QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: INTERVIEWING

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WHAT WE'LL COVER

- Qualitative Data Collection

- Why Interviews?

- Types of Interviews

- Designing and Structuring Interviews

- Mode of Interviewing

- Recording Interviews

- Transcribing Interviews

- Analyzing Interviews

Types and Purposes

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Document Review

Observation

Focus Groups

Interviews
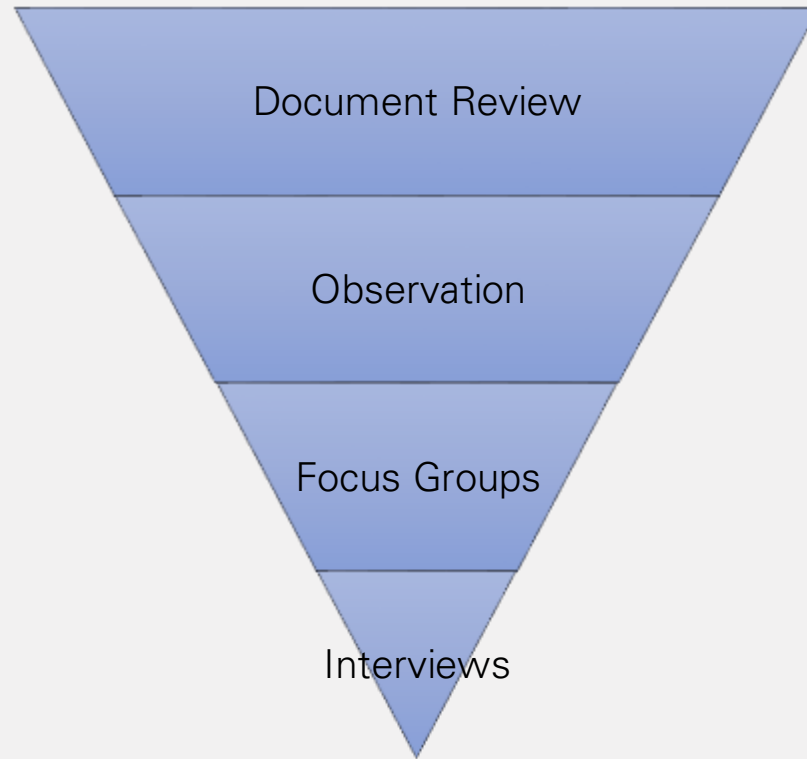
QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION: TYPES AND PURPOSES

Broad to Narrow – Distant to Up Close

- Document Review
  - Analyzes documents and printed materials
  - Can provide insight into programs and policies
  - Summarizes existing program information

- Observation
  - Can watch from afar – see how a program works
  - Can be structured or unstructured
  - Researcher takes lengthy, descriptive notes
  - Often recorded for future analysis

Document Review

Observation

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION: TYPES AND PURPOSES (CONT'D)

Broad to Narrow – Distant to Up Close

- Focus Group
  - Collects information from a group of people
  - Often about exploring a "shared" experience
  - Focus groups are facilitated small group discussions

  Focus Groups

- Interviews
  - About understanding individual experiences in great detail
  - Can be structured or unstructured
  - Generally conducted face-to-face or via phone (sometimes virtually)

  Interviews

WHY INTERVIEWS?

