

Beginner's guide to...

EXPLORING UNDERSTANDING USING MIND MAPS

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Nature of the technique

- ✓ It's a qualitative technique
- ✓ Participants are asked to build a visual and written representation about a topic
- ✓ The representation includes not only concepts but also relationships between them
- ✓ Different levels of structure (no structure) and prompting (from questions to keywords and pre-defined structures)

Assumptions underpinning the technique

- ✓ people build mental representations
- ✓ a mind map can capture part of the mental representations
- ✓ the map is influenced by people's linguistic abilities (beware of asking for mind maps in second language)
- ✓ the technique is not embedded in any particular philosophical or epistemological stance, so you can do this as a part of a positivistic study or in an interpretivist research

Practical issues

Beware of handwriting, you need to be able to read maps afterwards!

People might not now what a mind map is... to tackle this you might want to:

- (1) use an instruction script
- (2) or provide diverse examples of previously built mind maps
- (3) show non-examples

Ideally, you ask participants to explain what they've constructed (and record it!) so you know what they meant. It can serve as a complement for interview data.

Strengths...

- ✓ It's open-ended and inductive: participants use their own words
- ✓ Participants can construct the map without much researcher's interference or prompting
- ✓ It's free from the sequence logic of writing

- ✗ Might be hard to interpret (visual and written elements, not everything is written down)
- ✗ Dependant on language ability and use
- ✗ Omissions do not necessarily mean people don't think that way

And limitations

Example

♥♥♥ We asked two volunteers to construct mind maps reflecting what they think about Romantic Relationships ♥♥♥

