

# Chapter 7

## Utilising Media and Text-Based Sources



### Chapter Outcomes

By the end of the chapter, the reader should be able to:

- Describe the benefits of using traditional media sources as data for health and illness research.
- Describe the benefits of using text-based sources of data for health and illness research.
- Recognise the challenges of using this kind of data.
- Critically assess the different ways in which media can be used as data.
- Appraise the contributions that media and textual data can make to the field of health and illness.

### Introduction

A frequently underestimated valuable source of naturally occurring data is that which is generated by the media and those that are text-based. Indeed, in some cases researchers use these data sources without considering that they constitute a naturally occurring source of information about health and illness. This includes television programmes, documentaries, magazines, newspapers, policy documents, medical notes, and natural diaries. The world's media is full of reports and references to physical and mental health conditions, including references to services, stigma, disorders, and societal views. Through various media sources and through a range of different natural texts, it is possible to perform a range of qualitative analytic approaches on this naturally occurring data.

In this chapter, we take a practical approach to examining the different sources of naturally occurring data from various traditional media. We recognise the relevance

and importance of social media in a contemporary research context, and this is covered in the next chapter, Chap. 8. We consider how using recordings of various television sources, such as documentaries and chat shows, can provide insights into the social construction of health and illness. Text-based traditional media is also considered in terms of how this might be a useful way of understanding health and illness. The chapter concludes with other types of text-based sources that are common in health disciplines, such as medical notes, referral letters, health-related policies and guidelines, as well as natural diaries that are sometimes kept by patients with certain disorders, such as cancer or eating disorders.

## The Use of Media in Qualitative Health Research

Media are important sources of data. This is because the *media are important social institutions* as they are central presenters of social life, culture, and politics, and they shape and reflect how these are formed and presented (Bell, 1998, p. 64). The media plays a central and important role in reporting on various physical and mental health matters. The media not only reports on factual science-based health and illness issues but also has a crucial role in representing health conditions through its fact-based programming and reports and through its fictional articles and programming. In contemporary society we are surrounded by magazines, newspapers, news reports, documentaries, films, television programmes, images, and advertising, and these formats include representations, sensationalism, questions, and facts about a whole range of public health, physical health, environmental health, and mental health issues that may concern and influence the public.



### Notable Point!

The public world is always interested in health, and the media is a global medium through which important messages about health can be conveyed.

If we look at the coverage of health in the media, there are many ways that this is represented. Specifically, the factual representation of health requires journalists to balance different and sometimes competing aims. To achieve this, journalists often draw upon trusted sources such as medical staff, and specialist reporters have technical knowledge, appropriate sources of information, and more power within their organisations (Leask, Hooker, & King, 2010).

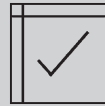
However, despite the effort to report health factually, research in this area has shown that media representation of health and illness is by no means neutral. A good example of this is evident if we turn our attention specifically to mental health.

Media coverage of mental health is often negative in tone, often focusing on the criminal behaviour of the mentally ill that perpetuates the stigma (Bithell, 2010), and tends to be more negative in UK media than others such as the USA or Australia (Huang & Priebe, 2003). Additionally, mental health receives less press coverage than general medicine (Lawrie, 2000). While the coverage of mental health is particularly negative, all types of illness tend to be represented in quite negative ways. The representation of illness in the media tends to focus on illness as a deviation from society's norms (Rozonova, 2006). Furthermore, certain physical diseases also have stigma perpetuated by the media, such as cancer and AIDS, and this can increase the patient's suffering and hinder help-seeking (Sontag, 1991). Of course, there are many physical and mental health conditions that have negative associations, stereotypes, or attitudes linked to them. We encourage you to reflect on this in the activity in Box 7.1.

### Box 7.1 Health Conditions with Negative Associations

#### Activity

We would encourage you to take some time out to reflect on the negative associations with certain health conditions, both mental and physical. In your research diary, create a list of all illnesses/diseases that you can think of that may be viewed with negative associations by society and in the media.



The research that has been conducted on the ways in which the media has portrayed health and illness has tended to pursue two interconnected directions.

- The first direction relates to the ways in which the media portrays illness and the meaning of that illness. In other words, in the analyses of media representations of disease, it is necessary to examine not only the accuracy of the media portrayals of diseases and how that compares to scientific findings, while also attending to the meaning of those media portrayals, as well as exploring why some health issues receive attention, while others do not (Rock, 2005).
- The second direction of the research conducted into the way the media represents health and illness relates to the effects of those portrayals on the audiences/readership. In other words, the media performs an important agenda-setting function. It selects which issues and diseases are worthy of the attention of the public, and likewise the public relies heavily on the media for information about health and illness (Frost, Frank, & Maibach, 1997). Consequently, the media reports of disease influence the ways people construct their views about health and illness (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2002).