Advantages

- Response rates

- Depth of information

- Flexibility

Disadvantages

- Time consuming

- Less Anonymity

- Data analysis

- Interviewer skill

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS: STRUCTURED
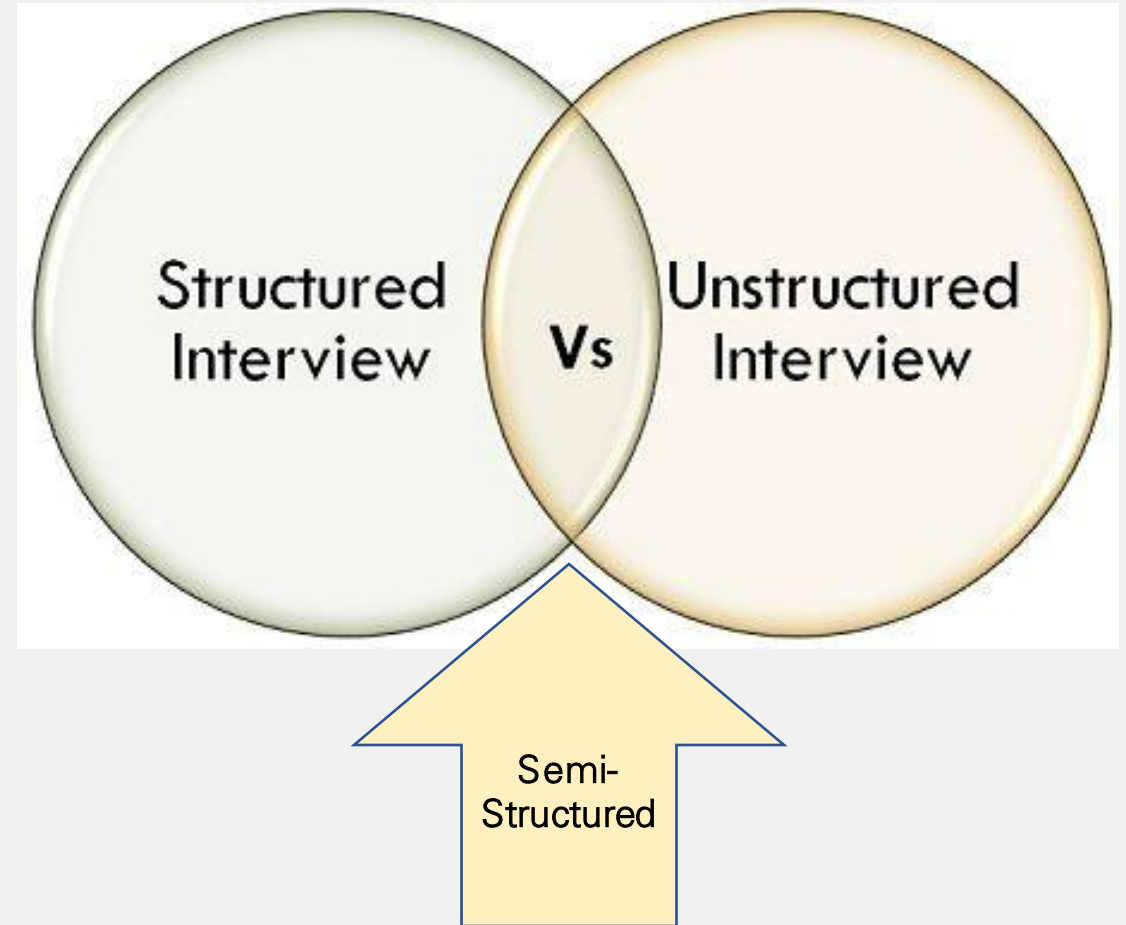
Structured:

- uses a standard set of questions

- no improvising or going "off script"

- Often used in employment interviews

Benefits:

- All participants are asked the same questions

- Provides structure for interview

- Helps avoid asking redundant questions

- Provides uniform experience for all participants

Drawbacks:

