Framework analysis methodology (Interviews)

I. Before conducting interviews

1. Set up the framework matrix. See examples. For interviews, this will normally have cases (i.e. individual interviews) as rows and themes as columns. You might want to populate themes that are likely to come up based on your research questions, research hypotheses, relevant literature, and/ or a previously conducted survey.

   You will want to leave space to add new themes that come up during the research or be open to changing, merging, or subdividing existing themes as you conduct more interviews.

2. The project team should decide how they will code interviews. Coding refers to the act of identifying themes within qualitative sources such as interviews.

   Coding can be done inductively (without predetermined themes) by reviewing transcripts and/or notes after all or some interviews are conducted and noting which ideas and topics come up most often, then reviewing the material for the identified themes or codes thoroughly.

   Or, coding can be done deductively (with predetermined categories, to test a hypothesis). In applied research, it is typically most efficient to code deductively, although it is important to leave time for reflection to see if any non-predetermined themes are coming up. Even with deductive coding, it is important for the team to develop a shared idea of how they will identify themes in interview texts, both what they mean and how they will be coded within the document – e.g. will you use the comment function in Word to tag section with themes or just highlight sections of texts (how long of sections? Use colour codes for different themes?)

3. The project team should decide how interview notes and/or transcripts will be named & saved. In a larger or long-term project it is important to maintain naming convention so specific transcripts or notes can be found easily. YEAR/MONTH/DAY_RespondentID is a good method so that interviews can be sorted by date.

II. **Interviews:** Take detailed notes in a pre-prepared template during the interview, recording a transcript for reference/backup. It is rarely efficient to code transcripts in applied research, so it is better to plan to take in-depth notes that can be used as the basis for analysis rather than relying on the transcript.

III. Post-interview:

1. Tidy up/complete interview notes.
2. Summarise 3 key themes and/or insights at the very top of the note template document.
3. Conduct an early team coding check:
   a. Code an interview someone else in the team has conducted and coded. Meet to discuss any similarities and differences in how you are applying the coding. The goal is to code consistently across all individuals in a team.
   b. Team agrees how they will transfer coding into the framework matrix.

    c. It is a good idea to have regular team check-ins about how interviewing and coding is going.
4. **After each batch of 2-3 interviews**:
    a. Code interview notes.
    b. Fill out the framework matrix with content and quotes from each case (return to transcript only if needed, e.g. for full quotes).

5. **After completing all interviews:**
    a. Review the interviews you conducted and code any additional themes that emerge (themes that were not pre-defined in the framework), add them to the framework matrix.
    b. Review a sample of other researchers' interview notes + coding. This is a quality control step.
6. As a team (or have a nominated lead) update the framework matrix, merging and adding, modifying, or deleting themes as needed.
7. Use the framework matrix as a tool to structure and write up your analysis of the findings. The full framework matrix is like a raw data analysis file – it can be added as an appendix to a report if desired by the client but not always included as an output.

Things to keep in mind when using a framework matrix approach:

- Consider the balance between summarising themes in the matrix framework grid and retaining enough detail for richness/capturing individual perspectives.
- **A quote on the pitfalls of framework analysis:** "The systematic approach and matrix format, as we noted in the background, is intuitively appealing to those trained quantitatively but the 'spreadsheet' look perhaps further increases the temptation for those without an in-depth understanding of qualitative research to attempt to quantify qualitative data (e.g. "13 out of 20 participants said X). This kind of statement is clearly meaningless because the sampling in qualitative research is not designed to be representative of a wider population, but purposive to capture diversity around a phenomenon." From: https://bmcmedresmethodol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2288-13-117