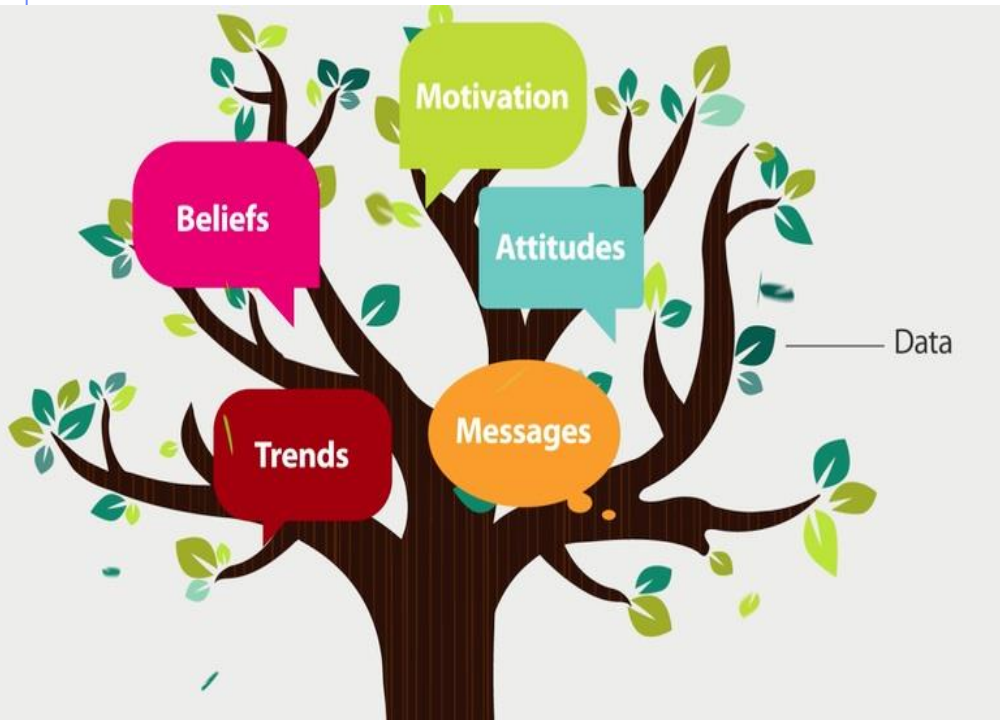# Qualitative Research

Session 3:
Data gathering

Prof Jan Nieuwenhuis

Data gathering in qualitative research

To understand society you have to -

- gain access to the way people attribute meaning to what goes on around them,
- find out how they react to and make meaning to things that happens.

Four ways of doing it:

- Watch them do it
- Talk to them about it
- Read what they have written [e.g. diaries]
- Study the artefacts produced

How you collect data depends on

- why you need it (purpose) and
- what you need

Table 1.2 Research Purposes

Exploratory[a]	Descriptive	Explanatory
Seeks to investigate an underresearched aspect of social life	Seeks to richly describe an aspect of social life	Seeks to explain an aspect of social life

a. Some qualitative researchers refer to this as Discovery.

Van Maanen's view of what research is

fieldwork (enacting methods)	headwork	textwork
constructing representations of the objects of inquiry (methodically *producing* data) by…	thinking about…	producing texts, stories, narratives including, for example…
• listening to (and/or interrogating) informants • observing behaviours • examining historical records and traces	• methodological issues – theories, analyses, and criticisms of how research should proceed • epistemological issues – theories of knowledge (and their adequacy) and justificatory strategies	• testimonies to field work and head work • critiques and/or alternative readings of other texts

☺

Don't be a bull in a china shop – prefigure your data collection

Prefiguring

Analysis of qualitative data begins before it is collected.

It starts with:

1. Framing and posing a research question or problem
2. Knowing the theoretical positions available on the topic

Finding the blind spots, gaps and omissions in literature

Knowing your own preconceptions and biases

Avoid the self-fulfilling research

Design in checks and balances to make sure research is believable, trustworthy and credible [Sandelowski 1986].

