques. Qualitative data can provide information about the quality of standardized case records and quantitative survey measures, as well as offer some insight into the meaning of particular fixed responses.

It makes sense to use official records to study the treatment of juveniles accused of illegal acts because these records document the critical decisions to arrest, to convict, or to release (Dannefer & Schutt 1982). But research based on official records can be only as good as the records themselves. In contrast to the controlled interview process in a research study, there is little guarantee that officials’ acts and decisions were recorded in a careful and unbiased manner.

### Case Study: Juvenile Court Records

#### Exhibit 10.14

#### Researchers’ and Juvenile Court Workers’ Discrepant Assumptions

Researcher Assumptions	Intake Worker Assumptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sent to court is a harsher sanction than diversion from court.</li> <li>• Screening involves judgments about individual juveniles.</li> <li>• Official records accurately capture case facts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sent to court often results in more lenient and less effective treatment.</li> <li>• Screening centers on the juvenile’s social situation.</li> <li>• Records are manipulated to achieve the desired outcome.</li> </ul>

Interviewing officials who create the records, or observing them while they record information, can strengthen research based on official records. A participant observation study of how probation officers screened cases in two New York juvenile court intake units shows how important such information can be (Needleman 1981). As indicated in Exhibit 10.14, Carolyn Needleman (1981) found that the concepts most researchers believe they are measuring with official records differ markedly from the meaning attached to these records by probation officers. Researchers assume that sending a juvenile case to court indicates a more severe disposition than retaining a case in the intake unit,

but probation officers often diverted cases from court because they thought the court would be too lenient. Researchers assume that probation officers evaluate juveniles as individuals, but in these settings, probation officers often based their decisions on juveniles' current social situation (e.g., whether they were living in a stable home), without learning anything about the individual juvenile. Perhaps most troubling for research using case records, Needleman (1981) found that probation officers decided how to handle cases first and then created an official record that appeared to justify their decisions.

