

The 'Sticky Notes' Method: Adapting Interpretive Description Methodology for Team-based Qualitative Analysis in Community-Based Participatory Research

Heather Burgess¹, Kate Jongbloed², Sean Grieve¹, Sharyle Lyndon¹, Tim Wesseling¹, Kate Salters^{1,3}, Robert S. Hogg^{1,3}, Surita Parashar^{1,3}, Margo E. Pearce⁴

1. BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, Vancouver, BC; 2. University of British Columbia School of Population and Public Health, Vancouver BC; 3. Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC; 4. BC Centre for Disease Control, Vancouver, BC

Background

- **Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)** has a long history in HIV research, yet relatively little work has focused on facilitating collaborative analyses in CBPR teams
- Thorne's qualitative methodology, **Interpretive Description (ID)**, identifies patterns within, and relationships between, phenomena to create practical knowledge for applied use¹
- **We adapted Thorne's ID for use in a team-based, participatory analysis** with Peer Research Assistants (PRAs), using a colour-coded system of sticky notes to facilitate analysis

Analytic Objective: What elements of permanent supportive housing influence (e.g., help or exacerbate) depressive symptoms? (see Figure 1)

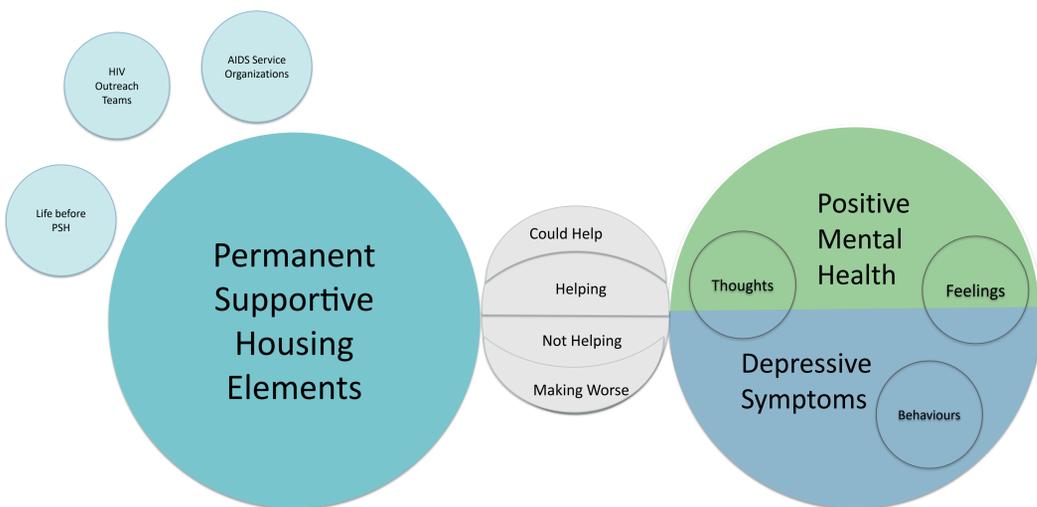


Figure 1. Visual depiction of the analytic objective

Methods

Training

- A CBPR facilitator trained three PRAs and two student research assistants in qualitative research fundamentals
- A Post-doctoral Fellow & Research Coordinator (the facilitators) adapted the Fellow's process for conducting ID using sticky notes for team-based CBPR analysis
- The facilitators introduced ID as it applied to the research question & the team did practice examples together
- **The process evolved to become much more interactive and synergistic** (Table 1)
- Academic researchers introduced the **colour-coded system of sticky notes** (Figure 2), which guided the forms in which data could be extracted
- PRAs added the categories *Feelings* and *Connections*, and the *Personal Experience* category was introduced to **substitute journaling** & facilitate scaffolding of personal experience



Figure 2. Colour-coded system of sticky notes

Data Fragmentation

- Data fragmentation sessions began by reviewing the analytic objective and previous session
- PRAs read through one transcript, then wrote pieces of data onto sticky notes
- PRAs discussed interpretations of the data to validate their understanding, applying their lived experiences to interpret participants' words
- As PRAs became more confident in conducting analyses, discussion was no longer needed for every excerpt

1. Thorne S. Interpretive description. 1st ed. New York: Routledge; 2016.

Acknowledgments: Many thanks to the participants who have made this work possible, the participating housing provider's executives, board members, and staff for their continued engagement, co-investigators and community-advisory board members for their input and guidance, and former research staff for conducting data collection

	Data fragmentation introduced in training	Data fragmentation evolved in training & used during practice	Data fragmentation evolved and used in final practice session
Step 1	PRAs individually read one transcript	PRAs individually read one transcript	PRAs individually read one transcript, marking up text
Step 2	PRAs extracted data by writing concepts, phrases, etc. onto sticky notes	We discussed as a team what we saw in the transcripts	PRAs independently extracted data by writing concepts, phrases, etc. onto sticky notes
Step 3	PRAs read transcript again, trying to see something new	During discussion, PRAs wrote on sticky notes independently, & for and with others	Discuss sections of transcript that are very rich or challenging to interpret
Step 4	-	-	During discussion, PRAs wrote on sticky notes independently, & for and with others

Table 1. Evolution of the stepwise data fragmentation process, conducted by PRAs

Data Synthesis

- Data synthesis was comprised of sorting and resorting sticky notes into clusters
- Facilitator arranged clusters into an initial mind-maps comprised of categories & subcategories
- The team spent three sessions re-arranging the 969 sticky notes into four final mind-maps
- During the first session, we identified a step-wise process to follow (Figure 3)
- The categories, and their relationships to each other, were defined over two sessions
- The team created a statement incorporating all categories in a mind map to **create themes**
- Full transcripts were then coded using categories and themes as "codes"



Figure 3. The stepwise process of data synthesis



Figure 4. The emerging mind-map of theme "Taking Control" (left) and the initial mind-map (right)

Conclusions

- **PRAs and academic researchers co-developed a participatory process for conducting ID**
- **Discussion** was essential to capacity building and maintaining momentum throughout analysis, and was used to challenge our assumptions and validate findings
- **Flexibility** was necessary to allow PRAs to adapt and individualize the process
- Experienced PRAs who valued their differences as much as their similarities cultivated a **supportive environment**, which was key to interpreting data through lived experience



BRITISH COLUMBIA
CENTRE for EXCELLENCE
in HIV/AIDS

