

Cracking the Code: Studying the Social Impact of DNA Testing through Qualitative Interview Coding



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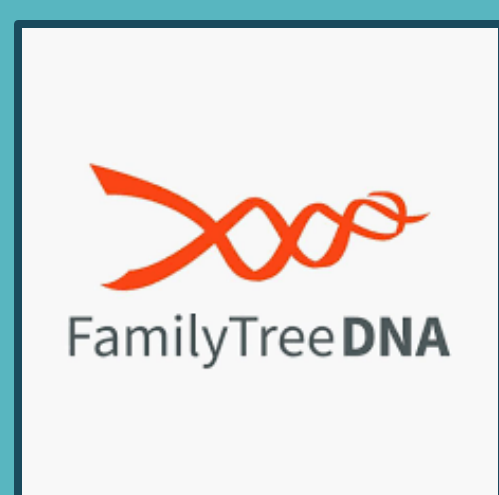
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Introduction

- “More than 26 million people worldwide have undergone genetic ancestry testing by direct-to-consumer companies.” (NIH)
- Project Overview
 - Analyze how genetic ancestry tests are interpreted by individuals
 - How results of tests influence racial/ethnic identity, understanding of race/ethnicity and behaviors
 - Based on interviews with respondents of varying levels of ancestral and genetic knowledge

Data & Methods

- Initial surveys spread through:
 - 3 companies
 - Online genetic genealogy forums
 - Facebook groups
- 482 eligible participants were asked for interview
 - 76% consented
 - 92% of participants were American
 - 92% of participants had W2 interviews
- 100 American interviewees who had taken at least 1 DNA test
 - Transcribed verbatim using Atlas.ti
 - Open coding procedures by Strauss & Corbin (1998) used to code themes



Qualitative Analysis

- W1 & W2 interviews
 - W1: given to participants after initial survey
 - W2: given months later after W1 interview
- Codes
 - Implementation of over 150 codes
 - Terms assigned to highlighted chunks of text
 - Have specific definitions and uses

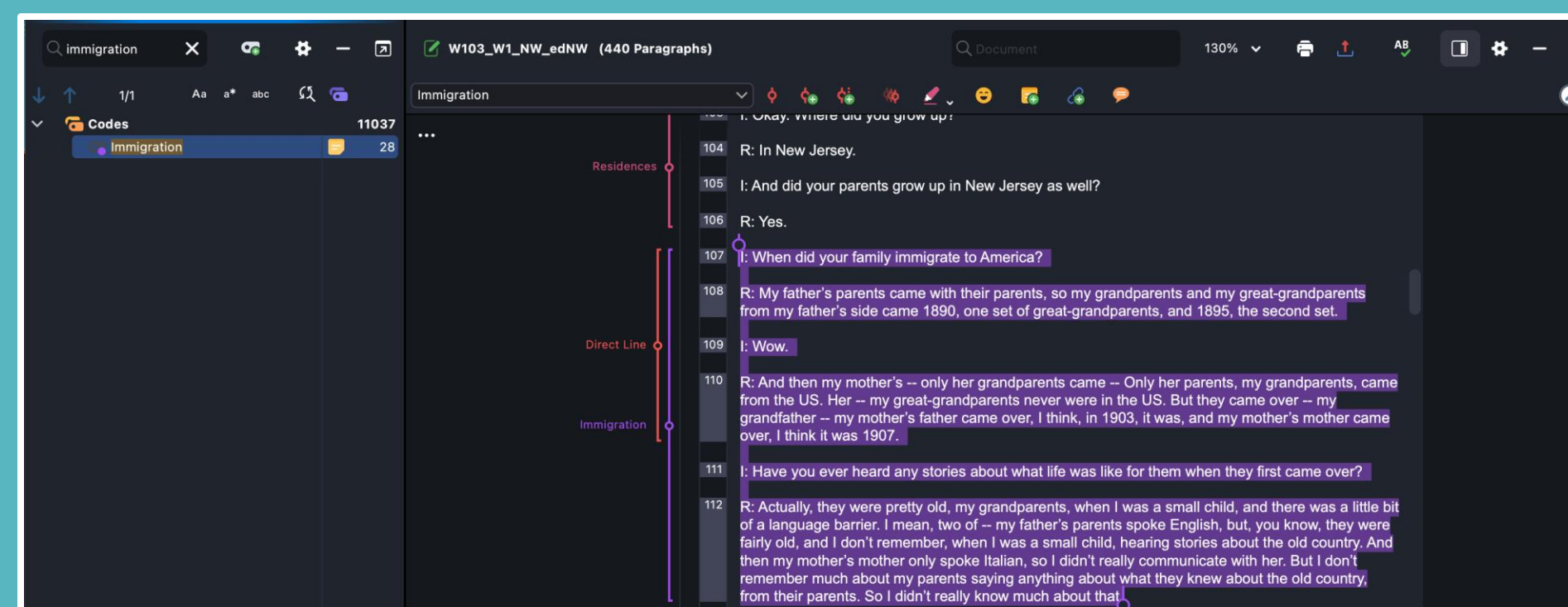
Immigration

Family’s or the respondent’s experiences with immigration and how that may have affected ethnic or racial identity.

- NOTE: If they are talking not about their family specifically, but about general population migration patterns, code that as ‘Human Family’
- A403 Line 330 -351

Example of code employed throughout coding process

- Frequently Used Codes
 - “New” codes → describe new outcomes or behaviors since initial DNA test
 - “Identity” codes → participants express opinion or change in racial/ethnic identity
 - “Long-term” codes → used in W2 interviews to examine behaviors mentioned in W1 interview
- MaxQDA
 - Qualitative data analysis software
 - Offers tools to code and categorize data
 - Makes it easier to identify patterns, themes and relationships within data



The screen in MaxQDA when coding a piece of interview text

Research Project Process

- Early Challenges
 - NVivo software incompatibility
 - Using NVivo through vLab software
 - Solution → switched to MaxQDA
- General Process
 - First meetings: learned coding list, new terms, and software
 - Group coding: looked over same transcript to exchange ideas
 - Peer-review coding: sent transcripts to peers to ensure intercoder reliability
 - Weekly coding meetings: independently coded in group setting



Conclusion

- Next Steps
 - Coded interview transcripts will be used in Roth’s upcoming book:
 - *Through the DNA Looking Glass: The Impact of Genetic Ancestry Testing on Race, Ethnicity and Family*
- Takeaways
 - Familiarity with qualitative research methods
 - Learned to work collaboratively & developed intercoder reliability
 - Gained insights into diverse perspectives on various histories, cultures and identities