

OBSERVATIONS: DATA HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

RIPL Data Bootcamp: Follow-Up Lesson
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WEBINAR: TOPICS

- Observations as a data collection method
- Guidelines for conducting observations
- Examples of using observations in libraries

WEBINAR: KEY POINTS

- Used to capture activities, events, behavior, interactions, and physical setting
- Gather data through our first-hand experience by systematically documenting what we see and hear
- Do not help us understand who people are
- Do not help us understand what people think or feel or why they do what they do
- Observations are messy!

WEBINAR: KEY POINTS

- Focus the observation by identifying the most important information to gather
- Use an observation guide to provide structure and direct your attention
- Use multiple observers to capture more detailed information and multiple perspectives—and as a double check
- Capture concrete, specific details of what you see and hear

OBSERVATION CHALLENGE



THIS FOLLOW UP LESSON

- Takeaways from the observation challenge (or other observations you've conducted)
- Managing the logistics of observations
- Analyzing observation data

TAKEAWAYS FROM OBSERVATION CHALLENGE

FOCUSING YOUR ATTENTION

- Things move fast! And many things happen at the same time.
- Slowing down helps (surprisingly!):
 - Take a few minutes to get a feel for the activity
 - Bring your attention fully to the here and now

FOCUSING YOUR ATTENTION

- Experiment with “zooming in” and “zooming out”



FOCUSING YOUR ATTENTION

- Experiment with “zooming in” and “zooming out”
 - Narrower focus: More detail
 - Wider focus: More people or activities
- When you get lost in the action or overwhelmed, return to your observation guide and start again

RECORDING DATA

1. Capture as much data as you can during the observation
 - Let what you see and hear “flow through” you
 - Capture moment-by-moment account—vivid details, not interpretations
 - Use shortcuts
 - Use tally marks to count
 - Record actual times (rather than measuring length of time)
 - Write phrases (rather than sentences), use abbreviations
 - Note clothing if you need to distinguish among people

RECORDING DATA

2. Flesh out your data immediately after the observation
 - Fill in detail
 - Turn phrases into complete sentences, write out abbreviations
 - Add more concrete details about what you saw and heard
 - Set aside time for this in advance (ideally, 1-2x the length of the observation)
 - Do this before you talk to anyone about the observation or do other tasks
 - Consider recording an audio memo if you are short on time

RECORDING DATA

3. Fill in numbers
 - Count tally marks
 - Calculate lengths of time
4. Complete rating scales and checklists
 - Review the descriptive details you captured
 - Interpret those data to determine your rating or presence/absence for checklists

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Try 15-minute daily life observations (this will be easier post-pandemic!)



DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Try 15-minute daily life observations (this will be easier post-pandemic!)
 - On public transit
 - At a coffee shop or restaurant
 - In a public park or shopping mall
 - At a child's sporting event

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

- Pair up with a friend or colleague
 - Observe the same activity or place
 - Use the observation challenge video (or another video)
 - Sit together in a public place
- Trade notes and compare

CHOOSING OBSERVERS

- All observers should:
 - Capture concrete details of what they see and hear
 - Avoid interpretation

CHOOSING OBSERVERS

- Outsiders
 - May have "fresh eyes"
 - May have less vested interest in the results
 - May lack context and background knowledge

CHOOSING OBSERVERS

- Insiders
 - May have a better understanding of what to look for
 - May be better able to interpret the data
 - May be more likely to "see" data that align with their vested interests

MANAGING LOGISTICS OF OBSERVATIONS

ALISON: CHOOSING AND TRAINING OBSERVERS

- Who is going to do your observing?
 - Are the staff going to be comfortable observing?
 - Will the staff have time in their schedule for training? Can you train in person?

KATIE: CHOOSING AND TRAINING OBSERVERS

- Who?
 - We worked with library staff familiar with the group
- Training
 - We practiced with a short clip from Better Off Dead
 - I did a pilot observation with staff, revised our tool
 - We addressed issues as we did the project

KATIE: SCHEDULING AND OTHER LOGISTICS

- When?
 - We observed the same participant more than once
 - Preferably with a different observer
- How?
 - Observing and interpreting didn't work great
 - Learned our lesson the second time around

ALISON: SCHEDULING AND OTHER LOGISTICS

- When are you going to observe?
 - Are there any challenges with doing multiple locations at the same time?
 - What if the people you've trained to observe aren't scheduled that day?
- How will the observer record their data?
 - Paper? Tablet? How much data will each observer record?

