time and effort (Krueger and Casey 2000, 149). But the added investment in style will undoubtedly help with your work's impact.

Presenting your Data . . . when Space is Tight

In a previous work (Cyr 2016), I noted that few norms exist regarding how to present focus group-based data in an article-length format. This conclusion was based off of a meta-analysis of published studies that used focus groups in their research design. That analysis revealed that the kind of information published about focus groups was highly variable. In many cases, even the most basic concerns were left unaddressed, including the kinds of questions asked and the number of focus groups carried out. I therefore created a set of three guidelines that I suggested were sufficiently informative and yet succinct enough to fit into a restricted, article-length space (Cyr 2016, 250–251).

First, make explicit the main purpose of the focus groups for the research design. Were they pre-tests for a different data collection method? Were they meant to produce triangulating evidence? Whatever the purpose, it should be clearly stated. The justification for using focus groups, and not some other method, to achieve that purpose should also briefly be addressed.

Second, note the level of analysis (individual, group, interactive) that will be the focus of your analytical attention. In most cases, the level of analysis will make sense given the main purpose of the focus groups (as per Table 5.4). Where this is not the case, you should defend why the level you are analyzing is the most appropriate for the task at hand.

Finally, list the exact phrasing of those questions that were cited directly in the analysis section. In the best-case scenario, *all* questions will be included (perhaps in an online appendix). But when pressed for space, you should, at a minimum, provide the precise language of the specific questions to which you directly refer in the text. You should also footnote the number of participants across the full (specified) number of focus groups you carried out.

These three pieces of information represent an absolute minimum when it comes to presenting your work. While not fully informative in terms of the focus groups you carried out, it will allow a reader to: understand why you used focus groups in the research design; assess your analytical focus; and know, at the very least, what specific questions were asked that informed the overall conclusions. Additional data, including the full question protocol, the recruitment strategy, and the precise analytical approach undertaken, can and, where possible, *should* be included in an appendix, online or otherwise.

At a minimum, you should offer to make this information available upon request.

Presenting your Data . . . when Space is (Relatively) Unrestricted

In this scenario, you will have to worry much less about what you present, because you will have more space to work with. Of course, the stylistic concerns mentioned above still apply, so please keep these in mind. Potentially unlimited space does not translate into unlimited patience or time on the part of your readers.

If the final presentation is a stand-alone report, then it will look slightly different than if you were to incorporate your findings into a larger book manuscript. Stand-alone reports, or narratives (Krueger 1998b), will often be oriented toward audiences that have specifically requested the focus groups be undertaken. These are fairly conventional and have a template that you can follow.[10] Nonetheless, much of the content will be quite similar to that of the book manuscript, even if where it appears in the text differs.

In what follows, I include a basic overview of the information that should appear about the focus group in either written medium (see also Krueger and Casey 2000, 149). Where you choose to put the information will depend on the overall organization of the publication.

First, you will want to include a summary of the most pertinent information about the focus groups (this would be an executive summary in the stand-alone report). Here, the information will look very similar to that which would appear in an article-length text (see the previous section). Specifically, you want to explain why the focus groups were undertaken, that is, what their purpose was for the larger research project. You also want to explain your objectives for the data collected. Here, you should see some alignment, as per Table 5.4 and our discussion above. The purposes of the focus group should match with the kind of data collected and analyzed.

You will also want to provide the questions that specifically informed the analysis undertaken. The full set of questions will be included elsewhere – and most likely in an attached appendix. You do not, however, want to make the reader look elsewhere to find the exact phrasing of the questions that were the most consequential for your analysis. Finally, you want to include the number of focus groups that were organized and the number of participants involved in each.

To be sure, you will want to include a complete description of the procedures undertaken to make the focus groups happen. In the book manuscript,

[10] See Krueger (1998b, 109–114) if you wish to follow this template faithfully.

Box 5.1 Creating an Appendix on Focus Group Procedures

The following is a list of those items that it can be helpful to include in an appendix to a book manuscript (or, alternatively, in a section on focus group procedures in a stand-alone report).

- Number of focus groups, when and where they took place;
- Average duration of each focus group;
- The compensation provided;
- A description of who the moderator(s) was (were);
- A description of the researcher's role (if she was not the moderator);
- A table of descriptive data, including, for example, pertinent socio-demographic information about the participants (e.g., percentage who were women, average age, average education);
- A description and justification of the recruitment process, as well as requisites for participation;
- A copy of the socio-demographic questionnaire if you used one;
- A copy of the full question protocol;
- A description of any pertinent instructions given to the instructor;
- A description of the data analysis, including, where applicable, the coding procedures at the different levels of analysis leveraged and any database that was created of the data generated;
- Any limitations that you encountered as you carried out the data collection method, what you did (if anything) to mitigate those limitations, and how they might affect the overall findings.

these will often occur in an appendix. For an example, see Appendix B in Cyr 2017a (219–230). The appendix includes potentially a lot of information (see Box 5.1). My goal was to be as transparent as possible with the process. I sought to convey the logic behind my methodological choices and the limitations I faced as I collected the focus group data. In providing this level of detail, I allow others to assess the merit of my findings based, in part, on the choices I made in collecting data. Where possible, this kind of data transparency is, I believe, valuable for the knowledge-building enterprise.[11]

You will have to include a description and analysis of the major findings from the focus group work undertaken. These should focus on the overall goals

[11] Note that I do *not* provide the transcripts of the focus groups themselves. I am not advocating that any researcher do this, certainly. Should you be interested in making these data available, data repositories, such as the QDR at Syracuse University, exist that know how properly to archive transcripts and administer them to other individuals.

of the project. If the goal of the focus groups was triangulation, this section will explain if the focus groups corroborated other data and how. If the purpose was to pre-test a survey or experimental protocol, then the results should focus on what the pre-test revealed and those changes, if any, that were undertaken as a consequence of the focus groups. The inclusion of a few examples will be helpful in either case.

Finally, it may be appropriate to set aside space to interpret the findings. What did the focus group data reveal that you did not otherwise know? What can you glean from those revelations? Do they suggest new avenues for research? Do they provide nuance about other theories or other gaps in the literature? This section is optional, and some of it may actually be better placed in the results/analysis section. Still, for larger projects – and especially for exploratory work – it may be useful to spend time on the broader implications that the focus group data raise.

Ultimately, the presentation of focus group data will be a function of the demands of the project, the expectations of the audience, and/or the particular norms of the social science discipline in question. This section has outlined, broadly and briefly, the main components that should be included when presenting your focus group work. Still, for more specific guidance, it will be useful to study how others have presented their work in a medium similar to that in which you hope to publish. The expectations in sociology may differ, ultimately, to those of political science or geography. Seeing how others have published focus group data will be immensely helpful as your prepare to publish yours.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined several considerations that you should make as you analyze your focus group data and present your findings. Rather than adopt a prescriptive approach and explain how, exactly, content analysis should occur, it provided a series of recommendations to contemplate as you carry out the analysis from start to finish. First, it suggested being as specific (and systematic) as possible with transcription. When you maximize the amount of information translated to the written page, you make data analysis more accurate, reliable, and valid.

Second, it highlighted a set of factors that you should keep in mind as you begin your data analysis. The importance of systematization – a recurring topic in this chapter – was emphasized, as was the need to be open to alternative interpretations of the data. The chapter also stressed the importance of different verbal and non-verbal elements of content analysis. Each of these factors can shape and, hopefully, improve the content analysis you undertake – be it