

# **MASARYKOVA UNIVERZITA**

## **Fakulta sociálních studií**

### **Čítanka pro kurs PSY 722 – 11. část (II.)**

Tento text slouží výhradně jako učební materiál pro studenty kursu „Metody výzkumu v psychologii“ (PSY 722), vyučovaného na Fakultě sociálních studií Masarykovy univerzity v Brně.

## **Výzkumná zpráva – II. část**

### **Presenting qualitative research up close**

Zdroj: Wilson, H. S., Hutchinson, S. A.: Visual Literacy in Poster Presentation.

In: J. M. Morse (Ed.): Completing a Qualitative Project. Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1997.

Both viewers and poster presenters can be enriched and informed by virtue of the interactive experience effective posters can inspire.

Another particular value to qualitative researchers is the opportunity interactive poster sessions offer for what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term *peer review*. Legitimate claims to credibility (validity) and dependability (reliability) for findings generated through qualitative research are enhanced by both *member checks* in which investigators seek confirming feedback from study participants themselves and *peer review* in which findings are presented and discussed with professional peers who attend scientific meetings and bring their expertise and research experience to bear on the study at hand. Such exchanges in an informal setting are rarely possible during a timed paper presentation at a scientific meeting. Although letters to the editor in professional journals do represent a means for audiences to communicate with investigators who publish their research, both the time lag and the limited space detract from the broad-ranging discussions that can occur during a poster session.

### The Poster Presentation Process: Pragmatic Strategies

Presenting your research in a scientific poster session will be more effective if you proceed through a three-phase decision process: prepresentation, presentation, and postpresentation. In so doing, poster sessions are more akin to craftsmanship than the creation of works of art. Yet, despite the deliberate process described here, it is possible to incorporate a leap of imagination while proceeding through the step-by-step set of decisions involved in crafting an effective research poster. Originality, novelty, freshness, and creativity often represent the very elements that distinguish an outstanding and memorable poster that attracts viewers from across a crowded hall from all those posters that can be easily overlooked. Poster presentations must be visually dynamic to gain viewers' attention and then must be sufficiently informative to engage the passersby in broader discussion. Posters must be designed as "sight bites" (May, personal communication, 1996) that draw viewers into interaction with the poster presenter and textual materials, using nonlinear, graphic textual strategies.<sup>1</sup>

## The Prepresentation Phase

*Targeting your audience.* Preparation for presentation of a research poster begins as long as six months to a full year prior to the date of a scientific or professional meeting that you have targeted. The choice of one meeting over another requires that you identify the audience you wish to reach with your in-progress or completed prepublication research. If your intent is to encourage others to extend your work cross-culturally, you may begin your search with international research meetings, such as the International Congress of Nursing, scheduled for Canada in 1997; the Japan Academy of Nursing Science International Research Conferences, held in Kobe in 1995; the Qualitative Research Conference sponsored by Curtin University in Fremantle, Western Australia, also held in 1995; or the International Qualitative Health Research Conference, held in Bournemouth, England, in 1996.

If, on the other hand, you seek discussion with peers who are conducting research similar to yours with your population or addressing your phenomena of concern, it makes sense to identify a regional or national specialty or scientific meeting that includes poster presentation sessions.

Still another audience eager to learn about qualitative research with clinical relevance is the cadre of practitioners in nursing, medicine, social work, and psychology who strive to base their clinical work on research findings. If you as a qualitative researcher are interested in the perceived clinical "grab" and utility of your discoveries and insights, seek an institute, symposium, conference, or professional forum such as a Sigma Theta Tau research day or an association of clinicians such as the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) meeting that is likely to attract practitioners who might use your qualitative findings in their clinical work or in clinical intervention studies.

*Obtaining official guidelines.* Once you have identified an audience and targeted a conference or meeting, it is crucial to obtain the specific official guidelines for poster presentations, which will at minimum outline the dimensions and type of expected poster displays (including details as specific as whether easels and bulletin boards or

simply tables will be provided for your poster or whether you must bring your own). Other information that you should obtain is the accessibility of power for audiovisual and other technologies and the location of the poster display area.

Sherbinski and Stroup (1992) urge nurse presenters to get very specific information such as on the amount and type of display space available. They emphasize that the size and type of poster display possible will be determined by whether you have a 6-foot booth with a wall backboard or a 4-foot table. They also urge that you be certain to check what times during the conference, meeting, or convention posters will be on display because most poster sessions require that investigators be present to answer questions and engage in discussion of their work. The time for displaying posters at a scientific meeting is usually a half day or a full day with specifications about when the author(s) will be present (Coulston & Stivers, 1993). If detailed information about these issues is unclear or unavailable, you are at risk for creating the scenario described in the second vignette that began this chapter. Consequently, it makes sense for a prospective poster presenter to take an active role in seeking out requisite information from the conference planners (McDaniel, Bach, & Poole, 1993). This recommendation is especially relevant to qualitative researchers, who may intend to attempt a less conventional poster representation of their work, although it applies to all poster presenters.

*Crafting an abstract and deciding on a title.* Most research posters are reviewed for acceptance by a panel of referees based on a 100- to 200-word abstract that you must write and submit. Brevity and precision are the hallmarks of a well-written abstract as well as of a well-organized poster display (Coulston & Stivers, 1993). In some cases, poster abstracts are reprinted in a conference syllabus or book, and conference attendees make decisions about which posters to visit based on reading the abstracts in the conference book. Think carefully about what to include in your abstract and how to write it.

