

# Building Evaluation Capacity Session 5

## Interviews, Observations, Analysis of Qualitative Data



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## What are Qualitative Data?



Qualitative data - come from surveys, interviews, observations and sometimes record reviews.

They consist of:

- descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors;
- direct quotations and ratings from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts or assessments;
- excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, case histories, field notes.

Collecting and analyzing qualitative data permit study of selected issues in depth and detail and help to answer the "why questions."

**! Qualitative data are just as valid as quantitative data!**

## How are evaluation data collected?

- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Interviews
- ▶ Observations
- ▶ Record Reviews
- ▶ All have limitations and benefits
- ▶ All can be used to collect either quantitative or qualitative data
- ▶ Require preparation on the front end:
  - Instrument Development and testing
  - Administration plan development
  - Analysis plan development



## Observations

Observations are conducted to view and hear actual program activities so that they can be described thoroughly and carefully.

- Observations can be focused on programs overall or participants in programs.
- Users of observation reports will know what has occurred and how it has occurred.
- Observation data are collected in the field, where the action is, as it happens.

Instruments are called protocols, guides, sometimes checklists

## Use Observations:

- To document implementation.
- To witness levels of skill/ability, program practices, behaviors.
- To determine changes over time.

## Trained Observers Can:

- See things that may escape awareness of others
- Learn about things that others may be unwilling or unable to talk about
- Move beyond the selective perceptions of others
- Present multiple perspectives

## Other Advantages

- The observer's knowledge and direct experience can be used as resources to aid in assessment
- Feelings of the observer become part of the observation data
- OBSERVER'S REACTIONS are data, but they MUST BE KEPT SEPARATE
- Let's try it . . .

## Methodological Decisions: Observations

- What should be observed and how will you structure your protocol? (individual, event, setting, practice)
- How will you choose what to see?
- Will you ask for a “performance” or just attend a regular session, or both? Strive for “typicalness.”

## Selecting Observation Subjects: Some Rules of Thumb

Goal	Number	Timing
Program implementation Use of space Regular use of specific practices	One or more	Typical
Characterize program delivery and/or Participant response to prg	At least two regular sessions	Spaced apart depending on program cycle
Documenting participant outcomes	One or more	When participants are expected to demonstrate (during a skills test or culminating activity)
Rich comprehensive information about program delivery and participant response	Multiple	Multiple options

## What's Off Limits

- × Confidential sessions
- × One-on-one participant interactions without express permission.

Observers should limit their participation in session activities.

Never share un-analyzed notes!

## Methodological Decisions: Observations

- Will your presence be known, or unannounced?  
Who should know?
- How much will you disclose about the purpose of your observation?
- How much detail will you seek? (checklist vs. comprehensive)
- How long and how often will the observations be?



## Conducting and Recording Observations: Before

- Clarify the purpose for conducting the observation
- Specify the methodological decisions you have made
- Collect background information about the subject (if possible/necessary)
- Develop a specific protocol to guide your observation

## Conducting and Recording Observations: During



- Use the protocol to guide your observation and record observation data
- BE DESCRIPTIVE (keep observer impressions separate from descriptions of actual events)
- Inquire about the “typical-ness” of the session/event.





## Conducting and Recording Observations: After

- Review observation notes and make clarifications where necessary.
  - clarify abbreviations
  - elaborate on details
  - transcribe if feasible or appropriate
- Evaluate results of the observation. Record whether:
  - the session went well,
  - the focus was covered,
  - there were any barriers to observation
  - there is a need for follow-up

## Observation Protocols

- Comprehensive
  - Setting
  - Beginning, ending and chronology of events
  - Interactions
  - Decisions
  - Nonverbal behaviors
  - Program activities and participant behaviors, response of participants
- Checklist - “best” or expected practices



## Analyzing Observation Data

- Surveys focus on frequencies and cross-tabs (numbers)
- Interviews focus on themes and quotes (words and numbers)
- Observations focus on descriptions (words and pictures).

Observation data can definitely include counting.

Observations are labor-intensive but produce rich data.



## Analyzing Observation Data

- Make summary statements about trends in your observations

*Every time we visited the program, the majority of the children were involved in a literacy development activity such as reading, illustrating a story they had read or written, practicing reading aloud.*

- Include “snippets” or excerpts from field notes to illustrate summary points.

