Coding for Ethnodramas, Oral Histories, and Other Performances: Find What Matters and Cut the Rest

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Coding for Ethnodramas, Oral Histories, and Other Performances: Find What Matters and Cut the Rest

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Data Quality in Performative Interviews

- What they say (Weiss, 1995)
- How they say it (Grele & Terkel, 1985)
- How interpreter(s) see and understand the data (Eisner, 1995; Kazubowski-Houston, 2010; Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008, Saldaña, 2012, Siegesmund, 2014)
What they say and how they say it

• Multiple interviews to hear the felt truth
• Multiple interviews to surface words that evoke what mattered
• Multiple interviews to find communicative versions of those memories
• More is more
• More is more work for everyone
Understanding takes time

- Hearing the data
- Transcribing the data
- Coding the data
- Seeing the data
- Working the data
- Dancing the data
- Expanding the data
- Abducted by the data
- Lost in the data

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Many qualitative researchers have gone into the field and never returned
Inquiry Theatre Methods

- Spend enormous amounts of time transcribing, responding, coding
- Feel the life
- Sense how the data might perform
- Start at the beginning and move through the end
- Find what matters
- Cut the rest
- Repeat—see Saldaña (2011)
- Repeat—see Saldaña (2011)
- Cut words and sentences to reveal the poetry of the speech act
- Repeat—see Saldaña (2011)
- Repeat—see Saldaña (2011)
- Continue to cut with an awareness of the final form
- Create a frame around these data for audience inquiry and discussion
  - Questions matter more than answers
  - Puzzles reveal more than maps
  - Life is more interesting than theory

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Demonstration

• Brief excerpts from Vanover (2014): *What Does it Mean to Work in a System that Fails You and Your Kids?*

• Performer Tiffany Octavia Harris, University of Illinois
References


Vanover, C. (2014). What does it mean to work in a system that fails you and your kids: Performance for the 28th Annual University of Michigan Martin Luther King Day Celebration [http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/video/newest/3053316112001/](http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/video/newest/3053316112001/)


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