Cultivate from Massive Texts

Sociology 310 Discussions, Week 9

Peng, Haorui | October 30, 2026

Agenda

- Coding Qualitative Data in General
- with Responses to Open-Ended Questions in Surveys
- Check Out

Coding in General

Coding in General

two things I'd always remember

- Coding is important as it helps and makes you
  - master the qualitative data you've gathered, including both "the usual" and "the odd"
    → think about statistics: both mean/median/mode and outliers are interesting. variation!
  - narrow things down and develop a structured organization of information
- When coding, do develop a "code book"
  - What do you mean by each code? If you're borrowing from literature, cite it!
  - It avoids you forgetting / adjusting meanings from time to time, and helps with group collaboration.

Coding in General

what is a “code”? definitions

- *not* a topic summary, which is usually to descriptive to help with future analysis
  e.g., “mentions family environment” “talks about work burden”

- rather, a word/phrase assigning an analytically meaningful label to a segment of data
  e.g., “hidden curriculum” “work-and-study balance”

- may form theme(s), pattern(s) across codes answering something about the RQ
  e.g., “disadvantages given family background”

Coding in General

what is a “code”? practice

- Research Question:
  How do U.S. people develop their intergenerational social mobility expectations in 10 years?

- Interview Question:
  Thinking about your life 10 years from now, how do you expect your work and financial situation to compare with your parents’? Walk me through how you’ve come to expect that.
  Probe - What experiences, people, or messages have shaped that expectation?

- Is this a descriptive topic summary? If yes, how would you rather code it?

Coding in General

what is a “code”? practice

- Research Question:
  How do U.S. people develop their intergenerational social mobility expectations in 10 years?

- Potential Theme(s)
  - Mobility expectations are not only personal ambitions, but also moral obligations.
  - The degree of upward mobility expectations is conditional.

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

differences from interview data

- higher “no response” rates
- shorter responses, with more bullet points / less structured sentences
- generally serve as secondary, supportive data

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

some steps to consider, #1

- Review the Item List. For each, consider:
  - how many responses to you have for this item? how many “missing data”?
  - is this item worth coding? e.g., is it central to your analysis, or just to collect more info?

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

some steps to consider, #2

- Export to a Spreadsheet.
  - one row per respondent, one column per item to be coded
  - keep respondent ID (not the real ones) and socio-demographic information

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

some steps to consider, #3

- Go through Responses.
  - develop a sense of the length, tone, rough ideas, etc.
  - note obvious and major mess.

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

some steps to consider, #4

- Build a Starting Codebook.
  - if there are already some “codes” you know, list and define them. cite appropriately.
    (this is the deductive portion of coding)
  - update the codebook when new codes emerge
    (this is the inductive portion of coding)

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

some steps to consider, #5

- Write your Memo(s)

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

how's the process? practice

- Research Question:
  How do U.S. people develop their intergenerational social mobility expectations in 10 years?
- See "Practice 2 - Info" for details.
- work individually first, then turn to groups

w/ Your Open-Ended Qs

how's the process? reflection

- How did your individual work went? Anything on which you struggle?
  → If the challenge is common to your group, write it down and tell me. If your group mates have some tips, please exchange your suggestions.

- What was your collaboration mode? Did it went well, or need some adjustments?
  - how was your codebook design? did it help to make collaborations smoother?
  - were there agreements and/or disagreements on how you code? what are they?

- Think about your own surveys -
  How will this practice experiences inform your actual analyses?

Check Out

- Please fill in this Check Out Form before you leave
- I will be using this form to track your attendance. This form is also a place where you can share your thoughts, questions, concerns, etc. You can also share your suggestions on how I can improve our sections.
- https://forms.gle/3JgspzzJMEL32dVn8

