

# Content Analysis as Audit Tool for Evaluating Racial Equity in the Food System

Presented by Andy Smolski, Ph.D. and Rebecca Shisler, M.A.



Andrew Smolski, Abbey Piner, Angel Cruz, Rebecca Shisler,  
and Emma Brinkmeyer

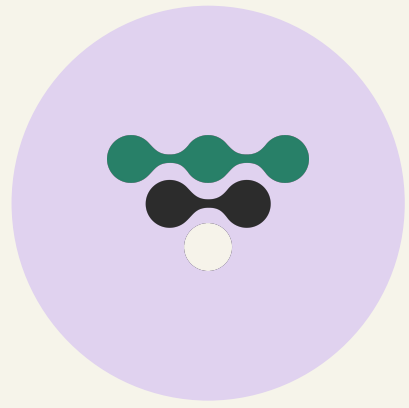


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# Some basics

- This workshop was created with a multi-disciplinary group, with folks with backgrounds in agroecology, policy, sociology, and design.
- We recognize racism as a systemic issue. To get closer to racial equity, we need tools to help us reflect on the possible outcomes beyond our individual intent.



# Background on Workshops

- In Summer 2022, our team prepared and piloted “Racial Equity in the Food System” workshops.
- Over three sessions, we engaged with students studying agriculture and the food system.
- The three sessions focused on:
  - i. Systemic Racism in the Food System
  - ii. Simulating Intervention Types
  - iii. Auditing for Racial Equity

# Purpose

Across the three workshops, we sought to help participants...

1. Conceptualize structural racism and how it persists across different levels of the social system
1. Frame intervention strategies for the food system and consider how they may benefit or harm equity outcomes
1. **Develop tools to audit current programming to support beneficial racial equity outcomes**

# The Audit Tool

## Content Analysis

1. Get a dataset of three de-identified proposals
1. Read entire set of documents, take notes and memos; memoing is about documenting trends and ideas
1. Code documents using provided codebook
1. Code in a group to bolster understanding of the data and develop consensus
1. Develop themes from codes; consider charity, innovative, and transitional frameworks
1. Based on the exercise, identify if proposals align with a model of charity, transition, or innovation.

# What is Content Analysis?



Systematically analyzing collected **qualitative data**.

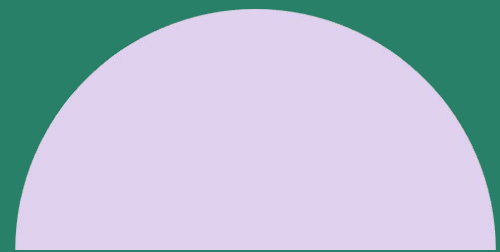
Looking for patterns, exceptions to patterns.

Assigning codes, making meanings.

Reach greater understanding of material.

# Qualitative Data

## What is it?

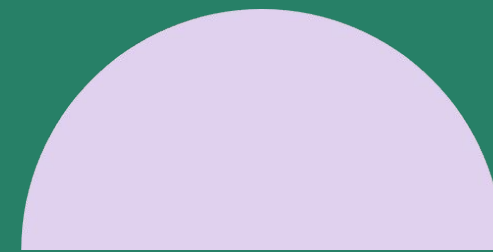


Sometimes  
*collected* by the  
researcher

i.e. interviews,  
fieldnotes

Sometimes  
*organized* by the  
researcher

i.e. newspaper  
clippings, grant  
proposals



Systemically  
managed and  
analyzed to  
search for  
patterns

Best used to get  
at emotions,  
meanings,  
motivations.

Goes beyond  
numerical data



# What is Content Analysis?



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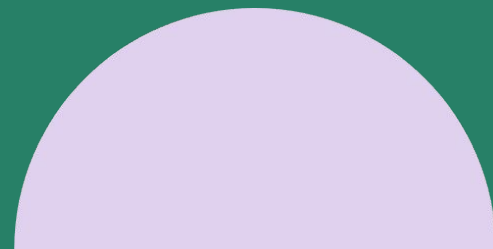
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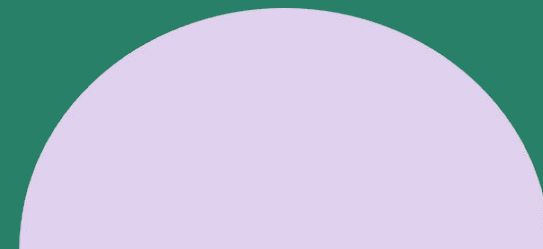


# What is a code?



Short representation of an idea found in the body of text. Mutually exclusive of other ideas.

Codes are organized into a codebook.

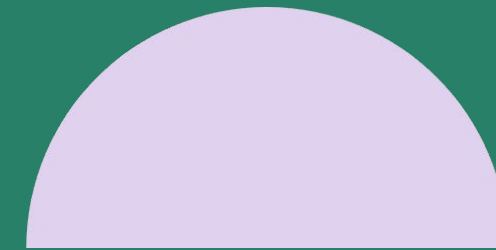


Can be *specific* or *thematic*. This will help collect similar ideas later.

Example:

Specific= gender, community group, faith-based

Thematic= “food as human right” or “comparing farming to parenting”

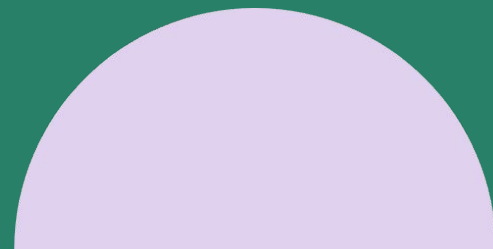


Codes can overlap! This is called cross-coding.

