

Book Review

Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers

Saldaña, J. (2011)

Sage, London UK

223 pages

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For doing research, special knowledge is needed. Especially knowledge and skills of transcribing and analysing interviews in qualitative studies. It is difficult, or better said impossible to find a good book, which describes ways of analyzing / coding in a simple but professional way. However, Johnny Saldaña addressed this gap by combining different coding methods in one book to help researchers and students to keep on track with their coding practice. So it can be said that this book is a perfect handbook for qualitative researchers of all expertise, because of its detailed and structured way to explain different ways of how transcribed interviews can be coded.

The book itself is structured in six different chapters, which helps the readers to understand qualitative coding as well as giving them a detailed guideline to complete their research.

The first part discusses the theoretical background of interview analysis, as well as an introduction of how coding is done in today's social science context. The author shows the coding procedural steps and gives detailed examples for each individual step.

The second part talks about the writing process of analytic memos. Memos are different to field notes, because they are written after the interview and not throughout the fieldwork process. In the memos, researchers' own ideas and reflection of collected information are included, which would help the researchers throughout the coding process, or give them additional questions, which would need further clarification with the interview partners, to understand the entire collected information.

The third part gives a deeply structured view of the first round of coding. The author also makes it clear that over the last century different coding practices are implemented and used. A really detailed explanation of each coding practice is implemented to help researchers go through the coding process. The author explains each coding practice with definitions, description, application and example to showcase the right way of coding. The examples are especially helpful for researchers to understand and apply a coding strategy without struggling through the process and keeping track of their coding process.

The fourth part gives an overview of the second round of coding, where the information from the first round are analyzed and themed. The structure of the chapter is similar to the previous chapter – the author explains the coding / theming process with a description, application and an example part. Which again helps a researcher go through the second coding process. Furthermore, the author added an analysis and note part to each coding practice to give a more sustainable support of the theming.

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The fifth part gives the researchers a guideline on how and what to do after the chapter explains about each step after coding procedurals, such as listing the themes, or arranging the order of the findings. These steps support the researchers to present their findings in the right way in his / her paper or dissertation.

The last part are appendixes which are based on research and coding examples, whereby the author gives the reader the opportunity to go through the entire coding process and see how each step (which is explained in the earlier chapters) connects with one another. It is a good way to end a book, where it gives an overall view of the coding process from the beginning by looking into the collected data to the point of finishing up the findings.

It should be noted that if an author details every coding style excessively, the connection between coding circle one and coding circle two becomes less clear. It is difficult for a new qualitative researcher to understand the connection and the need between the two coding circles and which circle is following which. The book encourages novice researcher to find the coding style best suited to him. However, for post graduate dissertation or publication, one has to be more specific on how to link the two circles together and round the coding process up in a proper and professional way.

In addition, the examples in the final part of the book are helpful to understand the coding process, however, it does not show real examples of how coding should be done. It would be great if the book could be extended with real examples of coding practices. Many coding types are explained in the book, which helps researcher to find the right coding strategy for him or her, however, as mentioned above, the book explains these different coding strategies in a general level and did not connect it with full text coding examples.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the author connects all coding practices to bigger and complex social science / sociology interview strategies, such as Grounded Theory. However, it would be great if the book could have extra information, what these strategies are about and give a more detail information on how the coding process of these strategies are done. Because the author did not make clear how coding circle one and two are connected to one specific strategy. It would be more than helpful, if for example the book could give information which coding circle follows in the Grounded Theory case.

Overall it can be said that this book is a brilliant example of detailed and structured way of coding practice in today's social science research and helps researchers to get an overview into coding processes, yet gives experienced researchers a guideline to go through the interview analysis part.