- No room for probing or follow up

- Very formal, lacks opportunity for building rapport

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS:
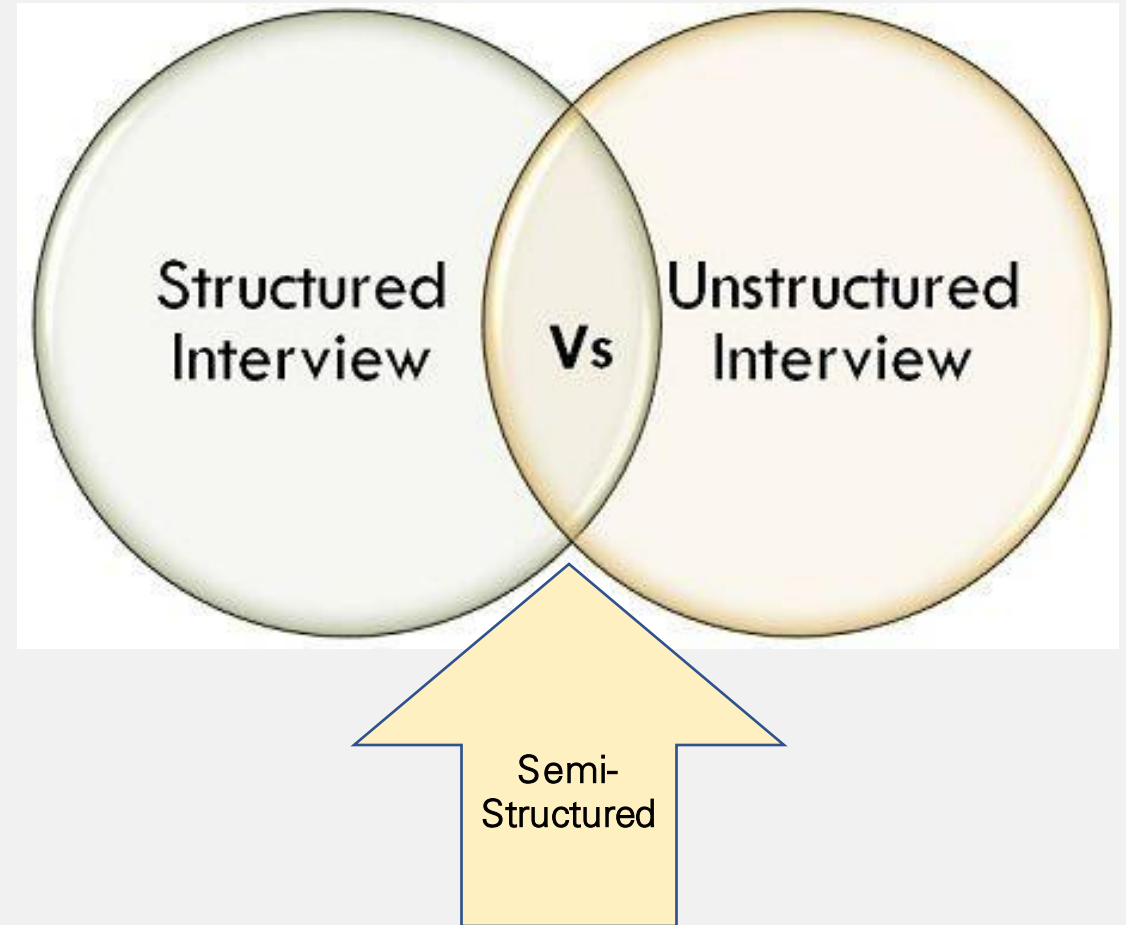## UNSTRUCTURED

Unstructured

- Free-flowing conversation

- No set of required questions

- Asks open-ended questions

Benefits:

- Allows for a deeper understanding of the interviewee

- Rapport building is maximized

- Can analyze answers and behaviors

Drawbacks:

- Can't guarantee that all interviewees were asked the same questions

- May seem disorganized

- Interviewer may forget important questions

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS:
## SEMI-STRUCTURED

Semi-Structured

- Asks questions within a specific framework but no required questions or set order (Interview Protocol)

- More exploratory in nature

- Most common type of interview in qualitative research

- Open-ended questions

Benefits:

- Allows for probing questions as needed

- Can help you see patterns (structured) while allowing for comparison (unstructured)

Drawbacks:

