

were motivated by fear; they often feared who they would become if they continued to use drugs or engage in crime. Indicators of this phenomenon included statements such as “I was afraid of dying alone in prison without my family” or “I knew that if I didn’t get clean, I would never be able to get my family back and I would end up on the street alone.” We coded all narratives reflecting these sentiments under the larger domain of *desistance* within a subdomain of *fear*. One example of such a narrative was from a 54-year-old white male:

Interviewer: So I know people say all the time “I just got tired.” You used the word *crushed*. What does that mean?

Respondent: I’ll be honest with you, more than tired, I got scared. The last time I went back I said I can’t do this anymore. I told myself over and over again I can’t do this anymore. I’m hurting myself, my loved ones, I was afraid that I’d be alone in life. And I didn’t know whether I liked myself so I had to work hard to make myself better. . . . It scared the hell out of me. I finally realized I was my own worst enemy.

Another respondent, an African American women, talked about almost dying from a heroin overdose:

I overdosed and I was in a coma for 9 days. They told my mom that if I was gonna live, I was going to be a complete vegetable; there was a time to start making funeral arrangements. I had no brain waves or anything. It was a complete miracle. They had no explanation why I lived or why I woke up. . . . When I woke up, I had to gain back all my muscle strength; I couldn’t even walk. . . . My mom had to take care of me. That’s how I got clean. It scared the shit out of me.

The actual term for a code in NVivo is a *node*, and you can have large domain *nodes* (e.g., drugs) with small subgroup nodes that fall within the larger domain. For example, we had a large domain node labelled *drugs*, and within this domain there were several subgroup nodes, including age at first use, *drug of choice*, *relapse*, and so on.

Once your data are coded, you can begin your analysis. In NVivo, you can examine all interview transcripts that were coded within particular nodes (coding categories). These analyses are called *queries*. For example, Exhibit 8.11 displays narratives that were coded under the node called *relapse*. When a query is performed on a single node, it will display the source number (in this case, internals/1009 stands for interview number 1009) along with the text that was coded within that particular category (node). As can be seen, respondent 1009 talked about getting out of prison the first time and ending up with the same “people, places, and things” that led to his drug use, which eventually led to relapse.

NVivo will also allow you to examine a domain separately based on other variables. For example, we could examine how fear was expressed differently for males and females in the sample, or by race or age. When a multiple query such as this is performed, called a *matrix coding query*, NVivo will first present a table displaying how many times each interview was coded within the grouping variable (usually a demographic indicator) and the category (nodes). Exhibit 8.12 displays one of these tables for a matrix coding query grouped by gender (1 = male, 2 = female) and by the nodes called *periods of abstinence* and *relapse*. You can see that within the interviews, 78 of the male interviews had narratives coded for *periods of abstinence* along with 54 females, and so on. When you click directly on a cell within this table, the text narratives that were coded will appear so that narratives can be compared and contrasted.

As you can see, computer software programs such as NVivo are an extremely useful way to organize and analyze qualitative data. In fact, when there is a great deal of data to be analyzed, a computer software program is not only a luxury, but a necessity!
