Examples of hierarchical coding systems

The following are some examples of hierarchical coding systems developed for different projects. (Lower level subcategories have been summarized in some instances.) They illustrate the point that the hierarchy is a taxonomy, or cataloguing system, rather than embracing theoretical associations. The latter are determined by using nodes or node trees in coding queries and/or matrix coding queries.

Project 1: Theory building – meeting the needs of spinal injured persons

This study was undertaken Lynn Kemp, during the period 1994 to 1998, and was the first comprehensive investigation of the lives of people with spinal injuries in the state of New South Wales, Australia. Different concepts of need (normative, felt, expressed, prescriptive, comparative, intrinsic, and need as a means to an end) were explored using surveys, interviews and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to determine:

- The relative importance of community services (personal care, paramedical, respite and transport) in the lives of people with spinal injuries;
- What people with spinal injuries wished to achieve in their lives; and
- What role community services played in helping (or preventing) people with spinal injuries to achieve their desired ends.

General issues

accommodation
access
employment
relationships
health
discrimination (in the community)
psychological adjustment
the future
compensation
hospital (historical)

Issues of service provision

organization
eligibility
assessment

- reliability
- discrimination
- quality
- timing
- availability
    - cost
    - knowledge
    - limits
- expectations of service providers
    - have to be grateful
    - appropriateness
- relationship with provider
    - relationships with workers
    - privacy
    - rudeness
    - retribution

Services and support

- doctor
- dentist
- nurses
- social workers
- physiotherapist
- counselling
- informal care
- aids and equipment
- occupational therapy
- rehabilitation services
- home care
- home nursing
- community nursing
- transport
- transport allowance
- parking scheme
- financial support
- meals on wheels

Evaluation of services

- good
- poor

Life impacts

- others
  - some other person
  - the system
  - self at a different time
  - sportsman
- changed life
  - becoming 'the disabled'
  - bludger
- control
  - no control
  - security
- normal life
- relationships
- adjustment
- dependency
  - dependent
  - independent
  - forced independence
  - interdependent

Project 2: Concept analysis – Child participation

This schema brings together data from a series of projects exploring the meaning of participation from the perspective of children and young people. The research was conducted by members of the Asia Pacific Regional Network of the Childwatch International Research Network. The common framework was designed to facilitate further analysis and coordinated writing on the concept of child participation.[1]

- **Cultural factors**, including:
  - gender issues
  - generational issues,
    - 'ownership' of children
    - definition of child/young person/adult
  - individualism vs collectivism
  - attitude to personal development

[1] This framework was developed at an international meeting held at Bowral, Australia, which was supported by the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney.

community attitudes to the role and ability of children

Situationally defined context, including:

access to information

language; internet

location - home/school/community/world

political structure

freedom of expression

opportunity for involvement

socioeconomic status

safety – security issues

Process, including:

seeing children as having resources to participate

reciprocity

modelling from parents/leaders

social/ parental/ peer support

self confidence, skills

Dimensions of participation

public – private

personal agency – interconnectivity

individual – social

local – global

personal – collective

self – other (focus)

immediate – sustained

being – becoming

significance of activity

obligation – voluntary

intentional – non intentional

negative – positive

passive – active

humanity – materialism

decorative – meaningful

Implications of participation, including:

increase in opportunities

sustainability

civic engagement

non-engagement (from non-participation)

Issues in participation, including:

- power dynamics
- communication styles/ modes/effectiveness

Project 3: Mapping experience – Symptoms of angina

This international study examined the experiences of women who were potentially experiencing angina (heart disease), with particular concern that, because they were women, their symptoms were often treated with scepticism. The qualitative data were then matched with diagnostic results from medical testing.