## *Media as Data*

Of course, there is myriad difference between scientific, accurate, and factual reporting on health and illness and sensationalising, representation, and fictional programmes representing health and illness through characters. In terms of science and fact, it is argued that the national and international press have a responsibility for honest and accurate representation of information. However, it is not always the case, and researchers have an interest in how health and illness are presented to the public. Specifically, there has been some tendency for journalists to sensationalise reports from academic literature on certain illness stories, and these are designed to attract the attention of the public and sell ‘news’. In terms of accountability, however, the problem is not one sided and not merely the responsibility or fault of journalism.

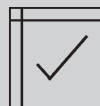
For example: *Research has indicated that much of the exaggeration in mainstream media coverage was already present in the press releases sent out from academic institutions (Sumner et al., 2014).*

With good reason, therefore, such media involvement in the reporting and representation of all kinds of health and illness has long been a concern of qualitative health researchers. This media coverage of health and illness therefore clearly presents a huge range of opportunities for doing qualitative research. Before you go any further, try the activity in Box 7.2.

### **Box 7.2 Reasons to Examine Media Data**

#### **Activity**

Data from the media can be analysed using a range of either quantitative or qualitative techniques. Try to write down three reasons why using any of the media sources as data might be useful for a qualitative health researcher.



Data from various sources of media can provide a range of insights about the spectrum of physical and mental health conditions and the consequences and effects of these. Qualitative research can be valuable in capturing these insights as qualitative methods allow the analyst to examine the representations in depth. The media has international reach, and health conditions affect the global population, and thus any qualitative research undertaken cannot completely account for a range

of different cultural contexts. Furthermore, the analysis of such sources provides an understanding of how health is represented from a range of perspectives and the process of this.

## Television and Radio as Sources of Naturally Occurring Data

Television offers an excellent source of naturally occurring data for the analysis of health-related topics. Television is an available medium in many countries and contains a wide range of fictional and factual programming. Likewise, radio programming offers a range of data opportunities, with news programmes, fictional plays, documentaries, chat shows, and so on. Radio political interviews provide an interesting source of data to explore how non-neutrality is achieved (Hutchby, 2011). Some radio shows allow the public to call in, and thus these turns can be examined to see how claims of personal experience or knowledge are positioned in such a public domain (Hutchby, 2001). As we mentioned earlier, there are two key ways in which television and radio are relevant to health. The first relates to the way they report on issues of health and illness, and the second relates to the way they represent health and illness. We offer two examples of this below to help you contextualise the relevance of this for naturally occurring data in Boxes 7.3 and 7.4.

### Box 7.3 Example of Television Data Reporting Health and Illness

#### Case Example

In an early study on the AIDS virus in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a great deal of media coverage of the condition. Colby and Cook (1991) examined this growth of AIDS cases and how the epidemic did not move onto the agenda of public health problems more quickly. They argued that an explanation for this lay with the national news media's reporting on the explanations of the epidemic and how this reporting shaped the very meaning of the virus for a range of audiences. They demonstrated in their study that coverage of the epidemic occurred in three short periods and public opinion seemed to shift and debates in government began. They also noted that typical stories about AIDS tended to report it in sensationalising ways rather than reassuring ways, and the media utilised doctors and government officials as evidence for the news being reported. The authors argued that there were both benefits and pitfalls to the news media's power in shaping the public agenda.



For more detail on this, see:

- Colby, D., & Cook, T. (1991). Epidemics and agendas; The politics of nightly news coverage of AIDS. *Journal of Health and Politics, Policy and Law*, 16(2), 215–250.

### Box 7.4 Example of Radio Data Representing Health and Illness

#### Case Example

Daykin et al. (2009) utilised naturally occurring radio data to examine how alcohol intake was represented through this medium. They noted that this was necessary as there were concerns about how the media might contribute to the developing culture of excessive drinking, particularly in younger people. For their study, they examined alcohol comments across six radio stations in England, with a data corpus of 12 h of radio. Analyses were quantitative and qualitative, and they identified 703 comments about alcohol with 244 involving presenters. They reported that 73% of the comments that were initiated by presenters and 45% of comments from all sources encouraged drinking. The authors argued that alcohol comments seemed to create an identity for programmes and to forge connections between presenters and audiences. Notably, the idea that alcohol is required for having a good time was rarely directly challenged on the radio. The data showed that weekend drinking and partying were key themes, and findings suggested that alcohol comments played a role in marketing and branding of radio output. The authors argued that comments about alcohol are shaped by the conventions of media that can make it difficult to challenge discourses about excessive drinking.