Make sure sampling is purposive

16 types of purposive samples
Patton (1990)

- *Stratified purposive sampling* - selecting participants based on pre-defined sub-groups according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question
- *Criterion sampling* - decide at the design stage of a study the typical characteristics (criteria to be met) by the participants
- *Snowball sampling* – chain referral sampling – is a method whereby participants with whom contact has already been made is used to penetrate their social networks to refer the researcher to other participants
- *Convenience sampling* means choosing participants that are easiest to reach.
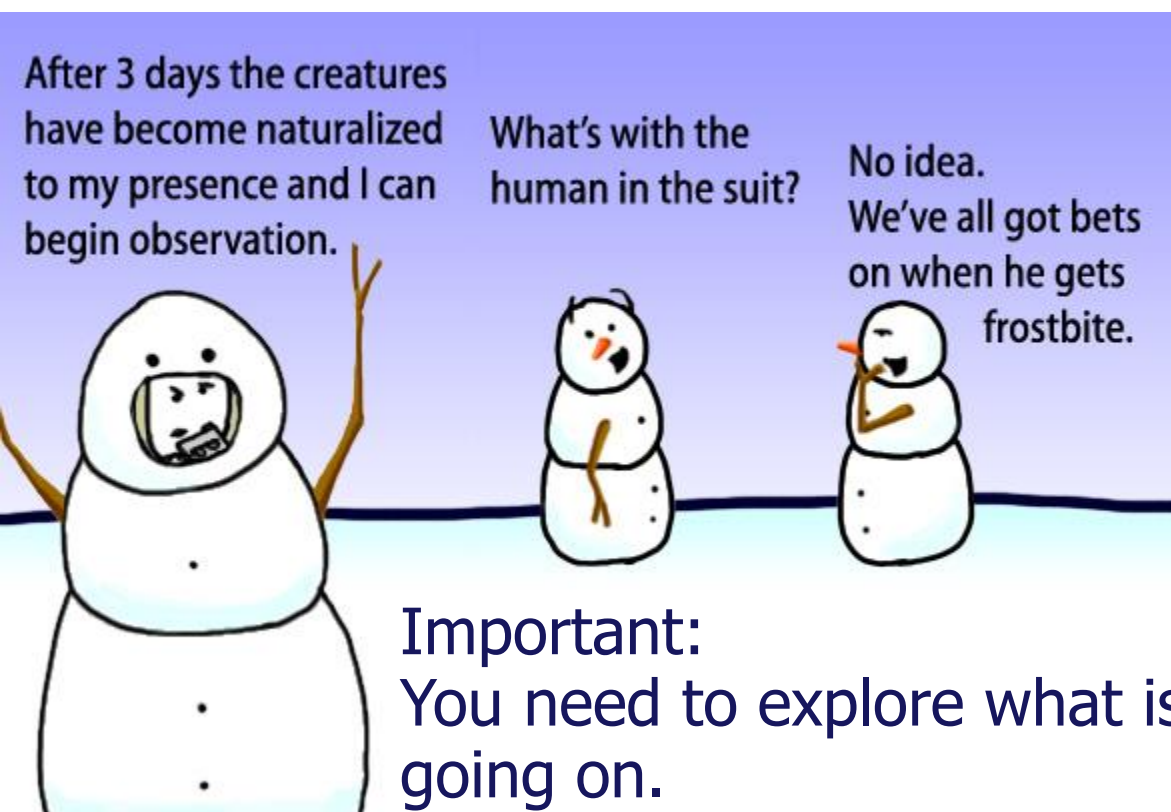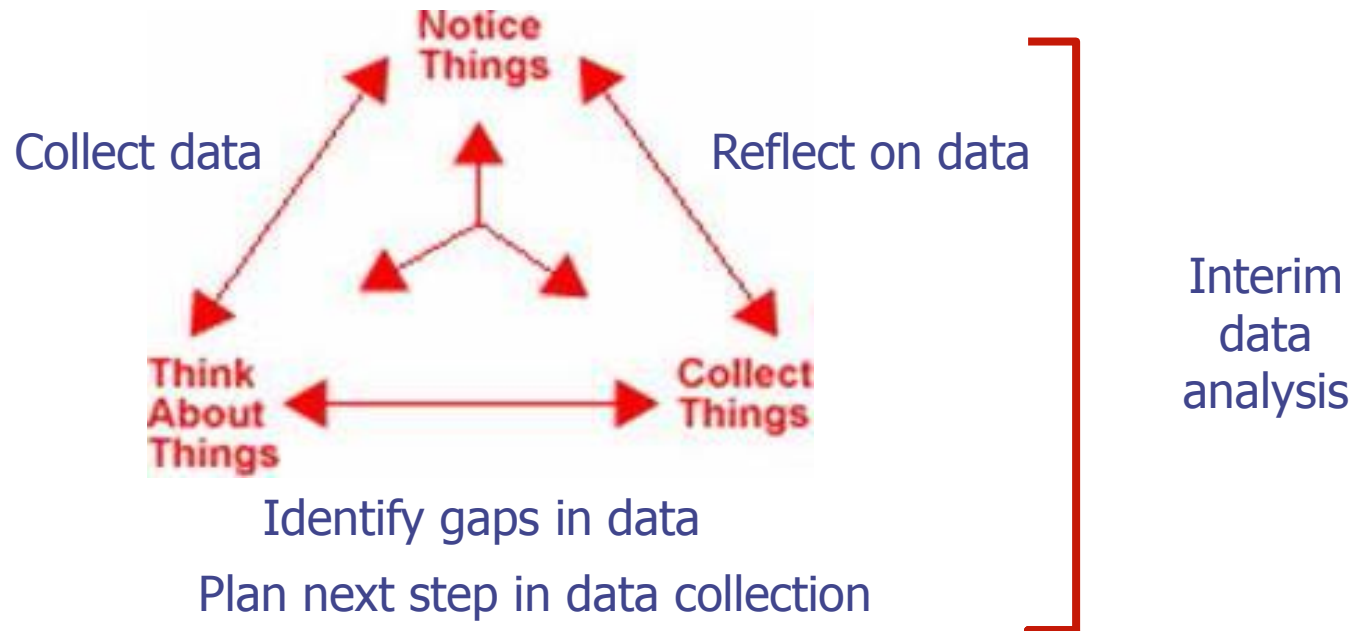
Important:
You need to explore what is going on *where* it is going on.
This often means building a close rapport with participants by staying close to the field in which they operate.
The more and longer you are immersed in field the better the depth of data
Size matters in qualitative research but in different ways (Cousins, 2013)

