Document Analysis:
An Underutilized and Helpful Type of Assessment
HELLO!

I am Christine Wilson. Thanks for coming to my workshop!

I am here because I love to talk about assessment. Assessment is a way for us to better understand our students and our work, and a pathway to assuring we become better and better professionals.

#nerdherd
Agenda

Document Analysis: What is it?

Document Analysis: What is it used for?
  Types of documents
  Advantages and Obstacles

Cataloguing and analyzing documents

Ethics of document analysis
Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher/assessor to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic.

Analyzing documents includes coding content into themes, similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed. Rubrics can also be used to evaluate documents. (Bowen, 2009)
Document Analysis is used:

As a form of qualitative research on its own

To provide background information or context

As a way to add to a topic or study

As a way to triangulate other types of qualitative and quantitative data
There are three primary types of documents:

- **Public Records**: The official, ongoing records of an organization’s activities. Examples include student transcripts, mission statements, annual reports, policy manuals, student handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi.

- **Personal Documents**: First-person accounts of an individual’s actions, experiences, and beliefs. Examples include calendars, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, Facebook posts, duty logs, incident reports, reflections/journals, and newspapers.

- **Physical Evidence**: Physical objects found within the study setting (often called artifacts). Examples include flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training materials.
Advantages of document analysis

Efficient
Availability
Cost-effective
Lack of obtrusiveness / reactivity
Stable
Exact
Broad coverage
Potential obstacles to good document analysis

- Insufficient detail
- Low retrievability
- Biased selectivity
Careful tracking is an ethical obligation
Analyzing documents is an iterative process

- Skim
- Read
- Interpret
  - Content analysis (code, question, compare)
- Thematic analysis
  (patterns across documents)
Researcher as ‘instrument’ calls for care and transparency.

**Bias in the search for documents**
Assure the plan for the search is pre-planned and updated as it changes.

**Bias in the selection of documents**
Document why each document is chosen, and track document finding / use.

**Bias in the analysis of documents**
Code / theme carefully and indicate “backup” in the documents.

**Bias in the selected documents**
Note the biases perceived when skimming / reading / coding the documents.

---

**Ethics of Document Analysis: Managing Bias**
Let’s chat:

What documents do you utilize?

What documents could you utilize?

And for what purposes? (short and long term)

Assessment vs research re: document analysis
Any questions?

You can find me at
christine.wilson@uconn.edu
Student Union
Room 307

phone 8151 (Kim)