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Abstract

An introduction and explanation of the epistemological differences of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms is first provided, followed by an overview of the realist philosophical paradigm, which attempts to accommodate the two. From this foundational discussion, the paper then introduces the concept of meaning ma king in research methods and looks at how meaning is generated from qualitative data analysis specifically. Finally, some examples from the literature of how meaning can be constructed and organized using a qualitative data analysis approach are provided. The paper aims to provide an introduction to research methodologies, coupled with a discussion on how meaning making actually occurs through qualitative data analysis.

Keywords

Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Epistemology, Meaning Making, and Qualitative Data Analysis

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Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer

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An introduction and explanation of the epistemological differences of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms is first provided, followed by an overview of the realist philosophical paradigm, which attempts to accommodate the two. From this foundational discussion, the paper then introduces the concept of meaning making in research methods and looks at how meaning is generated from qualitative data analysis specifically. Finally, some examples from the literature of how meaning can be constructed and organized using a qualitative data analysis approach are provided. The paper aims to provide an introduction to research methodologies, coupled with a discussion on how meaning making actually occurs through qualitative data analysis. Key Words: Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Epistemology, Meaning Making, and Qualitative Data Analysis

Introduction: Religiosity Research and Meaning

There are many topics within the social sciences that are deeply embedded with personal meaning. Research on religious experience and religious psychology are two such areas that are potentially rich in meaning, particularly in the context of individual experience. The following paper was written following a multi-year religiosity initiative in which the author was involved in conducting both qualitative and quantitative research to "assess" religiosity in the lives of young people. To better understand his study respondents, the author realized the need to make use of multiple research methods to optimize the data collection process, or to increase both the breadth and width of data collection. This required the use of mixed methods. The result of the process was a major study that tapped into the richness of individual religious experience, along with a broader understanding of religious behaviors and knowledge levels across large groups of young people. The following paper is not a report out on the findings of the religiosity study, but rather is a "primer" or an introduction to some of the basic issues in attempting to work with both quantitative and qualitative research methods toward the goal of generating meaning.

Comparative Epistemologies: Qualitative "versus" Quantitative Research Paradigms

The term epistemology comes from the Greek word epistêmê, their term for knowledge. In simple terms, epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge or how we come to know (Trochim, 2000). Epistemology is intimately related to ontology and methodology; as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses

how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it.

Epistemology poses the following questions: What is the relationship between the knower and what is known? How do we know what we know? What counts as knowledge? In the positivist paradigm, the object of study is independent of researchers; knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena; facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts. An alternative view, the naturalist or constructivist view, is that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena studied; researchers interact with the subjects of study to obtain data; inquiry changes both researcher and subject; and knowledge is context and time dependent (Coll & Chapman, 2000; Cousins, 2002).

Understanding the differences in epistemology among research paradigms begins primarily as a philosophical exercise, for according to Olson (1995), the question of whether there is one knowable reality or that there are multiple realities of which some individual knowledge can be acquired is more a question of faith. Dervin (1977) implies that both philosophies can in fact coexist when she says,

> …distinction between objective information (information1) and subjective information (information2). Information [1] is defined as information that describes reality, the innate structure or pattern of reality, data. Information [2] is defined as ideas, the structures or pictures imputed to reality by people. In the most general sense, information [1] refers to external reality; information [2] refers to internal reality. [Dervin (1977) as cited in Olson, (1995), So What? section, para. 2]

According to Dobson (2002, The Transitive/intransitive Divide section, para. 2), "the researcher's theoretical lens is also suggested as playing an important role in the choice of methods because the underlying belief system of the researcher (ontological assumptions) largely defines the choice of method (methodology)."

Despite many proposed differences between quantitative and qualitative epistemologies, ultimately, the heart of the quantitative-qualitative "debate" is philosophical, not methodological. Philosophical assumptions or a theoretical paradigm about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding the overall perspective from which the study is designed and carried out. A theoretical paradigm is thus the identification of the underlying basis that is used to construct a scientific investigation; or, "a loose collection of logically held together assumptions, concepts, and propositions that orientates thinking and research" (Bogdan & Biklan, 1982, p. 30). Likewise, a paradigm can be defined as the "basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105).