For more detail on this, see:

- Daykin, N., Irwin, R., Kimberlee, R., Orme, J., Plant, M., McCarron, L., & Rahbaril, M. (2009). Alcohol, young people and the media: A study of radio output in six radio stations in England. *Journal of Public Health*, 31(1), 105–112.

Research using television or radio as data makes an important contribution to the field of health as it enables researchers to show how the media can mislead and misinform the public about health issues, as well as reporting on health issues to inform and raise awareness. Television has the capability of circulating positive narratives that can encourage healthier lifestyles for the public (Giles, 2003) but also can convey illness in multiple ways.

For example: *Mental illness is conveyed in multiple ways on the television. Research has indicated that television and radio have made a significant contribution to managing community mental health by empowering audiences by broadcasting mental health campaigns and helping audiences understand and control issues that impact on their social and emotional well-being (Meadows & Foxwell, 2011). Yet, madness has a range of meanings on the television, with negative portrayals including violence commonly included (Rose, 1998).*

We would also encourage you here to think about the role of film and fictional television programmes, such as soap operas/dramas/daytime serials in the representation of health and illness. Over the decades there have been many films that have tackled issues of certain health conditions. What is notable here is that the entertainment media tends to portray evocative framing of disabilities (Garner, Harwood, & Jones, 2016). Garner et al. argued that the construction of the film character contributes to the defining and redefining of a condition.

For example: *An increased social interest in the neurodevelopmental condition autism spectrum disorder was increased with the release of the film ‘Rain man’ (Murray, 2008), and the media continued to captivate public interest with scientific reports around the link with vaccinations (Singh, Hallmayer, & Illes, 2007).*

We suggest that before you go any further, you have a look at the vignette in Box 7.5, and we provide some answers at the back of the book:

### Box 7.5 Vignette on Television as Data

#### Vignette

Darius is a trainee nurse who is interested in media representations of people with alcohol dependency and the physical health consequences of it. He is interested on the impact of such portrayals of television characters on public perceptions of alcohol-related health problems. He is interested in whether the other characters in the show are sympathetic or judgmental of the character with the condition.



- *What television or radio sources might Darius use as data?*
- *Hypothetically if Darius finds that people with alcohol dependence are portrayed negatively, how might this inform his nursing practice?*

## Documentaries

A common definition offered of a documentary is that of a ‘film or television or radio programme that provides a factual report on a particular subject’ (Oxford dictionary, n.d.; n.p). As such, although the producers make editorial decisions about the content that is shown publicly, they are positioned as ostensibly factual in character. Often documentaries include footage from other sources to illustrate a particular point or interview ‘experts’ to present the science or relevant people to provide a personal perspective.

For example: *In documentaries on healthy eating and obesity, it is not uncommon for the presenter to talk to a doctor or cardiologist, a marketing consultant from the food industry, individuals who are overweight and for whom healthy eating is problematic, and a scientist to explain the way the body processes food. They may also have celebrity chefs to talk about how to make healthy food exciting, politicians to explain policies, and celebrities who have dieted and successfully lost weight.*

**Notable Point!**

Just remember to think about what the documentary was produced for, how it was produced, and the fact that it will have been edited for a certain purpose.

Documentaries are readily available and in the public domain for researchers to use as naturally occurring data. This can be a useful source of data for several reasons:

- Allow an examination of social, cultural, and historical trends of how particular health issues are portrayed.
- The use of documentaries provides a way for the analyst to take a critical and/or sociopolitical position on the data.
- This type of data is presented as an objective and factual account of a certain area of health concerning the general population, and therefore, a social constructionist perspective can explore the way that reality and fact are constructed and presented.
- It allows for a focus on how different parties provide an account of a certain subject. In other words, the analyst can examine how different people talk about the issue being explored and compare these accounts.

For example: *In a study by Hodgetts and Chamberlain (1999), naturally occurring television documentaries were analysed to unpack the medicalisation of health coverage in this media. The study focused on the part that lay people played in the documentaries that were analysed. Their findings showed that the use of lay people normalised and personalised medical care as well as serving to legitimise the use of medical surveillance.*



## *Advertising*

While recognising that advertising can be pictorial or text-based, here we focus on advertising through television and radio to provide a simple example of how advertisements can function as data. Obviously, advertising is designed for promoting and selling the product being advertised, and a large volume of money is committed to creating the advertisement in order to motivate and persuade viewers/listeners to purchase the product. As such they provide a useful source of data to examine the rhetorical and persuasive aspects. One of the techniques used by marketing companies is to produce advertisements with controversial subject matter that encourages conversation about the source of controversy. Furthermore, the advertising placement has implications and could be a topic of study in its own right. It is worth considering who the target audience of advertisements might be. The placement of the advertisement, its content, its use of stereotyping, and the possible controversial message can all be an interesting source of data.

