

# Conducting Research with Children and Adolescents



Design, Methods and Empirical Cases

Julie Tinson

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 Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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# 7 Analysing and Interpreting the Data

## Objectives

- To identify a variety of approaches that can be employed to analyse qualitative research
- To explore the ways in which analysis and interpretation overlap
- To establish the importance of 'shared meaning' and how this can be achieved through back translation, dual moderation and multiple researchers
- To consider types of quantitative data and how to code, examine and analyse numerically
- To summarise the issues associated with mixed methods analysis.

## Introduction

Having successfully completed an ethical, engaging piece of research with children, the challenge that must now be met is that of analysing and interpreting the data. It is important, in order to ensure your study continues to be cohesive and focused, to review the initial aim(s) and objectives of the research before embarking on any analysis or interpretation. What did you hope to achieve overall? What 'themes' or concepts were you exploring? Did you pose questions and have these been addressed? Did the research raise issues or ideas that had not previously been considered? Once you have refamiliarised yourself with the context of your research study, you can begin to analyse and interpret the data. This chapter is designed to facilitate this process and is in three parts. In the first part, tried and tested methods which describe how to systematically analyse qualitative research will be discussed. This will be followed by an examination

of qualitative analysis and interpretation by considering the possible outcomes from research approaches discussed in Chapter 3. In the second part, analysing quantitative research will be explored with some practical advice on how to interpret the findings of the research study. Third, mixed methods analysis will also be addressed.

It is important to note that whilst analytical methods for qualitative research are being described in the following section to demonstrate ways in which 'sense can be made' of the data, it is difficult to clearly separate analysis and interpretation as the two partly overlap (Gummesson, 2005). Analysis and interpretation are not necessarily discrete activities nor do they occur in ordered sequential fashion (Spiggle, 1994). Although analysis in the following section is primarily associated with techniques (to ensure studies can be replicated and/or are rigorous in their research design) and is therefore more readily associated with quantitative approaches, it is recognised that qualitative 'analysis and interpretations are part and parcel of the same issue' (Gummesson, 2005: 311).

## Qualitative Research Approaches to Analysing Qualitative Data

Across disciplines (see for example: Spiggle, 1994; Jones, 2000; Mulhall, 2003; Gummesson, 2005) it is recognised that analysing qualitative research can be problematic. These concerns normally involve issues of reliability and imprecise modes of data analysis. Providing a structure for the data may ensure that the analysis is more comprehensive and often researchers will categorise and analyse thematically the data they have collected in order to provide a structure to their findings (see, for example, Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Woods *et al.*, 2005; Sanders and Munford, 2005; Dagkas and Stathi, 2007; Horstman *et al.*, 2008). Although the issues with qualitative analysis (e.g. interpretation, the role of the researcher in the data collection, shared meaning, etc.) are not confined to researching with children, (novice) researchers are often unsure how to collect their thoughts about what they have uncovered. The following approaches may assist in structuring and interpreting the data.

The Ritchie and Spencer (1994) Framework analysis method is one which is widely used in social science and has been used to analyse data generated by health, education and social research (see, for example, Jones, 2000; Russell *et al.*, 2004). It is a method for analysing qualitative research data and it was developed in the 1980s by the Qualitative Research Unit at the National Centre for Qualitative Research in the UK. This method depends on the manual coding, charting and mapping of data and can principally be used for analysing interviews, creative (focus) groups and diaries (unstructured).

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