Introduction to Qualitative Coding with NVivo

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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 recordings, 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 literature reviews, research management, and analysis.

Version and Platform Compatibility

1. Northeastern University students have access to NVivo versions 12 and 14 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 12 project to NVivo 14.
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.'

Key Terms and Concepts

- **Qualitative Coding**: Categorizing textual information by highlighting or marking up moments that relate to particular themes/broader ideas according to a self-created schema, or a predefined set of themes or ideas that appear in your text and relate to your research question.
- **Data**: The organized information used in research. In NVivo, the data includes the files you have imported or created in the software. This can also include metadata, or information about data.
- **Codes:** The themes, concepts, or sentiments in your research material and data. Codes in NVivo are separated into two broad categories: codes (or nodes in NVivo 12) and relationships.

- ○ **Codes (or Nodes in NVivo 12):** Codes are the themes, concepts, ideas, opinions, or experiences evident and reflected in your data. Codes can also be tiered and have sub-codes, or 'children' codes underneath 'parent' codes. NVivo 12 refers to codes as "nodes".
  - ○ **Relationships:** Relationships in NVivo are a special type of code that is a connection between two data items. Relationships can be one-way (for example, someone employing someone else), associative (two people knowing each other), or symmetrical (two people working 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.

Sample Interview Transcription

"I used to go to Rebecca's every day for breakfasts and dinners. My favorite breakfast was omelets with cheese. The lines were always really long, though, and it was so expensive. I struggled a lot with making sure I was eating healthy, too, because it was really easy to choose a cheeseburger over veggies. Rebecca's food is also not that great, but I guess most university food probably isn't great. I do like their coffee, though, and I made friends with one of the cashiers. I'm happy I live off campus now, though, and have a full kitchen where I can make my own food."