## Observation Results

- ▶ There was a maximum of 15 participants in the room, and a minimum of 9 participants, about 13 stayed for most of the training (some left or were there intermittently throughout the session). At least 5 different people uninvolved in the training passed through the room. The room was set between the front entrance and a back computer lab and staff offices. At least 6 participants arrived late (after the first topic had been covered) and two departed early (before most of the training had been completed).
- ▶ During the discussion portion of the training, participants are talking about verbal triggers they have experienced (e.g., being whistled at or propositioned after exiting the subway). During the exercise, one participant walked across the room and the other participants verbally offered triggering harassing comments. A majority of the group contributed comments and then added their own recollections of similar circumstances. The volunteer described what it felt like to be “harassed” during the session, and multiple participants added examples of that happening to them and how they responded.

## Observation Results

- *At all sites, ongoing projects were underway and examples of participant work were readily visible. Teaching artists were demonstrating skills, giving youth opportunities to try the skills, and providing one-on-one assistance as needed.*



## Participant Observation, Final Session: Practical Exam Results for Group B (n=9)

Participant Number	Followed Directions Using New Program-Specific Vocabulary	Number of Correctly Identified Items (n = 20)	Overall Performance Rating
Participant 1	All Directions	15	Very Good
Participant 2	All Directions	19	Excellent
Participant 3	Most Directions	15	Very good
Participant 4	All Directions	20	Excellent
Participant 5	Some Directions	14	Very good
Participant 6	All Directions	19	Excellent
Participant 7	Most Directions	12	Excellent
Participant 8	Most Directions	20	Excellent
Participant 9	Some Directions	15	Very Good
TOTAL/Average	<i>All or Most Directions = 7</i>	16	<i>Very Good/Excellent = 9</i>

## Important Reminders

To Increase Rigor: Conduct Observations

- Multiple times
- Multiple trained observers
- Multiple subjects

Good Observations Require:

- Good protocols
- An administration plan
- An analysis plan



## Interviews

- An interview is a one-sided conversation between an interviewer and a respondent.
- Questions are (mostly) pre-determined, but open-ended. Can be structured or semi-structured.
- Respondents are expected to answer using their own terms.
- Interviews can be conducted in person, via phone, one-on-one or in groups. Focus groups are specialized group interviews.

Instruments are called protocols, interview schedules or guides

## Use Interviews:

- To study attitudes and perceptions using respondent's own language.
- To collect self-reported assessment of changes in response to program.
- To collect program assessments.
- To document program implementation.
- To determine changes over time.

## Methodological Decisions: Interviews

- What type of interview should you conduct?
  - Unstructured
  - Semi-structured
  - Structured
  - Intercept
- What should you ask? How will you word and sequence the questions?
- What time frame will you use (past, present, future, mixed)?

## Interviews: More About Methodological Decisions

- How much detail and how long to conduct?
- Who are respondents? (Is translation necessary?)
- How many interviews, on what schedule?
- Will the interviews be conducted in-person, by phone, on-or-off site?
- Are group interviews possible/useful?



## Conducting and Recording Interviews: Before

- Clarify purpose for the interview.
- Specify answers to the methodological decisions.
- Select potential respondents - sampling.
- Collect background information about respondents.
- Develop a specific protocol to guide your interview (develop an abbreviation strategy for recording answers).



## Conducting and Recording Interviews: During

- Use the protocol (device) to record responses.
- Use probes and follow-up questions as necessary for depth and detail.
- Ask singular questions.
- Ask clear and truly open-ended questions.



## Conducting and Recording Interviews: After

- Review interview responses, clarify notes, decide about transcription.
- Record observations about the interview.
- Evaluate how it went and determine follow-up needs.
- Identify and summarize some key findings.

## Tips for Effective Interviewing

- Communicate clearly about what information is desired, why it's important, what will happen to it.
- Remember to ask single questions and use clear and appropriate language. Avoid leading questions.
- Check (or summarize) occasionally. Let the respondent know how the interview is going, how much longer, etc.
- Understand the difference between a depth interview and an interrogation. Observe while interviewing.
- **Practice Interviewing - Develop Your Skills!**



## More Tips

- Recognize when the respondent is not clearly answering and press for a full response.
- Maintain control of the interview and neutrality toward the content of response.
- Treat the respondent with respect. (Don't share your opinions or knowledge. Don't interrupt unless the interview is out of hand).
- Practice Interviewing - Develop Your Skills!