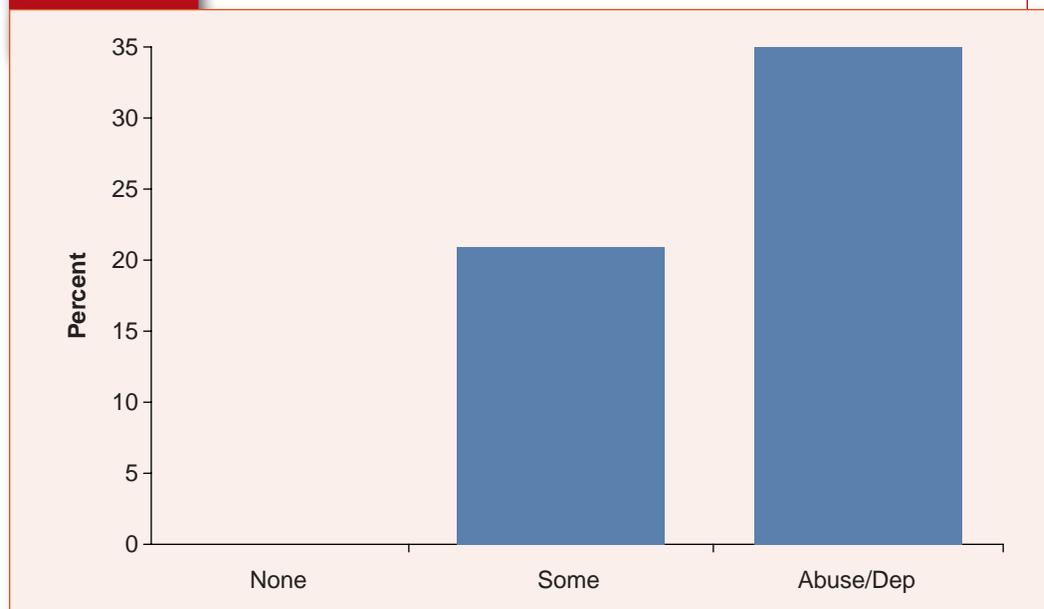
### Case Study: Mental Health System

The same observation can be made about the value of supplementing fixed-choice survey questions with more probing, open-ended questions. For example, Renee Anspach (1991) wondered about the use of standard surveys to study the effectiveness of mental health systems. Instead of drawing a large sample and asking a set of closed-ended questions, Anspach used snowball sampling techniques to select some administrators, case managers, clients, and family members in four community mental health systems, and then asked these respondents a series of open-ended questions. When asked whether their programs were effective, the interviewees were likely to respond in the affirmative. Their comments in response to other questions, however, pointed to many program failings. Anspach concluded that the respondents simply wanted the interviewer (and others) to believe in the program's effectiveness, for several reasons: Administrators wanted to maintain funding and employee morale; case managers wanted to ensure cooperation by talking up the program with clients and their families; and case managers also preferred to deflect blame for problems to clients, families, or system constraints.

### Case Study: Housing Loss in Group Homes

Ethnographic data complements quantitative data in my mixed-methods analysis of the value of group and independent living options for people who are homeless and have been diagnosed with severe mental illness. Exhibit 10.15 displays the quantitative association between lifetime substance abuse—a diagnosis recorded on a numerical scale that was made on the basis of an interview with a clinician—and housing

**Exhibit 10.15** Substance Abuse and Housing Loss in Group Homes



loss—another quantitative indicator from service records (Schutt 2011:135). The ethnographic notes recorded in the group homes reveal orientations and processes that help to explain the substance abuse-housing loss association (Schutt 2011).

... the time has come where he has to decide once and for all to drink or not. ... Tom has been feeling “pinned to the bed” in the morning. He has enjoyed getting high with Sammy and Ben, although the next day is always bad. ... Since he came back from the hospital Lisandro has been acting like he is taunting them to throw him out by not complying with rules and continuing to drink. ... (pp. 131, 133)

In this way, my analysis of the quantitative data reveals *what* happened, while my analysis of the ethnographic data helps to understand *why*.

## 2 Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

The analysis process can be enhanced in various ways by using a computer. Programs designed for qualitative data can speed up the analysis process, make it easier for researchers to experiment with different codes,

### Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis

Uses special computer software to assist qualitative analyses through creating, applying, and refining categories; tracing linkages between concepts; and making comparisons between cases and events.

test different hypotheses about relationships, and facilitate diagrams of emerging theories and preparation of research reports (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Richards & Richards 1994). The steps involved in computer-assisted qualitative data analysis parallel those used traditionally to analyze text such as notes, documents, or interview transcripts: preparation, coding, analysis, and reporting. We use three of the most popular programs to illustrate these steps: HyperRESEARCH, QSR NVivo, and ATLAS.ti. (A free trial version of HyperRESEARCH and tutorials can be downloaded from the ResearchWare site, at <http://www.researchware.com>.)

Text preparation begins with typing or scanning text in a word processor or, with NVivo, directly into the program’s rich text editor. NVivo will create or import a rich text file. HyperRESEARCH requires that your text be saved as a text file (as “ASCII” in most word processors) before you transfer it into the analysis program. HyperRESEARCH expects your text data to be stored in separate files corresponding to each unique case, such as an interview with one subject. These programs now allow multiple types of files, including pictures and videos as well as text. Exhibit 10.16 displays the different file types and how they are connected in the organization of a project (a “hermeneutic unit”) with ATLAS.ti.

Coding the text involves categorizing particular text segments. This is the foundation of much qualitative analysis. Each program allows you to assign a code to any segment of text (in NVivo, you drag through the characters to select them; in HyperRESEARCH, you click on the first and last words to select text). You can make up codes as you go through a document and also assign codes that you have already developed to text segments. Exhibit 10.17 shows the screens that appear in HyperRESEARCH and NVivo at the coding stage, when a particular text ms “autocode” text by identifying a word or phrase that should always receive the same code, or, in NVivo, by coding each section identified by the style of the rich text document—for example, each question or speaker (of course, you should check carefully the results of autocoding). Both programs also let you examine the coded text “in context”—embedded in its place in the original document.