Data collection as iterative process

Notice
Things

Collect data   Reflect on data

Think
About
Things

Collect
Things

Interim
data
analysis

Identify gaps in data

Plan next step in data collection

Two important objectives in data gathering

Saturation of data – *no new ideas /data emerge*

Thick descriptions – "to make meaning clear"

Data collection methods
Interviewing

An interview is a two-way conversation where the interviewer asks questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behaviours of the participant

Qualitative interviews allow you to see the world through the eyes of the participant.

Qualitative interviews range from open conversation to a structured approach.

A semi structured interview entails a set of open-ended questions in a particular order.

FOCUS GROUP & GROUP INTERVIEWS

- Assumption - group interaction is productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience, and releasing inhibitions

- Focus group is not a group interview

- Focus group = discussion focused on a particular topic; encourage debate/even conflict; group dynamics assist in data generation

- Stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and mourning

- Purpose: in-depth qualitative data (perceptions, attitudes, and experiences)

- Sampling vital (heterogeneous/homogeneous)

- Group dynamics can be the single most important asset – BUT could be the single greatest threat

- Groupthink phenomenon

Recording data from interviews

Write up the transcript immediately following the session (tape or video recorded).

Transcript should be written question-by-question format to capture what was said regarding each question.

Add field notes taken

What is observation?

The act of noticing or or noting a fact or occurrence of some scientific or other special purpose.

Observation is an everyday activity.

We use our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting), but also our intuition to gather bits of data on which we based our reaction to what we have observed.

Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of people, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them.

Four types of participant observation to choose from:

(a)   *Complete observer*.

(b)   *Observer as participant*.

(c)   *Participant as observer*.

(d)   *Complete participant*.

Two Components: Description and Reflection

Description – thick descriptions of what actually takes place; non judgmental;

Reflection – the researcher's thoughts or ideas about the meaning of what was observed

How do I know that what I have observed was in fact what happened?

Member checking – verify our observations with those observed.

More than one observer observing

Triangulation – compare observations with other data collected.

