From Codes to Conclusions: Strategies for Analyzing Qualitative Data

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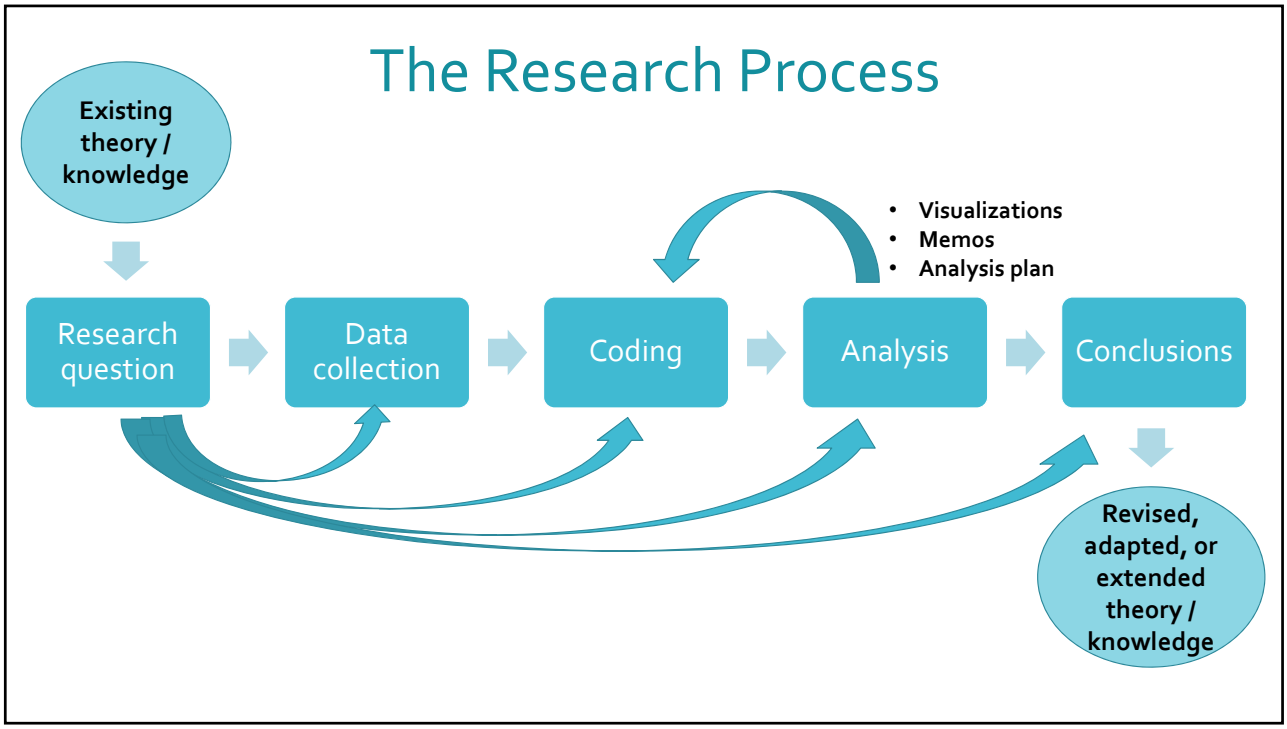


Step 1: Research question(s)

What are you trying to learn after doing this research?

How does socio-economic status affect attitudes towards obligation?

-How do low-, middle-, and high-income Ghanaians feel about their responsibilities towards each other?

-How do low-, middle-, and high-income Ghanaians manage requests from relations?

Step 1: Research question(s)

Research questions can be:

- **deductive** (testing a defined hypothesis)
- **inductive** (discovering new relationships/categories/phenomena or generating new ideas from the data)

In some disciplines, you need *hypotheses* that you can prove or disprove with data

- May be explicit or implicit
- What do you expect to find in your research?
- What have other researchers found?