Many qualitative researchers operate under different epistemological assumptions from quantitative researchers. For instance, many qualitative researchers believe that the best way to understand any phenomenon is to view it in its context. They see all quantification as limited in nature, looking only at one small portion of a reality that cannot be split or unitized without losing the importance of the whole phenomenon. For many qualitative researchers, the best way to understand what is going on is to become

immersed in it and to move into the culture or organization being studied and experience what it is like to be a part of it. Rather than approaching measurement with the idea of constructing a fixed instrument or set of questions, qualitative researchers choose to allow the questions to emerge and change as one becomes familiar with the study content.

In addition, many qualitative researchers also operate under different ontological assumptions about the world. They do not assume that there is a single unitary reality apart from our perceptions. Since each of us experiences from our own point of view, each of us experiences a different reality. As such, the phenomenon of "multiple realities" exists. Conducting research without taking this into account violates their fundamental view of the individual. Consequently, they may be opposed to methods that attempt to aggregate across individuals on the grounds that each individual is unique. They also argue that the researcher is a unique individual and that all research is essentially biased by each researcher's individual perceptions. There is no point in trying to "establish validity" in any external or objective sense (Trochim, 2000).

In general, qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality. Rather, there are multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest. People impose order on the world perceived in an effort to construct meaning; meaning lies in cognition not in elements external to us; information impinging on our cognitive systems is screened, translated, altered, perhaps rejected by the knowledge that already exists in that system; the resulting knowledge is idiosyncratic and is purposefully constructed (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990).

Positivism predominates in science and assumes that science quantitatively measures independent facts about a single apprehensible reality (Healy & Perry, 2000). In other words, the data and its analysis are value-free and data do not change because they are being observed. That is, researchers view the world through a "one-way mirror" (Healy & Perry, 2000).

In its broadest sense, positivism is a rejection of metaphysics. It is a position that holds that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena that we experience. The purpose of science is simply to stick to what we can observe and measure. Knowledge of anything beyond that, a positivist would hold, is impossible (Trochim, 2000). As such, positivists separate themselves from the world they study, while researchers within other paradigms acknowledge that they have to participate in real-world life to some extent so as to better understand and express its emergent properties and features (Healy & Perry, 2000).

According to the positivist epistemology, science is seen as the way to get at truth, to understand the world well enough so that it might be predicted and controlled. The world and the universe are deterministic, they operate by laws of cause and effect that are discernable if we apply the unique approach of the scientific method. Thus, science is largely a mechanistic or mechanical affair in positivism. Deductive reasoning is used to postulate theories that can be tested. Based on the results of studies, we may learn that a theory does not fit the facts well and so the theory must be revised to better predict reality. The positivists believe in empiricism, the idea that observation and measurement are at the core of the scientific endeavor. The key approach of the scientific method is the

experiment, the attempt to discern natural laws through direct manipulation and observation (Trochim, 2000).

Positivism has been defined by numerous individuals over the years. Kolakowski (1972), for example, states that positivism embraces a four point doctrine: (1) the rule of phenomenalism, which asserts that there is only experience; all abstractions be they "matter" or "spirit" have to be rejected; (2) the rule of nominalism – which asserts that words, generalizations, abstractions, etc. are linguistic phenomena and do not give new insight into the world; (3) the separation of facts from values; and (4) the unity of the scientific method. Burrell and Morgan (1979; in Hirschheim, 1985, Positivist Science section, para. 1) define it as an epistemology "which seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements."

Different modes of research allow us to understand different phenomena and for different reasons (Deetz, 1996). The methodology chosen depends on what one is trying to do rather than a commitment to a particular paradigm (Cavaye, 1996). Thus, the methodology employed must match the particular phenomenon of interest. Different phenomena may require the use of different methodologies. By focusing on the phenomenon under examination, rather than the methodology, researchers can select appropriate methodologies for their enquiries (Falconer & Mackay, 1999).

