

Writing Up Results in Qualitative Research: Thick Description and Painting a Picture

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Series offered by The Office of Research, Scholarship, and Sponsored Programs (ORSSP)

This workshop will explore...

Where to begin to write up results from your qualitative research?

In this session, requested by UT Tyler scholars, we will review the aims of qualitative results, examine good and lesser versions of published results, and come up with a set of maxims that can help the qualitative researcher as they communicate their findings

- 1. Please enter your name, position and department in the chat.**
- 2. This presentation will take about 30-40 minutes which will then allow for discussion and questions.**
- 3. Please hold your questions until the end and/or put them in the chat.**

Agenda

- *Review
- *Terminology/Concepts
 - *Examples
- *Individual Experiences
 - *Discussion

- And... you can visit the [resources bank of the ORSS](#). See especially several excellent **recorded webinars** on Qualitative Research by multiple people.

QUICK REVIEW...ATTRIBUTES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH



Great overall beginner text: Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. A. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

QUICK REVIEW:

Qualitative Research seeks to.....

Examine **perceptions, motivations, and experiences that are significant (meaningful) to people**

Explore **social processes**, not probabilities or predictions

Analyze **texts** (written word, images), **talk** (spoken word, conversations), and **interactions** (encounters, events) --rather than numbers and statistics,

More information?

Visit the resources bank of the ORSS. See especially several excellent recorded webinars on Qualitative Research.

An excellent text for better understanding of coding and qualitative analysis: Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE.



Pro-Tip

Must read, and read some more. Many helpful books and articles out there.

Writing up our qualitative research...

Thick Description

- [Geertz, C. \(2008\). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The cultural geography reader* \(pp. 41-51\). Routledge.](#)
- [Tips for writing Thick Description for ethnographies and case studies \(Vanderbilt\).](#)

Too Conclusive

“The teacher likes the students.”

Detailed

“The teacher smiles when the students enter the room, greets them attentively and warmly, and hugs those that run to her.”



Getting to Thick Description.....

- Why?
- Because in qualitative research our goal is to make a believable, credible, envisionable argument.

Consider questions like the following:

- + What is the layout of the space or room?
- + What are the specific objects or physical elements in the space?
- + Who are the people involved?
- + What clues signify people's statuses and roles?
- + What are the people you are observing doing in general or attempting to accomplish?
- + What explicit structures, rules, or norms govern the situation?
- + What are people wearing?
- + What is their affect like?
- + How do people interact with one another?
- + What are individuals' specific behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal?

Too Conclusive

“The teacher likes the students.”

“The interviewee was uncomfortable with this line of questioning.”

Stating what COULD be

“Students will learn math better with hands-on examples than numbers on a chalkboard.”

Detailed

“The teacher smiles when the students enter the room, greets them attentively and warmly, and hugs those that run to her.”

“During questions 5 thru 7 the interviewee started fidgeting in his seat, touching his hand to his mouth, and speaking more slowly while clearing his throat repeatedly. He displayed none of those behaviors in the first 4 questions.”

Explaining what IS happening

“Yesterday, when the teacher wrote problems on the board 3 students answered all problems correctly. Today, when the teacher used blocks and bottle caps, 8 students answered most problems correctly in under 30 seconds.”

Sensory Description

Painting a picture....

How to SHOW not TELL

in your
story writing

Thanks to K.M.Weiland at
www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com

Use specific **NOUNS**
and power **VERBS**...

The clapping of a thousand wings broke the silence.

... not too many
ADJECTIVES and
ADVERBS.

The broccoli tasted vile and bitter in my mouth, and I recoiled violently.

Describe through
the **SENSES**...

The bitter sweetness crumpled my mouth, and threatened to erupt.

... without writing **SEE,**
HEAR, TOUCH, SMELL,
TASTE, THINK, FEEL.

I could see the white birds fly upwards and hear the clapping of their wings.

Three principles for writing effective qualitative results sections.....

Storytelling -- (Narrative) **sensory data**

Authenticity – **provide evidence** to support readers' interpretations.

Argument -- **Connect the dots** – thread through your literature, your theory, and your evidence.

- [Cristancho, S., Watling, C. J., & Lingard, L. A. \(2021\). Three principles for writing an effective qualitative results section. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-Professional Journal*, 22\(3\), 110-124.](#)

Storytelling

“The properties of storytelling (...are such that a personal experience, told with nuanced detail, resonates with the listener and may even validate their own experiences, helping them and the teller make sense both retrospectively and prospectively of real-life events”

[McCall et al., 2021](#)



<https://youtu.be/tUth-ErqT1E?si=3FwP9qNEUnXxjVxL>

Argument

- Any writing we do is the construction of an argument for or against SOMETHING
- Using a both/and approach can help a researcher provide a balance.



● An effective argument is well grounded and supported by relevant data



● Presenting an effective argument does not involve mere participation but also contribution to an existing argument or scholarship in the field



● A fruitful academic argument defends against rational counter-arguments promoted by experts in defense of their perspective

Argument writers...

