

# Qualitative Data Analysis

Making sense of focus group  
and interview data

# Qualitative Research: Some Fundamental Assumptions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <b>Quantitative</b></li><li>▶ <b>Knowledge is</b></li><li>▶ absolute</li><li>▶ about finding cause-and-effect links</li><li>▶ deductive</li><li>▶ <b>Research questions are</b></li><li>▶ hypothesized</li><li>▶ tested empirico-analytically</li><li>▶ analyzed using numbers</li><li>▶ interpreted as mathematical relations</li><li>▶ <b>Research conditions require</b></li><li>▶ validity through control of variables</li><li>▶ reliability through test and retest</li><li>▶ objectivity without human distortion</li><li>▶ <b>Problem areas for research</b></li><li>▶ are reduced to smallest parts</li><li>▶ <b>Findings</b></li><li>▶ are quantified in numbers</li><li>▶ need to be significant statistically</li><li>▶ can be predictive</li><li>▶ claim to be generalizable</li><li>▶ <b>Outcomes include</b></li><li>▶ description, prediction and change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <b>Qualitative</b></li><li>▶ relative</li><li>▶ unique and context-dependent</li><li>▶ often inductive</li><li>▶ left open as tentative ideas</li><li>▶ explored by a variety of means</li><li>▶ analyzed using language</li><li>▶ interpreted as language relations, e.g., themes, critiques</li><li>▶ participants' validation</li><li>▶ attention to context</li><li>▶ valuing subjectivity without imposing prejudices</li><li>▶ are part of the whole context</li><li>▶ are qualified in words</li><li>▶ do not make absolute claims</li><li>▶ provide insights to possibilities</li><li>▶ are specific to local phenomena, which may be transferable</li><li>▶ description, meaning and change</li></ul>
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▶ Differences in quantitative and qualitative research (Taylor 1995)

# Qualitative Research: Some Fundamental Assumptions

## ▶ Differences in interpretive and critical methodologies

Methodologies are the theoretical assumptions that underlie the choice of qualitative data collection and analysis methods and processes

### Qualitative Interpretive Methodologies

*Describe human experiences and contexts to raise awareness and cause change*

*Examples:*

Grounded Theory  
Historical Research  
Phenomenology  
Ethnography

### Qualitative Critical Methodologies

*Describe and critique human experiences and contexts to question and unsettle the status quo and cause change intentionally*

Action Research  
Feminist Research  
Discourse Analysis  
Critical Ethnography

# Qualitative Research: Some Fundamental Assumptions

- ▶ Data analysis methods vary, to suit the research objectives and the data collection methods, e.g.:
- ▶ **Methods**                                      **Possible analysis methods**
- ▶ Archival searches                              Content analysis, discourse analysis
- ▶ Artistic expression                            Individual/group creative analysis and interpretation
- ▶ Fieldwork                                        Thematic analysis, discourse analysis, critique
- ▶ Focus group                                     Individual/group issues identification, thematic analysis, discourse analysis
- ▶ Group work                                     Individual/group issues identification, thematic analysis, discourse analysis
- ▶ Interviews                                        Manual and/or computer assisted thematic analysis, software systems analysis
- ▶ Journal entries                                 Reflective analysis, individual/group issues identification, thematic analysis
- ▶ Literature reviews                             Literature critique
- ▶ Mixed methods                                Mixture of congruent methods
- ▶ Observation                                     Individual/group issues identification, thematic analysis, discourse analysis
- ▶ Photographs, films,                            Individual/group creative analysis and interpretation

# Focus Group Data Analysis

- ▶ There is no one or best way of undertaking data analysis in focus groups, rather the chosen analysis method needs to “fit” the data collection method.
- ▶ *How* groups manage their group work analyzes depends on the type of group and why they were formed (according to the research project’s aims, objectives and questions).
- ▶ You can use:
  - ▶ Individual/group issues identification
  - ▶ Thematic analysis
  - ▶ Discourse analysis (if you have set the project up according to this methodology)

# Focus Group Data Analysis: Individual

- ▶ The researcher (having also acted as the focus group facilitator, preferably) can choose to “take away” the collected data, to make sense of it.
- ▶ What the individual researcher does to make sense of the focus group data, depends on the nature of the data.
- ▶ If the intention is to do a thematic analysis of the data, they need to be in sufficient depth and breadth to work effectively on the audiotaped transcripts, or very well written meeting notes.
- ▶ If there are sufficient data, the method is as for an interview transcript, which we’ll overview later in this presentation.
- ▶ If the intention is to do a broad compilation of emergent ideas, then the method is simpler, and involves the identification of broad of like categories, e.g., financial, political, cultural classifications.

# Focus Group Data Analysis: Group

- ▶ The success of collective data analysis lies in the richness of the data collected.
- ▶ Some methods for collecting group information may include note-taking, meeting minutes, reflective logs, audiotaping, videotaping, and/or by collective review processes at the end of the session.
- ▶ Encourage the group to generate ideas and write them clearly on view, e.g., on an overhead transparency sheet, a computer document projected onto a screen, a whiteboard, and/or large sheets of paper.
- ▶ Members discuss the ideas, and decide collectively on the key ideas/groupings/insights/discourses by general agreement.

# Interview analysis: An overview

- ▶ How you analyze interviews depends on the amount of data you need to analyze.
- ▶ For example, for anything over 50 interviews or so, consider using a qualitative software analysis system, e.g., NUDIST, Ethnograph, Leximancer.
- ▶ For manageable amounts of data, you may be able to undertake a manual method, which is computer-assisted or completely manual.



# Interview analysis: Computer-assisted method

A computer-assisted data analysis method is to:

make a disk copy of the main text to be analyzed,  
drop off any extraneous details from the copy,  
read through the text as it scrolls on the computer screen,  
section the text off under a subheading that is relatively descriptive,  
make connections between themes that are raised in one part of the text and reiterated in another part,  
collate the themes,  
review the list while asking yourself: 'What does this say about the research interest?',  
name and define the themes and describe their components.

# Interview analysis: Manual method

A manual thematic analysis method is to:

- read and re-read the text (audiotaped transcript);
- make multiple copies of the page-numbered transcripts (ensuring one copy is kept as a guide);
- keep in mind the research question and/or objectives;
- isolate (by cutting out or colour coding) any sections of text that appear to be connected to a theme;
- reduce the 'themes' to a word or two each and list them;
- and,
- collect them into groupings until they cannot be subsumed into other categories/groupings without losing their specialness in relation to the research aims and objectives.

# Reference

- ▶ The information I have shared with you today comes from my research and teaching experience and my research text:
- ▶ Taylor, B.J., Kermode, S. and Roberts, K. (2006). *Research in Nursing and Health Care: Evidence for Practice*, 3rd edition, Melbourne: Thomson.