

Qualitative Coding using Atlas.ti



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APRIL 24, 2019**

What is Qualitative Coding?



- Coding is a way of indexing or categorizing the data in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it.
- Put another way, it's “how you define what the data you are analyzing are about” (Gibbs 2007).
- The codes which are applied enable you to organize data so you can examine and analyze them in a structured way (including the relationship between codes). Therefore, coding is not just labeling; it is linking from the data to the idea and back to other data.

Some Coding Terminology



- Codes – short hand notation for labels or themes that you see in the data
- Coding – the act of linking themes/codes with passages of qualitative data
- Codebooks – lists of codes and definitions of codes

Some More Coding Terminology



- The theoretical approach to coding:
 - Deductive vs. Inductive
- The methodological type of coding:
 - Attribute coding
 - Descriptive coding
 - Structural coding
 - In Vivo coding
 - Process coding
 - Topic coding

Let's Practice Coding!



- What you're looking for depends on the goals of your study:
 - Think about the various things in your data you can code: behaviors, interactions, emotions, settings, quantities of things, processes, outcomes, relationships, skills/abilities, challenges, perceptions, etc.
- You have 1 page of an interview transcript about a student enrolled in a peer mentoring course. Take 5 minutes and code the text by hand in the margins.

Software is Essential for Large Projects



- It allows you to store vast amounts of qualitative data
- It facilitates the meaningful organization of that data – similar to a filing system
- The computer does the work of remembering everything, and transporting everything (bins full of files with post-its everywhere)
- It provides rapid quantification
- Studies can be changed or adapted more efficiently
- Analytical relationships and reports can be generated

Uploading Data in a Meaningful Way



- Naming and Organizing your data/transcripts in a meaningful way from the beginning is key
- Maybe you have interviews from multiple sources (veterans and their partners, children, and clinicians) about coping with PTSD. How might you name and upload your transcripts?
- So, the data itself can be segmented or structured in a way that facilitates your analysis

Let's Take a Look at the Interface

EMR Qualitative Analysis - ATLAS.ti

File Edit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Views Tools Extras A-Docs Windows Help

P-Docs P 9: 2011-04-15 C Quotes 1:1 TS: What can: Codes Appt type: geriat Memos

07
08 Patient #1: 3mo 2wk baby, mother, father
09 Doc asks mother if back to work, how it's affecting
10 breast feeding pumping schedule
11 Doc asks how long mother plans to breastfeed-notes on form
12 Doc sitting at desk w/ computer terminal + paper Well Child Assessment Form, facing
13 mother w/ baby
14 Father sits on table, saying some observations about baby, email on Blackberry
15 Doc gives lots of advice about putting to sleep, no notes in form
16 Doc asks about other concerns; doc say drooling fine, no note
17 Doc opens growth chant on opposite page of chart,
18 plots height ("length") and weight, notes percentile on form
19 Doc searches uptodate.com for Sudafed affects on breastfeeding
20 Searches by generic name pseudoephedrine, then no results, then
21 searches prefix pseudo to find exact match

Appt type: well child exam
Doc asks patient about lifestyle
Doc writes exam notes during exam
Doc suggests lifestyle change
Doc asks patient open-ended question
Doc writes exam notes during exam
Doc uses public app or website

P 9: 2011-04-15 <HUPATH>\Primary documents\2011-04-15 Size: 100% Text Default

2nd Cycle Coding (Lumpers vs. Splitters)



- After your initial round of coding you may decide to combine or split codes (make a larger, broader post-it or many smaller, more detailed post-its).
- **Lumping**
 - Collapse original number of 1st cycle codes into smaller numbers
 - Find larger segments of text are better suited to just one key code rather than several smaller ones (Codes 1 and 2 become CODE A)
- **Splitting**
 - Expand original number of 1st cycle codes into larger numbers
 - Find segments of text are better suited in smaller codes rather than a larger, more generalized code (CODE 1 becomes Codes A, B, and C)

Tips and Considerations



- Always export and save your work (some folks do this after every coding session; others once a week – do what feels comfortable for you)
- Highly recommend investing in a second screen so you can have coding manager open on one screen and data on the other (speeds up the process)
- It helps to have a contact who knows the software so you can run questions by them

More Tips and Considerations



- When choosing a software package (Atlas.ti, NVivo, MAXQDA, Dedoose, etc.), consider cost, availability of software, local knowledge base, online tools and support, and the output options (reports)
- Atlas.ti has numerous YouTube videos on how to use the tool, training webinars, a regular newsletter, and regional trainers who can be consulted (usually for a fee)
- There's even a textbook: Friese, Susanne. 2019. *Qualitative Data Analysis with Atlas.ti, 3rd Edition*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.