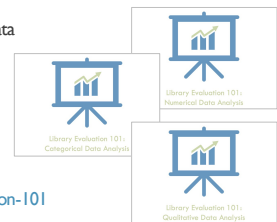
ANALYZING OBSERVATION DATA

ANALYZING OBSERVATION DATA

- Observations can yield 3 types of data
 - Numeric data
 - Categorical data
 - Qualitative data

- Videos on analyzing each type of data:

www.libraryeval.org/library-evaluation-101



ANALYZING NUMERICAL DATA

- **Numerical data** from observations include:
 - Counts of people, activities, or behavior
 - Length of time
- Examine **how spread out** the data are
 - Range (largest value minus smallest value)
- Find the **center point** of the dataset
 - Mean (or average)
 - Median (or middle value)

ANALYZING CATEGORICAL DATA

- **Categorical data** from observations include:
 - Rating scale data
 - Checklist data
- Examine **how often** each rating or checklist item was selected
 - Frequencies
- **Compare** subgroups
 - Crosstabs

ANALYZING QUALITATIVE DATA

- **Qualitative data** are captured in the form of words and include:
 - Descriptions of what you see and hear
- Identify **themes, patterns**, similarities, and differences
 - Read and highlight key sections of text
 - Code the highlighted sections (add labels to summarize)
 - Compare coded sections and/or count codes

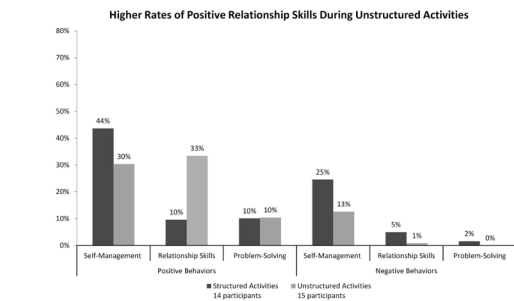
KATIE: ANALYZING QUALITATIVE DATA

- Coding the data was really hard in both cases.
- Worth the effort, but took a lot of time.
- We observed one of the younger children stacking chairs and we could never decide if that behavior meant anything or not.
- There is so much room for interpretation!
- Having long conversations about if eye contact is a part of communication is not for everyone.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Self-Management	Impulse control/ Self-discipline	Dis-engagement	Playing together - off task	Negative	
			Distraction	Negative	
			Interrupting	Neutral	
			Ran out of time	Negative	
			Passivity (just there, not engaged or distracted)	Negative	
			Not responsive to directions	Negative	
		Engagement (listening, responsive, on-task, follows directions)	Listening	Positive	
			On-task	Positive	
			Task Completion	Positive	
			Observing (peers or teachers)	Positive	
Self-motivation	Initiative/creativity	Responsive to directions	Positive		
		Taking responsibility for self	Positive		
		Not taking responsibility for self	Negative		

Average Percentages for All Types of Observed Behavior									
	Self-Management		Relationship Skills		Problem-Solving		Total*		
Activities	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Button Tree 4 participants	46%	38%	3%	5%	0%	5%	49%	48%	3%
Leaf Imprints 4 participants	70%	1%	17%	4%	6%	0%	93%	5%	2%
Slime 3 participants	59%	7%	22%	3%	3%	0%	84%	9%	6%
Paper Circuit 8 participants	30%	36%	10%	4%	16%	1%	56%	41%	3%
Solar Jitterbug 8 participants	29%	28%	4%	11%	14%	3%	47%	42%	12%

*Due to rounding some activities in this table do not total to 100%

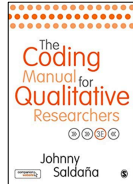
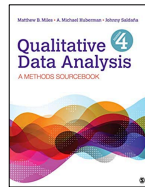
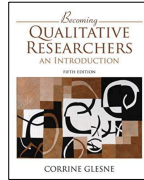
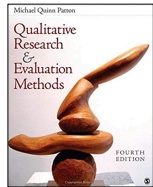


ALISON: TRIANGULATING DATA

- What if you don't know for sure what the data is telling you?
- Can you pull in some other data sources and triangulate your findings?
- Observation can be a useful component of triangulating your data

