

12 myths to dispel about NVivo

What it can and cannot do

© Dr Rachel Shanks

NVivo will transcribe recorded interviews etc.

- You have to pay for this if you are not going to do it yourself.
- Many people argue it is best (if you have) to transcribe your research interviews yourself for two main reasons:
 - You were there so you will be able to work out what people (including yourself) were saying when the audio is not completely clear
 - You will be immersing yourself in the data by listening to it while you transcribe so it is not wasted time

MYTH 1

Codes do not 'emerge'

- You decide if something is a code or not, and
- If something should be coded to that code or not
- Codes might be formed in your head but they do not 'emerge' from the text or data you are coding

MYTH 2

Case classifications is too complicated to use

- You need to create the type of case classification before you can create cases
- Once you have created the case classification of person, organisation, community, institution – whatever is the unit of your analysis
- Then you can go on to create cases as you upload data from each participant and/or through automatic coding

MYTH 3

Automatic coding does all the coding for you

- NO.
- Automatic coding is only useful if you did semi-structured interviews or focus groups, namely you asked people mainly the same questions (it doesn't matter what order you asked them in)
- Automatic coding is a tool which can create codes for each question you asked.
- It can also be used to create case classifications for each interviewee/focus group participant

MYTH 4

'NVivo analysed my data'

- NO!
- Only you can analyse your data.
- You do not say that Word wrote your thesis so don't say that NVivo analysed your data.

MYTH 5

Also, don't say 'I used NVivo to analyse my data' and nothing more

- You won't write in your thesis 'I used Microsoft Word to write my thesis' so why would you tell the reader that you used NVivo?
- You need to explain the processes and tools you used so that someone else could follow the same steps with your data and finish up with similar findings
- Therefore, there needs to be detail about how you used NVivo

MYTH 6

Using NVivo will improve my work

- NO!
- Rubbish in, rubbish out.

MYTH 7

Codes can overlap

- NO!
- You want to make your codes discrete and exclusive like options in a single choice survey question.
- No good having codes that are too similar, e.g.
 - Learning from colleagues, and Learning from school mentor.
- Better to have:
 - Learning from colleagues except school mentor, and Learning from school mentor

MYTH 8

Data should only be coded to one code

- NO!
- Remember data might be coded to 1, 2 or more codes
- For example:
- This pretend text could be coded to both learning from colleagues except school mentor and learning from school mentor
 - In the staffroom I got to discuss things with all my colleagues, especially X who taught P2 as well and Y my mentor.

MYTH 9

Everything and anything can be a code

- NO!
- If there is a Yes, No, binary or categories that can be assigned to the source of the data, e.g., the interviewee, then use case attributes and attribute values to record this information.
- E.g., case attribute 'Jeans banned' and the attribute values 'Yes', 'No', 'Not clear'.
- E.g., case attribute 'Teacher Induction Scheme' or 'Flexible Route to Registration' (can't be on both at the same time)

MYTH 10

Myth 10 continued – avoid viral coding

- If you have the same or similar words as subcodes in different codes then your coding system has gone viral!
- Look at the Sample Project and see how they have the codes:
 - Mixed
 - Negative
 - Positive

The percentages are useful

- NO!
- The percentages you see when looking at the coding extracts simply refer to what percentage of the file has been coded to that particular code – not sure when, if ever, this would be useful information.
- Remember the pitfalls of quantifying qualitative data.

MYTH 11