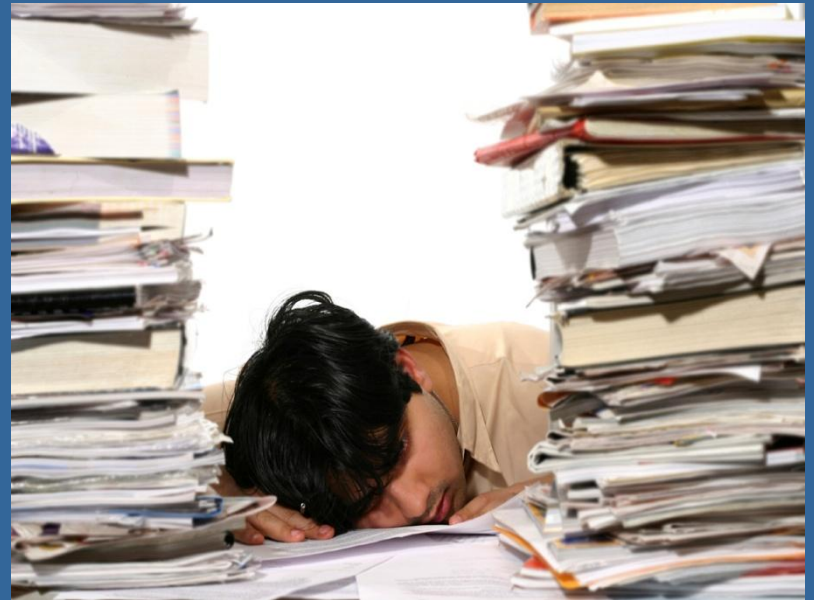


# Note Taking and Analyzing Qualitative Data

Roxanne Ezzet-Lofstrom  
URBP 298A, Fall 2009  
San Jose State University

# Overview

- How to take notes
- What to do with those notes
  - How to analyze “qualitative data”



# Outline

- Goals of note taking
- How to take notes
- How to analyze those notes (i.e., qualitative data)
  - Data management
  - Analyzing qualitative data
  - Content analysis
- Questions on your projects

# Goals of Note Taking

Adapted from material provided by Prof. Asha Agrawal

- What MIGHT your goals be?
- Possible goals
  - Retrieve details from original documents you read
  - Compile information if you cannot go back to originals
  - Keep track of what you have already read, so that you don't hunt for it again
    - To help you understand what you are reading
    - To help you remember what to read again later
    - To help you remember what you read

# How to Take Notes

- 1) Various source material
- 2) Detailed evidence to support statements
- 3) Note-taking is part of a process
- 4) You will only use a portion of your notes
- 5) Compress the information



# How to Take Notes, con't

- 6) Highlight key points
- 7) Be selective
- 8) Problems with too many notes
  - Transcribing too much of the original
  - Being unselective in topic choice
- 9) Solution to too many notes
  - Avoid being descriptive
  - *Think* more... *write* less
  - Be very selective

# How to Take Notes, con't

## 10) Good Layout

- Note your source
- Write clearly
- Use a system of tabulation
- Avoid continuous prose
- Devise a logical layout
- Use a new page for each set of notes
- Write on one side of the page only

# Note Taking Examples

- Interviews
  - Practice interview and note taking before conducting “real” ones
  - Record interview if possible
  - Immediately after the interview, review notes and fill in gaps
  - Later that same day, review/type/transcribe the notes from the interview

# Note Taking Examples, con't

- Documents (e.g., general plans, zoning codes, maps)
  - List key themes to look for before reviewing documents
  - Put “data” into a grid, matrix, spreadsheet or systematic file



# Note Taking Examples, con't

- Observations (e.g., activity in parks or plazas)
  - List key themes to look for before reviewing documents
  - Put “data” into a grid, matrix, spreadsheet or systematic file

# What to do with all that data

## Introduction

- Qualitative Data Analyses (QDA)
  - Choices & decisions
  - Iterative process: reading, describing & interpreting



# Data Management

- Disguise participants
  - Create a filing system: an excel file, a database file, or some other tool and be consistent
- Qualitative Data Analysis software
  - ATLAS/ti, NUD\*IST,;MaxQDA,
  - Hyper RESEARCH (MAC compatible),
  - The Ethnograph
  - CDC EZ-Text (Free download):  
[www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/software/ez-text/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/software/ez-text/index.htm)

# Analyzing Qualitative Data - Overview

- Filtering Data
- Start with raw data (e.g., maps, field notes, interview transcripts)
  - Codes, themes, categories
  - Log all decisions in a journal
- Various approaches to present/write up the data (discuss in a few minutes)

# Coding

- Identifying and labeling codes
  - Begin with open codes
  - Write in margins
  - After 3-4 transcripts, compile a start-list of codes
  - Trim back code list
  - Avoid professional jargon
  - Labels should be brief but descriptive
  - Keep a log of decisions

# Categories & Themes

- Producing Categories and Themes
  - Cut & paste coded segments
  - Use QDA software
  - Might use:
    - Schemas
    - Metaphor & analogies
    - Themes & subthemes



# Qualitative Data Presentation

Case Summaries

Data Displays (e.g., matrix)

# Content Analysis

## Steps in Conducting Content Analysis

- 1) Frame a research question
- 2) Decide on source materials
- 3) Decide on unit of analysis
- 4) Decide on sampling design
- 5) Conduct reliability checks

# References

- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Padgett, D. (2008). *Qualitative Methods in Social Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Royse, D. (2008). *Research Methods in Social Work*, Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1990). *Writing Up Qualitative Research*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994). *Transforming Qualitative Data*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.