Using QualPal in Data Jams

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Choose Anchor Examples

Anchors can be good fits or poor fits or fringe fits. Write some down.

Circle Back to the Research Themes

How does this reading connect to the research question and themes?

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Data Jams are collaborative workshops for research project teams to engage in the qualitative data analysis process. These workshops build capacity in qualitative data analysis while providing a space for teams to advance their research/evaluation project through rigorous team-based analysis.

QualPal is a deck of cards that contain concrete techniques that can help analysts when working with qualitative data.
QualPal helps analysts get un-stuck, and reflect on analytic processes. QualPal is also a group analysis facilitation tool that provides prompts and guideposts during the discussion of data.

QualPal can be used both during the planning stages of a Data Jam and during the Data Jam.
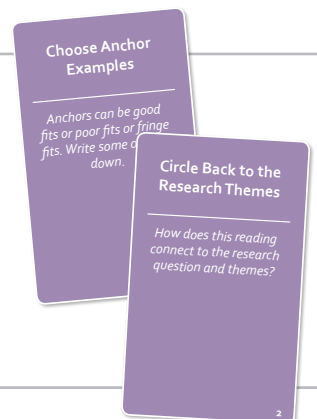
Use of QualPal during planning

Clearly defining a concrete analytic task (such as building an initial coding tree, or identifying the thematic dimensions of a specific collection of already coded data) is crucial to conduct a successful Data Jam. In working with the *data owner* (such as a principal investigator or project manager), it is important to discuss how analysts are going to concretely work with the data to tackle this task. This conversation requires an integrated discussion of the methodological approach, and concrete procedural elements.

QualPal is essentially a list of procedural elements in qualitative analysis. Many analysts are not used to speaking about their analytic process at such a granular level; the QualPal cards are a helpful tool to support *data owners* in communicating concretely what they expect analysts to do. A very simple way of using QualPal cards in this context: Ask the *data owner* to identify cards that contain analytic techniques that they expect analysts to use during the analysis at the Data Jam. Building on this list, you can then construct a workflow in QDAS that will serve as the procedural backbone of the Data Jam, and as the driver for building analysts' capacity regarding your QDAS package of choice. You can find

detailed instructions for this activity in the [QualPal Facilitator Handbook](#),"Plan: Design workflows for broader analytic tasks." You can find sample planning sheets on pages 2–3 of this publication.

Use of QualPal during the Data Jam

Warm-up

We have developed several group activities using QualPal that lend themselves to group warm-ups and as icebreakers. The playful use of the cards aids in setting up a less formal atmosphere for the Data Jam, and it orients the participants towards thinking about analysis in terms of concrete things to do. You can find detailed instructions for such activities in the [QualPal Facilitator Handbook](#). The following activities lend themselves to warm-ups for Data Jams: "Observe: QualPal "Bingo" and "Reflect: Becoming familiar with the technique cards, and sharing how you've done analysis in the past."

Setting ground rules

Data Jams are group analysis sessions. For analysis groups to successfully work together, members need to be on the same page regarding the "how" of the analysis. In fact, we developed the QualPal tool and Data Jams in response to the issue of dysfunction and

miscommunication in analysis groups. In the beginning of the Data Jam, we set analytic ground rules using the cards (such as "Read text aloud," analyze data "Sentence by Sentence," or "Take notes in full sentences"). This structures the process in terms of how data is approached by analysts, and how the process plays out in QDAS. Further, setting analytic ground rules forms an equal ground for both experienced and less experienced analysts. Specifically setting the ground rules helps prevent "steamrolling" of the analytic process by certain analysis group members, which can lead groups into rabbit holes that are not connected to the tasks and questions at hand. This being said: The use of analytic techniques changes and adapts over time, and it can be useful to ask analysis groups to evolve the set of techniques they are using throughout the Data Jam. To facilitate this, leave a deck of QualPal cards at each analysis station. Instruct the analysts to take breaks and review the deck of cards to identify additional analytic techniques they want to employ. If the technique they want to use is not part of the QualPal cards, ask them to create their own card. By using the card, the group is explicit about the concrete analytic process. This explicitness allows for critical discussion of the proposed workflow, and aids in forming consensus in the group.

continued

Sample analysis planning sheet

Overarching research/evaluation question

How is outreach education in organization X aligning
with the needs of under-served audiences in Wisconsin?

Analysis task for the Data Jam

Building an initial coding tree that helps us sort data by type of
educational activities related to under-represented audiences
in rural Wisconsin communities?

Scope for the Data Jam

All programming narratives from 2023 related to
educational outreach in the agriculture sector.

Question

What are topic areas of educational activities
with under-represented audiences?

Notes

Techniques used (from QualPal)	How will we use the techniques?	What digital or non-digital tools will we use?	Products needed to do this	Products we will make doing this
• Read aloud • Stop at every sentence • Document hunches as hunches • Write in full sentences • Circle back to the research question	• We will read each narrative, sentence by sentence. • While we read, we want to flag topic areas of the education that is described. • Later on, we also want to summarize any specific educational outcomes related to these topics. However, in our first session we will stay focused on the identifying topic areas. We can then later sift through the data topic-area-by-topic-area to identify outcomes (which may be linked to specific topics, or across topics).	• We will read the data in MAXQDA, and we will apply the code "topic" to highlight content that describes the topics of the educational offerings. • We will then use code comments to briefly summarize the topic. We will use full sentences. • After 2–3 hours, we will then review all of our summaries, and develop a set of topic areas based on the summaries, and revisiting the original data. • After that, we will write tentative definitions of the topics, and create a code for each major topic. We can then code more data with these codes to test and refine the emerging coding scheme.	• Transcribed data, imported into MAXQDA.	• An annotated list of all educational topics mentioned in the data. • A set of tentative codes (one for each recurring topic) that include definitions, that can be further refined by coding more data.

Sample analysis planning sheet

Overarching research/evaluation question

What are current needs and existing resource networks of immigrant populations related to financial resources and nutrition resources.

Analysis task for the Data Jam

Building out an initial set of possible themes related to the key topic areas of our focus group discussions with immigrants.

Scope for the Data Jam

All interview data that is coded with "financial resources" or "nutrition resources."

Questions

Data Jam group 1: What are current needs and existing resource networks related to financial resources?

Data Jam group 2: What are current needs and existing resource networks related to nutrition resources?

Notes

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Techniques used	How will I use the techniques?	What digital or non-digital tools will I use?	Products needed to do this	Products I will make doing this
• Read aloud • Stop at every sentence • Contribute to the code definition • Write in full sentences • Circle back to the research question • Choose anchor examples	• We will read each set of previously coded data, sentence by sentence. • While we read, we want to flag areas of need and existing resources; we will use full sentences to describe or paraphrase the needs and resources. • We will review the needs and resources, and begin fleshing out broader areas of needs and resource networks. We will do that by describing the broader areas in full sentences. This will include anchor examples, and reflections on how the different areas differ from each other.	• We will use MAXQDA to retrieve the already coded segments. • We will use code comments or paraphrases to flag areas of need and existing resources. We will use those code comments or paraphrases as spaces for our descriptions. • We will then create lists of our paraphrases/comments to identify recurring or broader areas of need and resource networks.	• Transcribed data • Pre-coded segments based on topic area	• Lists of areas of needs, and resource networks; each item on the list is clearly defined and described. • We plan to transform each item on the list into a code, and code subsequent interviews directly with these codes.

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