Exhibit 10.16 File Types and Unit Structure in ATLAS.ti

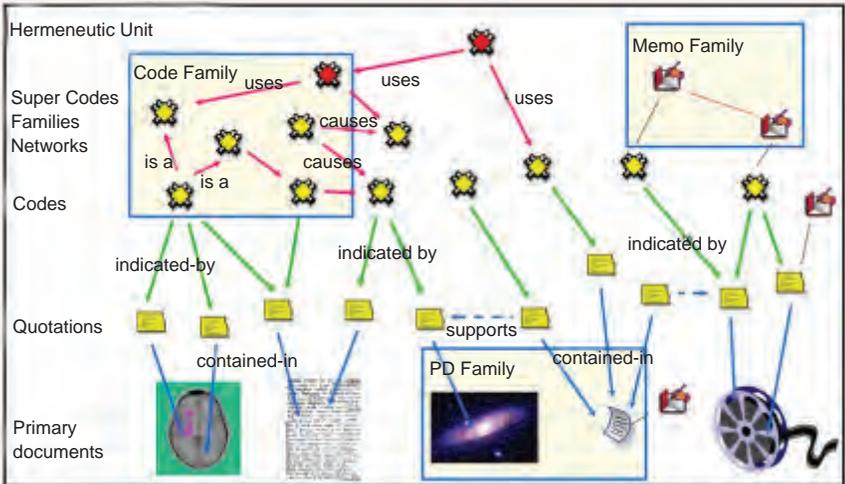
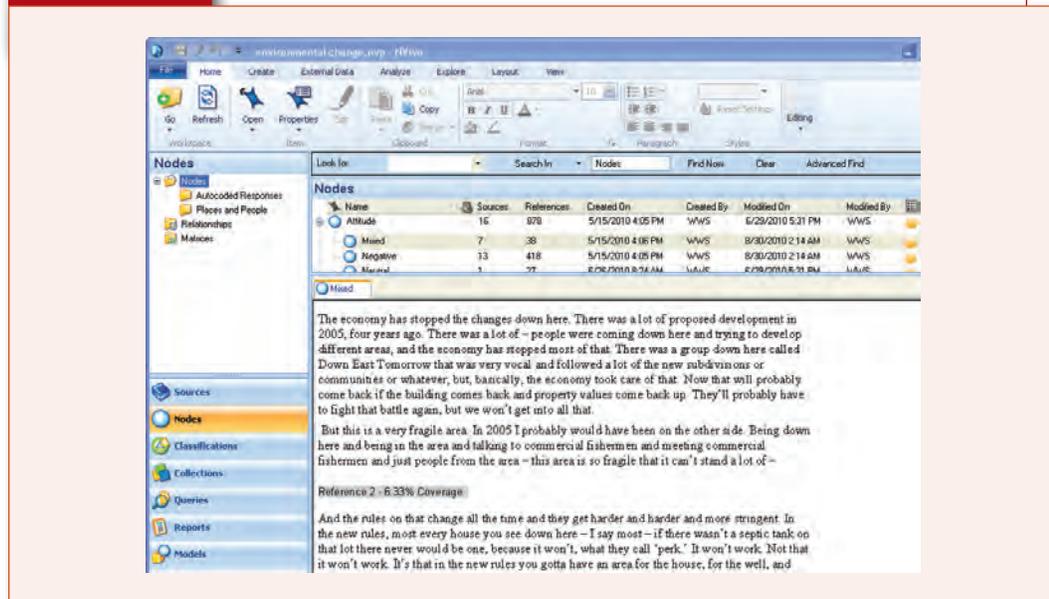