Step 2: Collect qualitative data

- Ethnographic field notes
- Interview transcripts
- Focus group transcripts
- Video or audio recordings
- Archival data
- Open-ended survey data
- Meeting transcripts
- Organizational documents
- Court proceedings
- Newspapers

Step 3: Code your data

What is **"coding"?**

- Categorizing and organizing data: breaking it down into analyzable parts
- Identifying ideas and concepts in your data that may apply across your different sources
- Can be done manually or using various computer tools
  - MaxQDA
  - Atlas.ti
  - Dedoose
  - NVivo

Step 3: Code your data

- Codes can be **deductive** or **inductive**

Emerge from the literature:

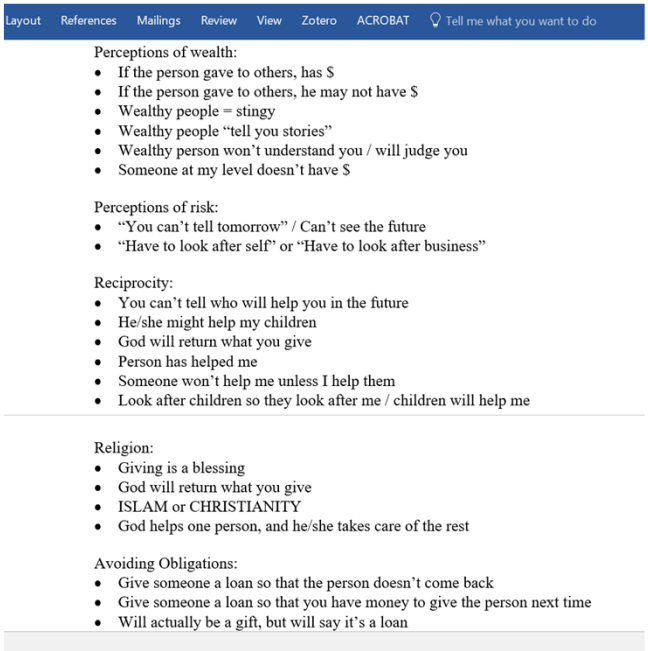
- Avoiding family members
- Reciprocity
- Risk/uncertainty
- Inheritance

Emerge from the coding and analysis:

- Religion
- Mobile phones
- Gender
- Perceptions of wealthy people

Step 3: Code your data

- Coding is an **iterative** process!
  - Start with a list of codes and apply them to a portion of your documents
  - Refine or add new codes if you think you're missing any big themes or ideas
    - Refining = separating some codes into two, or consolidating others
    - E.g. "Religion" → "Christianity" and "Islam"
    - E.g. "Asking someone to wait" and "avoiding phone calls" → avoidance strategies
  - Keep track of your codes!



