

# INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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WHAT IS YOUR INTEREST IN QUALITATIVE  
RESEARCH?

# WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

- Why Collect Qualitative Data
  - Types of Qualitative Data
  - Key Considerations for Analysis
  - Steps to Developing Themes
-

# WHY COLLECT QUALITATIVE DATA

- To understand people's life histories, everyday behavior or personal experiences
  - Allows for flexibility, subjectivity and deeper exploration
  - Focuses on words and images
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# TYPES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Phenomenology
  - Ethnography
  - Case study
  - Grounded theory
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# TYPES OF QUALITATIVE DATA

## Text

- Written Documents
- Interviews
- Focus Groups (Group Interviews)
- Observation
- Websites

## Images

- Photo Journals
  - Mind Mapping
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# BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

No matter what type of data collection, it is important to determine the analysis strategy in the beginning

# ANALYSIS CONSIDERATIONS

- When data is collected
  - How data is collected
  - Who is collecting data
  - The setting in which data is collected
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# DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

# DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- Research-Generated Documents - For what purpose were the documents produced?
  - Our (the investigator's) responsibility is to ask questions regarding the documents origin, reasons for being written, its author and the context in which it was written.
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# PRIMARY SOURCES

- Reflection papers are primary sources
  - The originator of the document is recounting a firsthand experience
  - The best primary sources are recorded closest in time and place to the phenomenon of interest by a qualified person
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# LIMITATIONS OF DOCUMENTS

- Subject to purposeful or non-purposeful deception
  - Distortion may be unintentional: writer is unaware of biases or simply does not remember accurately
  - Differences caused by manner in which data is collected
-

# STRENGTHS OF DOCUMENTS

- Can yield more data or better data than other tactics
  - Easily accessible and contains information that would take enormous time and effort to gather
  - May be the only means for studying certain problems
  - Stability - the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied
-

# REFLECTION EXAMPLES

When we encourage our students to experience, reflect and evaluate, we may not provide a means for students to concretize and to interpret their learning. As Nowacek and Mountin (2012) contend, in order for students to be able to meaningfully reflect and evaluate, they must first understand *how* to reflect effectively and with purpose. The faculty member's role, then, is to provide the direction that enables students to reflect in meaningful ways.

-Hidding, Scheidenhelm, and Milligan, 2014

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# LOYOLA'S ENGAGED LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Loyola University Chicago Mission Statement: “We are Chicago’s Jesuit, Catholic university – a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith.”

We ask all students enrolled in an Engaged Learning class to complete this reflection.

Holding in mind the University’s mission statement, please compose a written reflection of at least two double-spaced pages that explains:

- How did you connect your in-class and out-of-class Engaged Learning experiences?
- How did your Engaged Learning experience help you connect to the University’s mission?
- How did the Engaged Learning experience in this course affect your personal, intellectual, civic, and/or professional development?

# LOYOLA'S ENGAGED LEARNING ASSESSMENT

## Engaged Learning Pilot Assessment

Synthesis through Reflection

<p>1</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET/ PARTIALLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS (1)</p> <p>Does not clearly connect out-of-class and in-class experiences as they relate to the Engaged Learning Experience, or does not demonstrate meaningful reflection upon the experience.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>MEETS EXPECTATIONS (2)</p> <p>Articulates clear connections between the in-class and out-of-class components of the Engaged Learning Experience, and reflects meaningfully upon the experience.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS (3)</p> <p>Demonstrates clear connection/s between the in-class and out-of-class components of the Engaged Learning Experience, and demonstrates exceptional insight in meaningful reflection upon the experience.</p>
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Relate Experience to Development

<p>1</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET/ PARTIALLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS (1)</p> <p>Lacks clear connection between the Engaged Learning experience and the student's intellectual, personal, professional, and/or civic development, or does not demonstrate meaningful reflection upon the experience.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>MEETS EXPECTATIONS (2)</p> <p>Clearly articulates how the Engaged Learning experience contributed to the student's intellectual, personal, professional, and/or civic development, and reflects meaningfully upon the experience.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS (3)</p> <p>Clearly articulates how the EL experience contributed to intellectual, personal, professional, and/or civic development, and demonstrates exceptional insight in meaningful reflection upon the experience.</p>
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Connect Engaged Learning to Loyola University Chicago Mission

<p>1</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET/ PARTIALLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS (1)</p> <p>Does not articulate a clear connection between the Engaged Learning experience and Loyola's mission to "expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith."</p>	<p>2</p> <p>MEETS EXPECTATIONS (2)</p> <p>Articulates a clear connection between the Engaged Learning experience and Loyola's mission to "expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith."</p>	<p>3</p> <p>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS (3)</p> <p>Demonstrates how the Engaged Learning experience helped put into action Loyola's mission to "expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith."</p>
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Ok

FOCUS GROUPS

# PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUPS

- Efficient
  - Interviewing in a social context (e.g., flexibility, rich data)
  - Group dynamics (e.g., synergy, divergent opinions)
  - Data derived from group process in a focused manner (participant influence)
  - Data collection through observation, conversation and other means (demographics)
-

# STRENGTHS OF FOCUS GROUPS

- Gather information about a specific topic
  - Group environment
  - Allow interaction and discussion by participants
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# STRENGTHS OF FOCUS GROUPS

“Focus groups provide an excellent opportunity to listen to the voices of students, explore issues in depth, and obtain insights that might not occur without the discussion they provide.”

(Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 196-197)

# LIMITATIONS OF FOCUS GROUPS

## Group dynamics

- Responses influenced by others
- Domination by vocal participants
- Withheld opinions (silence  $\neq$  no opinion)

## Requires skilled moderation

## “Reactivity bias”

- Purposeful or non-purposeful deception

## Limited # questions

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ASKING FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- Be conversational
  - Be clear
  - Seek Help
-

# CATEGORIES OF FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- Opening Question
  - Introductory Questions
  - Transition Questions
  - Key Questions
  - Ending Questions
-

# SEQUENCING FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- Provide background information
  - General questions before specifics
  - Positive questions before negative questions
  - Consistency is important
  - Usually questions are not changed
-

# FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS IS UNIQUE

- Data collection through observation, conversation and other means (demographics)
  - Data derived from group process in a focused manner (participant influence)
  - Silence does not imply lack of opinion
  - Important to note body language, intensity and non-verbal interactions
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OBSERVATIONS

# PURPOSE OF OBSERVATIONS

- To watch the behavioral patterns of people (Johnson and Christensen, 2008); to provide a firsthand account of the situation under study (Merriam, 2009)
  - Allows for data collection “when people cannot or will not discuss the research topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 136)
  - **What to observe:** physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and your own behavior
-

# “SENSITIZING CONCEPTS”



Test Your Awareness

<http://youtu.be/Ahg6qcgoay4>

# STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS OF OBSERVATIONS

- **Strengths**
  - Brings to light what we ordinarily give only passing attention (Merriam, 2009)
- **Limitations**
  - Remaining descriptive, NOT inferring meaning or perceptions
    - Intertwine with informal interviews and conversations
  - Trustworthiness of results questionable when sole data collection method – triangulate!

# WHAT TO OBSERVE

- The physical setting
  - The participants
  - Activities and interactions
  - Conversation
  - Subtle Factors
  - Your own behavior
  - Refer to the Participant and Direct Observation Guide Template
-

ANALYSIS

# ANALYSIS MUST BE PRACTICAL

- Only collect data you will use in your analysis
  - Select a sample set of data, when possible
  - Depending on the size of the project and your interest, there is qualitative research software that can be helpful
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# ANALYSIS MUST BE INTENTIONAL

- Your research question(s) must guide the analysis
- Questions are the raw material of analysis
- Do not get locked into one way of thinking
- Let the words and actions of your participants guide your analysis
- Analysis reflects not what participants should be saying, but what they are saying
- Effective analysis goes beyond words

# ANALYSIS MUST BE **SYSTEMATIC**

- Sequence questions
  - Be consistent in capturing data (tape recording, notes, papers, etc.)
  - Maintain records of coding the data
  - Consider using participant verification (e-mail)
-

# ANALYSIS MUST BE VERIFIABLE

- Another professional should arrive at similar conclusions
  - Keep track of everything you do during analysis (research memo or journal)
-

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Consider the . . .

- words
- context
- internal consistency
- frequency of comments
- extensiveness of comments
- intensity of comments
- specificity of responses
- what was not said

Find the big ideas!

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DEVELOPING THEMES

# CODING

Definition: Combining text to build a broad picture of the data

- Developing categories
  - Organizing into themes
  - Substantiated by evidence and quotes
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# DEVELOPING CODES

1. Read all documents thoroughly
  - Help familiarize yourself with the material
2. Read through transcripts second time
  - Jot down ideas in margin
3. Read through transcripts a third time
  - Ask question “What is this about?”
  - Begin to underline and box sets of words
4. Final Reading
  - Develop labels for these sections (Codes)

# DEVELOPING CODES

1. Codes can be stated as
    - Participants actual words
    - In educational terms
    - In your own words
  2. Make list of all coded words (30-50)
    - Cluster together similar codes
    - Look for redundant codes
  3. Repeat the process
-

Jean Jones

### The Process of Reconstructing Curriculum in a Rural High School Setting

Codes notes



JJ: One thing, Lori, that I've heard talked about was the fact that schools reflect the strengths of communities. What do you perceive as strengths of Wakefield as a community and how that relates to schools?

