Session 7 - Coding

April 2024

1

Developing grounded theory: Why?

- All of us could use a little more grounding!
- **Grounded Theory**
  - Concepts which are related by statements of relationships
  - NOT description!
  - MUST HAVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONCEPTS!!!
- Note: Can do grounded theory with more than your qualitative field notes!

2

Theoretical Sensitivity

The ability to recognize what is important in data and give it meaning
- Pointers:
    - Step back: Ask "What is going on here?" "Does it fit the data?"
    - Maintain an attitude of skepticism
        - Theories are provisional
    - Follow the research procedures (Strauss and Corbin)

3

How? Open Coding

- Naming and categorizing phenomena through close examination of data
- Labeling phenomena
    - Conceptualize, don't summarize
- Discovering categories
    - Group concepts that seem to pertain to same phenomenon
    - More abstract labels than concepts
- Developing categories
    - Lay out the properties and dimensions

4

Axial Coding

- Making connections between a category and its subcategories
  - Conditions that give rise to phenomenon
  - Context (properties) within which it is embedded
  - Action/Interaction strategies by which it is handled, carried out
  - Consequences of those strategies

5

Spradley's Strategy:
Identify semantic domains

- Inclusion   X is a kind of Y
- Spatial   X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y
- Cause-effect   X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y
- Rationale   X is a reason for doing Y
- Location   X is a place for doing Y
- Function   X is used for Y
- Means-end   X is a way to do Y
- Sequence   X is a step/stage in Y
- Attribution   X is a characteristic of Y

6

Grounded Theory: Reminder

Not Description!

- Be wary of going native
- You may overidentify with your informants
- Your data is too technical
- You can't see the forest for the trees

Must have (interesting) relationships!!!

- It is not enough to have themes

7

Enhancing theoretical sensitivity

- Use of questioning: Who? When? Where? What? How? How much? Why?
  - Can do this with a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph
- Flip flop technique
- Systematic comparisons
  - Close in (to substantive area) vs. Far out
- Waving the red flag!
  - Never, always…
- Validate hypotheses against the data

8

Selective Coding

- Integrating categories to form grounded theory
  - Identify story line
  - Tell it analytically - Give it a conceptual label
  - Relate properties of core category and subsidiary categories
  - Validate relationships
  - Go back to categories and fill in missing detail

9

Becker's Tricks of the Trade

Concepts are empirical generalizations
- Bernie Beck's trick – Generalizing
  - Tell what you've found out, but without any identifying characteristics of the actual case
- The Wittgenstein trick
  - If I take away the quality Y from the concept X, what is left?
  - Helps get at what's important in defining the concept

10

Becker's Tricks of the Trade

- Concepts are relational
  - Put terms into the full set of relations they imply. How is that set of relations organized? How did it used to be organized, and how is it organized elsewhere? What connections to other social relations sustains it the way it is?

11