Step 4: Analyze your data

What is **"analysis"?**

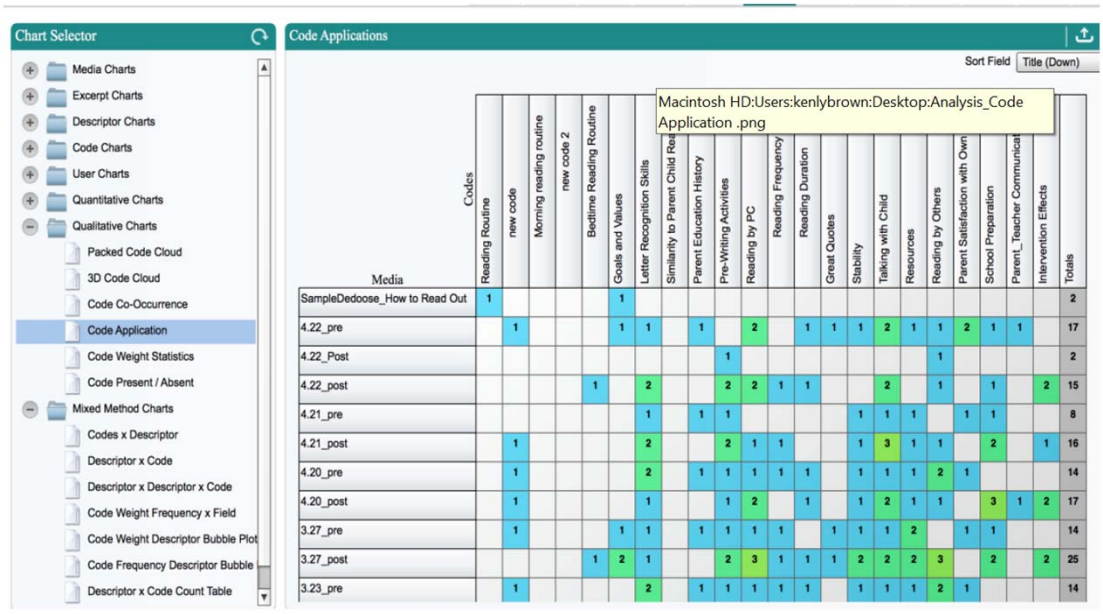
- Analyzing means interpreting, synthesizing, and looking for patterns in data in order to draw a conclusion
- Which aspects of your data will best answer your research question?
  - You will never use all of your data!
  - Identify which units of analysis, codes, and comparisons or relationships are most important

Step 4: Analyze your data

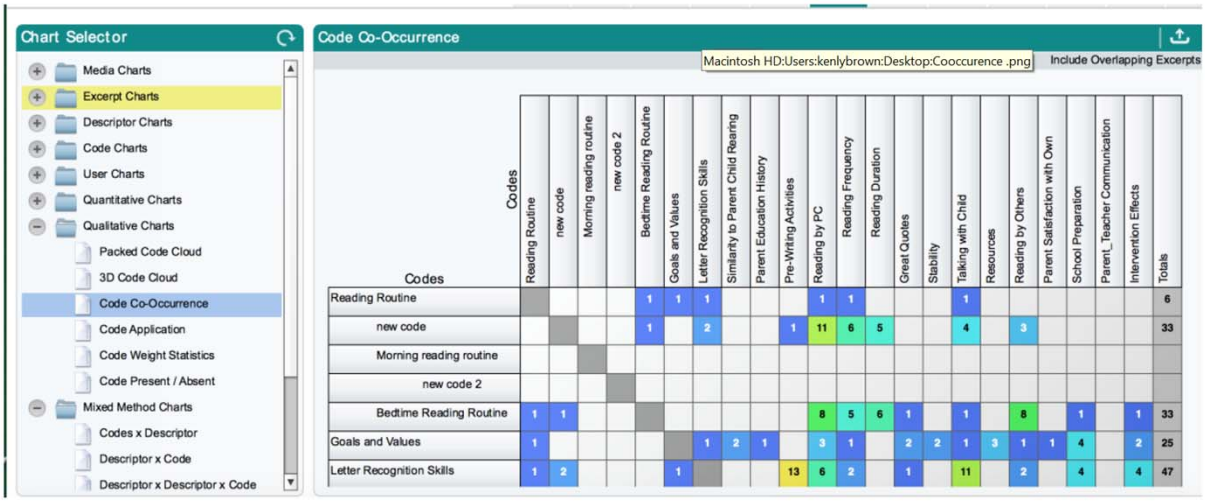
- What is your unit of analysis?
  - Documents
  - Individuals
    - Includes attributes like age, race, gender, job, attitudes and beliefs
  - Organizations
  - Locations
  - Time periods
- You may have "sub-units": relevant groupings of units
  - Can be both deductive and inductive
  - "Sub-groups" are units that emerge from prior research
    - E.g. "class" or "socio-economic status" applies to different individuals
  - "Typologies" are groups that emerge from data itself
    - E.g. "givers" vs. "non-givers" may include people from all different socio-economic groups

