
9-1-2010

Comprehensive and Clear: A Review of H. Russell Bernard and G.W. Ryan's *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*

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Recommended APA Citation

Victor, S. (2010). Comprehensive and Clear: A Review of H. Russell Bernard and G.W. Ryan's *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1282-1284. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1343>

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Comprehensive and Clear: A Review of H. Russell Bernard and G.W. Ryan's *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*

Abstract

In their book *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*, Bernard and Ryan (2010) present a thorough review of qualitative data analysis. Main topic areas include data collection, coding, development of themes, qualitative analysis of words and detailed descriptions of grounded theory, content analysis, and schema analysis. This book is applicable and appropriate for a variety of professionals in the social sciences.

Keywords

Qualitative Analysis, Qualitative Data

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**Comprehensive and Clear:
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*Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches***

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*In their book *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*, Bernard and Ryan (2010) present a thorough review of qualitative data analysis. Main topic areas include data collection, coding, development of themes, qualitative analysis of words and detailed descriptions of grounded theory, content analysis, and schema analysis. This book is applicable and appropriate for a variety of professionals in the social sciences. Key Words: *Qualitative Analysis and Qualitative Data**

Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches by Bernard and Ryan (2010) is organized so that Part One, which includes the first six chapters, provides an overview of the basics of qualitative data analysis. The second half of the book, including chapters 7-17, provides more detailed information on this subject. This book is well suited for a novice in qualitative research, as the chapters are written in a clear and simple style. Those who are more experienced in qualitative research could include this in their collection because it is comprehensive and replete with examples from studies that illustrate the content. The authors provide excellent tools for the readers. For example, they include sources to locate available qualitative software in the Appendix, and they provide an abundance of figures and tables that offer visual representations of the content. An extensive list of references is provided in addition to sources at the end of each chapter.

In their opening chapter, Bernard and Ryan (2010) indicate that the goals of qualitative research are to uncover and describe patterns, use the patterns to compare differences between individuals or groups, and then to test assumptions about the patterns. The authors point out that qualitative data can include physical objects, media images, audio and files, and a range of textual material from the novel to brochures and ads.

Data collection, the first step in qualitative analysis, is addressed in Chapter Two. The authors discuss three types of data collection: indirect, direct, and elicited. In the indirect approach, data is collected from artifacts, pottery, photographs, archives of written records, and data from other research studies. A comment I found of interest was that trash can be used as an indirect source. It certainly adds new meaning to the term sanitation engineer! Direct approaches to data collection include observation of individuals and groups. The last type of data collection, discussed in greater detail than the first two, is elicitation. Bernard and Ryan (2010) include an excellent overview of the interviewing process and further subdivide this information into structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. For those with limited experience in qualitative interviewing, the section on suggestions for the beginning interviewer and types of probes would be helpful. This chapter also includes a discussion of how mixed methods

studies can include qualitative research through use of focus groups, participant observation, and ethnographic decision modeling. A shortfall of the chapter is the limited information it includes devoted to transcription of audio and video data.

The next two chapters cover coding and how to develop qualitative themes. Eight techniques to identify themes are mentioned, ranging from repetitions within the text, to identifying linguistic connectors, and considering missing text. Examples serve to bring these techniques to life. Bernard and Ryan (2010) also describe ways to manipulate themes, and they cover the topics of cutting and sorting, developing word lists, and identifying key-words-in-context. The authors include a useful table on how to identify which technique to use given the type of data collected. Bernard and Ryan also provide a detailed explanation of how to code and develop codebooks. They explain how to develop original codes and use standard codes. This information is best explained through the use of examples, which the authors provide. I found their table illustration of coding about the common cold quite interesting, as I was recovering from a cold while reading the book!

In Chapters 5 through 8 the authors delve into the crux of the text, which is data analysis. The authors discuss the importance of validity checks and present two types of matrices to display data: profile matrices and proximity matrices. Figures are used liberally to represent conceptual models. The authors discuss the steps in building a model: determining the concepts, showing how they are intertwined, and then proving that the relationships apply to the majority of cases. Bernard and Ryan (2010) examine how to determine if variables are related to one another, how to determine the feature(s) to be analyzed, and how to compare data. Moving from these general elements of data analysis to a more specific issue, Bernard and Ryan address the topic of cultural domain analysis in Chapter eight; this is the analysis of perceptions of individuals from cultural groups. This section of the book serves to demonstrate the depth of analysis required in quality qualitative research.

In the next several chapters, the authors describe ways to analyze words within qualitative data. They explain how to analyze key words in context by drawing upon examples from studies of how parents describe their children, the words in personal ads, and descriptions of horror movies. Bernard and Ryan (2010) explore several specific methods of analyzing words, including semantic network analysis, which focuses on the connections across words, discourse analysis, and conversational analysis. Aspects of data that can be considered in this latter method include turn taking and adjacency pairs. The authors provide thought-provoking examples of turn taking among jurors, in doctor/patient interaction, and in a conversation between two Hispanic men. Data analysis in narrative analysis is described with examples of studies exploring the sociolinguistics of how women respond to the death of their mother, hermeneutics in the interpretation of the text of a sermon, and phenomenology in the experience of those seeking subsidized housing.

The authors' explanations of data analysis continue in Chapters 12 through 14 with detailed descriptions of data analysis in grounded theory, content analysis, and schema analysis. In describing data analysis in grounded theory, the authors provide examples of types of questions that can be used to uncover information; they also discuss coding and theorizing, and the use of memoing to develop a theme. A study of media bias is used to illustrate a sequence of content analysis which includes defining the texts

to use, creating the codes, checking the text, creating a matrix for the codes, and determining intercoder reliability. With schema analysis, we take a story and fit it to our mental model. Examples of interviewing and analyzing metaphors in a discussion of folk theories are provided.

I found chapter 15, on analytic induction and qualitative comparative analysis, to be one of the more difficult chapters in the book. The authors discuss the use of qualitative data to study the cause and effect of social phenomena. A study of embezzlers was examined to hypothesize who these people would be. In qualitative comparative analysis, dichotomies are developed such as true/false and present/absent. The example provided as an illustration was use of a data matrix to identify eating disorders. Chapter 16 presents how data can be analyzed in an ethnographic study to develop a model of decision-making. Two interesting examples are provided on recurring decisions such whether to attend class, or whether or not to recycle. The book concludes with a discussion of sample size.

Although this book covers a great deal of information, the authors' clear writing style makes it a good starting place for the novice qualitative researcher to learn about analysis of qualitative data. It would serve as an excellent text in a qualitative analysis course. You can look at the book's table of contents at the website of Sage, the book's publisher, at <http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book227658&#tabview=toc>. You can also read Chapters 1 and 3 free online at <http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book227658&#tabview=samples>.

Reference

Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

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Article Citation

Victor, S. (2010). Comprehensive and clear: A review of H. Russell Bernard and G. W. Ryan's *analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1282-1284. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/sss/QR/QR15-5/bernard.pdf>