Description of sensation

- pain
- burning
- pressure

Location of sensation

- points of most intensity
  - e.g. chest; jaw
- radiation
  - e.g. from neck down arms
- pattern
  - e.g. comes in waves

Intensity of sensation

- not too bad
- I think I'm going to die

Duration of sensation

- each episode
  - short
  - long time
- since it began
  - e.g. two years

Triggers of sensation

- walking
- lifting
- argument

Meanings for sensation

- death

isolation

I'm getting old

Actions taken

medication

rest

work

seek help

People or organizations referred to

doctor

nurse

hospital

family

neighbour

friend

church

Access to health care system

facilitated

hindered

Consequences for daily living

can't work

can’t do daily tasks,

became depressed

became anxious

Impact on roles

as a wife

as a mother

as a caregiver

Other contextual issues

divorce

moving house

loss of job

Narrative

metaphors-idioms

quotes

surprises

Project 4: Theory development – Health behaviour (childhood immunization)

Parents of young children were interviewed or surveyed with respect to their experiences of and concerns about childhood immunization, with a view to understanding what might encourage or discourage on-time compliance with recommended immunization schedules.

- **Issues re vaccines**
  - reactions
    - potential for long term damage
    - short term - physical
    - short term - crying
  - trusting
    - trusting experts
    - give protection
    - belief in immunization
  - questioning
    - how effective?
    - weighing up
  - knowledge

- **Issues re diseases**
  - dangers
  - experience of disease
    - vicarious
    - benign
    - negative

- **Issues re process**
  - advice
  - needles, pain

- **Strategies**
  - preparation
  - support

- **Feelings**
  - fear-anxiety-worry
  - empathy
  - accepting

Actors

father

other relatives

friends

doctor

media

Other health issues

alternative medicine

baby's health

Sorting out a mess

The example that follows is for those who have already created coding structure before they found Chapter 5 in *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo* (because, of course, those who had read the chapter first would never end up with a mess of this sort)!

The column on the left is an example of a potentially viral coding system relating to the delivery and implementation of a training program for youth workers. Compare with the column on the right, where the coding system has been reorganised. Many less nodes are needed to cover the same topics; it provides for easy access to everything known about any particular factor or issue so it can be reviewed as a whole; it allows a range of other questions to be asked about any aspect of the program (such as whether it was seen as a strength or weakness, or when it occurred); and it allows for creation of more specific subcategories if needed, without creating more repetitive sub-trees.

Converting the first system to the second requires steps that need to be completed in the following order:

- Copy nodes at the lowest level in each subtree and merge with their immediate parent node (these can be done in groups) so that, for example, everything that was under *Immersion workshops* is now also at the *Immersion workshops* node (as well as remaining in nodes below it); everything under *Learning issues/Before* is now also coded at *Learning issues/Before*.
- Highlight and copy each node that means the same thing and merge into a new *child* node in a new tree for that kind of thing. For example, all the *before* nodes are merged into a single *before* node in the *Time* tree; all the *Strengths* nodes from wherever are merged into a node for that in the *Evaluation* tree); the two 3rd level *level of understanding* nodes are combined into a new 2nd level *Level of understanding* node

under *Learning issues* (along with *Level of interest, Resources available, Relationships in group* and any other issues that might be found).

When you are sure you have it all covered in the new structure, you can safely delete the original (but check first!). What all the copying and merging will have done, effectively, is code the same text at multiple nodes. You will find ***matrix coding queries*** very useful for considering patterns of relationships between nodes in these trees, e.g., to see how learning issues change over time, or how the content and delivery of the training programmes received by or implemented by the trainees were evaluated. A matrix coding query will also allow you to compare the views of trainers with those of trainees (assuming both were interviewed and this has been created as an attribute of the cases).

Repetitive version!	***Suggestion for a revised version***
Training in new programme (group leaders)	**Training component (for group leaders)**
Immersion workshops	Immersion workshops
strengths	Follow-up training
weaknesses	On-going mentoring
suggestions	**Programmes implemented by trainees**
Follow-up training	Content
strengths	[specific subnodes covering particular aspects of content here if wanted]
weaknesses	Delivery
suggestions	[specific subnodes covering particular aspects of delivery here if wanted]
On-going mentoring	**Learning issues (in target group)**
strengths	Level of understanding
weaknesses	Level of interest
suggestions	Resources available
Programmes implemented by trainees	Relationships in group
Content	**Evaluation**
before	Strength (no subnodes needed!)
after	
Delivery	
before	

after	Weakness (no subnodes needed!)
Learning issues (in target group)	Suggestions (no subnodes needed!)
Before	**Time referred to**
level of understanding	Before training and implementation
level of interest	After immersion training
resources available	
relationships in group	
After	
level of understanding	
level of interest	
resources available	
relationships in group	