

Qualitative codes and coding

“If it moves, code it”

(Richards and Morse, 2007: 146)

Heather Ford | Advanced Qualitative Analysis |
Oxford Internet Institute | Hilary Term 2014



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Goals for today

- Understand the **functions** of codes and memos in the qualitative research process
- Understand different **approaches** to coding and memo-ing and how they are implemented in real research projects
- Get some **experience** coding and memo-ing
- Formulate **next steps** for your project

`<codes>`

**What is a qualitative
code?**

‘A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that **symbolically assigns** a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data’

(Saldaña, 2013)

**Are codes the same as
categories?**

‘(Q)ualitative **codes** are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story, that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate the development of **categories** and thus analysis of their connections.’

(Saldaña, 2013: 8)Ñ

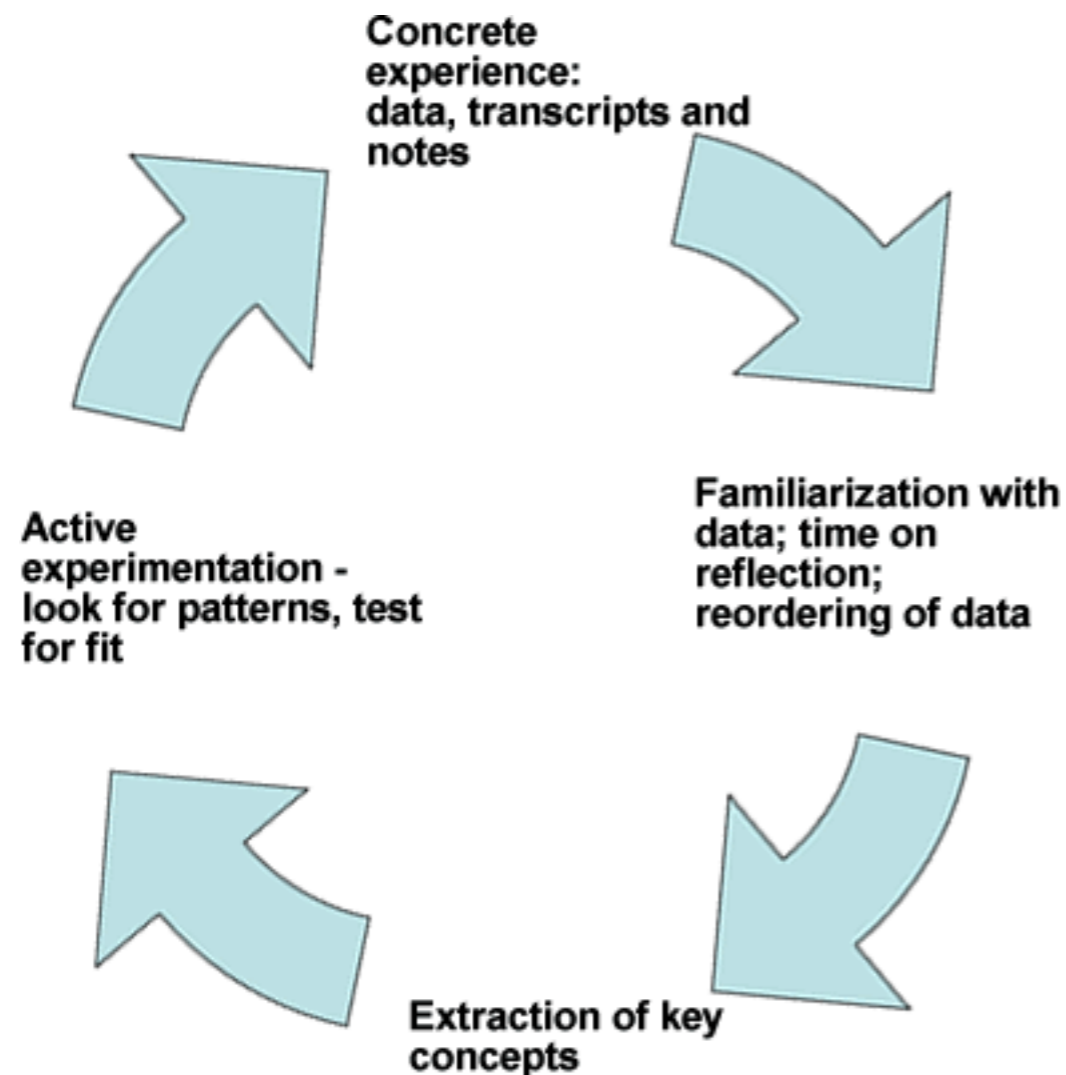
‘A word or a phrase does not “contain” its meaning as a bucket “contains” water, but has the meaning it does by being a choice made about its significance in a given context.’