Example: “Pilgrim Church runs a hot lunch program every other week”

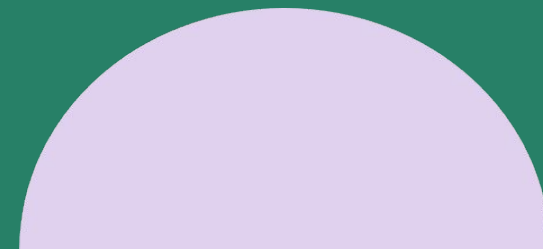
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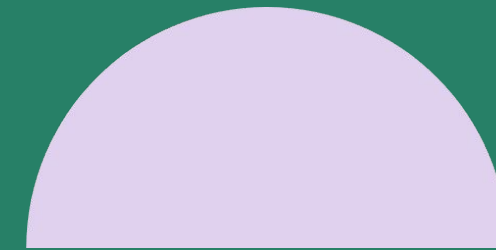


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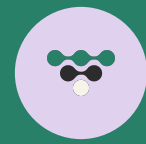


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# What is a codebook?



Defined set of codes and instructions of how to use them.  
Having guidelines provides a systemic tool to reduce bias.  
Coding inherently requires subjective judgement, codebooks help.  
Especially important for groups!



# Codebook Examples

## Who (Funder, Doer, Receiver)

- Race
  - *PWI and BIPOC*
- Funder
- Grantee
- Target Community
- Doer

These primary, secondary, and tertiary coding relationships are meant to help participants consider a racial equity lens when considering “who” is doing food interventions.

This also helps participants pinpoint the parts of the proposal that indicate funders, grantees, communities, and those who will implement the interventions.

## How (Grant Process)

- Reporting
- Funding flow
- Decision-making
- Stage of process

These primary and secondary codes will help participants clearly define the grant and bureaucratic processes of a proposed food system intervention.

## Programming

- Proactive
- Reactive
- Short-term
- Long-term

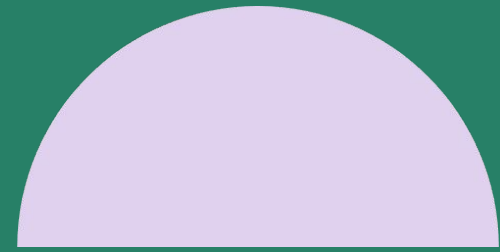
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## Level of Intervention

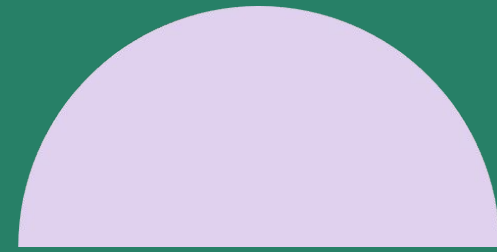
- Structural
- Institutional
- Cultural
- Personal

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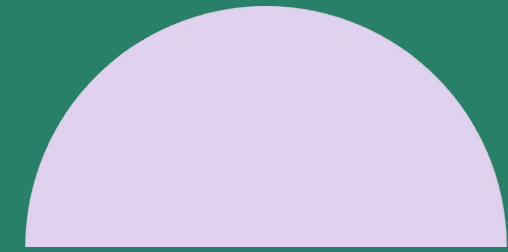
# Qualitative Coding



Focus on the construction of meaning within a body of text.



Analyze data (the text) systematically.  
Look for patterns



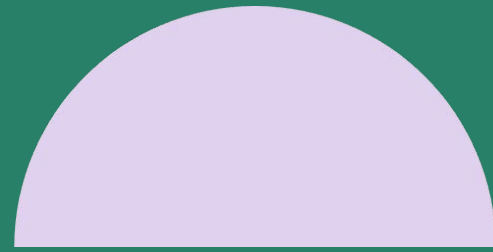
Look for patterns, but also anything unusual (an exception to the rule)

# The Audit Tool

## Content Analysis

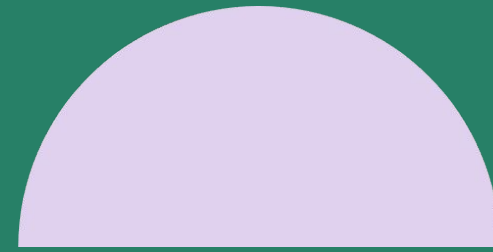
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# Three Models



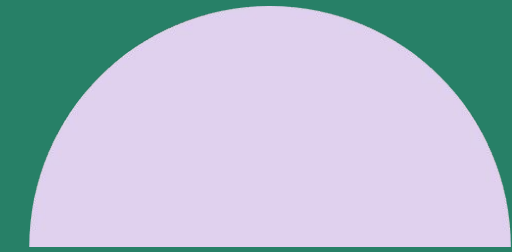
## Charitable

Food insecurity as acute emergency  
Direct provisioning via organizations  
Reactive and short-term  
Often predominantly white institutions  
Bureaucratic



## Innovative

Food insecurity as result of persistent systemic inequality  
Long-term solutions via capacity-building  
Intersectional, resilient, and sustainable  
Justice and empowerment focus



## Transitional

Hybrid frame between charitable and innovative  
Demonstrates aspects of both frames  
Intentional movement toward innovation

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# What model (or frame) should we choose?

Who holds the power to decide...?

- who gets to participate
- what the criteria are to participate
- when an activity or space is open
- how the space or setting is created
- who gets to lead
- what is required to receive aid

Who holds the funding?

What is the relationship between those giving and receiving aid?

- consider racial disparities

# Time to Audit

With the codebook, analyze...

- Your own proposals
- The example proposals

Andy and Rebecca will be floating to provide guidance.