Exercises

# Chapter 17: Quality in qualitative research

## Exercise 1: Achieve credibility in your data analysis

1. List the ways in which you can make your data analysis credible.
2. In the context of your own research project, what is the single best way of achieving credibility?

## Exercise 2: Achieve validity in your data analysis

This is an exercise designed to help you think about the validity of your data analysis. It is best attempted when you have already written at least one substantial paper on your findings.

1. Choose any paper you have written on your data.

2. Explain on what grounds you chose those particular data extracts to report.

3. To what extent can you claim that this data was ‘typical’ or ‘representative’?

4. To what extent have you investigated and reported ‘deviant’ cases?

## Exercise 3: Explore the benefits and limits of your data

This exercise is meant to accustom you to the advantages and limitations of simple tabulations.

1. Select one dataset from your data corpus (e.g. a particular collection of interviews, observations or transcripts).

2. Count whatever seems to be countable in this data according to your theoretical orientation.

3. Assess what this quantitative data tells you about social life in this setting (e.g. what associations you can establish).

4. Identify deviant cases (i.e. items that do not support the associations that you have established). How might you further analyse these deviant cases, using either quantitative or qualitative techniques? What light might that throw on the associations which you have identified?

## Exercise 4: Explain how your analysis gives the reader access to your data

The following is a quotation from Barry Glassner and Julia Loughlin about how they handled the issue of reliability in a study of adolescent drug users:

In more positivistic research designs, coder reliability is assessed in terms of agreement among coders. In qualitative research one is unconcerned with standardizing interpretation of data. Rather, our goal in developing this complex cataloguing and retrieval system has been to retain good access to the words of the subjects, without relying upon the memory of interviewers or data analysts. (1987: 27, my emphasis)

Now write a short piece (say 1,000 words) explaining how your own data analysis provides the reader with good access to your original dataset. Check out this piece with your supervisor and other students. If they think it works, you may be able to use it as part of your final methodology chapter.