

FRONT MATTER

Example 7.3

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CHAPTER TEXT

Case Study 7.3: Abductive Coding: The QUALIDEM Project*

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In our research project QUALIDEM, we mobilize a related, yet original, approach to the Breadth-and-Depth Method. We abductively code existing material on citizens' perceptions of democracy and public policies from four qualitative data sets to develop abductive inference through in-depth interpretive analysis and, eventually, theory building (Vila-Henninger, Dupuy, Van Ingelgom et al., 2022) . In our abductive coding approach, researchers manually code multiple qualitative data sets that were collected by primary researchers and have been compiled into a single data set in order to answer research questions that span individual qualitative data sets. The new research questions theoretically drive data assemblage for secondary qualitative analysis – thus drawing on the opportunities created by comparison (Halford and Savage 2017).

Methodologically, our approach combines traditional approaches to abduction (Pierce 1934) with qualitative approaches (Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Tavory and Timmermans 2014). In particular, the qualitative branch of abduction builds theory by engaging with the data via qualitative coding and identifying theoretically anomalous cases. Timmermans and Tavory (Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Tavory and Timmermans 2014) highlight the

methodological steps that are conducive to the implementation of the abductive logic of data analysis. These three steps consist of “Revisiting the phenomenon”, “Defamiliarization”, and “Alternative casing”. In the context of our research project, we suggest that each step raises specific issues and is performed through specific operations (Vila-Henninger, Dupuy, Van Ingelgom et al., 2022).

Concretely, building on these three steps, our approach develops three phases for abductive coding: 1) Generating an Abductive Codebook, 2) Abductive Data Reduction, and 3) Abductive Qualitative Analysis. We start with an initial deductive, theoretically-driven codebook, which then allows us to develop inductive codes for cases in the data that are “theoretically anomalous”—or not present in the initial theoretically-driven deductive codebook. By this, we mean that human coders start with a deductive codebook and then through the process of coding, build the codebook—and by extension build theory—by developing data-driven inductive codes that document theoretically anomalous cases. The approach then proceeds through data reduction with Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) to combine codes in order to operationalize phenomena that span data sets (Evers, Caprioli, Nöst and Wiedemann, 2020). This stage of the analysis allows for further inductive coding and facilitates a final round of qualitative analysis that researchers perform manually. To summarize, our approach builds on and expands the Breadth-and-Depth Method by mobilizing abductive coding and inference.

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* This research was funded by the project ERC Starting Grant Qualidem – Eroding Democracies. A qualitative (re-) appraisal of how policies shape democratic linkages in Western Democracies. The Qualidem project is supported by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement 716208).