(Blissa, Mark, and Ogborn, 1983 in Miles and Huberman, 1994)

Steps

1. Decide which types of coding is most relevant
2. Start coding!
3. Create a start list of codes
4. Generate categories (pattern codes)
5. Test these categories against new data (start with contrasting data early on!)
6. Write about categories/pattern codes in a memo to explain their significance

Coding is cyclical



- coding is not just labeling, it is *linking* (Saldaña, 2013: 8) - from the data to the idea and back to other data

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/research/guides/qualitative.htm?part=3>

Different approaches to coding

TABLE 4: Major Coding Differences Among Three Approaches to Content Analysis

<i>Type of Content Analysis</i>	<i>Study Starts With</i>	<i>Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords</i>	<i>Source of Codes or Keywords</i>
Conventional content analysis	Observation	Codes are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings
Summative content analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature

Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, 2005:

(A few of many) coding concepts

1. **descriptive coding**: summarizes the primary topic of the excerpt
2. **process coding**: a word or phrase that captures action
3. **in vivo coding**: using the participants' own language
4. **pattern coding**: coding for patterns in the data
5. **simultaneous coding**: applying multiple codes to the same text

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

? coding:

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ IMMIGRATION ISSUES

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

? coding:

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ IMMIGRATION ISSUES

? coding:

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ "NO PLACE"

(Saldaña, 2013: 7)

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ IMMIGRATION ISSUES

¹ "NO PLACE"

(Saldaña, 2013: 7)

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

descriptive coding:

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ IMMIGRATION ISSUES

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ "NO PLACE"

(Saldaña, 2013: 7)

Descriptive vs In Vivo coding

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

descriptive coding:

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ IMMIGRATION ISSUES

in vivo coding:

¹ There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from.

¹ "NO PLACE"

(Saldaña, 2013: 7)

? coding

¹ Mrs. Jackson rises from her desk and announces, "OK, you guys, let's get lined up for lunch. Row One." Five children seated in the first row of desks rise and walk to the classroom door. Some of the seated children talk to each other.

^{1a} Mrs. Jackson looks at them and says, "No talking, save it for the cafeteria.

¹ Row Two." Five children seated in the second row of desks rise and walk to the children already standing in line.

¹ LINING UP FOR LUNCH

^{1a} MANAGING

BEHAVIOR

(Saldaña, 2013: 5)

Process coding, simultaneous coding

¹ Mrs. Jackson rises from her desk and announces, "OK, you guys, let's get lined up for lunch. Row One." Five children seated in the first row of desks rise and walk to the classroom door. Some of the seated children talk to each other.

^{1a} Mrs. Jackson looks at them and says, "No talking, save it for the cafeteria.

¹ Row Two." Five children seated in the second row of desks rise and walk to the children already standing in line.

¹ LINING UP FOR LUNCH

^{1a} MANAGING

BEHAVIOR

(Saldaña, 2013: 5)

Pattern coding

- **similarity** (things happen the same way)
- **difference** (they happen in predictably different ways)
- **frequency** (they happen often or seldom)
- **sequence** (they happen in a certain order)
- **correspondence** (they happen in relation to other activities or events)
- **causation** (one appears to cause another)

(Hatch, 2002: 155)

What gets coded?

