Farriers’ roles in ‘making every contact count’: a tale of integration for a mixed methods study design using NVivo

Jenny Lynden¹, Jane Ogden¹ and Teresa Hollands²

¹ School of Psychology, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Surrey, jenny.lynden@surrey.ac.uk; j.ogden@surrey.ac.uk
² School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Surrey, t.hollands@surrey.ac.uk

This paper explores the unique affordances of using NVivo for an applied psychology research study in a veterinary healthcare context, both in terms of how it supported and constructed the research journey, and how it enabled an in-depth analysis leading to conceptual and theoretical development. In veterinary medicine it is estimated that approximately 45% of leisure horses in the UK are now overweight (Robin et al., 2015). This is likely to be the result of complex horse-owner relationships involving affection and nurturing behaviours, such as overfeeding (Visser & Van Wijk-Jansen, 2012). Overweight horses are at an increased risk of laminitis. This causes inflammation in the hoof, severe pain and results in disability and death (Hollands, 2012). There is an interest in how horse owners access information about nutrition and how they become motivated to make changes to their care practices (Hoffman, Costa, & Freeman, 2009; Roberts & Murray, 2014). Prior to the current study, there had been no research published into how farriers’ roles are constructed in supporting horse owners to manage horse obesity. Farriers shoe horses’ feet every 4-8 weeks and are, therefore, in a unique position to provide ongoing support to horse owners. However, they receive no formal training for this role.

Symbolic interactionist (SI) role theory can be useful in framing an analysis because it recognises how in everyday situations there is a degree of uncertainty and discretion which leads to joint action between individuals in modifying roles in occupational and healthcare settings (Hardy & Conway, 1988). This involves a process of social learning, ultimately leading to norms which become ‘internalised standards’ (Lum, 1988). An ethnographic approach is an established practice for SI research as it centres on interpreting the intersubjective world of human lived experience, recognising the capacity people have for reflexivity and therefore meaning making using symbolic representations (Prus, 1996). The research was designed to explore how farriers’ roles are constructed through interaction with horse owners, and to what extent their roles ‘make every contact count’ in supporting horse owners to prevent laminitis. The study identified different farrier and horse owner typologies and a ‘contracting’ process which lead to 4 ‘contexts of care’ (Lynden, Ogden, & Hollands, 2018).

This paper will focus on how NVivo enabled the integration and triangulation of complex data analysis (e.g. coding of interview data using the constant comparison method for grounded theory analysis; micro-level transcription of video data for conversation analysis; and the integration of a factor analysis conducted within SPSS for survey data). The paper will explore how the use of tools within NVivo (including, coding, memoing, matrix queries and conceptual mapping) supported theory development. This provides further support for the advantages of using CAQDAS for a mixed methods design as it supports the integration of complex datasets (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Inevitably, this type of mixed methods research raised epistemological tensions for working across different paradigms and this paper will outline how linked memoing within NVivo kept these tensions visible throughout the research process.

Keywords: Role theory; symbolic interactionism; mixed methods; CAQDAS;
References


