

QUALITATIVE DATA

DR ELOISE GOVIER

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN HEALTH CARE
ANALYSING QUALITATIVE DATA
CATHERINE POPE, SUE ZIEBLAND,
NICHOLAS MAYS

- Qualitative research produces large amounts of textual data in the form of transcripts and observational fieldnotes

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- The systematic and rigorous preparation and analysis of these data is time consuming and labour intensive

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- Data analysis often takes place alongside data collection to allow questions to be refined and new avenues of inquiry to develop

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- Textual data are typically explored inductively using content analysis to generate categories and explanations; software packages can help with analysis but should not be viewed as short cuts to rigorous and systematic analysis

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- High quality analysis of qualitative data depends on the skill, vision, and integrity of the researcher; it should not be left to the novice

THE QUALITY IN QUALITATIVE METHODS.

MANFRED MAX BERGMAN & ANTHONY
P.M. COXON

- “We do not believe that the quality of qualitative research can be encapsulated a priori within a set of rigid rules”.
- Certain guidelines may help improve either the quality or the credibility of research results, while their adoption does not automatically guarantee these.

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- Any observed "fact" has already been interpreted at least in the sense that meaning has been assigned to an empirical observation.
- To understand is to interpret.
- Sometimes we recognize the importance of context in the interpretation of empirical data when we discuss the research process in abstract terms, but we tend to fail to take into consideration contextual elements when we elaborate a research question

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- “It is not only those we study who are stuck in a subjectively constructed reality within which meaning is elaborated; we researchers, as we attribute meaning to empirical phenomena, are equally stuck in our own subjectivity (e.g. GERGEN 1973; WEBER 1949/1977)”.

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- Social science data is produced within a particular political, historical, and socio-cultural context
- Researchers themselves belong to various cultures and traditions (e.g. academic, political, historical, socio-cultural).

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- “These two interconnected elements—the contextualized research phenomenon and the contextualized researcher—contribute in different ways to the impossibility of sensing and describing anything without interpretation”.

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- Quality concerns in the following areas :
 - elaboration of a research question;
 - data collection;
 - data analysis; and
 - interpretation.

THE QUALITY IN QUALITATIVE METHODS.

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- “Participant observation, interviews, and focus groups are usually thought of as qualitative research methods. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes clear that these methods relate primarily to how data is collected, i.e. they are data collection methods”.
- “Data analysis methods, i.e. things we do with our observations after they are collected, may include some forms of content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis”.

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- “Institutionalized traditions or preferences provide different colored and shaped lenses through which research questions are selected and conceptualized. Approaches marked by symbolic interactionism, DURKHEIMian structuralism, rational choice theory, Marxism, functionalism, psychoanalytic theory, feminist theory, historicism, etc”

THE QUALITY IN QUALITATIVE METHODS.

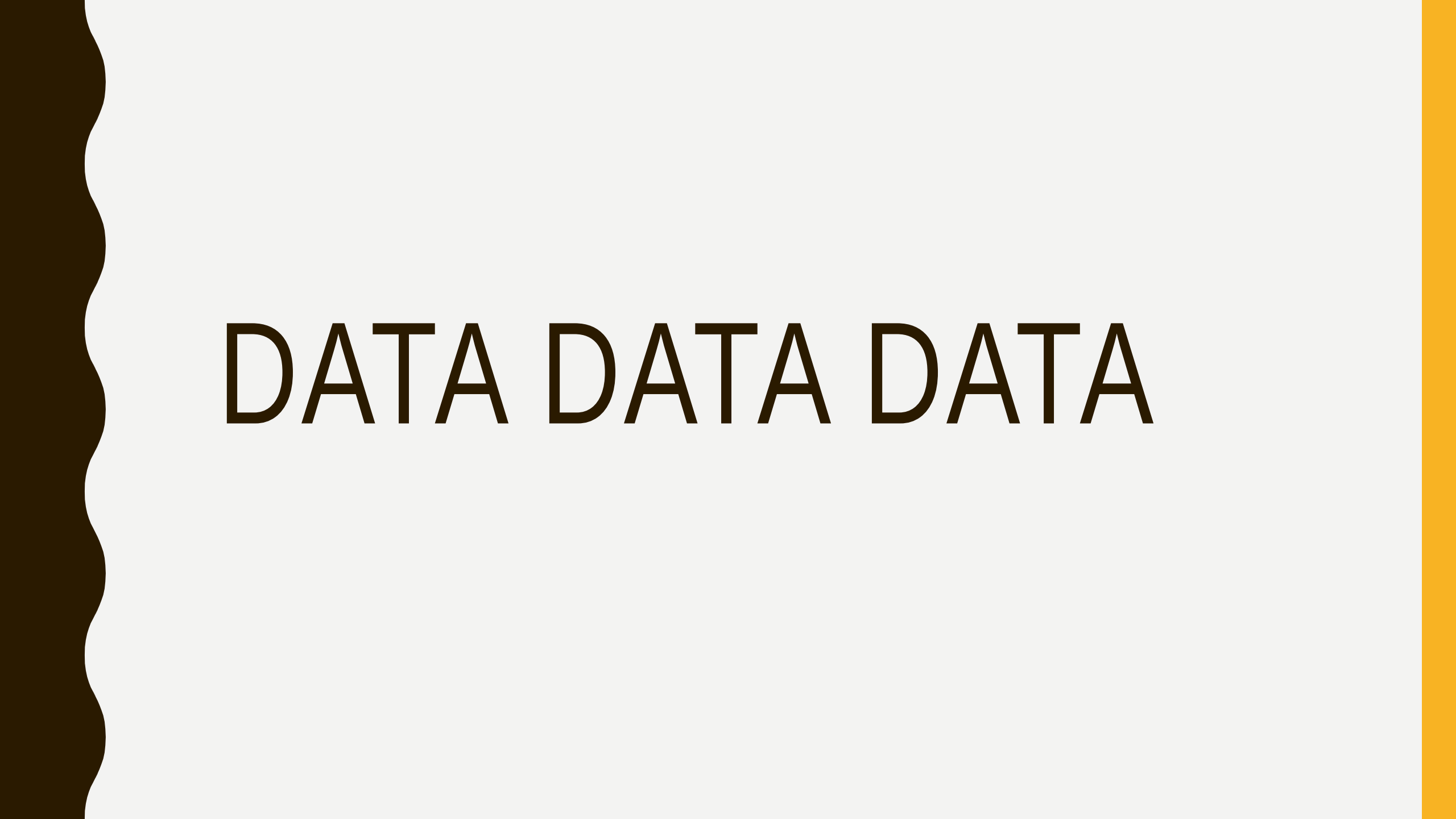
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- Data collection is a process of selectively choosing empirical phenomena and attributing relevance to them with respect to the research question. Therefore, data are nothing but interpreted observations and our findings are strongly dependent upon what we accord the status of data (e.g. COOMBS 1964).

THE QUALITY IN QUALITATIVE METHODS.

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- “All the baggage which shapes our selection criteria, whether or not we are aware of it, shapes also the body of raw data through, for example, question phrasing, probed responses, and a variety of non-verbal cues, which enter the interaction between researchers, their data collection methods and devices, and respondents”.



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