For example: *Wilson, Quigley, and Mansoor (1999) explored the nutritional quality of food that featured in advertisements designed to target children. Their analysis demonstrated that the content of these advertisements generally reflected the dietary patterns associated with an increased risk of obesity and dental cavities.*

## **News Interviews**

In every country across the globe, there will be some form of television and radio news reporting system. These could be reporting on local, national, or international events and concerns. News as a source of naturally occurring data is rich in live and recorded footage of events and situations that are currently unfolding. News as data is always kept current and up-to-date and as such is the most contemporary and recent data available. In other words, 'televisual news claims to provide an up-to-the-minute (now) narrative which, in turn, projects for the viewer a particular place (here) from which she or he may 'make sense' of the significance of certain 'newsworthy' events for their daily lives' (Allan, 1998, p. 105). Allan noted however that this process of representation is not a neutral reflection of society.

Part of the presentation of the news is the news interview. These can be pre-planned with certain individuals being invited into the studio for interview or can be more in situ on the streets where an event is taking place live with opportunistically selected individuals from those circumstances. Therefore, the analyst is given

access to the real-life emotional reactions from the people experiencing the subject of the report. In other words, naturally occurring data at its most raw and in the moment.

For example: *In the aftermath of a hurricane or earthquake hitting a town, inhabitants may be questioned on camera about their feelings and emotions. In so doing the analyst gets the real and immediately experienced feelings. Interviewees are typically obviously distressed and expressive in that moment and it is captured by the journalist.*



#### **Notable Point!**

Remember that while news is presented as factual, it is still selective and arguably influenced by the financial and political circumstances in which it is produced.

In the news interview, there is a relationship between the social organisation of the interview and the expectation of the journalist to maintain neutrality and balance in their coverage of the news (Greatbatch, 1998). Greatbatch noted however that such neutrality is a ‘member’s phenomenon’ and something oriented to by the members of the interaction. By examining naturally occurring data of news interviews, analysts can start to explore how these interactions unfold and how different members of the interview communicate with each other and manage the institutional task.

## ***Chat Shows***

Chat shows are a hugely popular source of entertainment with chat show hosts rapidly gaining status as household names. A frequently visited topic in many chat shows is physical and mental health as it is a major concern of many audiences. As a source of naturally occurring data, chat shows often invite lay members of the public as guests who have experienced a difficult health-related issue. These might include:

- Victims of a major publicised accident in a popular resort.
- Parents of children with chronic conditions.
- A special feature on a specific health condition that is under-reported or under-recognised.
- A feature on rare diseases.

- A telephone opportunity to speak to a celebrity doctor to ask for advice about a condition.
- Debates on potentially controversial issues such as plastic surgery or gender reassignment surgery.
- ‘Agony aunt’ problem discussions.

Reasons for these kinds of items on chat shows may be to raise public awareness or to demonstrate the resilience of human nature. Often these items are presented as factual; however, all programmes are conceptualised as light entertainment and inevitably present a perspective on the issues discussed. Therefore, any analysis of this kind of naturally occurring data should bear in mind its purpose.

We offer an example of a research study examining a chat show where health issues were the focus below in Box 7.6.

### Box 7.6 Example of Chat Show Research

#### Case Example

In a study by Henson and Parameswaran (2008) of a popular television chat show presented by ‘Dr Phil’, the presentation of masculinity was critically analysed. Dr Phil was the focus of the analysis and was reported to be a performer, author, and celebrity, made famous through his work on The Oprah Winfrey Show. The study was a critical social comment on the way that cultural hegemony is created and perpetuated through the influence of certain views, values, and mores of the general population. As an influential figure in popular television, Dr Phil’s demonstration of masculinity was examined by the authors to unpack the discursive and embodied aspects of masculinity as were portrayed through this medium. By accessing several episodes of the show, the authors used this naturally occurring data to examine the repetition of certain discourses and bodily enactments of masculinity.



For more detail on this, see:

- Henson, L., & Parameswaran, R. (2008). Getting real with ‘tell it like it is’ talk therapy: Hegemonic masculinity and the Dr. Phil Show. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 1(3), 287–310.