Recording data

A. Anecdotal record - short, basic action, exact words, more objective, one incident.

B. Running record - longer, more detailed, continuous or sequential account, more environmental information, evidence

C. Checklist - numerical form, can have large amounts of information

D. Category systems – pre-set behaviours to look for

Memoing

The sorts of things included are –
1. The identification of patterns;
2. Working out the limitations, exceptions and variations present in whatever is being investigated;
3. Generating tentative explanations for the patterns and seeing if they are present or absent in other settings or situations;
4. Working explanations into a theoretical model;
5. Confirming or modifying the theoretical model;

What makes qualitative data analysis dynamic, exciting and intellectually challenging is the iteration between generation and analysis and within the different types of analytical work.

Qualitative Research

Session 4:

Data analysis

The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid.

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclty uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh? yaeh and I awlyas thought slpeling was ipmorantt.

Start with you as the instrument

Describe your own your perspective

Describe your theoretical orientation and personal interest in the research

Good to declare your values, interests, commitments, assumptions, expectations, and the role these played in the study

It postulates the lens that you have used opens possibility of indicating what strategies employed to counter biases (member checking, more than 1 analyst)

Describe your sample

Describe realised sample i.t.o age, sex, occupation, education or marital status, etc.
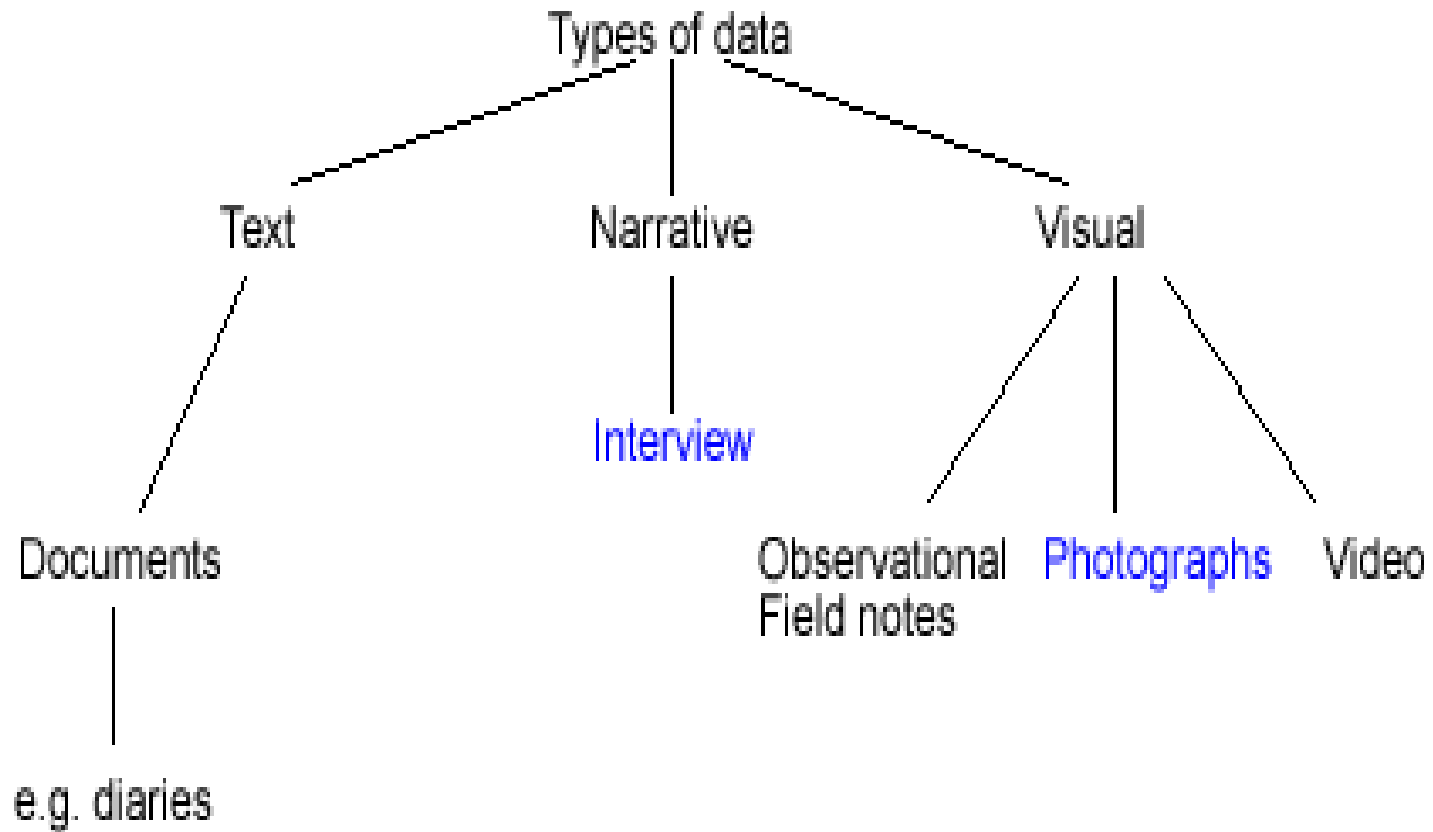Place the data in its context -- who were the participants, what made you decide to choose them?
Who took part in the focus group discussions? How were the participants of the groups selected and how representative are they for your study population?
For observations: under what circumstances were they carried out? Who were observed, and by whom?
Take ethical commitments into account (anonymity, etc.)
Unless this type of information is provided, interpretation of data may appear haphazard.