The most obvious difference between the "conventional" positivist belief system and that of the "naturalist" or constructive system in terms of epistemology is that the former is essentially objectivist, or, there is the belief that it is possible for an observer to exteriorize the reality studied, remaining detached from it and uninvolved with it (Al Zeera, 2001). On the other hand, the naturalistic posture contends that epistemologically, the inquirer, and the inquired, into are interlocked in such a way that the findings of the investigation are the literal creation of the inquiry process (Al Zeera, 2001). The constructivist, therefore, takes the position that the knower and the known are co-created during the inquiry.

Realism: The Qualitative and Quantitative as Complementary

Realism, as a philosophical paradigm, has elements of both positivism and constructivism (Healy & Perry, 2000). Realism is also known as critical realism (Hunt, 1991), postpositivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) or neopostpositivism (Manicas & Secord, 1982). While positivism concerns a single, concrete reality and interpretivism multiple realities, realism concerns multiple perceptions about a single, mind-independent reality (Healy & Perry, 2000). The concept of reality embodied within realism is thus one extending beyond the self or consciousness, but which is not wholly discoverable or knowable. Rather than being supposedly value-free, as in positive research, or value-laden as in interpretive research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), realism is instead value cognizant; conscious of the values of human systems and of researchers. Realism recognizes that perceptions have a certain plasticity (Churchland, 1979) and that there are differences between reality and people's perceptions of reality (Bisman, 2002). According to Dobson (2002), the critical realist agrees that our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning and, thus, cannot be understood independently of the social actors involved in the knowledge derivation

process. However, it takes issue with the belief that the reality itself is a product of this knowledge derivation process. The critical realist asserts that "real objects are subject to value laden observation"; the reality and the value-laden observation of reality operating in two different dimensions, one intransitive and relatively enduring; the other transitive and changing.

Within this framework, the discovery of observable and non-observable structures and mechanisms, independent of the events they generate, is the goal of realism (Outhwaite, 1983; Tsoukas, 1989). In other words, researchers working from a realist perspective observe the empirical domain to discover by a “mixture of theoretical reasoning and experimentation” (Outhwaite, 1983, p. 332) knowledge of the real world, by naming and describing the generative mechanisms that operate in the world and result in the events that may be observed. This inherent complexity that exists within the world of the social scientist, thus posits a reality that may be considered “real but fallible” (Wollin, 1995, p. 80).

Within a critical realism framework, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are seen as appropriate (Healy & Perry, 2000) for researching the underlying mechanisms that drive actions and events. Methods such as case studies and unstructured or semi-structured in-depth interviews are acceptable and appropriate within the paradigm, as are statistical analyses, such as those derived from structural equation modeling and other techniques (Bisman, 2002; Perry, Alizadeh, & Riege, 1997). With realism, the seeming dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative is therefore replaced by an approach that is considered appropriate given the research topic of interest and level of existing knowledge pertaining to it.

Meaning and Meaning Making

The most fundamental aspect of a human social setting is that of meanings. These are the linguistic categories that make up a participant’s view of reality and with which actions are defined. Meanings are also referred to by social analysts as culture, norms, understandings, social reality, and definitions of the situation, typifications, ideology, beliefs, worldview, perspective or stereotypes (Lofland & Lofland, 1996). Terms such as these share a common focus with humanly constructed ideas that are consciously singled out as important aspects of reality. Meanings are transbehavioral in the sense that they do more than describe behavior – they define, justify, and otherwise interpret it as well (Lofland & Lofland).

The role of meaning is of paramount importance in human life (Frankl, 1963). Human beings have a natural inclination to understand and make meaning out of their lives and experiences. It is one of those attributes that makes us distinctively human. As Dewey (1933) wrote, “Only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing as intentional, deliberate control of them possible” (p. 19). Meanings are the cognitive categories that make up one’s view of reality and with which actions are defined. Life experience generates and enriches meanings, while meanings provide explanation and guidance for the experience (Chen, 2001).

A person draws meanings from, or gives meanings to, events and experiences. That is, experiencing starts to make sense as the person performs his or her psychological

functioning of translating it into how he or she thinks and feels. It is individuals' subjectivity, or phenomenological world, that forms the very core for meaning origination and evolvement. People have the freedom to choose meaning (McArthur, 1958) through their interactive experiencing with various internal and external contexts (Chen, 2001). As such, meaning is the underlying motivation behind thoughts, actions and even the interpretation and application of knowledge.