## Newspapers and Magazines

The range of possible data sources for conducting research using naturally occurring data is vast, as it encompasses all materials that have been physically produced. Within this rubric, newspapers and magazines offer a readily available source of

textual and visual naturally occurring data. Notably, such textual and visual data through media texts reflect the technology available for producing them, (Garrett & Bell, 1998) and provide a rich source of accessible data that can provide a great deal of information about social meanings projected through language and communication (Bell, 1995). Obviously, the caveat that all naturally occurring data is produced for a context and purpose applies to newspaper and magazine data. Perhaps, this is even more important to bear in mind given that newspaper reporting is traditionally aligned to certain political affiliations.

Newspapers can provide a rich data source for analysis of areas related to health and illness, as this is one of the most commonly reported topics of public interest. One of the popular areas of reporting is that of global public health concerns, such as the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and more recently the outbreaks of Ebola and SARS. The reporting of such global health conditions has drawn research attention, with researchers exploring the media's representations.

Joffe and Haaroff (2002) examined the correlation between the messages portrayed in popular tabloid media relating to the Ebola outbreak in Africa and British people's patterns of thinking in relation to these events. The focus of the analysis was to explore how the people interviewed perceived the crisis as a potential threat to Britain and compared with this with media representations in newspapers. The aim was to examine if media representations of Ebola influenced lay thinking about the disease. Similarly, Washer (2004) examined the way in which UK newspapers presented severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) as a danger to the UK public. This research utilised social representation theory to highlight the mechanisms used by newspapers to report on epidemics of global infectious diseases.

Evidently newspapers can be conceived as an important source of data for health researchers. The rationale for utilising these for your research project might include:

- Newspaper articles are readily available, easily accessible, and cost-effective.
- Newspaper articles are typically available online and in print; that means they are a convenient source of data.
- The ethical sensitivities to using newspapers as data are much less than using human participants in either researcher-generated or naturally occurring data.
- Newspapers can report on news that is local, national, and international and thus provides a route for comparison regarding how certain health issues are represented in different types of newspapers or between countries.
- These are useful sources of data for researchers interested in sociocultural and sociopolitical issues and health.

We now offer a research example of newspaper research in Box 7.7 and suggest you use this to contextualise what you have learned so far.

### Box 7.7 Example of Newspaper Research

#### Case example

In a study by Rozonova (2006), dominant political discourses emphasising the importance of taking individual responsibility for health and well-being among the elderly were explored. Newspaper portrayals of healthy ageing were found to perpetuate ‘ageist stereotypes’ that were argued to marginalise vulnerable adults who fail to age healthily. Rozonova argued that the popular media are potentially irresponsible to suggest that ill health in older adults is a moral issue and to idealise healthy ageing, when in reality, physical decline is an inevitable aspect of the ageing process. The research noted that newspapers reported on ‘health sins’, specifically, poor diet, bad habits, and poor lifestyle choices (such as smoking, lack of exercise, and alcohol consumption), and claimed that these were due to lack of taking individual responsibility for health.



For more detail on this, see:

- Rozonova, J. (2006). Newspaper portrayals of health and illness among Canadian seniors: Who ages healthily and at what cost? *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, 1(2), 111–139.

Magazines are also a useful form of text-based and visual data. Frequently magazines are designed to be appealing visually and contain many visual images/photographs. In practice for research, this enables an analysis of both the text and the visual accompaniments. Magazines are a huge business, and there is a vast range of different types, from popular culture, fashion, and entertainment to more specialist or technical ranges. Within the field of health, there are numerous magazines that report specifically on health and well-being, with other generic magazines including articles, stories, letters, advertisements, and so forth about health and illness. Either the features or the advertisements can be utilised as data.

For example: *Advertisements in US magazines have been used to examine trends in the stereotyping of the elderly. Results demonstrated a significant decrease of positive stereotypes over time and discussed the social impact on ageing that this has had (Miller, Miller, McKibbin, & Pettys, 1999).*

There are many ways in which magazine data might be useful for your project, and some suggestions for using magazine data include (but are not limited to):

- Comparing visual images of women across historical periods to examine representations of beauty.

- Examining the advertisements for certain products to see how they target specific audiences.
- Magazines could be used for historical research.
- Exploring personal stories that are submitted to magazines to see how people represent their health and illness experiences.
- Analysing the personal problem pages to examine the social construction of problems and letters.
- A focus on gender representation in the popular media.
- An examination of how advertisements are designed to persuade.
- An exploration of how celebrity culture is presented in the media.
- An examination of how particular lifestyle choices are presented as desirable or undesirable.

We now offer a research example of magazine research in Box 7.8 and suggest you use this to contextualise what you have learned so far.