Exhibit 10.17a HyperRESEARCH Coding Stage

Code Name	Source	Type	Reference
I am making a high nontraditional field	Interview.Lbc	TEXT	1,319
gets married and st	Interview.Lbc	TEXT	452,561
wants kids	Interview.Lbc	TEXT	926,1009
leaves work when k	Interview.Lbc	TEXT	1012,1609
takes major respon	Interview.Lbc	TEXT	1012,1609

**Exhibit 10.17b** NVivo Coding Stage

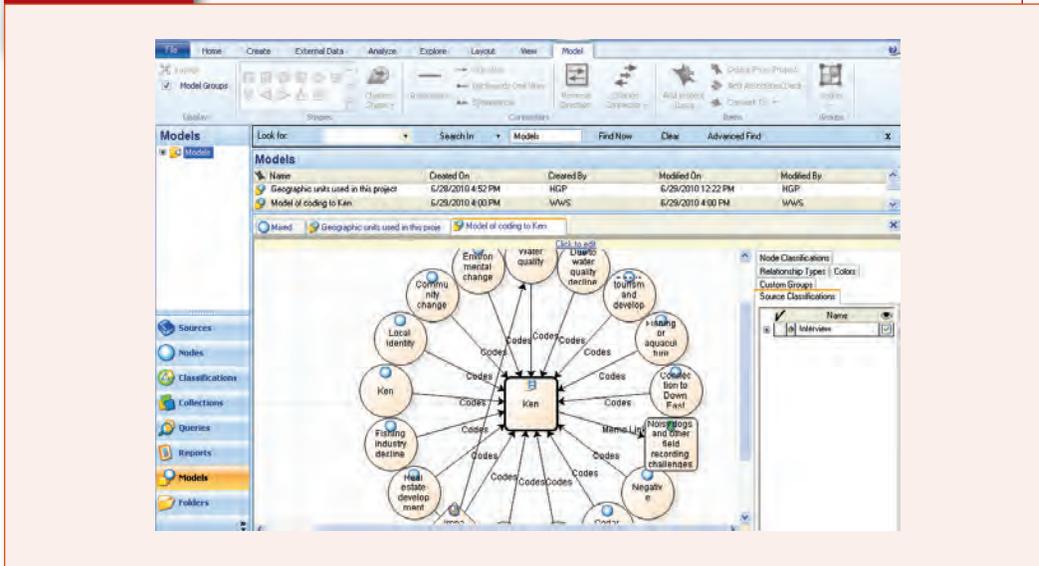
In qualitative data analysis, coding is not a one-time-only or one-code-only procedure. Each program allows you to be inductive and holistic in your coding: You can revise codes as you go along, assign multiple codes to text segments, and link your own comments (“memos”) to text segments. You can work “live” with the coded text to alter coding or create new, more subtle categories. You can also place hyperlinks to other documents in the project or any multimedia files outside it.

Analysis focuses on reviewing cases or text segments with similar codes and examining relationships among different codes. You may decide to combine codes into larger concepts. You may specify additional codes to capture more fully the variation among cases. You can test hypotheses about relationships among codes and develop more free-form models (see Exhibit 10.18). You can specify combinations of codes that identify cases that you want to examine.

Reports from each program can include text to illustrate the cases, codes, and relationships that you specify. You can also generate counts of code frequencies and then import these counts into a statistical program for quantitative analysis. However, the many types of analyses and reports that can be developed with qualitative analysis software do not lessen the need for a careful evaluation of the quality of the data on which conclusions are based.