In this way, meaning and meaning making have many implications for learning. One key implication emerges through the notion of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981, 1991, 1994), in which "learning is defined as the social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (Mezirow, 1994, pp. 222-223). What gives this significance is that learning is suggested as a mechanism for finding or, as some propose, making meaning in life (Merriam & Heuer, 1996). Learning can inform or challenge existing conceptions of meaning and, in the process, provide an opportunity for acquiring new meaning or confirming currently held views.

Meanings vary in terms of the breadth or range of situations to which they apply. There are those that are life-encompassing in scope, claiming to encompass virtually any topic that might arise. Such schemes are often called "ideologies," "worldviews," "Weltanschauungs," or "philosophies" (Lofland & Lofland, 1996). Meanings can also be more discrete. That is, they can be attached to more defined aspects of a person's life yet still rather general in their application.

Constructing Meaning through Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative research has the unique goal of facilitating the meaning-making process. The complexity of meaning in the lives of people has much to do with how meaning is attributed to different objects, people and life events. Erikson (1963) elaborated on the importance of meaning when he broke it down into two sub-categories: common meanings and unique meanings. What has a common meaning to a group of people may have a unique meaning to an individual member of the group. For example, a group of children having a reel and a string represent a living thing on a leash may have a unique meaning to an individual child who has lost a beloved pet. Thus, understanding unique meanings has to do with the construction of the meaning process and the many different factors that influence it. This is the unique work of qualitative research and data analysis in particular – to identify the contributors to an individual's (or groups') unique meaning.

The construction of meaning is the task of qualitative research and reflects the specific methods used in the qualitative data analysis process. Historically, data analysis in qualitative research was thought of as a mysterious metamorphosis. The investigator retreated with the data, applied his or her analytic powers, and emerged at some later point with "findings" (Merriam, 1998). The qualitative data analysis process is a highly intuitive activity. As such, it is its epistemological nature and assumptions that make qualitative data analysis a rich and often intricate exercise. When one engages in a research effort, one engages in an intensive learning process where new knowledge and information is achieved. Thus, as an important learning facilitator, qualitative research and qualitative data analysis in particular have the power to be transformative learning

tools through their ability to generate new levels and forms of meaning, which can in turn transform perspectives and actions. This is an important yet often overlooked aspect of qualitative research that can be understood and identified through the function of meaning and meaning making.

The naturalistic proclivity for direct observation and comprehension of the social world as primary considerations in qualitative data analysis reflects a certain epistemology that includes two main tenets: (1) that face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being, understanding not only their words but the meanings of those words as understood and used by the individual, and (2) that one must participate in the mind of another human being in order to acquire social knowledge (Lofland & Lofland, 1996). Social knowledge refers to the broad variety of human activities, concepts and ways of being social, or "knowledge of doing." It can range from how we interact with shopkeepers and follow routines of traveling through the city, to how we take part (or not) in communal activities. Participating in the mind of another, therefore, allows us a glimpse into the how and why, the meaning behind an individual's behavior in social settings. These epistemological considerations comprise the guiding foundation for the data analysis process in naturalistic inquiry. Data analysis techniques in qualitative research are thus guided by an epistemology reflective of a paradigm that attempts to acquire "social knowledge."

Epistemological and ontological assumptions are then translated into distinct methodological strategies. The goal of a qualitative investigation is to understand the complex world of human experience and behavior from the point-of-view of those involved in the situation of interest. Therefore, the investigator is expected not to have an a priori, well-delineated conceptualization of the phenomenon; rather, this conceptualization is to emerge from the interaction between participants and investigator. Flexibility in design, data collection, and analysis of research is strongly recommended to gain "deep" understanding and valid representation of the participants' viewpoints (Sidani & Sechrest, 1996).