### Box 7.8 Example of Magazine Research

#### Case Example

In a study by Peirce (1990), a feminist approach was taken to the analysis of how female identity and role were represented in a popular teenage girls' magazine between 1961 and 1985. Results indicated that the feminist movement of the late 1960s may have increased the extent of editorial copy given to categories such as girls' self-development temporarily. However, this longitudinal study based on naturally occurring data revealed that by the early 1980s, similar themes including beauty, fashion, cooking, and decorating were just as dominant as they had been in the early years before the feminist movement.



For more detail on this, see:

- Peirce, K. (1990). A feminist theoretical perspective on the socialization of teenage girls through *Seventeen* magazine. *Sex Roles*, 23(9–10), 491–500.

## Policy Documents

A particularly useful data source is policy documents related to health concerns. Cheung, Mirzaei, and Leeder (2010) defined a health policy as 'a plan that steers the direction of investment and action designed to alleviate suffering, improve health care or prevent illness' (p. 406). Health policy documents can range from those developed by governments to policies produced within a certain institution (e.g. local clinic). For instance, Daugbjerg et al. (2009) conducted a content analysis to identify how physical activity was promoted in the European region within 49

national policy documents. There are many reasons why health policy documents may be the primary focus of one’s analysis, including how an analysis of health policy documents can serve to (Cheung et al., 2010):

- Offer important information about how a policy was originally conceptualised.
- Highlight future research needed related to policy implementation challenges.
- Increase the impact of a certain policy on practice.
- Provide important information about funding related to a given policy, among other information.

Notably, how one goes about studying health policy ranges from studying the actual health policy documents to more broadly considering implementation of a given policy in practice.

*For example: A hospital may introduce a new policy about not smoking on hospital grounds. This written policy document could be analysed as a piece of naturally occurring data. Alternatively, or additionally, the researcher could record staff in the designated smoking area discussing the new policy. This naturally occurring audio data could be analysed in its own right or in addition to the policy document.*

Some researchers may already be carrying out a qualitative study wherein one of many data sources includes policy documents.

*For example: A researcher is interested in studying how an institutional policy related to breastfeeding instruction is institutionalised within a baby-mother unit within a hospital. The researcher interviews new mothers, as well as various healthcare providers. To contextualise the study, the researcher also includes the actual policy related to breastfeeding instruction in her analysis. This allows her to more fully understand how the policy was crafted and the degree to which the policy is being implemented as originally conceived.*



**Notable Point!**

As Cheung et al. (2010) noted, those who write health policies may not fully articulate the intended outcomes of a given policy; thus, analysing policy documents can serve as a useful means to better articulate their intended outcomes.

We offer a research example that focused on the analysis of health policy documents in Box 7.9. We recommend that you review this example, as it is a useful

example of how analysis of health policy documents might serve to inform practice.

### Box 7.9 Example of Policy Document Research

#### Case Example

In a study, Cheung et al. (2010) conducted a policy analysis of the intended outcomes of chronic illness policy documents in New South Wales, specifically, the Chronic Care Program. The researchers included policy documents produced from 1999 to 2008. The aim of the study was to assess the alignment between policy ‘determinants and outcomes’ and therefore to make proposals about future health policy documents. Using document maps to measure this alignment, this study used naturally occurring policy documents to show ways in which more successful implementation of health policies might be possible and improve accessibility. The researchers used predefined criteria to analyse the documents. Notably, the researchers concluded that predefined criteria are useful for analysing policy development and the consistency (or lack thereof) between intended outcomes and successful implementation of policy.



For more detail on this, see:

- Cheung, K. K., Mirzaei, M., & Leeder, S. (2010). Health policy analysis: A tool to evaluate in policy document the alignment between policy statements and intended outcomes. *Australian Health Review*, 34, 405–413.

## Medical Records/Notes

Documents or text-based data in the form of medical records or notes are another potentially useful naturally occurring data source. Such forms of data can serve as a primary data source or simply serve to contextualise a researcher’s understanding of a phenomenon within a broader study.

For example: *A researcher studying doctor-patient communication may decide to include within their data set medical records that are referenced during the interactions. Rather than analysing the communication without having access to the documents that were referenced in the interaction, the research can study the actual medical records as part of the data set.*

As you consider the potential use of medical records or notes, it is helpful to keep in mind the following:



- Medical records/notes may include highly sensitive information, and thus it will be important to consider whether any unique ethical requirements are needed to access such data.
- Medical records/notes may be used as your sole or primary data source, or they may be one of many naturally occurring data sources that you use within your study.
- If your research is being conducted within a certain institutional setting, it will be important to determine whether the documents are relevant within the institutional context of focus.
- If you include medical notes/records as part of a larger data set, it is crucial to determine whether your approach to analysing the medical notes/records will be different from your approach to analysing your other data sources.