## Analyzing Interview Data

- 1) Read/review completed sets of interviews.
- 2) Record general summaries
- 3) Where appropriate, encode responses.
- 4) Summarize coded data
- 5) Pull quotes to illustrate findings.

## Analysis Plan Specifics, You Must Decide . . .

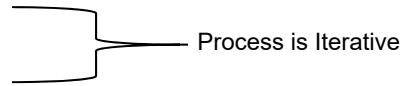
What procedures will be conducted with each set of data and who will do them?

- How will data be partitioned?
- What types of codes will be applied to the data?
- How will comparisons be made?
  - Data to other project data (within group)
  - Data to expectations
  - Data to data from other sources (across groups)

There is no single process!

## Steps to Take When Analyzing Qualitative Data

1. Segment or partition data (i.e., divide it into meaningful analytical units)
2. Reduce data
  - ✓ Code data
  - ✓ Compare data
3. Organize, summarize and display data
4. Draw conclusions, verify/validate results
5. Revise summaries and displays accordingly

 Process is Iterative

## Coding Qualitative Data

1. A priori or deductive codes: predetermined categories based on accepted theory or program knowledge
2. Inductive: based on raw data (not predetermined)

## Enumeration

A strategy for organizing, summarizing, and displaying qualitative data

- ✓ Quantify frequency of codes,\* or types
- ✓ Use counts to define results (e.g., *most responses were positive; all responses fell into 4 categories – the category most exemplified was \_\_\_\_\_*).

\* e.g., none, some, a lot, as a percentage

## Coding Strategies and Reminders

1. Keep a master list of codes
  - ✓ Distinguish a priori and inductive codes
  - ✓ Re-apply codes to all segments
2. Use multiple codes, but keep coding schemes as simple as possible
3. Test out sample entries to identify potential problems before finalizing code selections
4. Check for inter/intra coder reliability (consistency)
  - ✓ Coding is not exact (expect differences)
  - ✓ Co-occurring codes (more than one applies)

## Observation Results

[The observation protocol included a quick summary assessment at the conclusion of each observation. All five Studios received an \*Excellent\* rating. The following are highlights consistently observed/recorded. During each visit it was noted that there were:](#)

- ▶ Opportunities for young people to develop and hone their talents in multiple areas of the arts – film, music, photography, writing/poetry/spoken word, dance and theater.
- ▶ High quality, demanding and authentic work with many clear directions, both verbal and written, guiding apprentices as they worked to complete projects and/or prepare for performances. At the three studios that were not involved in full rehearsals, multiple opportunities for self-direction and decision-making by apprentices. At the two studios where rehearsals were underway, apprentices were observed interjecting and contributing to performance decisions. At every observation, all apprentices were present and completely engaged in the work of the day.
- ▶ Spaces in arts organizations (museums, stage and musical rehearsal rooms, theaters, classrooms) that were completely transformed into learning/practice "Studios" vibrant with the presence of young artists. Apprentices and their learning weren't confined to a single space in their organizations though, and at every non-rehearsal session observation young people were encouraged to freely use the multiple creative environments in the buildings where they were studying.
- ▶ Positive, interactive instruction by Master Teaching Artists and a camaraderie and respect between the apprentices and the Teaching Artists, Interns and organization staff. Multiple suggestions to inspire creativity and to strengthen and polish work.
- ▶ Interactions between and availability of multiple adults (interns, partners, organization staff). Teaching Artists had support and assistance and apprentices had opportunities for individual and small group instruction.
- ▶ Technology (such as laptops with editing software, still and video cameras, projection equipment, scanners, sound recording and producing equipment, etc.) used to support the work of the young artists and being made available to everyone.
- ▶ Interconnected young people who talked and worked with each other in a variety of large and small group constellations depending on the focus of the work. Mostly during the observations, these were assigned, although sometimes they were self-selected. Consistently there were opportunities and requirements for group interactions.