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA	BB	BC	BD	BE	BF	BG	BH	BI	BJ	BK	BL	BM	BN	BO	BP	BQ	BR	BS	BT	BU	BV	BW	BX	BY	BZ	CA	CB	CC	CD	CE	CF	CG	CH	CI	CJ	CK	CL	CM	CN	CO	CP	CQ	CR	CS	CT	CU	CV	CW	CX	CY	CZ	DA	DB	DC	DD	DE	DF	DG	DH	DI	DJ	DK	DL	DM	DN	DO	DP	DQ	DR	DS	DT	DU	DV	DW	DX	DY	DZ	EA	EB	EC	ED	EE	EF	EG	EH	EI	EJ	EK	EL	EM	EN	EO	EP	EQ	ER	ES	ET	EU	EV	EW	EX	EY	EZ	FA	FB	FC	FD	FE	FF	FG	FH	FI	FJ	FK	FL	FM	FN	FO	FP	FQ	FR	FS	FT	FU	FV	FW	FX	FY	FZ	GA	GB	GC	GD	GE	GF	GG	GH	GI	GJ	GK	GL	GM	GN	GO	GP	GQ	GR	GS	GT	GU	GV	GW	GX	GY	GZ	HA	HB	HC	HD	HE	HF	HG	HH	HI	HJ	HK	HL	HM	HN	HO	HP	HQ	HR	HS	HT	HU	HV	HW	HX	HY	HZ	IA	IB	IC	ID	IE	IF	IG	IH	II	IJ	IK	IL	IM	IN	IO	IP	IQ	IR	IS	IT	IU	IV	IW	IX	IY	IZ	JA	JB	JC	JD	JE	JF	JG	JH	JI	IJ	JK	KL	KM	KN	KO	KP	KQ	KR	KS	KT	KU	KV	KW	KX	KY	KZ	LA	LB	LC	LD	LE	LF	LG	LH	LI	LJ	LK	LL	LM	LN	LO	LP	LQ	LR	LS	LT	LU	LV	LW	LX	LY	LZ	MA	MB	MC	MD	ME	MF	MG	MH	MI	MJ	MK	ML	MM	MN	MO	MP	MQ	MR	MS	MT	MU	MV	MW	MX	MY	MZ	NA	NB	NC	ND	NE	NF	NG	NH	NI	NJ	NK	NL	NM	NN	NO	NP	NQ	NR	NS	NT	NU	NV	NW	NX	NY	NZ	OA	OB	OC	OD	OE	OF	OG	OH	OI	OJ	OK	OL	OM	ON	OO	OP	OQ	OR	OS	OT	OU	OV	OW	OX	OY	OZ	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK	PL	PM	PN	PO	PP	PQ	PR	PS	PT	PU	PV	PW	PX	PY	PZ	QA	QB	QC	QD	QE	QF	QG	QH	QI	QJ	QK	QL	QM	QN	QO	QP	QQ	QR	QS	QT	QU	QV	QW	QX	QY	QZ	RA	RB	RC	RD	RE	RF	RG	RH	RI	RJ	RK	RL	RM	RN	RO	RP	RQ	RR	RS	RT	RU	RV	RW	RX	RY	RZ	SA	SB	SC	SD	SE	SF	SG	SH	SI	SJ	SK	SL	SM	SN	SO	SP	SQ	SR	SS	ST	SU	SV	SW	SX	SY	SZ	TA	TB	TC	TD	TE	TF	TG	TH	TI	TJ	TK	TL	TM	TN	TO	TP	TQ	TR	TS	TT	TU	TV	TW	TX	TY	TZ	UA	UB	UC	UD	UE	UF	UG	UH	UI	UJ	UK	UL	UM	UN	UO	UP	UQ	UR	US	UT	UU	UV	UW	UX	UY	UZ	VA	VB	VC	VD	VE	VF	VG	VH	VI	VJ	VK	VL	VM	VN	VO	VP	VQ	VR	VS	VT	VU	VV	VW	VX	VY	VZ	WA	WB	WC	WD	WE	WF	WG	WH	WI	WJ	WK	WL	WM	WN	WO	WP	WQ	WR	WS	WT	WU	WV	WW	WX	WY	WZ	XA	XB	XC	XD	XE	XF	YG	YH	YI	YJ	YK	YL	YM	YN	YO	YP	YQ	YR	YS	YT	YU	YV	YW	YX	YY	YZ	ZA	ZB	ZC	ZD	ZE	ZF	ZG	ZH	ZI	ZJ	ZK	ZL	ZM	ZN	ZO	ZP	ZQ	ZR	ZS	ZT	ZU	ZV	ZW	ZX	ZY	ZZ																																																																																																						
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RESOURCES: BOOKS



IMAGES LICENSED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS

Morning Circle at Preschool, still image from video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZYt-b87C_lw&t=908s

Here and Now by TheeErin

Soccer Army Youth Sports and Fitness by USAG Humphries Snapshot day at Darien Library by Darien Library

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