

Presenting Qualitative Results

Marvarene Oliver, Ed.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S
Professor, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi
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Difficulties

In one old text:

- 75-page chapter on presenting quantitative results
 - Multiple statistical methods
 - Each method with “Did you remember to...” list about what to include in write-up of results
- 24.25-page chapter on presenting qualitative results
 - No lists of what to include
 - Three samples of partial write-ups from particular methodological perspectives

Some Hard Realities

- Ontology of qualitative research (recognition of multiple realities)
- Numerous ways to conduct study
- Numerous ways to interpret materials, even within one broad methodological approach
- Thus, multiple ways to present results

Before Going Further: Importance of Writing

- Insufficient time to develop skills in writing results for qualitative research in most research courses.
- If only you weren't in the midst of the dissertation, you could
 - Improve writing skills
 - Develop and elaborate your ability to write narratives
 - Read literature
 - Study creative writing
- But since you are
 - Get consultation as well as editing
 - Get others to read and critique who don't know your field
- Your writing can make or break your presentation of results!

Why?

- Results should be
 - Clear
 - Interesting
 - Logical with some kind of flow that makes sense to the reader
 - Organized in such a way that they tell the story of . . .
 - NOT a list of disparate findings with transitional sentence or two thrown in
 - Make connections for the reader
- If not
 - May look (or be) superficial
 - May look (or be) thrown together with little thought
 - May cause even sound research to appear not-so-sound

Researcher as maker of quilts

Researcher may juxtapose or partially superimpose bits of data in creating the whole – depends on research questions and methods

Results section should show the reader the “quilt.”

Most often (but not always), we use words/narratives to describe or tell the story of results.



Or Researcher as Maker of a Montage

Data Analysis

- Selecting, editing, and piecing together separate pieces of data to form a whole

Results

- Showing (telling) the whole



Or Researcher as Maker of a Watch?

Keep in mind that you are trying to show your readers how your data fits together (and where it doesn't) in a way that is understandable.



Difficult to divorce methods and analysis from results

How you analyze data and present results is determined or influenced by your design and flow from there.

- Methods and methodology will inform how you analyze your data.
 - And how credibility or rigor is established
 - And how much data you collect (e.g., Giorgi's view of data saturation – NO)
 - And whether/how much to include of your lens
- Similarly, methodology will inform how you present your data
 - Themes?
 - Exemplars and creative synthesis?
 - Emerging theory?
 - Other?

Thus

- Research problem
- Purpose
- Question(s)
- Design
- Methods



Should all connect in such a way that how to make sense of a study's results and findings is a reasonable and rigorous "flow" from all of the elements above

Some General Guidelines

- Refine concepts and link them where you can.
 - Can be more difficult than you think – may require re-writing/re-conceptualizing
- Provide sufficient data (e.g., quotes) to allow the reader to see the relationship between the data and the interpretation of the data. The reader should be able to assess whether interpretation is supported by the data.
- Ethically, you must account for counter evidence. Provide explanation and/or possibilities about why the disconfirming data may exist.
- Conversely, do not report something as a finding for which you do not have sufficient evidence.

General Guidelines, continued

- Present findings in light of similar previous research/theories. Do your findings support or deviate from previous research? Are there “unique” findings that do not seem to be already in the literature?
- Generally, your Methods chapter should have included sufficient information about participants and context for readers to assess whether your results could be applicable to their setting, assuming this is appropriate for your study.)

Talk to your chair and be consistent with your methodological foundation and methods!

Common Problems in Presentation of Findings

- No focus (e.g., loosely or unconnected collection of themes or other organizer)
- Lack of depth in analysis (e.g., data doesn't support results; categories/themes/other organizers are unclear or are ill-defined)
- Appears to “force” themes/categories/other organizers onto the data and participants rather than data and/or participants giving birth to them
- Strings themes/categories/other organizers together in a way that reads like a list (remember the quilt/montage/watch).

More Common Problems

- Overstating or misstating results (e.g., making a theme or category out of a collection of data that just isn't – at least as the data is presented)
- Poor labeling/conceptualizing of a theme or category
- Failure to present findings in a way that is consistent with your methods and design
- Writing style that distracts reader from content or worse, prevents reader from being able to tell what the content is

Examples of Findings

- See chapter 4 examples