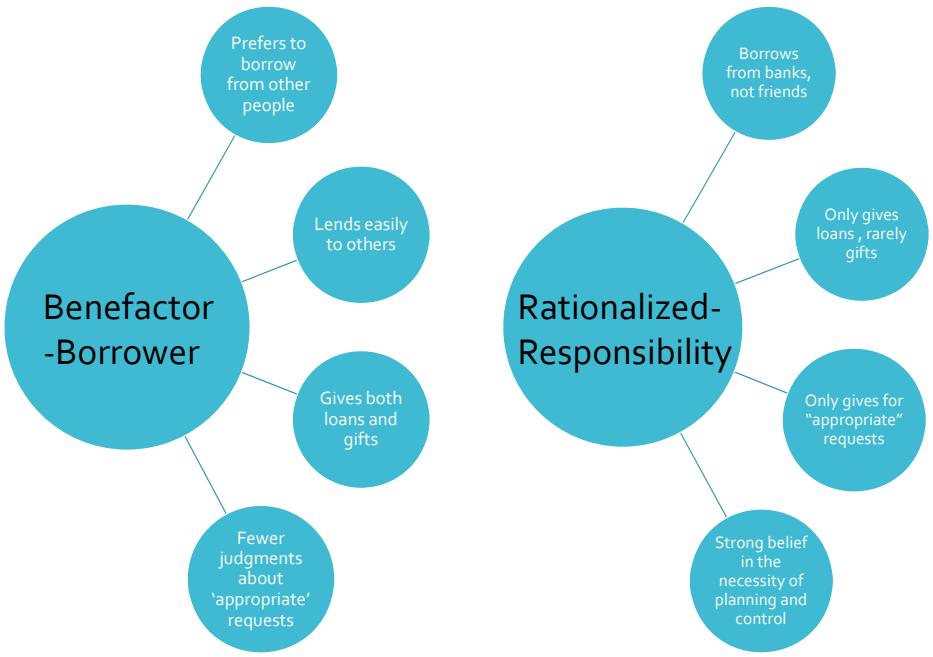
Step 4: Analyze your data

- Sub-groups facilitate **comparisons**
  - Help you see forces at work in your data
  - Look for similarities, and differences, and connections between categories
  - Which codes and categories frequently co-occur? Which codes and categories *never* co-occur?
- You may look for particular relationships between codes and categories
  - Relationships of time (B precedes B)
  - Relationships of similarity (A and B both say X)
  - Relationships of difference (A says X but B says Y)