In reality, using a qualitative data analysis computer program is not always as straightforward as it appears. Scott Decker and Barrick Van Winkle (1996) describe the difficulty they faced in using a computer program to identify instances of the concept of *drug sales*:

The software we used is essentially a text retrieval package . . . One of the dilemmas faced in the use of such software is whether to employ a coding scheme within the interviews or simply to leave them as unmarked text. We chose the first alternative, embedding conceptual tags at the appropriate points in the text. An example illustrates this process. One of the activities we were concerned with was drug sales. Our first chore (after a thorough reading of all the transcripts) was to use the software to “isolate” all of the transcript sections dealing with drug sales. One way to do this would be to search the transcripts for every instance in which the word “drugs” was used. However, such a strategy would have the disadvantages of providing information of too general a character while often missing important statements about drugs. Searching on the word “drugs” would have

**Exhibit 10.18** A Free-Form Model in NVivo

produced a file including every time the word was used, whether it was in reference to drug sales, drug use, or drug availability, clearly more information than we were interested in. However, such a search would have failed to find all of the slang used to refer to drugs (“boy” for heroin, “Casper” for crack cocaine) as well as the more common descriptions of drugs, especially rock or crack cocaine. (pp. 53–54)

Decker and Van Winkle (1996) solved this problem by parenthetically inserting conceptual tags in the text whenever talk of drug sales was found. This process allowed them to examine all the statements made by gang members about a single concept (drug sales). As you can imagine, however, this still left the researchers with many pages of transcript material to analyze.

## 2 Ethics in Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analyst is never far from ethical issues and dilemmas. Data collection should not begin unless the researcher has a plan that others see as likely to produce useful knowledge. Relations developed with research participants and other stakeholders to facilitate data collection should also be used to keep these groups informed about research progress and findings. Research participants should be encouraged to speak out about emerging study findings (Lincoln 2009:154–155). Throughout the analytic process, the analyst must consider how the findings will be used and how participants in the setting will react. Miles and Huberman (1994:293–295) suggest several specific questions that are of particular importance during the process of data analysis:

- *Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity*: “In what ways will the study intrude, come closer to people than they want? How will information be guarded? How identifiable are the individuals and organizations studied?” We have considered this issue already in the context of qualitative data collection, but it also must

be a concern during the process of analysis. It can be difficult to present a rich description in a case study while at the same time not identifying the setting. It can be easy for participants in the study to identify each other in a qualitative description, even if outsiders cannot. Qualitative researchers should negotiate with participants early in the study the approach that will be taken to protect privacy and maintain confidentiality. Selected participants should also be asked to review reports or other products before their public release to gauge the extent to which they feel privacy has been appropriately preserved.

- *Intervention and advocacy*: “What do I do when I see harmful, illegal, or wrongful behavior on the part of others during a study? Should I speak for anyone’s interests besides my own? If so, whose interests do I advocate?” Maintaining what is called *guilty knowledge* may force the researcher to suppress some parts of the analysis so as not to disclose the wrongful behavior, but presenting “what really happened” in a report may prevent ongoing access and violate understandings with participants.

- *Research integrity and quality*: “Is my study being conducted carefully, thoughtfully, and correctly in terms of some reasonable set of standards?” Real analyses have real consequences, so you owe it to yourself and those you study to adhere strictly to the analysis methods that you believe will produce authentic, valid conclusions.

- *Ownership of data and conclusions*: “Who owns my field notes and analyses: I, my organization, my funders? And once my reports are written, who controls their diffusion?” Of course, these concerns arise in any social research project, but the intimate involvement of the qualitative researcher with participants in the setting studied makes conflicts of interest between different stakeholders much more difficult to resolve. Working through the issues as they arise is essential.

- *Use and misuse of results*: “Do I have an obligation to help my findings be used appropriately? What if they are used harmfully or wrongly?” It is prudent to develop understandings early in the project with all major stakeholders that specify what actions will be taken to encourage appropriate use of project results and to respond to what is considered misuse of these results.

Netnographers must consider additional issues:

- *The challenge of online confidentiality*: While a netnographer should maintain the same privacy standards as other qualitative researchers, the retention of information on the web makes it difficult to protect confidentiality with traditional mechanisms. Anyone reading a distinctive quote based on online text can use a search engine to try to locate the original text. Distinctive online names intended to protect anonymity still identify individuals who may be the target of hurtful commentary (Kozinets 2010:143–145). Some users may think of their postings to some online community site as private (Markham 2007:274). For these reasons, netnographers who study sensitive issues should go to great lengths to disguise the identity of the community they have studied as well as of its participants who are quoted.

