Asha’s Practical Tips for 298A Students on Coding & Analyzing Interview Data

This handout summarizes some of my practical advice on analyzing interview data, written for students who use interview data as part of their 298A projects.

As an overview, you want to follow three key steps:

1. Identify relevant themes (and the associated “codes” you use to describe each theme)
2. Code the transcripts
3. Analyze the coded data to answer your research question(s)

Background: Materials to read and watch
Here are a few suggested items you can read and watch to learn more about coding.

- Watch this video, made by URBP Professor Hilary Nixon: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnDUARfEuSI


Step 1: Define the themes and associated codes you will use for analysis

Step 1a: Review the transcripts to develop ideas for possible themes and codes
You will most likely want to use a mix of “deductive” and “inductive” analysis. Because you start with one or more research questions, your approach is deductive: you want to find answers to predetermined questions. However, you can also use an inductive approach to identify the themes, sub-themes, and codes you use to analyze the transcripts and answer your research questions.

To begin the process of identifying themes, sub-themes, and codes you might use to analyze the transcripts, read through all your transcripts, highlighting passages that strike you as interesting.
and jotting down ideas for themes and codes. If you have the time, you may want to read through the transcripts more than once.

For every possible theme and code you identify, write out a description of what it covers (you can think of this as a definition) and include at least two sample quotes from the transcripts.

**Step 1b: Select a final set of themes and codes**

You now need to determine the final set of themes and codes you will use for analysis. Questions you will want to think about carefully for each potential theme and code include:

- Exactly how do I want to define the theme or code?
- Will that theme or code be truly useful to help answer my research question(s)?

**Step 2: Code the transcripts**

I recommend doing this using MS Word’s “Comment” feature for this step. Read through every transcript and highlight as a “comment” each section of text (phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc.) that relates to one of your codes. Then, in the comment bubble, write the name of that code.

**Step 3: Analyze the coded data to answer your research question(s)**

The analysis goal is to see what answers to your research question you can identify, using just the material in the transcripts. You will want to identify both differences and similarities among how the interviewees addressed your research questions. The optional reading by Burkowitz poses a useful set of questions to guide you in your analysis:

- What patterns and common themes emerge in responses dealing with specific items? How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to illuminate the broader study question(s)?
- Are there any deviations from these patterns? If yes, are there any factors that might explain these atypical responses?
- What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How can these stories help to illuminate the broader study question(s)?

You may want to collect all the material related to each code into one place, either an MS Word document or an Excel spreadsheet.

Now, read, re-read, and re-read again (!) the collection of material you have related to each theme, to see what insights you can pull out of the data.

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