

Introduction to coding the journals with NVivo by Peter Fleming

Our analysis of the ethnographic journals is done with NVivo 2.0¹, a qualitative analysis software that allows us to organize, index, code, and query the journals for specific topics. We began using NVivo in January of 2004 and have found it very useful in cataloging the journals while assisting us in our hypotheses and analyses. NVivo allows us to count, compare, and query subject areas that are typically unquantifiable in text documents. This software necessitates that we code all text that we determine to fit into each category (node). Furthermore, NVivo permits us to group together subject areas that are coded under the same definition. After a word, sentence, paragraph, or section is coded in the same node we are able to query the entire set of journals for that topic and thus pare down the browsing usually necessary when looking for a specific topic or subject word. Additionally, NVivo allows one to do a fast search for a word or phrase among a specified set of documents.

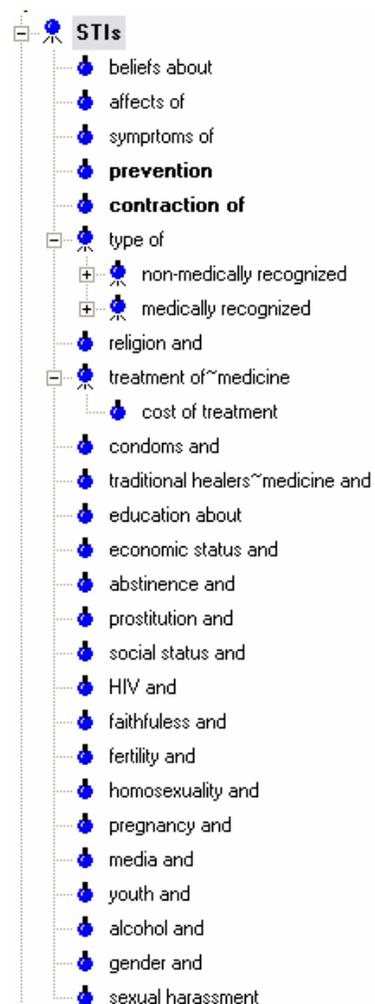
The first category we coded was sexual transmitted infections (STIs). We created a tree organization of nodes (Figure 1) in which the STIs node had several subcategories, known as child nodes. A node of the same level is called a sibling node and each step down in relationship is known as a child node.

Under the STIs heading are interrelated child nodes such as, *beliefs about STIs to sexual harassment* related to STIs. Interrelated nodes can be Boolean searched with intersections (and), unions (or), as well as negations (not) to sort the text for organized reading. In paring down and grouping subject interests the reader can more quickly find topics that are of specific importance.

To provide an example, in January of 2004 our journals contained 1228 pages. When STIs were coded and isolated we remained with 112 pages containing text that was coded for STIs. This isolation of subject areas allows researchers to pass information of interest among each other without sending all 1228 pages of the journals. Additionally, NVivo allows multiple persons to code and edit the same project, which fosters the sharing of notes.

Our objective for using NVivo is not to reduce the amount of reading for the researcher but to rather help one review the material that is of greatest interest to them. Reading the journal entries from start to finish provides a valuable impression of the flow, context, and quantity of writing on a specific topic. Malawian journalists are instructed to write as they desire and little to almost no direction is given to them so not to influence their writing style and content. On the other hand, we recognize that not all will have sufficient interest, or time, to read everything, and thus believe that providing the data coded in large categories may be helpful.

It is our hope that we can create a standard in qualitative data organization, management, sharing and analysis. NVivo seems to work well for us at the moment and we welcome your comments and recommendations for developing qualitative research. Enjoy reading the journals!



¹ NVivo free demonstration software can be downloaded at <http://www.qsrinternational.com/DemoReg/DemoReg1.asp>