- *Gaining informed consent*: Since community members can disguise their identities, gaining informed consent creates unique challenges. Men may masquerade as women and children as adults, and yet the research should not proceed unless an effort is made to obtain informed and voluntary consent. Netnographers must make their own identity known, state clearly their expectations for participation, provide an explicit informed consent letter that is available as discussion participants come and go (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:274), and attempt to identify those whose identity is not credible through inconsistencies in their postings (Kozinets 2010:151–154).

Some indigenous peoples have established rules for outside researchers in order to preserve their own autonomy. These rules may require collaboration with an indigenous researcher, collective approval of admission to their culture, and review of all research products prior to publication. The primary ethical commitment is to the welfare of the community as a whole and the preservation of their culture, rather than to the rights of individuals (Lincoln 2009:162–163).

## 2 Conclusions

The variety of approaches to qualitative data analysis makes it difficult to provide a consistent set of criteria for interpreting their quality. Norman Denzin's (2002:362–363) “interpretive criteria” are a good place to start. Denzin suggests that at the conclusion of their analyses, qualitative data analysts ask the following questions about the materials they have produced. Reviewing several of them will serve as a fitting summary for your understanding of the qualitative analysis process.

- *Do they illuminate the phenomenon as lived experience?* In other words, do the materials bring the setting alive in terms of the people in that setting?
- *Are they based on thickly contextualized materials?* We should expect thick descriptions that encompass the social setting studied.
- *Are they historically and relationally grounded?* There must be a sense of the passage of time between events and the presence of relationships between social actors.
- *Are they processual and interactional?* The researcher must have described the research process and his or her interactions within the setting.
- *Do they engulf what is known about the phenomenon?* This includes situating the analysis in the context of prior research and also acknowledging the researcher's own orientation on first starting the investigation.

When an analysis of qualitative data is judged as successful in terms of these criteria, we can conclude that the goal of authenticity has been achieved.

As a research methodologist, you should be ready to use qualitative techniques, evaluate research findings in terms of these criteria, and mix and match specific analysis methods as required by the research problem to be investigated and the setting in which it is to be studied.

### Key Terms

Case-oriented  
understanding 344

Computer-assisted qualitative  
data analysis 350

Emic focus 322

Ethnography 333

Ethnomethodology 336

Etic focus 322

Grounded theory 341

Matrix 329

Narrative analysis 339

Netnography 335

Photo voice 346

Progressive  
focusing 322

Qualitative comparative  
analysis (QCA) 344

Tacit knowledge 331

### Highlights

- Qualitative data analysts are guided by an emic focus of representing persons in the setting on their own terms, rather than by an etic focus on the researcher's terms.
- Case studies use thick description and other qualitative techniques to provide a holistic picture of a setting or group.
- Ethnographers attempt to understand the culture of a group.

- Narrative analysis attempts to understand a life or a series of events as they unfolded, in a meaningful progression.
- Grounded theory connotes a general explanation that develops in interaction with the data and is continually tested and refined as data collection continues.
- Special computer software can be used for the analysis of qualitative, textual, and pictorial data. Users can record their notes, categorize observations, specify links between categories, and count occurrences.

## STUDENT STUDY SITE

To assist in completing the web exercises, please access the study site at [www.sagepub.com/schuttisw7e](http://www.sagepub.com/schuttisw7e), where you will find the web exercise with accompanying links. You'll find other useful study materials such as self-quizzes and e-flashcards for each chapter, along with a group of carefully selected articles from research journals that illustrate the major concepts and techniques presented in the book.