### Notable Point!

Remember that medical notes/records may be highly sensitive, and thus you should take precautions to be sure that you follow the appropriate ethical procedures when accessing them.

Next, in Box 7.10, we provide a research example focused on the analysis of electronic medical records.

## Box 7.10 Example of Medical Notes Research

### Case Example

In a study carried out by Bostanci et al. (2016), the medical records of 39 cancer patients who died in 2010 in Victoria, Australia, were analysed. A qualitative content analysis approach was used, with the primary focus being on making sense of the ‘events leading up the death, the manifest reasons for hospital admission and explicit decision making about place of care and death’ (p. n.p). This study offers important understandings about the importance of multidisciplinary teams and their role in supporting cancer patients who desire to die at home. Further, the analysis offers critical insights about the meaning of ‘home’.



For more detail on this, see:

- Bostanci, A., Horey, D., Jackson, K., William, L., Pittmann, L., Ward, J., ... & Philip, J. (2016). Insights into hospitalisation of advanced cancer patients: A study of medical records. *European Journal of Cancer Care*, 25(1), 190–201.

## Summary

In this chapter, we introduced you to the potential benefits of using traditional media sources as data, as well as various text-based data sources. Notably, we positioned the data discussed within this chapter as further examples of naturally occurring data. We highlighted the various uses of media in qualitative health research, noting how the media tends to portray illness and the meaning(s) of illness. We then discussed the various reasons for using media data when engaged in qualitative health research, noting that the range of such data may include television or radio recordings, documentaries, advertising, news and chat show interviews, and newspapers and magazines. We concluded by noting some of the possibilities for collecting policy documents or medical records/notes.

## Recommended Readings

- Bell, A. (1998). The discourse structure of news stories. In A. Bell & P. Garrett, (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse* (pp. 64–104). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

This book chapter focuses specifically on the structure of news stories. The focus for the author is on the ways in which news is presented, examining how news is presented as factual. The author leads the reader through the various aspects of a news story from the headline to the news story and explicates how this can be discursively examined.

- Frost, K., Frank, E., & Maibach, E. (1997). Relative risk in the news media: A quantification of misrepresentation. *American Journal of Public Health* 87(5), 842–846.

This article is a good example of naturally occurring media data to explore representativeness. In this case, the authors quantify the representativeness of print newspapers' depictions of mortality. The results of the study demonstrated that for every tested cause of death, there was a disproportion between the text devoted to the cause and the real number of attributable deaths. Examples and statistics are provided by the authors. They conclude from their work that the news media misrepresents the prevalence of leading causes of death and the risks associated with them. They claimed that this misrepresentation may contribute to the distorted perceptions that people hold about threats to their health.

- Garner, A., Harwood, S., & Jones, S. (2016). Discourses of autism on film: An analysis of memorable images that create definition. In M. O'Reilly & J. N. Lester (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of adult mental health: Discourse and conversation studies* (pp. 151–166). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book chapter is a useful example of how naturally occurring film data can provide important information about health. In this the authors explore the powerful influences of film on the rhetoric of mental health, by looking at representations of autism in film. The authors utilise discourse analysis to examine influential knowledge about adult autism and to explore how the images in film can have effects on the discourses of autism. The authors argue that such representation provides a restrictive frame for the viewer and too frequently depicts autism in negative and stereotyped ways.

