



2018 Health Educators Institute

Qualitative Research:

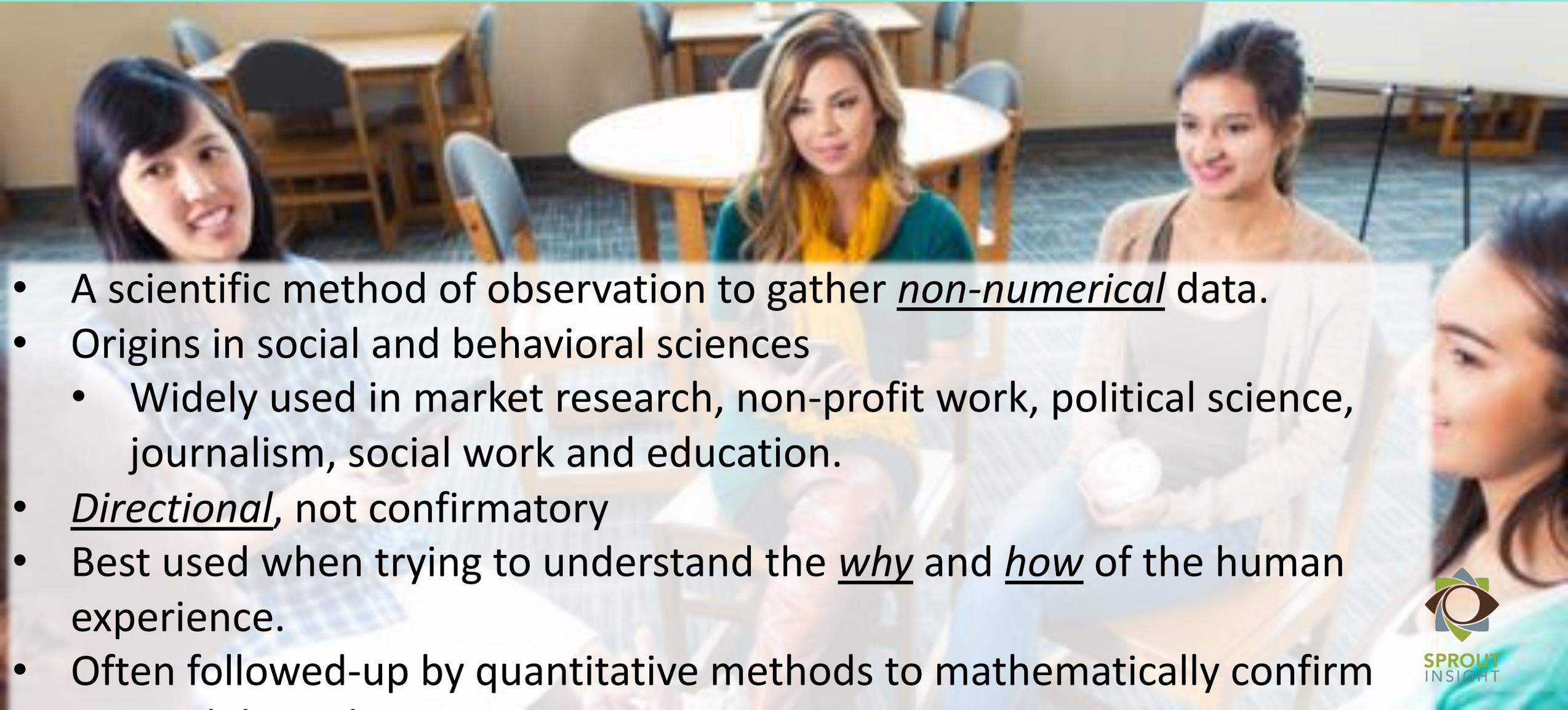
Approaches and Tips for Enhancing Your Work

October 19, 2018

Kathy Burklow, Ph.D.
Sprout Insight



What is Qualitative Research?



- A scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data.
- Origins in social and behavioral sciences
 - Widely used in market research, non-profit work, political science, journalism, social work and education.
- Directional, not confirmatory
- Best used when trying to understand the why and how of the human experience.
- Often followed-up by quantitative methods to mathematically confirm

Qualitative Research is NOT QUANTITATIVE!

