Interaction Analysis

was a key tool we used as we studied what was happening inside our group

It could be easy to just focus on what gets ***said*** in a meeting — it's fast to write down, easy to explain to readers — but its not really the whole story.

Think about tense meetings, where people are disagreeing strongly.

(we saw this a lot in the second year of our group.)

I THINK WE NEED SOMEONE WHO LOOKS...

If we just wrote down the "talk" and shared that, you wouldn't get a sense of how it was received or how it polarized the group

01:36:40.02 I think we need someone who *looks* like a leader.

01:36:42.16 absolutely!

But if you look at interaction, it tells a different story altogether:

see that side-eye?

see that face palm?

see that person leaving in tears?

see that person sucking air through their teeth?

holding our bodies

using space

gesturing

Interaction analysis pays attention to the ways we use space, hold our bodies, gesture, make faces, and engage with each other in ways that create and communicate meaning.

We look at the physical clues for what is going on in the meaning so that we can interpret it.

making faces

engaging with each other

For our research, we collected video of every meeting, all the rallies, and most of the debriefs and retreats.

For about two years.

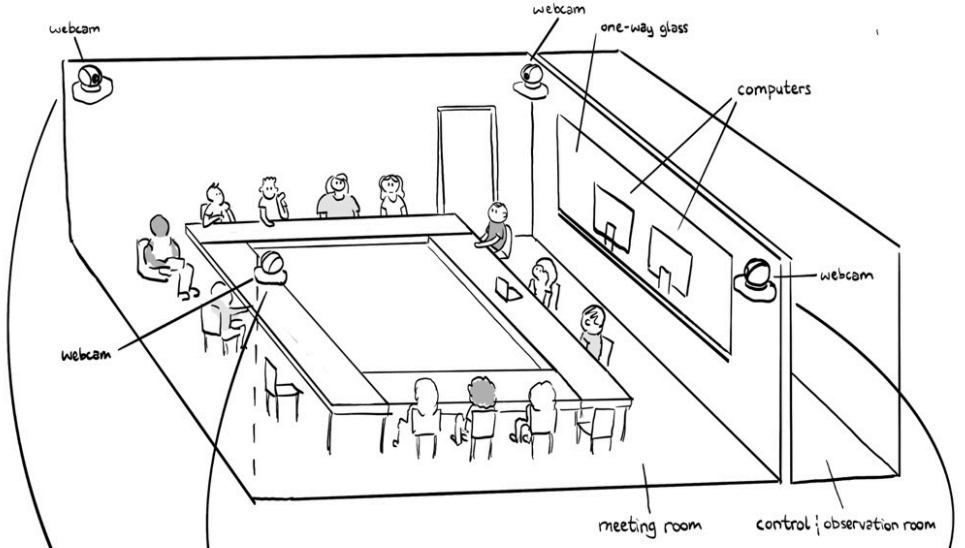
Yes.

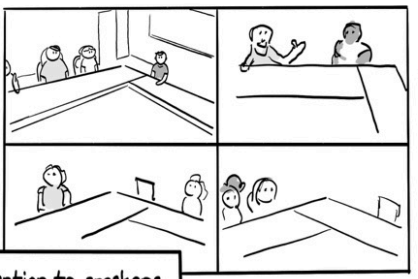
Yes it is.

So many hard drives

That's a **ton** of video!

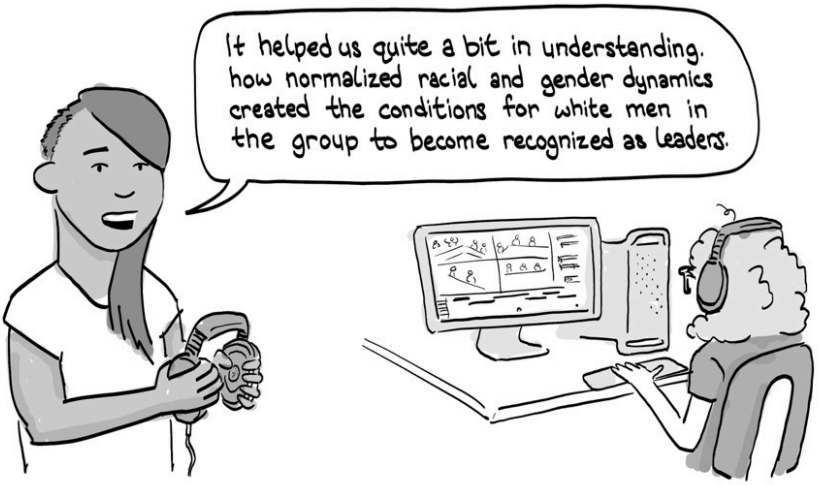
We recorded most of these from multiple angles, and stacked the video so we can watch all of them at the same time.