Within the data analysis process itself, although subjective understanding is expected to be reached through the exchange of ideas, interaction, and agreement between the researcher and participant, the researcher avoids imposing his or her views, sets aside any preconceived knowledge, and is open, sensitive, and empathetic to the participants' responses; a difficult set of tasks. Qualitative investigators are also encouraged to record their own biases, feelings, and thoughts and to state them explicitly in the research report (Creswell, 1994). Nonetheless, the extent to which characteristics of the investigator will have played a role in or influenced data analysis cannot truly be known. As such, the process of qualitative data analysis is described as "eclectic," and there is no "right way" of conducting it (Creswell, 1994). However, how conclusions are drawn from the interpretive, intuitive analysis will be unclear (Sidani & Sechrest, 1996) unless researchers describe the method of analysis used and show how the conclusions were drawn from the data.

One major point most qualitative researchers tout as a major epistemological advantage of what they do is that the qualitative approach allows them to grasp the point of view of the respondent. This satisfies what they regard as a crucial criterion of adequate social science. "Taking the point of view of the other" is a wonderful example of the variety of meanings methodological slogans acquire. For some, it has a kind of

religious or ethical significance: if we fail to do it we show disrespect for the respondents. Another tendency goes further, finding fault with social science which "speaks for" others, by giving summaries and interpretations of their point-of-view. In this view, it is not enough to honor, respect, and allow for the actor's point-of-view. One must also allow them to express it themselves by capturing it in their own words (Becker, 1996). Nevertheless, even when the words of the respondents themselves are used, any level of interpretation by the researcher will inevitably be looked at as "speaking for" the respondents. To the constructivist, though, interpretation may be a crucial element in the meaning making process.

According to Becker (1996), all social scientists, implicitly or explicitly, attribute a point-of-view and interpretations to the people whose actions are analyzed. That is, qualitative researchers always describe how they interpret the events their respondents participate in, so the only question is not whether it should be interpreted, but how it is done. A researcher can find out, although not with perfect accuracy, what people think they are doing, and what meanings they give to the objects, events and people in their lives and experiences. This is done by talking to them, in formal or informal interviews, in quick exchanges while participating in and observing their ordinary activities, and by watching and listening as they go about their business; it can even be done by giving them questionnaires which let them say what their meanings are or choose between meanings given to them as possibilities. Thus, the nearer the researcher gets to the conditions in which they actually do attribute meanings to objects and events the more opportunity researchers and respondents have to engage in meaning making together.

Rigor in qualitative data analysis is therefore a necessary element for maximizing the potential for generating meaning. As subjects, social actors attach subjectively, intended meaning to their behavior. According to qualitative epistemology, this "meaning" relates to the subject, not to what positivists consider as an objectively correct or metaphysically explored true meaning (Weber, 1949). In order to discover this subjectively intended meaning, researchers have to empathize with social actors and appreciate the purposes, motives and causes that underlie those actions. Accordingly, this can only be accomplished within a framework and approach that encourages immersion of the researcher into the research setting of the respondents. A hands-off approach where the researcher attempts to distance him or herself from the research setting will never be able to achieve this goal.

Qualitative Data Analysis as a Tool for Organizing Different Levels and Forms of Meaning: Some Examples

The ability of qualitative data analysis to generate meaning makes it a unique and powerful epistemological tool for understanding even seemingly mundane experiences. According to Becker (1996, The Everyday World: Making Room for the Unanticipated section, para. 2),

> the general idea is that we act in the world on the basis of assumptions we never inspect but just act on, secure in the belief that when we do others will react as we expect them to. A version of this is the assumption that things look to me as they would look to you if you were standing where I

> am standing. In this view, "everyday understandings" refers not so much to the understandings involved, say, in the analysis of a kinship system….but to the deep epistemological beliefs that undergird all such shared ideas, the meta-analyses and ontologies we are not ordinarily aware of that make social life possible.

Becker's quote highlights the usefulness of qualitative data analysis as a tool for generating meaning in different aspects of daily life. Things, events, activities that seem commonplace, when approached from an analytical, naturalistic perspective, can be a source of significant meaning. Qualitative data analysis provides a method for categorizing and organizing the subtleties of everyday social phenomena in a meaningful way.