Typical components of a study abstract include

- the title, the investigators, and their affiliations;
- funding sources for the research;
- the study purpose and questions;

- a description of the sample;
- a brief rendering of the data collection and analysis methods;
- and, most important, the study's preliminary findings and their implications.

Make your title active in voice, yet informative of the type of study you've conducted. Most experts suggest that you include the major study problem or process on which you've focused and a description of the participants whose narratives provided your textual data. Titles usually should be limited to approximately 10 words and when printed on your poster should be large enough to be read easily at a distance of 10 feet. From as early as deciding on a title, begin to think about principles of visual literacy and apply them to the plan for your poster. Your primary aim in a poster design must be "to attract attention among a sea of posters competing for viewers' time, and then to enable the viewer to decide rapidly whether the poster is relevant or interesting" (Forsyth & Waller, 1995, p. 83). Edit a title like "A Cross-Sectional Descriptive Study of Spiritual Mediators of Anxiety, Hope and Quality of Life in African American Men and Women With HIV Infection" to a more succinct, active form such as "Spirituality Affects Quality of Life for African Americans Living With HIV." Keep your abstract clear, concise, direct, vivid, stimulating, and informative. Remember that language can corrupt thought and that bored writers produce bored readers. But, also, begin entertaining ideas about how to achieve the properties of a successful abstract and still retain the human interest of your research. The text of your abstract should be considered carefully and rigorously edited. The review panel's decision to select your poster for inclusion at the conference, meeting, or convention will be based on it. Craft a substantive, lean, and direct presentation of your conclusions. Avoid overly detailed literature citations and elaborate discussions of methodology.

An annotated bibliography and copies of your interview guides can be shared with viewers as handouts during your poster display. McDaniel et al. (1993) remind poster presenters to be sure to put your name, address, and phone number on the handouts you distribute or attach your business card, which should include an E-mail address and fax number.

*Designing a poster based on principles of visual literacy.* Forsyth and Waller (1995) emphasize the importance of what they term “visual literacy skills” if health care researchers are to communicate effectively with professional as well as lay audiences who have increasing visual sophistication. Although full mastery of visual literacy requires a long apprenticeship in graphic and print design, contemporary desktop publishing computer software has, in their words, “put great design power into inexperienced hands” (p. 80). Good visual design has one straightforward aim—to ease communication so that the flow of information from presenter to viewer is easy and enjoyable and both are free to concentrate on the content of the presentation.

The primary visual elements of a poster presentation include (a) the text, (b) the materials and layout, and (c) the illustrations and/or graphs. All must be crafted so as to provide a clear visual structure to your material that is first and foremost suited to your audience. Every choice you make about your poster’s design—from selecting the type font, the color scheme, the illustrations and graphics, the layout, and the adjunctive materials—can contribute to the clarity of your poster’s message if made with savvy and care. Effective posters make what viewers describe as an unambiguous and immediate statement, drawing viewers to look at your poster up close despite multiple competing stimuli. Yet, once your paper has attracted viewers, it can make use of diverse arrangements of text, different sized boxes or columns, and various typefaces and colors to engage the audience in both the expressive and the informative elements of the text.

*The text content.* Deciding what essential information to include in your poster presentation is the initial challenge. The text, like the abstract, should be vivid, concise, error-free, and logically organized. If you neglect to allow sufficient lead time to rigorously proofread the copy for your poster, you risk the scenario depicted in the third vignette that began this chapter. Typically, posters include the same information that appeared in your abstract. Forsyth and Waller (1995) emphasize that the visual structure of essential elements must be such that the viewer who is not likely to study the poster in detail can pick out the key components. They suggest that the IMRDA (introduction, method, results, discussion approach) may be specified by conference

planners as the poster structure. However, more informative section titles often contribute to what's called "eye appeal."

Whatever stylistic structure you select, at minimum a poster should show, as well as tell, a project's entire story in a visually appealing and effective way. The content customarily includes a title, the study aims and conclusions, and then methods, results, and discussion. These elements should be organized so that headings guide the viewer to the major points. Viewers should be able to answer the following questions about your poster as a result of its design (Forsyth & Waller, 1995):

- Where can I find out what it's about?
- Where do I find the take-home message?
- Where do I begin reading?
- How far through am I?

*The text design.* Design choices begin with something as basic as decisions about fonts (Forsyth & Waller, 1995). *Font* refers to type-faces and styles. Font choice has an impact on the "personality" of a poster. Type size and leading (the space between lines) can also affect the light or heavy feel of a panel and its legibility. Experts recommend that posters use no more than two font types in a poster. Sans serif fonts like Helvetica have the clarity and emphasis useful for titles and headings. Serif fonts like Times Roman have small tails or "serifs" on the ends of letters that aid the reader by visually linking adjacent letters. Consequently, serif fonts are preferred by some for longer blocks of text but categorically avoided by others (Ryan, 1989) (see Figure 4.1).

Typographic experience has yielded a few other font design guidelines. For example, guidelines published by Forsyth and Waller (1995) are summarized in the Box 4.1.

*The materials and layout.* McDaniel et al. (1993) echo most others in emphasizing that cost and time are influential when planning the materials and layout for your poster. Box 4.2 summarizes some crucial information for decisions about materials and layout. The most common material for a poster is a foam-backed plastic board or large sheets of poster board.