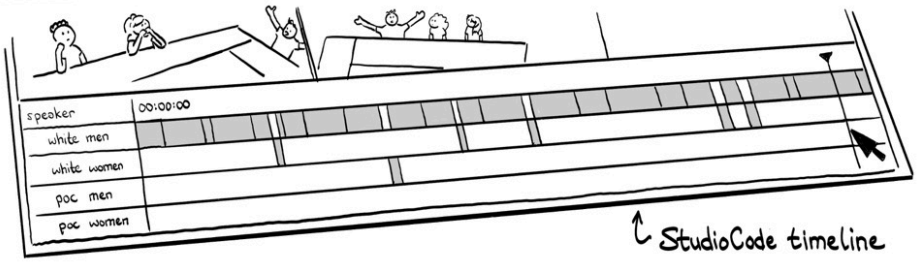


We could really pay attention to speakers and listeners simultaneously, and all the other little things that happened

and with so much video, we could look at not just the individual interactions, but also the patterns and trends over time.



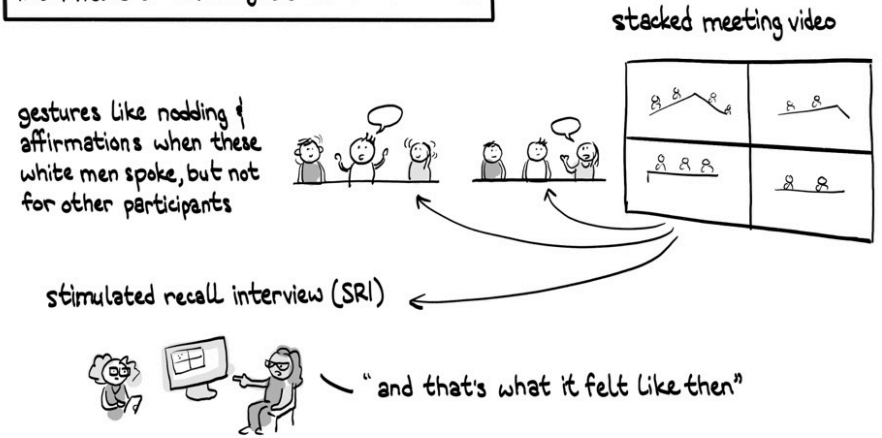
When we paid attention to speaking frequency and duration, we could see that white men spoke ***waaaay*** more, and way longer, than any others.



↑ StudioCode timeline

The sheer volume of their participation led other people to assume they were in charge.

We used video data and participant interviews to investigate what we found.



We also looked at things like *exclusive talk* —

— looking at who spoke and was involved in decision-making.

Have you ever been in a meeting where two or three people are talking to eachother, and everyone else is just watching?

That's exclusive talk, and it's another type of interaction we analyzed

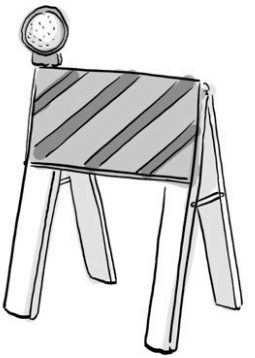
These interaction dynamics weren't consciously chosen by our group.

They were basically invisible until we started naming and investigating them.

That's one of the assets of interaction analysis:

it can reveal the normalized dynamics of race and gender, so we can look at how they impact the broader interaction dynamics of the group

and the types of learning they enable and constrain.



For more information, visit: joecurnow.com

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