## References

- Allan, S. (1998). News from nowhere: Televisual news discourse and the construction of hegemony. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse* (pp. 105–141). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bell, A. (1995). Language and the media. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 23–41.
- Bell, A. (1998). The discourse structure of news stories. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse* (pp. 64–104). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bithell, C. (2010). *Mental health research in the media: Recommendations for a new function at the Science Media Centre*. Retrieved October 21, 2016, from <http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Science-Media-Centre-mental-health-consultation-report.pdf>.
- Bostanci, A., Horey, D., Jackson, K., William, L., Pittmann, L., Ward, J., ... Philip, J. (2016). Insights into hospitalisation of advanced cancer patients: A study of medical records. *European Journal of Cancer Care*, 25(1), 190–201.
- Cheung, K. K., Mirzaei, M., & Leeder, S. (2010). Health policy analysis: A tool to evaluate in policy document the alignment between policy statements and intended outcomes. *Australian Health Review*, 34, 405–413.
- Colby, D., & Cook, T. (1991). Epidemics and agendas: The politics of nightly news coverage of AIDS. *Journal of Health and Politics, Policy and Law*, 16(2), 215–250.
- Daugbjerg, S. B., Kahlmeier, S., Racioppi, F., Martin-Diener, E., Martin, B., Oja, P., & Bull, F. (2009). Promotion of physical activity in the European region: Content analysis of 27 national policy documents. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 6(6), 805–817.
- Daykin, N., Irwin, R., Kimberlee, R., Orme, J., Plant, M., McCarron, L., & Rahbaril, M. (2009). Alcohol, young people and the media: A study of radio output in six radio stations in England. *Journal of Public Health*, 31(1), 105–112.
- Frost, K., Frank, E., & Maibach, E. (1997). Relative risk in the news media: A quantification of misrepresentation. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87(5), 842–846.
- Garner, A., Harwood, S., & Jones, S. (2016). Discourses of autism on film: An analysis of memorable images that create definition. In M. O'Reilly & J. N. Lester (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of adult mental health: Discourse and conversation studies* (pp. 151–166). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Garrett, P., & Bell, A. (1998). Media and discourse: A critical overview. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse* (pp. 1–20). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Giles, D. (2003). Narratives of obesity as presented in the context of a television talk show. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 8(3), 317–326.
- Greatbatch, D. (1998). Conversation analysis; neutralism in British news interviews. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse* (pp. 163–185). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Henson, L., & Parameswaran, R. (2008). Getting real with 'tell it like it is' talk therapy: Hegemonic masculinity and the Dr. Phil Show. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 1(3), 287–310.

- Hodgetts, D., & Chamberlain, K. (1999). Medicalization and the Depiction of Lay People in Television Health Documentary. *Health (London)*, 3(3), 317–333.
- Hodgetts, D., & Chamberlain, K. (2002). The problem with men: Working-class men making sense of men's health on television. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 7(3), 269–284.
- Huang, B., & Priebe, S. (2003). Media coverage of mental health care in the UK, USA and Australia. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 27, 331–333.
- Hutchby, I. (2001). Witnessing: The use of first-hand knowledge in legitimating lay opinions on talk radio. *Discourse Studies*, 3(4), 481–497.
- Hutchby, I. (2011). Non-neutrality and argument in the hybrid political interview. *Discourse Studies*, 13(3), 349–366.
- Joffe, H., & Haaroff, G. (2002). Representations of far-flung illnesses: The case of Ebola in Britain. *Social Science and Medicine*, 54(6), 955–969.
- Lawrie, S. (2000). Newspaper coverage of psychiatric and physical illness. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 24(3), 104–106.
- Leask, J., Hooker, C., & King, C. (2010). Media coverage of health issues and how to work more effectively with journalists: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 10, 535–542.
- Meadows, M., & Foxwell, K. (2011). Community broadcasting and mental health: The role of local radio and television in enhancing emotional and social well-being. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 9(2), 89–106.
- Miller, P., Miller, D., McKibbin, E., & Pettys, G. (1999). Stereotypes of the elderly in magazine advertisements 1956–1996. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 49(4), 319–337.
- Murray, S. (2008). Hollywood and the Fascination of Autism. In M. Osteen (Ed.), *Autism and representation* (pp. 244–255). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Peirce, K. (1990). A feminist theoretical perspective on the socialization of teenage girls through Seventeen magazine. *Sex Roles*, 23(9–10), 491–500.
- Rock, M. (2005). Diabetes portrayals in North American print media: A qualitative and quantitative analysis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(10), 1832–1838.
- Rose, D. (1998). Television, madness and community care. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 8(3), 213–228.
- Rozonova, J. (2006). Newspaper portrayals of health and illness among Canadian seniors: Who ages healthily and at what cost? *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, 1(2), 111–139.
- Singh, J., Hallmayer, J., & Illes, J. (2007). Interacting and paradoxical forces in neuroscience and society. *Nature Reviews. Neuroscience*, 8(2), 153–160.
- Sontag, S. (1991). *Illness as metaphor*. New York, NY: Picador.
- Sumner, P., Vivian-Griffiths, S., Boivin, J., Williams, A., Venetis, C., Davies, A., ... Boy, F. (2014). The association between exaggeration in health-related science news and academic press releases: Retrospective observational study. *British Medical Journal*, 349, g7015.
- Washer, P. (2004). Representations of SARS in the British newspapers. *Social Science & Medicine*, 59(12), 2561–2571.
- Wilson, N., Quigley, R., & Mansoor, O. (1999). Food ads on TV: A health hazard for children. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23(6), 647–650.