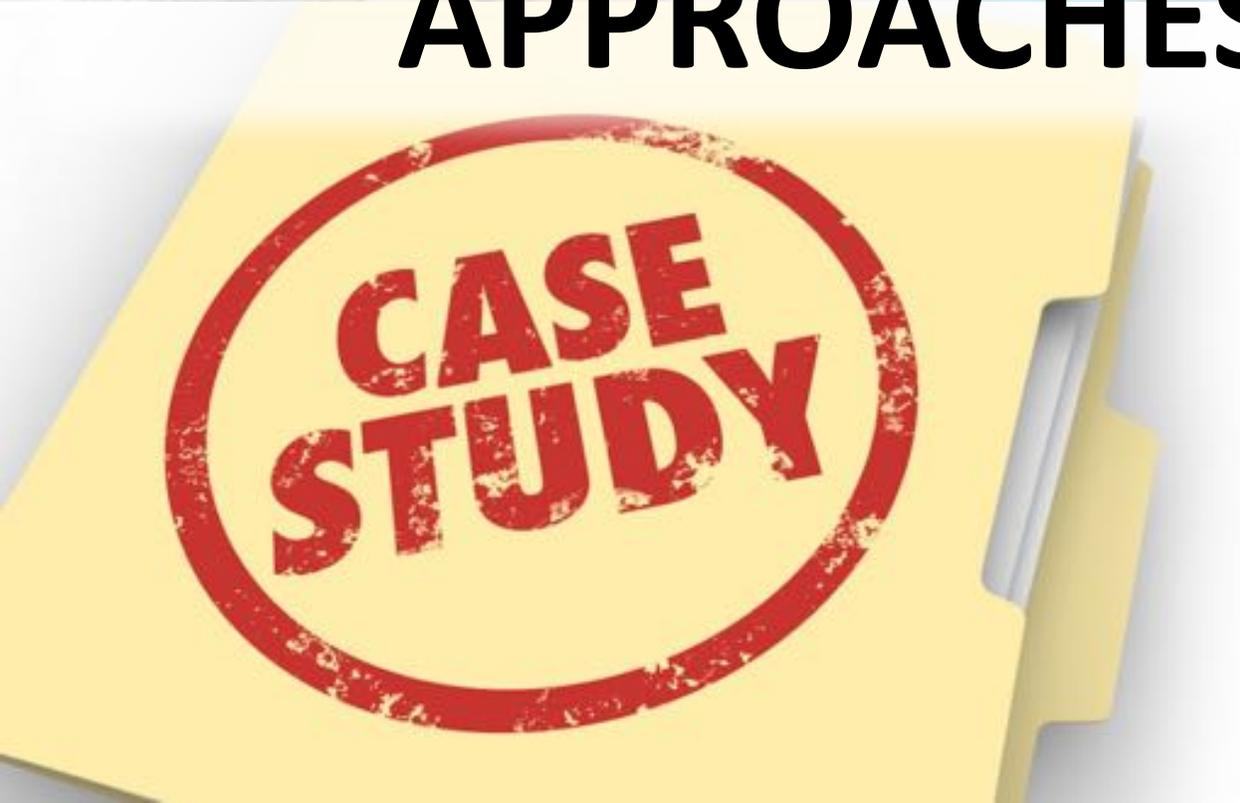


Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

Attributes	Qualitative	Quantitative
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes individual experiences and beliefs • Hypothesis generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes characteristics of a population • Hypothesis testing
Types of questions asked	Open-ended	Close-ended
Data collection instruments	Semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation	Highly structured methods using questionnaires and surveys.
Type of data produced	Descriptive data oriented toward deriving meaning versus documenting behavior	Numerical
Degree of flexibility	Participant responses effect how and which questions are asked next	Questions asked in structured order.



