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## Qualitative Coding with NVivo: Basics

### Simon Singer

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#### Excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail":

"In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal, and unbelievable facts. On the basis of them, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation."

For information on how to install NVivo, available for **free** for all Northeastern University students, please see our accompanying installation guide handout.

Link to NVivo homepage: <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home>

#### What is NVivo?

NVivo is a computer software package for qualitative data analysis. NVivo is designed to assist researchers in organizing and analyzing non-numerical and unstructured data. It is useful for coding surveys, interviews, audio recording, text documents, and other data formats. The software supports a large variety of file formats and data sources including Qualtrics, Zotero, OneNote, EverNote, SurveyMonkey, Excel, Word, and .pdfs among many others. NVivo can be used for both literature reviews, research management, and analysis.

#### Version and Platform Compatibility

1. Northeastern University students have access to NVivo versions 11 and 12 for both Mac and Windows operating systems, but there are compatibility issues moving projects between the two.
2. You **cannot** go backward in versions, but can convert a NVivo 11 project to NVivo 12.
3. Only the Windows version can convert projects between operating systems.
  - a. To convert a project: click on 'File,' in the top toolbar then 'Copy Project.'
4. NULab DTI recommends the students and the professor in the module use the same NVivo version to ensure compatibility. Furthermore, to ensure cross-platform compatibility, we recommend exporting projects as .qdp files.

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#### Question? Contact Us!

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5. For more information, see:  
[https://techcenter.qsrinternational.com/desktop/nv12/nv12\\_compatibility\\_with\\_other\\_qsr\\_software.htm](https://techcenter.qsrinternational.com/desktop/nv12/nv12_compatibility_with_other_qsr_software.htm)

### Key Terminology

- **Data:** The organized information for research. In NVivo, the data includes the files you have imported or created in the software. This can also include metadata.
- **Codes:** The themes, concepts, or sentiments in your research material and data. Codes in NVivo are separated into two broad categories: nodes and relationships.
  - **Nodes:** Nodes are the themes, concepts, ideas, opinions, or experiences of your data. Nodes can also be tiered with tiered or 'children' nodes underneath 'parent' nodes.
  - **Relationships:** Relationships in NVivo are a special type of code that is a connection between two data items. Relationships can be one-way (someone employing someone else), associative (two people knowing each other), or symmetrical (two people work together).
- **Cases:** In NVivo, cases are your unit of analysis for your research. For example, if you are studying a group population, your cases would be the individuals in that group. You can assign different variables and attributes to your cases
- **Maps:** Maps in NVivo are a useful visualization tool for seeing connections between the cases and nodes in your data.
- **Query:** Queries in the context of NVivo are a flexible way to explore and analyze your data and codes. With a query you can count word frequency, assign new codes based on a search, and perform searches based upon case attributes.

### Resources

Link to DTI slides, handouts, and documentation <http://bit.ly/diti-spring2020-singer1>

Readings on Using Nvivo for Research:

- Bandara, Wasana, "Using NVivo as a Research Management Tool: A Case Narrative,"
- Gregorio, Silvana di, "Using NVivo for your Literature Review"
- Roth, J.J., "Using NVivo to Organize Literature Reviews"

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