Visualizations





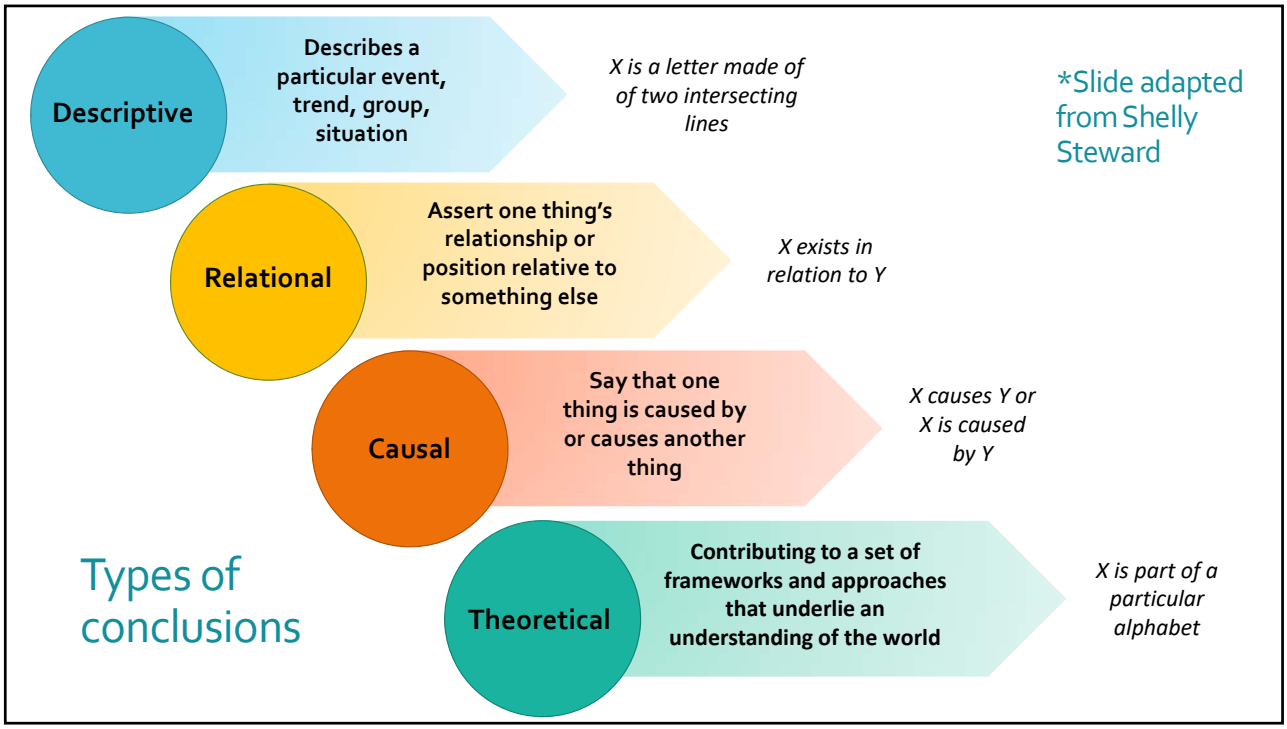
Memos

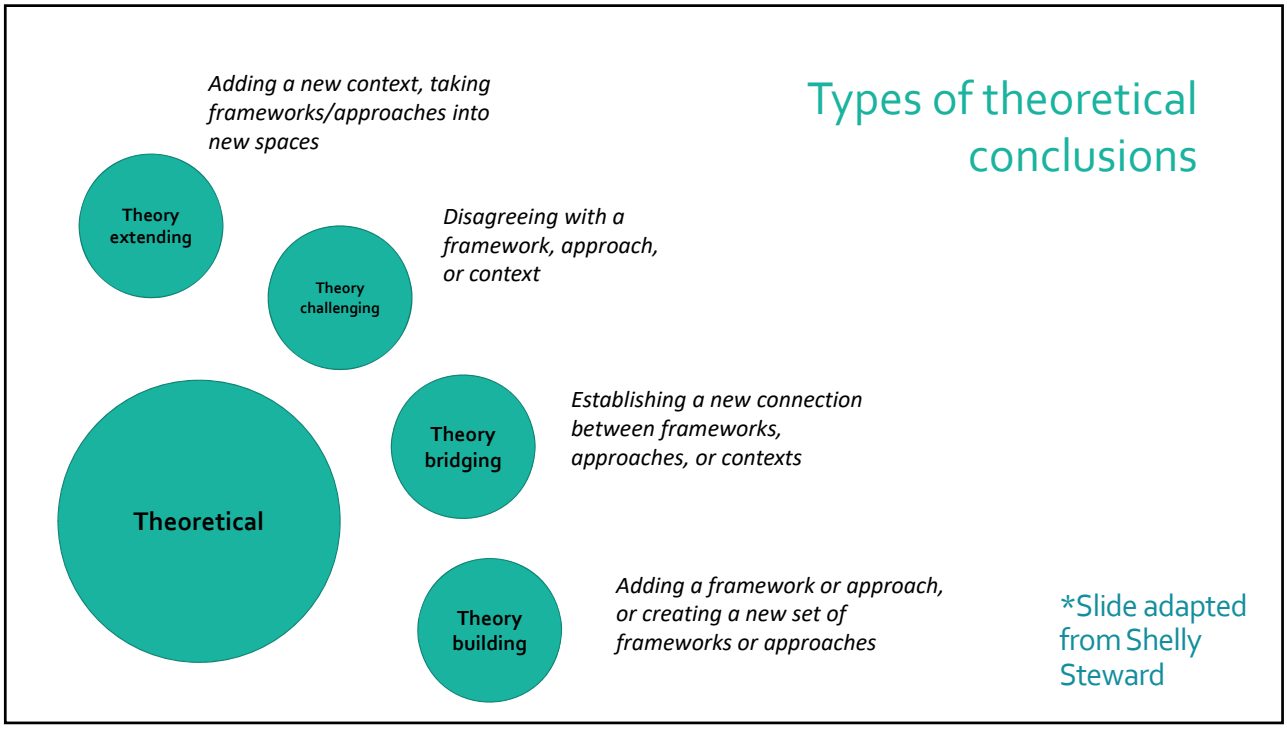
References Mailings Review View Zotero ACROBAT Tell me what you want to do