- o ...give compelling evidence to prove their point
- o ...pour over research, finding the evidence will really support their claim
- o ...start by putting that evidence in their own words

Findings are key

- Evidence
- Illustrative language
- Organization that is reader friendly – in other words “a considerate text”
- *Show Maloch findings section and note that the table helps both the writer and the reader.*

TABLE 1: Summary of findings

Teacher Dimension			Student Dimension
THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	
<i>Theme 1:</i> The teacher offers multiple opportunities for students to engage with ITs and encourages students to engage with ITs.	Availability of ITs*		Students engage with ITs in variety of ways during a variety of events
	Promotes ITs	Recommends IT	Students choose ITs
		Is explicit about purposes of IT	
		Uses ITs as resources	Students use ITs as resources
	Uses ITs as part of instruction		
<i>Theme 2:</i> The teacher supports students' encounters with ITs	Mediates difficulty level	Provides ITs at multiple levels	
		Provides rereading opportunities	Students choose to reread ITs
		Teaches students strategies to identify “just right” books	Students use strategies to choose “just right” books
	Supports vocabulary learning	Teaches before reading (e.g., picture walk; word maps)	Students notice and discuss key vocabulary
		Supports during reading	
	Scaffolds students' sense-making	Encourages students' connections	Students make sense of text by making connections to their lives, to other texts, to the world, to movies and cartoons, and to previous learning
		Makes/demonstrates connections	
Elicits students' reasoning			
Labels students' connections			
<i>Theme 3:</i> The teacher uses and invites explicit talk about text features	Highlights, explains, and models use of text features	Students notice text features as they read ITs	
	Explicit talk about genre differences	Students ask questions and debate about genre	

*IT denotes informational texts

Reflexivity and its importance in qualitative research writing

- Reflexive research is defined as a method that fully embraces and exploits the **subjectivity** of the researcher. Increasing reflexivity of research can increase the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative data.
- And.. **positionality** of the researcher.
- [Smith, S. \(2006\). Encouraging the use of reflexivity in the writing up of qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 13\(5\), 209-215.](#)

The notion of reflexivity implies a shift in people's understanding of the data and its collection towards something that is accomplished through internal dialogue and a constant scrutiny of 'what I know' and 'how I know it' (Hertz, 1997).

Researchers, as authors, need to address their position in relation to the research process and all the other people involved in it (Coe, 1991).

Thus, researchers may need to think about the political dimensions of their fieldwork and discuss the different power relationships that might have occurred.

The need to consider how issues of gender, class, age and disability might shape the construction of knowledge must be considered.

All these issues may influence the researcher's interactions in the field; who gets studied, which questions are asked and which are left unasked (Sparkes, 2002), and how knowledge of the participants in the study is constructed and portrayed through text.

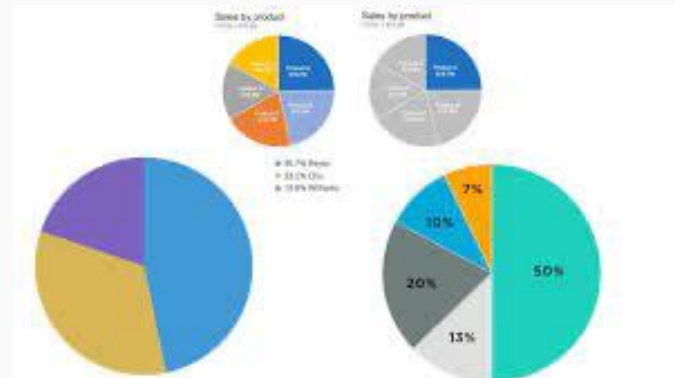
Smith (2006) p. 210

Examples of reflexivity

- For example, if you're conducting research on the experiences of Asian American youth in New York City, and you are Asian American as well, you can use personal reflexivity to reflect on how your own upbringing, background, and relationship to the community impacts your research.
- For example, after each interview, the researcher might write about how they felt during the interaction, how they think their behavior or identity might have influenced the participant's responses, and any assumptions or biases they noticed in their questions or reactions.

GRAPHS and TABLES

- Curation is essential.
- Otherwise it's like turning the TV on and leaving the room.



Introduction

- Describe what the graph shows
 - *'This graph shows ...'*
- Identify and list any general patterns or trends

Trend 1

- Describe the first pattern or trend
- Try not to start a sentence with a number; if you do, write the number in words (e.g. *Twenty* not *20*)
- Provide evidence from the graph to support the identified trend

Additional trends

- Repeat the above for any other additional patterns or trends

Anomalies or differences

- Describe any anomalies or different data points
- Provide evidence from the graph

Conclusion or recommendation

- For long analyses with multiple paragraphs, rephrase the main trend and information the graph provides in general terms
 - avoid using specific figures; rather, use generic comparative terms such as *'most'*, *'least'*, *'the majority'*
- If required, provide a recommendation for further action, but be objective
 - *'Based on this data ...'*

Providing explanation for tables and graphs

Sentence starters teachers can provide students include:

- This graph shows ...
- A pattern I notice in the graph is ...
- An anomaly/outlier/different pattern in the graph is ...
- A difference between ... and ... is ...
- A similarity between ... and ... is ...
- If this pattern continued, I predict ...
- A probable reason for that pattern is ...
- A probable reason for this difference is ...
- When I first looked at this graph ...
- The data that most stood out to me was ...

What about you? Problems? Solutions? In your writing....

- PROBLEMS

- SOLUTIONS

Discussion and Q&A

What are you working on currently?



Questions?
Experiences to
share?

Thank you for attending. I
am happy to talk with you
on an individual basis.

You can schedule a
meeting [HERE](#) or if those
times don't work, email
me at
aconsalvo@uttyler.edu



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