



60 MINUTES

Collaborative Qualitative Coding

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Activity Rationale and Aims

Aims

Teams will work together to identify and analyze themes in the data.

Rationale

Analyzing data is a central part of research and design projects. In research, it informs analysis and the framing of findings, and in the design of tools and products, it supports the iterative design cycle. Though data analysis has traditionally been conducted by researchers, it is really important to include stakeholders and collaborators in the process of collaborative meaning-making and analysis for several reasons, including: a) to ensure that stakeholders and collaborators are respected and acknowledged as valuable partners in the work; b) to ensure that all collaborators' perspectives and voices are represented in the analysis and conclusions drawn; and c) to strengthen the validity and reliability of the claims made.

Activity Summary

This activity draws on a constructivist approach to grounded theory where collaborators construct meaning via an inductive exploration of qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006). They will work together to identify emergent themes and then refine those themes into categories. Collaborators will then use those categories to systematically analyze a specific set of data.



In Person Steps

Prior to the meeting:

01. Facilitators should identify 6-8 rich segments of data that are representative of the larger data set. This may include things like interview or focus group transcripts or open-ended responses to a questionnaire.

- a. These data segments should be no longer than 3-4 sentences, if it is written or transcript data. Facilitators should print out the data segments in larger print, as well as the more complete transcript, so that collaborators can understand the data segments in context.

As a whole group:

02. Revisit the focal questions of the group and clarify the unit of analysis. That is, what is the group looking for?

In small groups:

03. Review the selected piece of data. Have each collaborator take notes on which themes they see emerging.

04. Have collaborators discuss their notes and decide upon common themes.

- a. Make sure that each collaborator explains their rationale and provides examples for the themes.

05. Have collaborators write their common themes on sticky notes.

As a whole group:

06. Have each group share to the whole group by reading their sticky note, and then placing it on the wall.

07. If another group has a similar theme to what was previously presented, group the sticky notes together.

08. Once all small groups have shared, discuss the groupings of themes:

- a. What are the broader categories?
- b. Which term is most accurate?
- c. Develop consensus on how the grouping of themes should be presented in one or two words- this will be the code.

09. Develop a chart that identifies the code, a definition, and an example for each code. This is the team's coding scheme.

10. Once the coding scheme has been developed, pass out cut up segments of data. On the board, write out the codes, and have collaborators tape the segments of data under the codes that they think are most appropriate.

- a. If different perspectives arise, facilitate a conversation about how the data and the codes are being interpreted until consensus is reached.

11. Once all groups have categorized their pieces of data under codes, discuss any challenges that arose.

12. By the end of the activity, collaborators should have a shared understanding of how to operationalize the codes. At this point, once consensus has been developed, and all perspectives have been heard, it may be appropriate to have a smaller group of collaborators work to code a more comprehensive data set over the course of several weeks.

13. Once the whole data set is coded and analyzed, the coded data should be brought back to the whole group. At which point the coders should share out key themes and findings to ensure that all collaborators agree with the ways that data has been analyzed and interpreted.

Modification Notes

This activity can be modified to meet the needs of the group.



Facilitator Preparation

MATERIALS

- Pre-identified piece of data (e.g. interview transcript, focus group questions, open ended survey responses) in a document form
- The same piece of data in larger print and cut up into sections
- Sticky notes
- White board
- White board markers

Example from the field

This activity was done with a youth participatory action research team collaborating with university educators to understand young people's experiences of feeling grounded in their bodies. Collaborators were asked to submit an artistic depiction of when they felt grounded and submit an audio clip explaining what grounded meant to them. To analyze the art and audio, the youth team and adult researchers worked together to identify emergent themes and then code the data under those themes. These themes were then used to inform the design of an intervention to support young people to feel grounded in their body.

Facilitation Tips

It is recommended that facilitators are familiar with qualitative data analysis prior to engaging in this activity. Facilitators should be prepared to facilitate a conversation about what constitutes a pattern or theme.

It is important to carefully select the piece of data so that there is rich enough information to generate patterns and conversation and that it is not too long.

It is important that the facilitator closely attends to the process of establishing consensus and moderates conversation to ensure that all perspectives are heard and valued.

Make sure that all data that is shared is anonymous and that all collaborators are on the IRB protocol, if relevant. Make sure that this activity is in compliance with the IRB protocol, if relevant and if human subjects are involved.

If time allows, it would be beneficial to schedule one more time to repeat this process to allow for a deeper shared understanding of the codes.

Commitments to Equity

Traditionally, data has been coded and analyzed by researchers, without the collaboration of stakeholders. Research that honors multiple truths and that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing and being necessitates that the process of analyzing data incorporates multiple perspectives. Bringing stakeholders into the process is critical to the development of analytic frameworks and shared understandings

of key constructs in a way that reflects the values, experiences, and knowledge of stakeholders. Excluding the perspectives of stakeholders in the data analysis process could misrepresent the stakeholders. Engaging in collaborative processes of data analysis has the potential to mitigate the risk for harm and holds great opportunity for generating rich understandings and processes that support the wellbeing of all collaborators.

Additional Reading

Bejarano, C., García, M., Juárez, L., & Goldstein, M. (2019). Decolonizing ethnography: Undocumented immigrants and new directions in social science. Duke University Press.

Bishop, R. (1998). Freeing ourselves from neocolonial domination in research: A Maori approach to creating knowledge. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(2), 199–219.

Cahill, C. (2007). The personal is political: Developing new subjectivities through participatory action research. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 14(3), 267–292.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 1–19). Sage.

Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 70–82). Sage Publications, Inc.

Thambinathan, V. & Kinsella, E. A. (2021). Decolonizing methodologies in qualitative research: Creating spaces for transformative praxis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20.

Zavala, M. (2013). What do we mean by decolonizing research strategies? Lessons from decolonizing, Indigenous research projects in New Zealand and Latin America. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), 55–71.

Works Cited

Charmaz, K. (2006). Grounded theory. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of sociology*. Blackwell.



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