

# Examples of hierarchical coding systems

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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.<sup>1</sup>

**Cultural factors**, including:

gender issues  
generational issues,  
    ‘ownership’ of children  
    definition of child/young person/adult  
individualism vs collectivism  
attitude to personal development  
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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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).

<b><i>Repetitive version!</i></b>	<b><i>Suggestion for a revised version</i></b>
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<p><b>Training in new programme (group leaders)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immersion workshops                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengths</li> <li>weaknesses</li> <li>suggestions</li> </ul> </li> <li>Follow-up training                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengths</li> <li>weaknesses</li> <li>suggestions</li> </ul> </li> <li>On-going mentoring                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengths</li> <li>weaknesses</li> <li>suggestions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Programmes implemented by trainees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>before</li> <li>after</li> </ul> </li> <li>Delivery                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>before</li> <li>after</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Learning issues (in target group)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>level of understanding</li> <li>level of interest</li> <li>resources available</li> <li>relationships in group</li> </ul> </li> <li>After                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>level of understanding</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Training component (for group leaders)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immersion workshops</li> <li>Follow-up training</li> <li>On-going mentoring</li> </ul> <p><b>Programmes implemented by trainees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[specific subnodes covering particular aspects of content here if wanted]</li> </ul> </li> <li>Delivery                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[specific subnodes covering particular aspects of delivery here if wanted]</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Learning issues (in target group)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of understanding</li> <li>Level of interest</li> <li>Resources available</li> <li>Relationships in group</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strength (no subnodes needed!)</li> <li>Weakness (no subnodes needed!)</li> <li>Suggestions (no subnodes needed!)</li> </ul> <p><b>Time referred to</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before training and implementation</li> <li>After immersion training</li> </ul>
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<p>level of interest</p> <p>resources available</p> <p>relationships in group</p>	
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