Qualitative Coding using Atlas.ti

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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 qualitativfe 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.

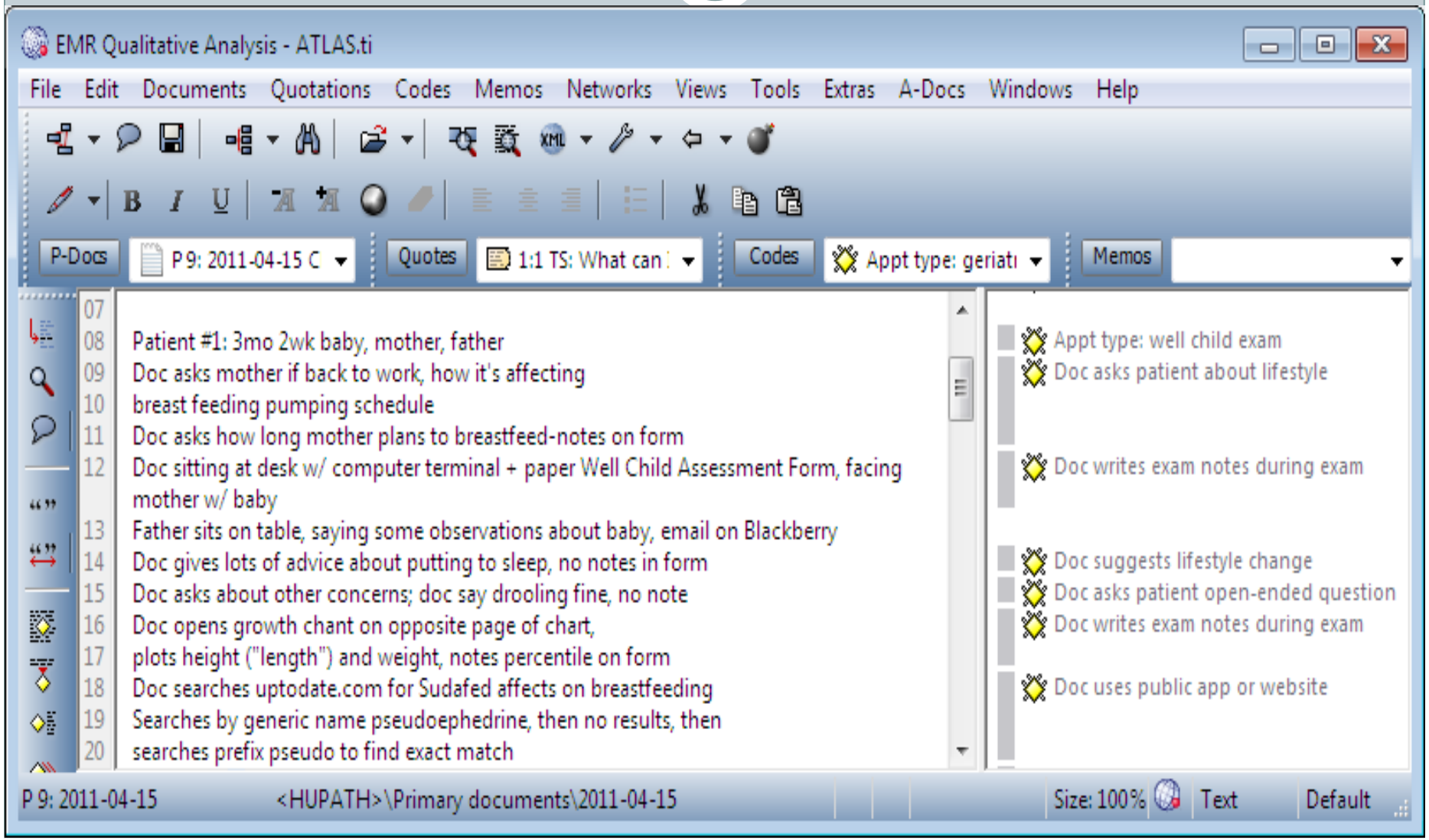
Software is Essential for Large Projects

- 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



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 (Atlast.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.