DATA ANALYSIS

Types of data

- Text
  - Documents
    - e.g. diaries
- Narrative
  - Interview
- Visual
  - Observational Field notes
  - Photographs
  - Video

Preparation of data

Prepare all data (notes and transcripts)

- ❖ Cutting and sorting – ID participants

- ❖ Read and reread

- ❖ Memoing - journaling

- ❖ Do quality check (blind, blank, thin spots)

Key question: Have I saturated my data?

Principles of QDA
Robert Elliott and Ladislav Timulak (2005)

Qualitative research often employs a general strategy that provides the backbone for the analysis.
Qualitative research requires flexibility during the analysis phase
Constant critical self-reflection and challenging scepticism with regard to the analysis methods and the emerging results.
Checking and auditing all steps of the analysis is natural part of the qualitative research
Careful archiving of each step of the analysis
Analysis has to be systematic and organised, so the researcher can easily locate information the data set and can trace provisional results

Analysis of Q data based on content analysis

Content analysis is defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding
Three types:
- *Conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data (inductive)*
- *Directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes (a-priori coding) (deductive)*
- *Summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context.*

Types of QDA

Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous research methods used to analyse text data.
Other methods include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical research.
Discourse analysis
Critical discourse analysis

Conventional content analysis
(in vivo coding)

Divide data into distinctive meaning units -- meaning units are usually parts of the data that communicate sufficient information to provide a piece of meaning to the reader (labelling)

Code every meaning unit

Find an overall organising structure for the meaning units (domains)

Orphaned codes – don't force them into domains (sock bag)

If you are working inductively (using Grounded Theory) codes emerge from the data

Sorting the data into domains that provide a conceptual framework for the data is referred to in grounded theory as axial coding

Reflective notes		Codes	
Reflective notes Discipline in past	*Interviewer Ms Vasi in our previous interview we talked about your experience as a teacher. In today's interview I would like us to focus on that first year of teaching. Can you talk me through your experiences during that first year?*	**Codes**	
Note emotion	*Ms Vasi:* Wow.. was that a wake-up call! I wanted to be a teacher since I was a little girl and then when I started out I just wanted to run away…	Initial experience Teaching as life ambition Initial experience	**Experience** **Expect** **Experience**
	Interviewer What made you want to run away? *Ms Vasi:* I think I had an unrealistic expectation about learners and school discipline. I though that if I ask them to take out their workbooks that they would do it, that	Unrealistic expectations	**Expect**
Emotion again	they would do their homework, etc, but all I got was blank expressions and complaints of me expecting them to do too much work. It was awful!	Learners' reaction to work	
Use of metaphor Emotional expression	*Interviewer: So how did you deal with the situation?* *Ms Vasi:* Pain is sometimes a good teacher. (laughs)	Coping strategy	
Note that pain & discipline is linked/ equated	*Interviewer: I'm not sure what you mean... can you explain it to me….* *Ms Vasi:* I mean there is nothing like a good spanking to get children's attention	Discipline strategy Purpose of discipline	

Conventional content analysis
(in vivo coding)

Iterative process of organising meaning units in terms of literature and critical reflection (sense making of data)

Identify categories - creation of categories is an interpretive process on the part of the researcher

Write a short description/definition for each category - give examples/quotes from the text that illustrates the meaning of the category

A key aspect of the categorisation is a delineation of the relationships between the categories.

The relationships among categories are often pictured in the form of figures or diagrams.