APPROACHES & METHODS



Types of Qualitative Approaches

Approaches	Objective	Sample Size	Data Collection Methods	Best Use
Ethnography	To understand context or culture	--	Observation & interviews	Academic research, User experience
Narrative	To understand individual experience and sequence	1-5	Stories from individuals and documents	Developing personas or prototypical users
Phenomenological	To understand experience of people	5-25	Interviews, documents, other materials, projective techniques	Understanding personal impact of participation or exposure
Grounded Theory	To develop a theory grounded in field data	20-60	Interviews then open and axial coding	Academic research, pre-work for quantitative survey
Case Study	To demonstrate a process of an organization, entity individual, or event	Single case or a collective	Interviews, documents, reports, observations, lessons learned	Annual reports, promotion & marketing materials, education, academic research

Ethnography

- Rooted in cultural anthropology where researchers immersed themselves into a culture for years.
- Best used when you want to immerse into the participants environment to understand the goals, culture, challenges, motivations and themes that emerge.
- Most in-depth, highest cost/resources, time consuming, yields lots of data to analyze.
- Observational method that studies people in their naturally occurring environment (e.g., anthropology)
- Requires researchers to adapt to the target audiences environments (home, organization, neighborhood, etc.)
- Aims to understand the cultures, challenges, motivations, settings,
- Lasts from several hours, days to years.
- Can uncover unmet needs as people interact in the environment.
- Need to have unbiased observation--look to disconfirm not to confirm your hypotheses.



Narrative Approach



- How does an individual story illustrate larger than life influences that created it?
- Interviews are conducted over weeks, months or years.
- Stories or a narrative is constructed with themes, tensions, conflicts, challenges and resolutions.
- Can be combined with other supportive documents.
- Used to build a persona or composite with details that describes the culture and conflicts of living with a disability, life of a student, etc.
 - **Who is this and what is important to them?**

Phenomenological Approach

- Used when you want to **describe the essence of an activity or event**.
- Involves interviews, reading documents, visiting places or events to understand the meaning that participants place on whatever topic is being examined.
- Relies on the participants own perspectives to provide insight into motivations.

Examples:

- How do parents of a preterm infant cope with the news that their child has long-term health issues?
- What is it like to experience a natural disaster?
- How does it feel to live with chronic disease?
- What is it like to be a minority in a predominantly white community?



Grounded Theory

- Seeks to provide an explanation (or theory) behind events or activities.
- Using primarily interviews, **a theory is built based on the data** (e.g., theory that is 'grounded' in the data).
- Researchers conduct a series open and axial coding techniques to identify themes and build out the theory.
 - The core category is the concept to which all other concepts relate.
- Requires larger sample sizes 20-60
- Highly structured approach to analyzing qualitative research.



Case study

- Used in education, social science and business.
- Can involve a single case or a collective of cases.
- Involves gaining a deep understanding through multiple types of data sources.
- Can be explanatory, exploratory or describe an event.



Types of Qualitative Methods

- Individual Interviews
- Pairs/Triads/Quads
 - Couples, best friends
- Focus Groups
- Large Group Forums
- Ethnographic Immersion (home visits, school visits, etc.)



1-on-1 Interviews

- Exposes individual beliefs and motivations
- Can be conducted in person or over-the-phone
 - Opportunities to observe non-verbal body language when in-person
 - Saves on travel costs and allows larger geographic samples when conducted over the phone
- Best used for sensitive topic areas or when you want to avoid behavioral “herding”
- Can last 15 minutes to 2 hours



Dyads, Triads, Quads

- Can include couples, friends, classmates
- May increase comfort and familiarity so participants talk more, but they may not feel comfortable speaking openly as if they were alone or anonymous.
- Smaller groups allow the researcher to probe responses more often and in more detail.



Focus Groups & Forums



- Focus groups = 6-10 participants from your target segment
- Forums= 20 or larger
- Includes online methods with discussion boards
- Need to control for group herding.
- Best for when you want participants to interact with each other and engage in a discussion.

Individual Interviews vs. Groups

1-on-1 interviews	Groups
No group dynamic, group think or collaboration	Group think dynamic and collaboration
Bias is to the researcher but not to peers	Higher likelihood of socially acceptable answers
Individual input	Not all opinions can be expressed equally due to time or other constraints
Clearer top-of-mind insights	Limited top-of-mind insights
Deeper emotional insight	Collective emotion
When you want the individual to tell you what they think, believe, and feel	When you want participants to interact and discuss a topic
Can be easier to schedule	More challenging to get a group together
Better for sensitive topics, professionals	Good for creative and collaborative sessions

Text Analysis

- Researchers analyze the social life by decoding words and images from documents or other similar forms like film, music, etc.
- Looks at the content in which images are used then draws inferences.
 - E.g. content analysis of that which is shared on social media or other online platforms.





