Example of Coding and Analysis: Vaccine Blogs and Discussion Boards

**Summary of approach/methods:** We approached the data as narrative data; however, we modified the analytic plan to include other methods to code the data. This made our approach pragmatic—we could describe the stories to best convey meaning to our audience.

Narrative analysis uses the story itself as the object of investigation; and a representation of a succession of “happenings” (organized by time/events). We selected parenting and vaccine specific blogs and discussion boards as this was our particular audience. Narrative methods rely on multiple voices, so blogs and discussion boards were ideal for the topic. Our codes were selected or derived from the data to seek meaning in the content, structure and chronological order of the story, and classified the interactional context (told to others online).

**Summary of data:** We used search terms to search publicly available blogs and discussion boards for qualitative information on childhood vaccine discussions. These data were organized into excel spreadsheets. The deductive codes were driven by the Theory of Planned Behavior and Health Belief Model. Inductive codes were developed through individual and group coding. Individual coding followed by group consensus coding occurred. This was a descriptive study. Data were summarized in tables and quotes.

**Analysis:** We developed an analytic plan that encompassed contradictions—this allowed us to show contrasts in stories as well as similarities for parents who had infants and parents were making decisions about vaccines. By using a narrative lens, we were also able to look at the values that parents held about vaccines through their stories.

**Step 1: Determine codes and develop codebook**

We used theory-driven codes, a priori codes, and codes that emerged from the data.

Examples of codes

- Tone
- Vaccine stance
- Accuracy of information
- Vaccinating self-efficacy
- Severity of vaccine preventable disease
- Severity of vaccine adverse event

We defined the codes either prior to (if theory codes or a priori codes) the coding process or during the coding process for codes that emerged in the data.

**Step 2: Build a data repository**

Since we were using individual coding across multiple people and then coming together as a group for group consensus on the codes, we developed an easy-to-use excel book. (See example attached). This took quite a bit of maintenance and organization, as we had threads of information that made up a blog, and a lot of text to code. Using a drop-down list in excel helped coders to be most efficient. Since individuals first coded the data prior to group coding, the data repository had to be viewable at the individual level and then brought to the group coding meetings. There was one person who managed
the “group” coding decisions and recorded the group consensus codes applied to the data. It was important to have the flexibility to “add” new codes that emerged in the data to the coding process.

**Step 3: Set up a coding schedule and meetings and code the data**

By setting up a schedule, the process moves forward and with group coding, it structures time for team mates to code regularly. Allow time in the timeline to go back over data as a group that was previously coded. We coded weekly after some initial multiple hour meetings to establish codes, definitions and initial pilot testing of the codebook and coding tool. We also revisited previous text to consider our initial coding.

**Step 4: Organize coded data numerically for easy analysis**

After the coding process, the codes were organized into numerical codes. This allowed us to revisit the codes, identify themes, and extract quotes from the data.

**Step 5: Identify themes**

By memoing throughout the coding process as a group, we were able to recall some initial thematic trends in the data, and then use the data to confirm or discount the themes. We also went across the blogs and discussion board data to identify themes.

**Step 6: Look for quotes to support themes and code results**

We used the coded data to find quotes that illustrated contrasts in the data and to support themes found in the data.