Social life happens at four coordinates, “the intersection of one or more actors (**participants**) engaging in one or more activities (**behaviors**) at a particular **time** in a specific **place**”

Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland (2006) in Saldaña

Units of social organisation

1. **cultural practices** (daily routines, occupational tasks);
2. **episodes** (unanticipated or irregular activities such as divorce, championship games, natural disasters);
3. **encounters** (a temporary interaction between two or more individuals such as sales transactions, panhandling);
4. **roles** (student, mother, customer) & **social types** (bully, geek);
5. **social & personal relationships** (husband & wife, party-goers);
6. **groups & cliques** (gangs, congregations, families, jocks)
7. **organizations** (schools, fast-food restaurants, prisons);
8. **settlements and habitats** (villages, neighborhoods, etc.);
9. **subcultures and lifestyles** (the homeless, skinheads)

Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland (2006) in Saldaña

In combination with

1. **cognitive aspects or meanings** (e.g., ideologies, rules, self-concepts, identities);
2. **emotional aspects or feelings** (e.g., sympathy in health care, road rage, workplace satisfaction);
3. **hierarchical aspects or inequalities** (e.g., racial inequality, battered women, high school cliques)



First Cycle coding:

Emotion Coding, Values Coding

Structures and processes: Process Coding, and Domain and Taxonomic Coding,

Causes and consequences: Pattern Coding

Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland (2006) in Saldaña

Questions to ask yourself as you code

- What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
 - How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means &/or strategies do they use?
 - How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?
 - What assumptions are they making?
 - What do I see going on here?
 - What did I learn from these notes?
 - Why did I include them?
- (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003: 44)
- What surprised me? (to track your assumptions)
 - What intrigued me? (to track your positionality)
 - What disturbed me? (to track the tensions within your value, attitude and beliefs)
- (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater, 2007: 106)

How many codes?

- it depends...
- pro line by line: Charmaz (2008) says it reduces chance of bias
- Stern (2007) looks for the 'cream on the top' of the data
- Friese (2012) recommends 120-300 codes total; others like Litchman (2010) suggests 20-100; Crewell (2013) starts with 5-6 provisional codes

Advice from Saldaña

- Be organized
- Exercise perseverance
- Learn to deal with ambiguity
- Exercise flexibility
- Be creative
- Be 'rigorously ethical'
- Develop an extensive vocabulary

`</codes>`

<memos>

When you get new data

through interviews, field visits, participant observation etc

- write up your observations in memos, using contact sheets and/or interim case analysis forms

Memos and memo-ing

- ‘(A memo is) the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding... it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages... it exhausts the analyst’s momentary ideation based on data with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration’ (Glaser, 1978: 83)

What can memos *do*?

- pulling together incidents that appear to have commonalities
- what is intensely puzzling or surprising about a case
- alternative hypotheses in response to someone else's memo (or analysis)
- proposals for a specific new pattern code
- integrating a set of marginal or reflective remarks already made on field notes
- when the analyst does not have a clear concept in mind but is struggling to clarify one
- around a general theme or metaphor that pulls together discrete observations

Miles and Huberman, 1994: 73)

**other types of
documents to help with
iterative analysis**

Contact sheet

- Should take less than an hour to fill out
- Contains: date of contact, key concepts, linked to specific places in field notes
- Essential for revising your initial framework

(Miles and Huberman, 1994: 51)

Contact sheet

Questions:

- What people, events, or situations were involved? (using numbers or other identifiers to anonymize if necessary)
- What were the main themes or issues in the contact?
- Which research questions and which variables in the initial framework did the contact bear on most centrally?
- What new hypotheses, speculations, or hunches about the field situations were suggested by the contact?
- Where should the field-worker place most energy during the next contact, and what kinds of information should be sought?

(Miles and Huberman, 1994: 51)

Interim case analysis forms

1. Main themes, impressions, summary statements about what is going on in the site
2. Explanations, speculations, hypotheses about what is going on in the site
3. Alternative explanations, minority reports, disagreements about what is going on in the site
4. Next steps for data collection
5. Implications for revision, updating of coding scheme

Based on Miles and Huberman, 1994: 78

Research outline

Auerbach & Silverstein (2003, p.44) recommend that you keep a copy of your research concern, theoretical framework, central research question, goals of the study, and other major issues on one page in front of you to keep you focused and allay your anxieties because the page focuses your coding decisions.

</memos>

Let's start coding!

20 mins

Let's write a memo!

10 mins