GETTING STARTED

Decide on the Participants

- Who are the appropriate target participants to be involved?
- Develop a screener of exclusion and inclusion criteria for each target.



Develop a Discussion or Interview Guide



- What are the primary research objective(s)?
- Start with general questions and move to specific
 - Spend time in warm-up
- The goal is to encourage conversation, thus use open-ended questions.
 - *Tell me...*
 - *Share...*
 - *How...*
 - *What are some reasons, if any,...*
 - *Why...*
- Avoid double-barreled and double negative questions.

Imagery-based and Projective Activities



Collect the Data

- Set the ground rules
 - How long will the interview take?
 - There are no right or wrong answers
 - Not seeking consensus (if a group)
 - Confidentiality will be maintained
 - Audio recording and/or video recording for research purposes
 - Incentives
 - Consent forms to capture spoken comments and written work
- Pay as much attention to what respondents are saying as much as what they are NOT saying.
 - Watch for body language and discomfort
- Seek to disconfirm your hypotheses, not confirm to avoid confirmation bias



DATA ANALYSIS



Challenge of trustworthiness (Validity) & credibility

- Interviewer corroboration
- Member check (respondent validation)
- Input and analysis from multiple researchers



Qualitative Analysis: 3 General Approaches

- Conventional Analysis
 - Coding categories come from the text data
- Directed approach
 - Analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for developing initial codes
- Summative content analysis
 - Involves counting and comparisons, usually of key words or content followed by interpretation of the underlying content.

Example

What does it mean for clients to ‘belong’ in this facility?

We should know their background and where they come from to make them feel more comfortable here. We should know how to involve them in everyday activities.

[Facility] is a big family. Staff even go to resident birthday parties and/or come in on off days. Everyone is a friend.

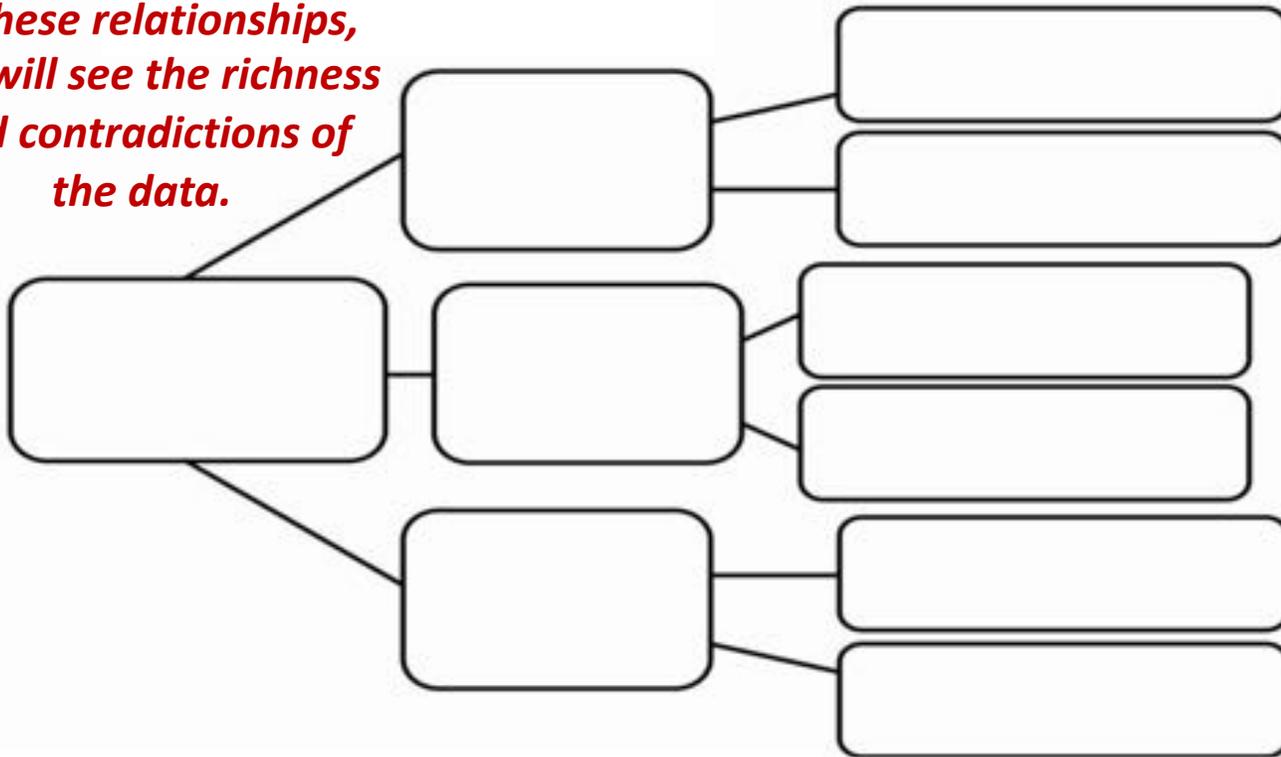
The residents need the staff and the staff are often the residents’ voice, especially for nonverbal residents.

