

Applying an Equity Lens to Qualitative Analysis



As a starting place, use an equity glossary to develop a codebook.

These codes, or markers of specific pieces of data, will help frame your overall themes and interpretation.



Use a method of “open coding,” which allows a narrative to emerge from the data that is generated by participants themselves, as opposed to relying entirely on pre-established language to overlay and fit to the data.



Honor participant language. Different communities express constructs and concepts in different ways. Use the community’s own language when describing themes and ultimately, when reporting. Be aware of your own process of selecting supporting quotes. You may find perspectives in the data that contradict dominant cultural norms. Honor knowledge among underrepresented communities as valid.



Be aware of how you balance the focus between the “hot” and “tedious” stories. Be aware of where your attention is drawn, and to not overemphasize the dramatic. Also, avoid lifting out a stereotypical narrative of deficiency—be sure to lift out strengths and assets of stakeholder groups, while also avoiding characterizing communities at the other end of the false dichotomy: a narrative of resilience.



Use narrative to describe themes. This is a way to articulate life experiences and feelings, especially allowing intersectionality to play out without being watered down.



Collaborate to make meaning of data. Whenever possible, budget enough time into the project to allow for a collaborative interpretation of the findings to co-create meaning of them with diverse stakeholders who understand the experiences of the participants. Especially present equity-related limitations to the group, such as how research participants talked about racism.



Consider where your client is on their equity journey. Think about your client’s organizational readiness and politics behind how you are framing the issue.



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