Structuring your analysed data

Study your categories and identify links between categories - links are based on commonalities in meanings/assumed relationship

Write your categories on note cards/flipcharts/post-its and spread them across a table

Draw lines to indicate how they are connected – diagrams/mind-maps/matrixes

Work across all your analysed data sources.

Consider alternative links

Be mindful and explore possible contradictions, paradoxes, conflicting themes, and evidence that seem to challenge your interpretations.

Figure 8.2 Themes and Categories on British Muslim Girls' Choices
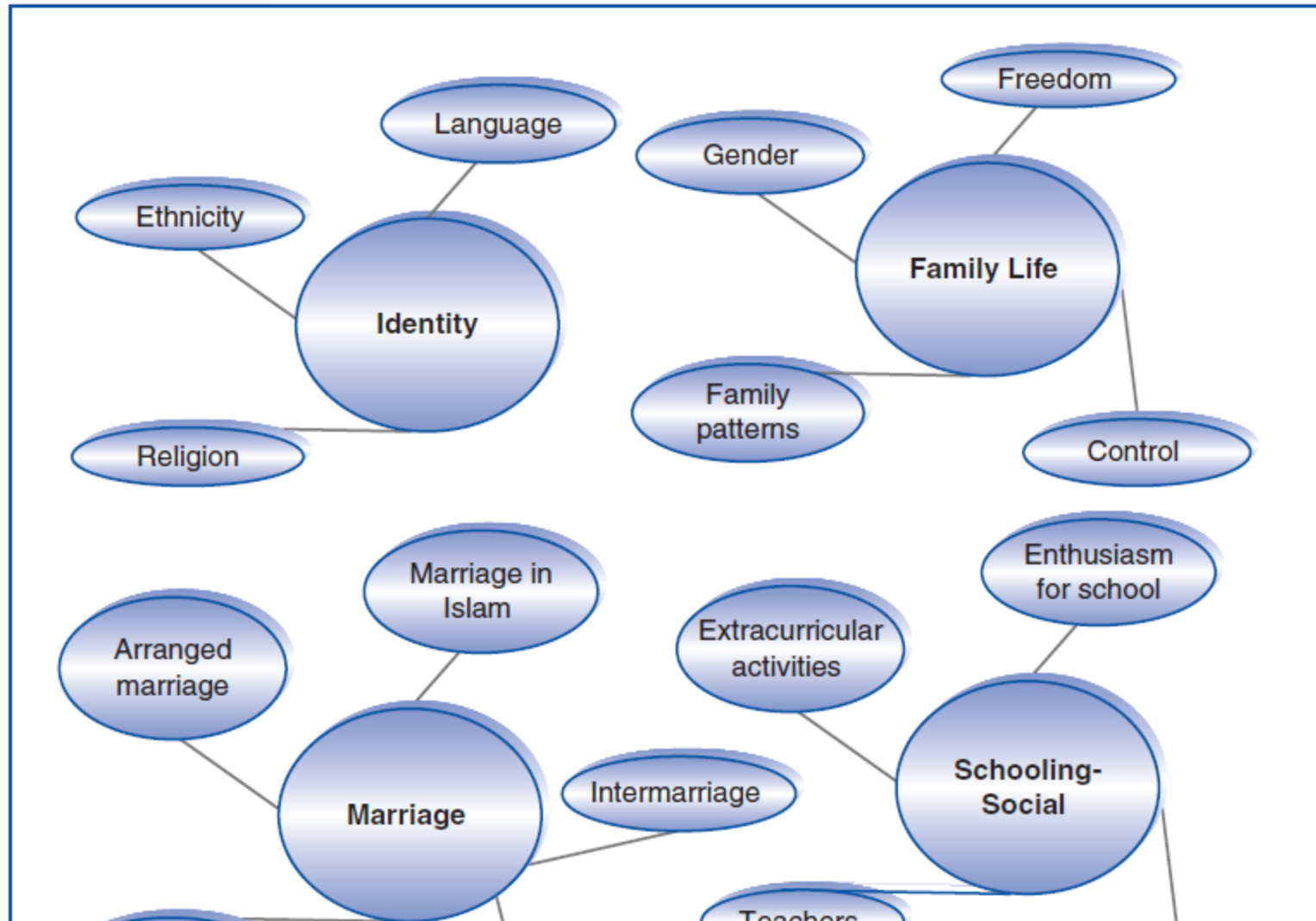
Directed content analysis
(a-priori analysis)

Using existing theory or prior research identify key concepts or variables as initial coding categories

Provide operational definitions for each category using theory.