In *Analyzing Social Settings*, Lofland and Lofland (1996) provide several examples of how qualitative data analysis is used to generate different types and levels of meaning. Analyzing qualitative data for meaning often centers on the question of how members define for themselves a given problematic topic. An example of this is provided by Lofland and Lofland, who relate the story of a researcher who, in observing a religious group that strongly believed it was destined to make thousands of new converts and which worked hard to achieve its goal, found it failing time after time. The group members also perceived that failure. Members of the group explained the failure in three ways, which were generated under themes by the researcher. The meaning of the group's failure in bringing in new converts was derived and categorized from language used by the group members' themselves, so as to, as closely as possible, represent the meaning of the data in relation to the respondents.

Two other categories of meaning are 1) rules as meanings, and 2) unarticulated meanings (Lofland & Lofland, 1996). Rules can be a source of meaning in that they often represent a shared meaning, such as norms, and usually have some positive moral preference attached to them. Rules, whether explicit or implicit, communicate meaning through the values behind them. Thus, group norms can be understood through the existence and abstraction of rules. For example, in observing the relationship between students and teachers, an implicit set of rules regarding expected proper conduct between the two groups may arise, conveying clear values and ethics. As such, the meaning of this relationship to both parties can be better understood through the rules governing the way it functions.

Unarticulated meanings refer to those that go unrecognized by respondents but are articulated by the researcher through the use of typifications. Typifications are based on a large range of categories of data, and are typically used to generalize such data under one name. Typifications are never verbalized by respondents but created by the researcher to give meaning to the wide range of data they house. That is, the data comprising the typification all point to the same general theme despite the variety of details. In this way, the diversity of data within one overall theme conveys meaning through the generalizing process. For example, Lofland and Lofland (1996) cite the example of a research study conducted on a certain public defender's professional behavior. In the example, the researcher used the term "normal crimes" in his work to refer to a wide range of categories of unlawful behaviors, which, after further inquiry, also included data not only pertaining to the crimes themselves, but included information such as the race of those

that typically commit such offenses, the nature of the crimes, and the usual victims of such crimes. Thus, it was concluded that the use of this typification, "normal crimes," conveyed a much broader meaning when used by the respondent and his colleagues in their work.

Thus, through qualitative data analysis, meaning is constructed in a variety of ways. Through construction, the researcher is not a blank slate, rather he or she is an active participant in the process, as typification outlined above points out. Epistemologically, the researcher is engaged in the setting, participating in the act of "being with" the respondents in their lives to generate meaning of them. Developing themes and storylines featuring the words and experiences of participants themselves is an important result of qualitative data analysis that adds richness to the findings and their meaning.

Conclusion: Learning Implications of Meaning Making

This paper set out to provide an introduction to some basic epistemological considerations of meaning making, as approached through the use of qualitative data analysis. First, some of the key differences between the epistemologies of qualitative (naturalist/constructivist) and quantitative (positivist) research paradigms were introduced, highlighting their differences as reflecting unique ontological views about the nature of reality. Second, the realist paradigm was discussed as a "middle ground" between the poles of positivism and constructivism. For realists, the means to determine the reality of a social phenomenon is through the triangulation of cognition processes, which include elements of both positivism and constructivism rather than solely one or the other. A perception for realists is thus a window from which a picture of reality can be triangulated with other perceptions. Third, meaning and meaning making were defined and discussed, stressing the significance of different levels of meaning such as worldviews or philosophies of life, and the importance of meaning as a critical element to human existence and learning. Fourth, the task of constructing meaning through qualitative data analysis was described citing a variety of perspectives and approaches. Here, important epistemological considerations were applied and illustrated through examples of how qualitative data analysis can be used to generate meaning. And finally, how qualitative data analysis can be used to organize and categorize different levels and forms of meaning was addressed citing examples from the work of Lofland and Lofland (1996).

Lofland and Lofland and others' work on generating meaning through qualitative data analysis points to the important role such analysis can play in understanding behavior, thinking, and worldview formation. The unique features of qualitative data analysis (for example, the strategic use of data to elicit important themes building toward the development of theory) contribute greatly to the construction of meaning. As such, qualitative data analysis is not only a research tool but also a powerful learning tool.

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