close knit community

LU: Well, I think Wakefield is a fairly close knit community. I think people are interested in what goes on. And because of that, they have a sense of ownership in the schools. We like to keep track of what our kids are doing and feel a connection to them because of that. The downside of that perhaps is that kids can feel that we are looking TOO close. But most of the time, that is the nurturing environment that we do provide an atmosphere of concern and care. To back up, you said the health of the community itself is reflected in schools. A lot of times communities look at schools and say they are not doing this or they aren't doing that, or we're missing something in our schools. I think perhaps we look at the school and see, this is probably a pretty conservative community overall, and look to make sure that what is being talked about in the schools really carries out the communities values. There is a little bit of an idealization I think, perhaps in terms of what we thought of "basic education". And I think there might be a tendency to hold back a little bit too much because of that idealization of "you know, we learned the basics, the reading, the writing and the arithmetic." So you know, any change is threatening. And I think that goes for the community as well as what we see reflected at the school. Sometimes that can get in the way of trying to do different things. I think, again, idealization, older members of the community forget, some of the immaturity that they experienced when they were in school and forgetting that kids are kids. So there is a little bit too much of that mental attitude. But for the most part, I think there is a sense of we're all in this together, and concern for the kids.

Health of community or community values

change is threatening

JJ: In terms of looking at leadership strengths in the community, where does Wakefield set in a continuum there with planning process, understanding the need to plan, forward thinking, visionary people. You talked about that a little bit before.

LU: I think there are people that have wonderful visionary skills. I would say that the community as a whole would be... would not reflect that. I think there are people who are driving the process, but the rest of the community may be lagging behind a little bit. I think we have some incredibly talented people who become frustrated when they try to implement what they see as their

Themes and ideas from  
Potential themes:  
- The community  
- Getting the best of the community and its values  
- Good goals  
- What is shown?  
- Leadership  
- Visionary  
- Community

Figure 8. Sample Transcript with Codes and Potential

# DEVELOPING THEMES

- Similar codes aggregated to form a major finding (Theme)
  - Usually 5-7 (2-4)
  - Identify themes by:
    - Frequency
    - Uniqueness
    - Most evidence to support them
  - Use specific quotes as supporting evidence
-

# DEVELOPING THEMES

- Different types of themes
    - Ordinary themes
    - Unexpected themes
    - Hard-to-classify themes
    - Major and Minor themes
  - Themes represent multiple perspectives of the participants
  - Once themes are developed look for contrary evidence
-

# CONNECTING THEMES

- Layering the analysis
    - Representing the data using interconnected levels of themes
  - Going beyond merely stating themes
  - Minor themes are subsumed by major themes
  - Major themes lead to broader themes
  - Working upward toward broader and broader themes
-

# ANALYSIS SEEKS TO ENLIGHTEN

- Analysis should lift the level of understanding to a new level
- Analysis should inspire a search for new information

# TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

- <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/research/researchcentres/caqdas/support/choosing/index.htm>

# TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Dedoose <http://www.dedoose.com>



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Great Research Made Easy

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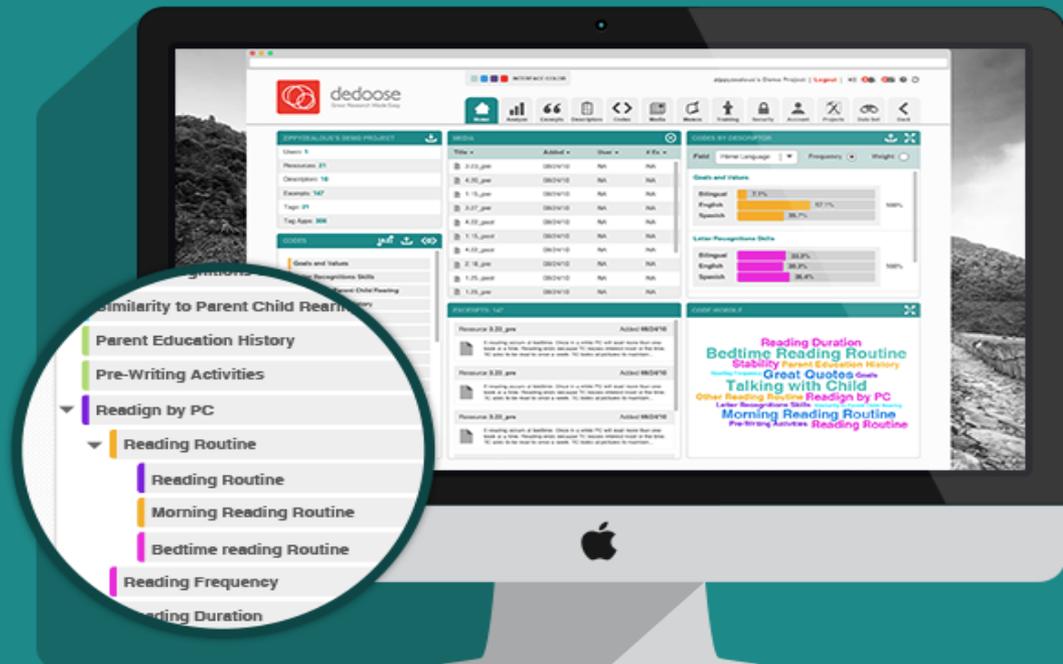
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# TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

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### Work with your surveys

Import SurveyMonkey surveys directly into your NVivo project.

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# QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

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