## Discussion Questions

1. List the primary components of qualitative data analysis strategies. Compare and contrast each of these components with those relevant to quantitative data analysis. What are the similarities and differences? What differences do these make?
2. Does qualitative data analysis result in trustworthy results—in findings that achieve the goal of authenticity? Why would anyone question its use? What would you reply to the doubters?
3. Narrative analysis provides the “large picture” of how a life or event has unfolded, while conversation analysis focuses on the details of verbal interchange? When is each method most appropriate? How could one method add to another?
4. Ethnography, grounded theory, and case-oriented understanding each refers to aspects of data analysis that are an inherent part of the qualitative approach. What do these approaches have in common? How do they differ? Can you identify elements of these three approaches in this chapter's examples of ethnomethodology, netnography, qualitative comparative analysis, and narrative analysis?

## Practice Exercises

1. Attend a sports game as an ethnographer. Write up your analysis and circulate it for criticism.
2. Write a narrative in class about your first date, car, college course, or something else that you and your classmates agree on. Then collect all the narratives and analyze them in a “committee of the whole.” Follow the general procedures discussed in the example of narrative analysis in this chapter.
3. Go forth and take pictures! Conduct a photo voice project with your classmates and write up your own review of the group's discussion of your pictures.
4. Review one of the articles on the book's study site, [www.sagepub.com/schuttisw7e](http://www.sagepub.com/schuttisw7e), that used qualitative methods. Describe the data that were collected, and identify the steps used in the analysis. What type of qualitative data analysis was this? If it is not one of the methods presented in this chapter, describe its similarities to and differences from one of these methods. How confident are you in the conclusions, given the methods of analysis used?
5. Review postings to an on-line discussion group. How could you study this group using netnography? What challenges would you encounter?

## Ethics Questions

1. Pictures are worth a thousand words, so to speak, but is that 1,000 words too many? Should qualitative researchers (like yourself) feel free to take pictures of social interaction or other behaviors anytime, anywhere? What limits should an institutional review board place on researchers' ability to take pictures of others? What if the picture of the empty table in this chapter also included the abusive family member who is discussed? What if the picture was in a public park, rather than in a private residence?
2. Participants in social settings often “forget” that an ethnographer is in their midst, planning to record what they say and do, even when the ethnographer has announced his or her role. New participants may not have heard the announcement, and everyone may simply get used to the ethnographer as if he or she was just “one of us.” What efforts should an ethnographer take to keep people informed about their work in the setting they are studying? Consider settings such as a sports team, a political group, and a book group.

## Web Exercises

1. The *Qualitative Report* is an online journal about qualitative research. Inspect the table of contents for a recent issue at [www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html). Read one of the articles and write a brief article review.
2. Be a qualitative explorer! Go to the “Qualitative Page” website and see what you can find that enriches your understanding of qualitative research ([www.qualitative-research.net/](http://www.qualitative-research.net/) or [www.qualitative-research.org/](http://www.qualitative-research.org/)). Be careful to avoid textual data overload.

## HyperRESEARCH Exercises

1. Eight essays written by college-age women in Hesse-Biber's (1989) “Cinderella Study” are saved on the book's study site. The essays touch on how young women feel about combining work and family roles. Download and install HyperRESEARCH from <http://www.researchware.com/> and open the Cinderella Study (Find it at C:\ProgramFiles\HyperRESEARCH3.0\Documentation\Tutorials\Cinderella Study\Cinderella Study.hs2). Look over the preliminary code categories that have already been applied to each essay. Do you agree with the code categories/themes already selected? What new code categories would you add and why? Which would you delete? Why? What are some of the common themes/codes that cut across all eight cases concerning how young women think about what their life will be like in 20 years?
2. Work through the tutorial on HyperRESEARCH that was downloaded with the program. How does it seem that qualitative analysis software facilitates the analysis process? Does it seem to you that it might hinder the analysis process in some ways? Explain your answers.

## Developing a Research Proposal

1. Which qualitative data analysis alternative is most appropriate for the qualitative data you proposed to collect for your project (Exhibit 2.14, #18)? Using the approach, develop a strategy for using the techniques of qualitative data analysis to analyze your textual data.