- ***Importance of reciprocity***
  - Nearly everyone verbalized the importance of reciprocity, but some also noted that their friends and family people didn't necessarily follow this rule
    - About 1/3 of respondents said that they would have difficulty finding someone to ask for $, even if the respondent have given money to others
  - Reciprocity is not necessarily tit-for-tat: about ½ of respondents saw themselves as part of a generalized exchange system where reciprocity is managed by God (i.e. "God will reward you" if humans don't)
    - Oscar: "I'm only doing my duty for blessing, not for anything. Only for God." And "God will reward you. Once you are a Christian, you cannot turn your back [on others' suffering]."
      (Note: Oscar also said that his younger brother got $ and didn't share it with Oscar, but now that his brother's money is gone and he needs help himself, Oscar helps him even though he wasn't helped himself.)
    - Rashida: "Sometimes it's getting tiring when you give $ with no reward, but God is the only reward, so he [Kwabena] should still give [Akos] the $."
    - David: He gives out whatever he has, and has faith that it will come back to him somehow
    - Faith in a system of generalized exchange doesn't necessarily track onto income or class status (e.g. David and Oscar are both entrepreneurs, but one is much wealthier than the other)
  - Those who don't give out much $ to others note that they would have a hard time asking people for help as well.
    - George: Would be difficult to find someone to help him b/c "he doesn't depend on people"
    - Oscar: If he needs help, he'll go to someone who would come to him.
    - Theresa: "If you always ask people for money, then they will also ask you. I don't want to get involved in those money relationships."

Step 5: Draw conclusions

- What is the "big picture" of your research question, data, and findings?
- What kind of story are you trying to tell?


Descriptive
Describes a particular event, trend, group, situation
X is a letter made of of two intersecting lines
*Slide adapted from Shelly Steward
Relational
Assert one thing's relationship or position relative to something else
X exists in relation to Y
Causal
Say that one thing is caused by or causes another thing
X causes Y or X is caused by Y
Types of conclusions
Theoretical
Contributing to a set of frameworks and approaches that underlie an understanding of the world
X is part of a particular alphabet


Adding a new context, taking frameworks/approaches into new spaces
Types of theoretical conclusions
Theory extending
Theory challenging
Disagreeing with a framework, approach, or context
Theoretical
Theory bridging
Establishing a new connection between frameworks, approaches, or contexts
Theory building
Adding a framework or approach, or creating a new set of frameworks or approaches
*Slide adapted from Shelly Steward

Thank you!

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Review

- Make an **analysis plan**: what relationships, comparisons, categories and codes will best help you answer your research question?
- Return to the categories that are important for your research question
  - What units of analysis are you looking at? Are there important sub-categories or comparisons that you are making?
  - What codes / concepts / tags / themes help you make conclusions about these categories?
- What kind of relationships are you looking for between codes and categories?
  - Relationships of time (B precedes B)
  - Relationships of similarity (A and B both say X)
  - Relationships of difference (A says X but B says Y)