Interview schedule based on categories in theory - start open-ended question followed by targeted questions about predetermined categories.

Coding – read the transcript and highlight all text based on categories

The next step in analysis would be to code all highlighted passages using the predetermined codes.

Any text that could not be categorized with the initial coding scheme would be given a new code.

The findings from a directed content analysis offer supporting and non-supporting evidence for a theory.

MARKET BASKET ANALYSIS
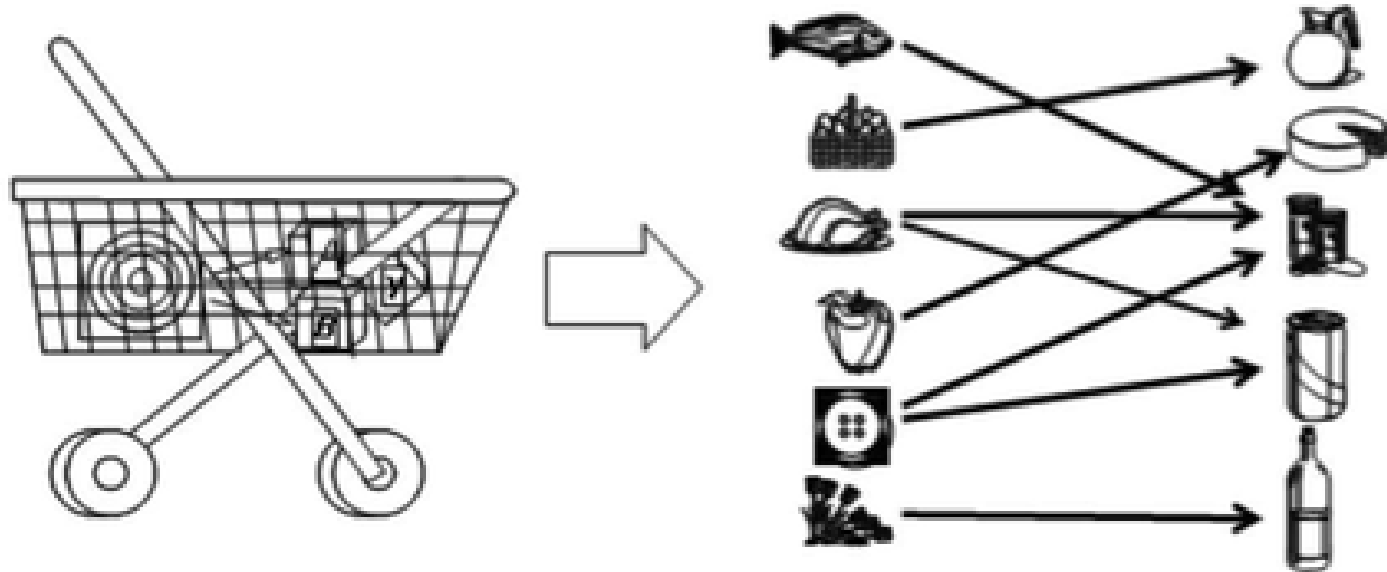
98% of people who purchased items A and B
also purchased item C

Summative content analysis

The purpose is to understand the contextual use of the words or content.

Frequency of use of words

This quantification is an attempt not to infer meaning but, rather, to explore usage.

A summative approach to qualitative content analysis goes beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis. Latent content analysis refers to the process of interpretation of content.

In this analysis, the focus is on discovering underlying meanings of the words or the content.

Links to discourse analysis

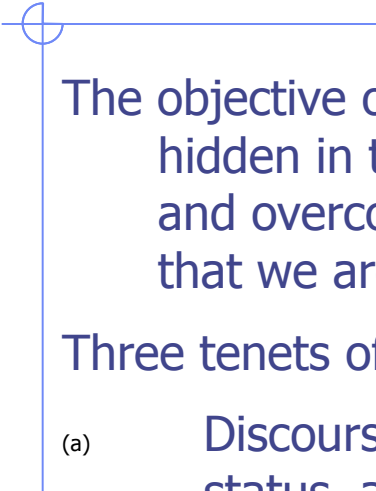| Type of Content Analysis	Study Starts With	Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords	Source of Codes or Keywords
Conventional content analysis	Observation	Codes are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings
Summative content analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature

WHAT IS DISCOURSE ANALYSIS?