- Requires interview experience

- Takes time to develop and test an interview protocol

Structured Interview **Vs** Unstructured Interview

Semi-Structured
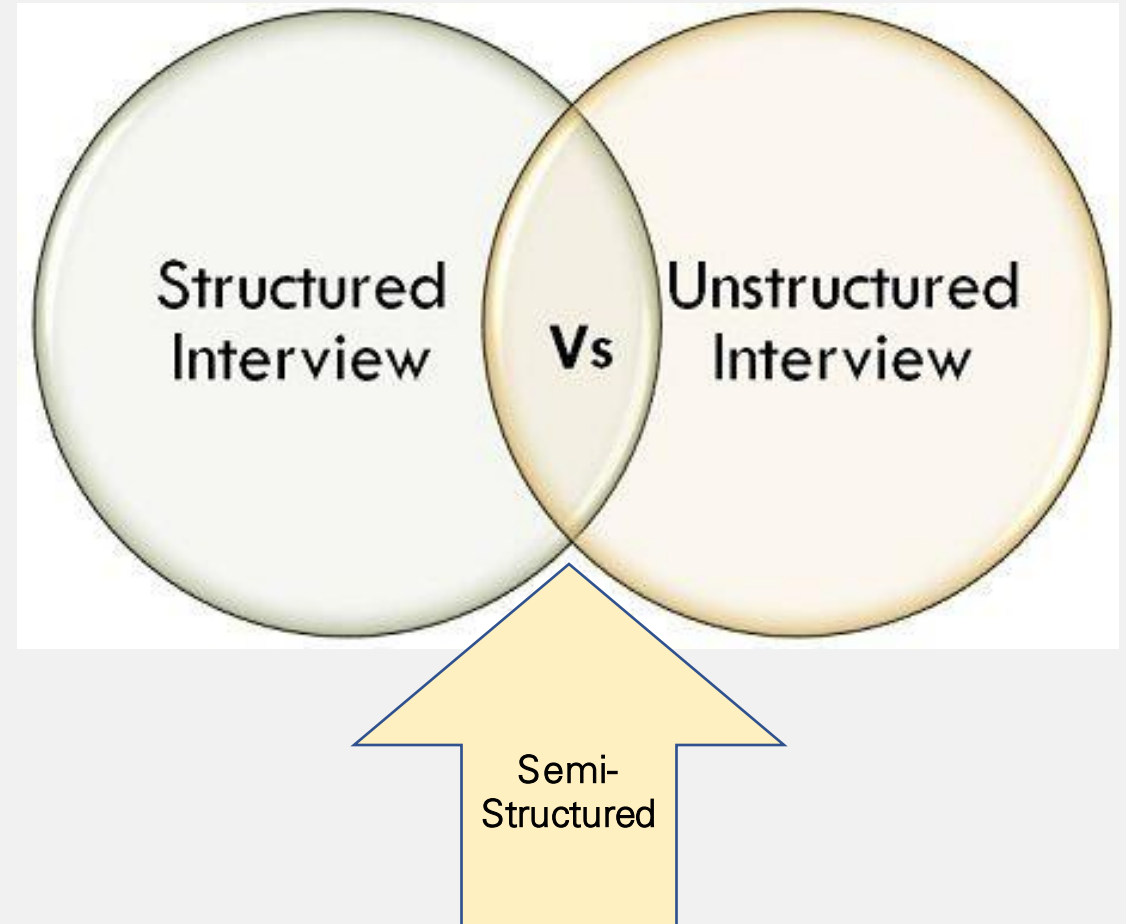
DESIGNING AND STRUCTURING INTERVIEWS

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

Factors to Consider

- Research question(s)

- Researcher skill level

- Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

- Research Methodology

Things to Avoid

- Closed questions (i.e., those answered with a "yes" or "no"

- Biased questions

- Questions that are too specific

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE (CONT'D)

Using follow-up questions

- Use follow up questions to elaborate or clarify (e.g., "What do you mean by…" or "Can you tell me more about…?")

Use probes to get more detail

- Keep them short and simple
  - Continue an answer (e.g., "Then what happened?")
  - Elaborate an answer (e.g., "Can you give me an example?")
  - Steering a conversation (e.g., "You mentioned that…)
- Can be non-verbal (e.g., silence or body language)
- Can be used to reframe
  - If a question causes discomfort
  - If a question draws confusion or is not understood
  - If you need to move on and circle back later
- Can be used to summarize key ideas or themes

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE (CONT'D-2)

Starting an interview

- Choose setting carefully – should be comfortable for interviewee, free of distractions, and private enough to ensure anonymity as best as possible.

- Developing rapport – start with off-topic subjects (i.e., weather, news).

- Explain the research – go over the informed consent and explain the purpose of your research.

- Broach the Confidentiality Issue – explain the differences between anonymous and confidential.

- Generate Trust – can use self-disclosure (within limits), mutual acquaintances, etc. This is especially important if the subject of the research/interviews is sensitive.

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE (CONT'D-3)

Structuring an Interview

- Structure like a conversation – with logical transitions between topics

- Start easy and general

- Tough or controversial questions should be in the middle of the interview (rapport is established, but still time to lighten things up.

- End with questions that allow participants to elaborate on any topic previously covered or talk about the interview itself.

MODE OF INTERVIEWING

Face-to-Face

- Pros:
  - Easy to establish rapport
  - Can pick up on non-verbal cue
- Cons:
  - Can create travel restrictions
  - Harder to schedule
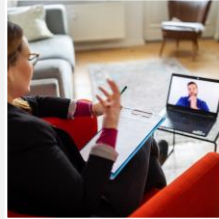
Virtual

- Pros:
  - Easier to schedule
  - Easy to record and transcribe
- Cons:
  - Potential for technology issues
  - May be limited by time constraint

Phone

- Pros:
  - Easiest to schedule
- Cons:
  - Will miss non-verbal cues
  - Typically shorter
  - Difficult to establish rapport/trust

RECORDING INTERVIEWS

**When possible, always record the interview (with permission):**

- Allows interviewer to devote full attention to interview (not note taking)
- Minimizes loss of information
- Aids in data analysis
- Create a transcript (including notes) as soon as possible after the interview.
- A full recording and/or detailed notes are extremely important for the accuracy and transparency of your findings.

