Qualitative Analysis Activity

The two interview questions below align with the AMMP! evaluation question "What barriers exist that prevent students from completing homework?" developed in module 2 of the toolkit. Read through the responses to each question from the interview transcripts. Then, follow the steps in the thematic coding process to identify common themes from the responses.

Qualitative Data

Interview question for students: "What are some things that might keep you from completing homework?"

Student 1: "Right now, I run cross country for school, and then after practice mom takes me to piano lessons. After all of that is done, I am hungry so I go home and mom makes dinner and we eat. Then I'm tired and want to go to bed. I just have so much going on, and at the end of the day I just don't feel like I have the time or energy to do my homework. I try to finish it in the morning when I get to school, but I usually don't have time to finish it all."

Student 2: "My homework is too hard for me to do on my own at home. My mom and dad usually aren't home to help me do it, and I don't want to ask my grandma to help. I usually just don't do it. I think homework won't help me anyway. I don't think it will help me later anyway, so what is the point of doing it now? I'd rather be hanging out with my friends anyway."

Student 3: "It's not hard for me to do homework, but I usually don't see the point. I'm a good test-taker, and I like the projects that I get to do in class. The homework isn't a large part of my grade, so I usually just decide to not do it and focus on doing well on the in-class assignments instead. I always get As and Bs anyway. After school I like to ride my bike with my friends in my neighborhood. I don't think they spend time on homework either."

Student 4: "I have a lot of siblings at home, and it gets really loud. My parents are often not around to keep my brothers and sisters under control, so I usually have to do that and I'm only 12. I always feel like I don't have a quiet place to do my homework. Sometimes I try to do it in the morning when I get to school, but it is also loud there so it can be hard at school too."

Interview question for teachers: "What do you think are barriers that prevent students from completing homework?"

Teacher 1: "I believe there are many barriers that likely exist, mostly relating to time. Many kids are involved with after school activities such as music lessons, band, sports, and so much more. I'm sure they find it hard to find time to do lengthy homework assignments because of the time they have at home. I know that I see students frantically completing homework in class all throughout the day. Some students might also have difficulties with the content and find it hard

to find support to complete their homework, either through someone at home or through an outside tutor."

Teacher 2: "I think many students, at least in my class, don't have an issue with homework. Since this is an advanced math class, many of my students breeze through homework. Some choose to not do it because it is not a large portion of their grade. I still see the value in doing homework to reinforce lessons, but maybe they don't see that value. These students still do well in class but get zeros on their homework assignments."

Teacher 3: "I often hear that some students are unsupervised after school. Because parents aren't available to supervise their kids due to reasons like needing to take on extra jobs, these kids are spending time doing whatever they want, which does not involve homework. Some of these kids even have to take on the responsibility of taking care of their siblings in the absence of their parents, so they don't have time."

Teacher 4: "I think the largest barrier is not having the support at home to do the homework. Sometimes it might be related to the time that students have, but I think the largest is the issue of support. Parents aren't home or they don't have the knowledge to help the students complete the homework. Students don't know how to do the homework. Because of this, they decide to not do it."

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic Coding Process

The tables below include a seven-step process you might follow when analyzing interview transcripts to identify themes to address evaluation questions. The first table provides an example of how you might code the transcript excerpts above. The second table is blank so that you can replicate this process for coding different themes that you notice in the data.

Step	Description	Examples Related to AMMP! Interviews
1. Identify an evaluation question	First, identify an evaluation question you would like to address using the interview transcript. In this case, the question is "What barriers exist that prevent students from completing homework?"	Identify which questions from your interview protocol can be used to answer your evaluation question. In this example, there are two questions: For students: "Is it ever difficult for you to complete homework? If so, what are some things that keep you from completing homework?" For teachers: "What do you think are barriers that prevent students from completing homework?"
2. Scan and annotate transcripts	The goal of reading through data in qualitative analysis is to prepare the ground for analysis. Annotating opens up the data and prepares for a more systematic and thorough analysis. You can annotate by hand or with software. You can also use sticky notes if you do not want to mark up the document.	Brief excerpts from the transcripts provide useful examples of key themes. In this excerpt, you might use two quotes to illuminate the answers to the evaluation question: **Student 1:** "I just have so much going on, and at the end of the day I just don't feel like I have the time or energy to do my homework." **Teacher 1:** "I'm sure they find it hard to find time to do lengthy homework assignments because of the time they have at home. I know that I see students frantically completing homework in class all throughout the day."
3. Identify themes	Qualitative analysis involves categorizing data so that you can organize and report results. Typically, you develop a set of themes, where each includes criteria for categorizing related statements, words, phrases, and other content from transcripts. Such a set of categories allows you to organize the data according to a variety of characteristics. You may predetermine themes based on your research questions or you may let themes emerge from your review of the transcript (open coding).	Using the examples above, you might categorize each annotation based on the categories identified. Lack of time: - "I just don't feel like I have the time or energy to do my homework." - "I'm sure they find it hard to find time to do lengthy homework assignments because of the time they have at home."

Step	Description	Examples Related to AMMP! Interviews
4. Assign themes	Once you have a set of codes, you will review the transcript and attempt to assign a theme to most of the quotes. If you can't relate an utterance to any of your themes, you may have to add more themes.	As you review the rest of the transcript, look for more examples of "lack of time". As you add more themes, it will be useful to organize quotes under each theme.
5. Add context	Once the transcript is coded and themes have been assigned, you will want to make connections and add any context that is important to understand the meaning.	For the teacher quotes assigned the theme "lack of time" above, you may want to add anything you know about the school that will help interpret this. For example, you may know that three-quarters of students at the school have responsibility for younger siblings afterschool.
6. Check assumptions	It is important to consider your biases as you apply themes. Try to avoid applying preconceived opinions while coding. If you are concerned, you can have another individual check your coding to establish agreement.	For example, a data analyst who helped to design AMMP! may inadvertently focus on and highlight responses that paint the program in a favorable light. Be aware of the lens through which you view data and be careful to accurately characterize the full range of responses when summarizing qualitative data.
7. Produce an account	Producing an account is not simply a report of results but a process of making connections and clarifying the meaning of your coding. The account ultimately must be an accurate and accessible summary of findings.	Use notes and categories to create summary statements that use evidence to make substantive conclusions. For instance, you might note the frequency with which certain themes are expressed as well as include illustrative comments that help to strengthen the conclusion by highlighting particularly relevant comments.

Now you can repeat this process on your own by coding themes for the same evaluation questions. Look for themes in addition to "lack of time."

Step	Workspace
1. Identify an evaluation question	For students: "What are some things that might keep you from completing homework?" For teachers: "What do you think are barriers that prevent students from completing homework?"
2. Scan and annotate transcripts	
3. Find themes	
4. Assign themes	