Discourse refers to expressing oneself using words.

Discourses are ever-present ways of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the world.

Discourses are used in everyday texts for building power and knowledge DA is concerned with studying and analysing written texts and spoken words to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, economic, political, and historical contexts

It tries to illuminate ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favour their interests.

The objective of DA is to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of our written text or oral speech in order to resist and overcome various forms of power "over" or to gain an appreciation that we are exercising power "over," unbeknownst to us

Three tenets of DA:

(a)   Discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity and gender)

(b)   Discourse is shaped and constrained by culture.

(c)   Discourse (the words and language we use) helps shape and constrain our identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs.

Analyse the discourse

An analysis of the interaction (language used) in focus groups can reveal:

The shared language on the topic, what was taken for granted and what was asked for clarification by other participants.

The beliefs and myths about the topic that are shared, taken for granted, and which ones are challenged.

The arguments which participants call upon when their views are challenged.

The sources of information people call upon to justify their views and experiences and how others respond to these.

The arguments, sources and types of information that stimulate changes of opinion or reinterpretation of experiences.

The tone of voice, body language, and degree of emotional engagement is involved when participants talk to each other about the topic.

How do we approach discourse analysis?

1) Approach a text in an uncritical manner, like an ordinary, undiscerning reader. Price (2002) noted that *engagement without estrangement* is to submit to the power of the text, regardless on one's own position, thereby accepting the reading and offering unquestioning support of the status quo.

2) Come at it a second time with a critical hat on. Revisiting the text at different levels, raising questions about it, imagining how it could have been constructed differently, mentally comparing it to related texts

3) Do not start to decipher the text word by word; rather, one should place the text in its genre - each genre-orientation has a style of its own set of characteristics that identify it—a template of sorts

4) Still looking at the text as a whole, check out what sort of perspective is being presented—what angle, slant or point of view. This is called *framing*

5) Analyse sentences, phrases, and words to understand various forms of power

WHAT QUESTIONS DO I ASKED IN ANALYSING THE TEXT?

How is this text is shaped by what it does in the world, what it is about, how it is related to the world of the audience?

How is this text shaped by what human language is like, in general, and by what the text-builders' particular language is like?

How is this text shaped by who the audience is, who the speaker is, what the relationships between speaker and hearer are, who else is listening, how speaker and audience are related to them?

How is this text shaped by what people expect to hear in this context, how they expect it to be said, what they expect it to be meant to mean?

How is this text shaped by its medium? What sorts of differences can it make whether people are interacting face-to-face or at a spatial or temporal or social distance?

How is the text shaped by purpose, intention, telos, by what speakers hearers and audiences are trying to accomplish?

Deconstructing the message

1. *Topicalization:* In choosing what to put in the topic position, the writer creates a perspective or slant that influences the reader's perception.

2. Who is depicted as in power and over whom? Who is depicted as powerless and passive?

3. Nominalization (converting a verb into a noun) and the use of passive verbs

4. Persuasive rhetoric which can be used to convey the impression that what an agent of power says carries more weight

5. Insinuations are slyly suggestive, carrying double meanings.

6. Connotations associated with one word, or through metaphors and figures of speech, can turn the uncritical viewer's mind.

7. The tone of the text is set with the use of specific words to convey the degree of certainty and authority (called modality).

8. *Register*--do the words spoken ring true? Writers can deceive readers by affecting a phony register, one that induces mistrust and scepticism.

Critical discourse analysis

CDA tries to unite, and determine the relationship between, three levels of analysis:

(a)   the actual text;

(b)   the discursive practices (text is a record of an event where something was communicated and involves the presentation of facts and beliefs (often ideological), the construction of identities of participants discussed in the communication, and strategies to frame the content of the message) and

(c)   the larger social context that bears upon the text and the discursive practices (Fairclough, 2000).

Crystallization

What has emerged from my data?

1. Reflect and analyse the possible fit of the categories
2. What is the emerging reality in my data?
3. How does it corroborate theory?
4. What new insights are brought to the fore?
5. Does it provide an answer to my research question and sub-questions?
6. What are my main findings?
7. What are the limitations of my data?
8. What is the contribution to the body of knowledge?
9. Recommendations
10. Conclusion