The clients know that someone will take care of them. It’s nice to see the same people; the clients stay attached to a few people and trust that they will be taken care of.

Hybrid Approach of A Priori and Emergent Codes

- Based on research literature, develop hypothesized content areas with codes but allow for the flexibility to add, collapse, expand upon, revise or develop sub-codes to major codes.

*In these relationships,
you will see the richness
and contradictions of
the data.*



- Transcribe interviews and code statements to answers based on this hypothesized coding system.
- Some people add up the codes to get a proportion of representation, but qualitative data is meant to be directional and not meant to be quantitative.
- Keep a log of decisions made during analysis, especially when revising, collapsing, or adding codes.

Coding as a System to Organize Data

- Think of this as placing data in a code just as you would systematically file something in a folder.
 - What is this saying? What does it represent?
 - What is this an example of?
 - What do I see is going on here?
 - What I happening?
 - What kind of events are at issue here?
 - What is trying to be conveyed?
- Use words and phrases to code in the margins.
- The rule of thumb is to make the codes fit the data, not to make the data fit the codes.

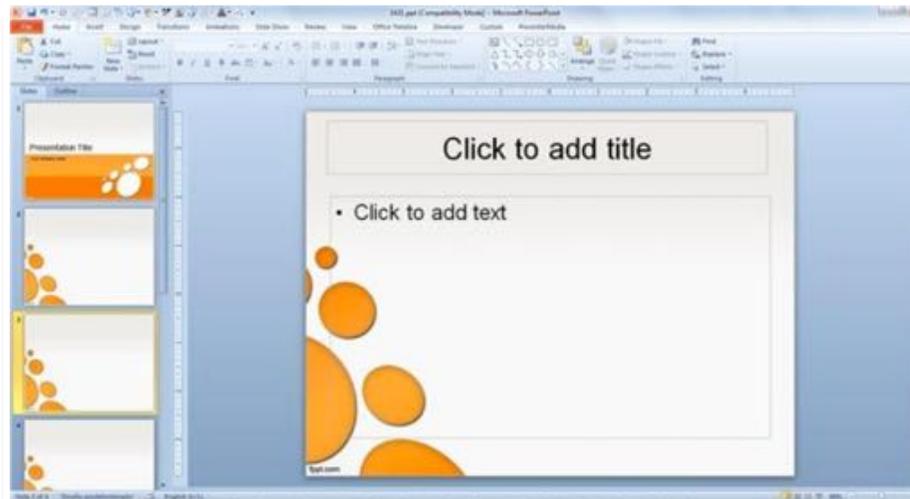


Qualitative Data Analysis Software

- Many options (Nvivo, text analytics)
- These programs do not replace the need to interpret and code the data, but builds efficiencies into labeling and retrieving codes rather than hand coding and hand tabulating
 - Ex. Can search by text or concepts
- Must use caution to avoid the urge to use this software to quantify qualitative data.
- Very large datasets benefit from such software to help save time.
- Does not replace the need for data to be reviewed by several researchers for “meaning-making”.



REPORTING



Team Alignment

- Coding and thematic analysis is an iterative process best carried out by a team.
- Pull quotes that support and exemplify major and minor themes.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage publications.

Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 9, 10.3402/qhw.v9.23606.
<http://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.23606>