When you cannot record:

- Some interviewees may not be comfortable with being recorded
- Bring a second person to take notes

What should you note:

- Body language
- Tone of voice
- Any non-verbal cues (missed on an audio recording)
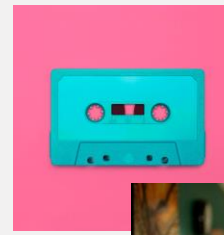
TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS

Types:

- Manual Transcription
  - You, as the interviewer, listen to your interviews and transcribe them as you do
  - Slowest form of transcription
  - Most accurate in terms of data because you were the one there and can account for tone and non-verbal cues as you transcribe

- Auto-Transcription
  - Transcription through the recording software (i.e., Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet, etc.)
  - Not 100% accurate (mishears words or phrases or misses some portions completely)
  - Fastest form of transcription – it is instantly finished when the recording is stopped

- Transcription Services
  - Using a 3rd party service to transcribe (you will send your recording, they will transcribe it for you)
  - Exposes your data to an outside party
  - Possible loss of accuracy and definite loss of accounting for tone and non-verbal cues
  - Must be disclosed to the participant and within your IRB application and final report

WHICH TYPE OF TRANSCRIPTION SHOULD YOU USE?

Simply put … it depends!

- How quickly do you need to get started?

- How many interviews do you have to transcribe?

- Is auto-transcription available?

- How's the quality of your audio recording?

- Will different people be transcribing?

Everyone should transcribe an interview at least once in their life as a researcher!

TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS: HOW TO

1. Prior to the interview
   - Use high quality recording equipment
   - Test your devices by recording a "test" interview first
   - Schedule interviews in a quiet place with limited interruptions
   - Remind your participants that you will be recording (verify consent)
   - Silence other devices (phones, laptops, ipads, etc.)

TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS: HOW TO (CONT'D)

2. Pick a type of transcription
   - Verbatim – includes every word or sound – even the filler words like "um," "uh," "like," etc. Also includes laughter, throat clearing, etc. Depending on the purpose of the interview, this may be the type of interview you need.
   - Intelligent Verbatim Transcription – includes every word but excludes the filler words and "noises." These are more common in settings where the words someone says are more important than the "way" they said them. This is the most common type of transcription.
   - Edited Transcription – these interviews prioritize accuracy and readability. These are commonly used in publications (i.e., newspapers, websites, magazines) where formality is preferred over accuracy.

TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS: HOW TO (CONT'D 2)

3. Listen
   - Before starting, simply listen to the recording all the way through
     - Take note of places where the audio quality is difficulty to hear
   - Break it down into chunks
     - Transcribing will take more time than you expect and be longer than you can imagine. Break the recording into chunks (by topic or question or in 3-5 minute segments) to make it more manageable.
   - Re-listen
     - Listen, pause, transcribe. Repeat. Re-wind as needed. Remember, accuracy is important here.
     - Create a shorthand for commonly used words and abbreviations where possible. Don't worry about typos or formatting yet
   - Take Breaks
     - Don't try to do it all in one sitting – you'll tire out and miss something
     - Use the chunks you've created to take realistic breaks regularly

TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS: HOW TO (CONT'D 3)

4. Edit Rough Draft

- Now that you have a fun rough draft transcript – listen again, slowly and check your draft for accuracy.
- Add things you've missed
- Correct things you've gotten wrong
- Correct typos
- Fix shorthand and abbreviations
- Add in interviewer notes about non-verbal cues, silences, laughter, smirks, etc.

TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS: HOW TO (CONT'D 4)

5. Formatting
   - Apply a formatting that is consistent across your transcripts (this helps others with reading and analyzing your data as well)
   - Identify speakers – as well as non-verbal cues and researcher notes
   - If applicable, use insert time stamps
   - Use paragraphs and spacing to help distinguish between topics/sections so that your transcript flows as intended and is easy to navigate
   - Use consistent margins – I suggest a wide margin on the right and left so that you can use your margins as you begin to code your transcripts

ANALYZING INTERVIEWS: A PRIORI

- Qualitative Data Analysis – starts with your literature review – before data collection begins.
  - *A priori* codes – codes that are predetermined – things you KNOW will be there based on your prior research
  - Latin for "from the earlier"
  - For example, If you are conducting interviews in order to explore the contributing factors of teacher burnout at the middle-school level, you may already know that things such as workload, relationships with administrators, parent-teacher interactions, etc. will likely be brought up during your interviews. You will likely design your interview protocol to account for some of these things.
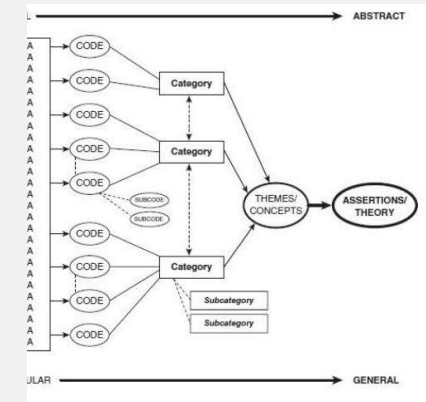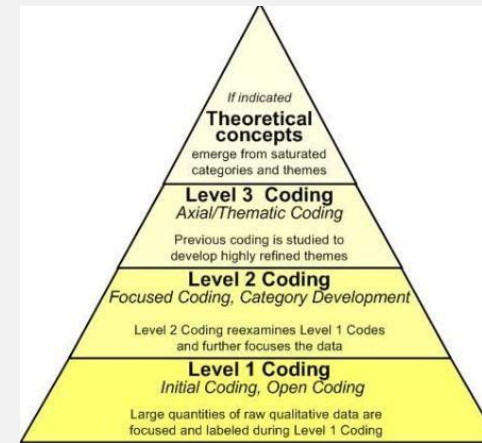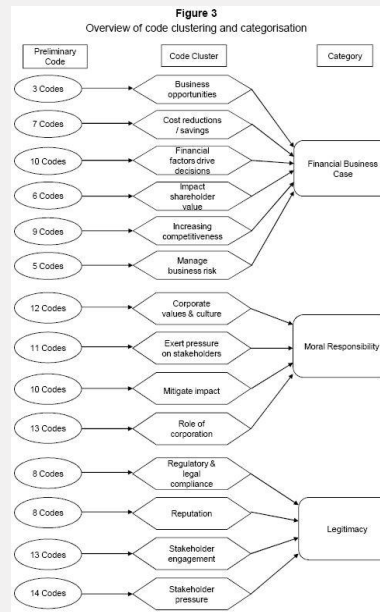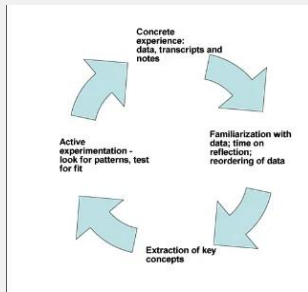
ANALYZING INTERVIEWS: A POSTERIORI

- *A Posteriori* codes on the other hand are codes that you did not know would be there.

- Latin for "from the latter"

- For example, while you may have expected some answers based on your prior research, your use of open-ended questions and probing may have allowed participants to reveal things that were not in the research (this is the sweet spot of qualitative research).

ANALYZING INTERVIEWS: CODING

How do you get from pages and pages of transcripts from hours and hours of interviews to research findings that make sense?
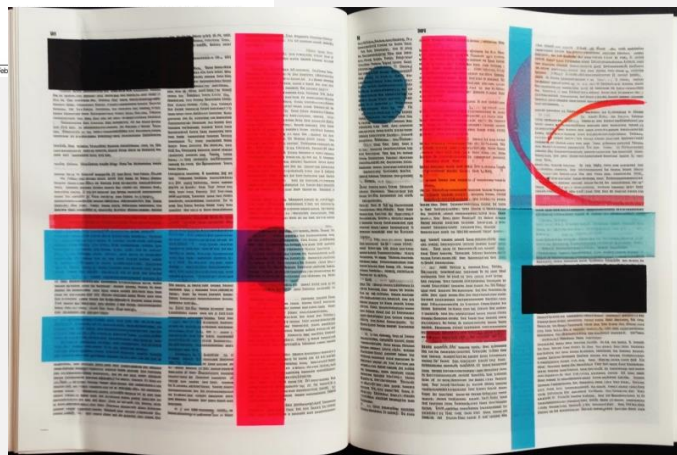
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