WHAT IS...
SOFTWARE-ASSISTED QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS?

Sanna Herkama (sanna.herkama@utu.fi)
Senior Researcher, PhD, University of Turku

Anne Laajalahti (anne.laajalahti@jyu.fi)
Post-doctoral Researcher, PhD, University of Jyväskylä

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QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS IN PRACTISE:
"TRADITIONAL” OR COMPUTER ASSISTED ANALYSIS?

• Should I go for a traditional way of analyzing research material?
  • paper prints and coloring, copy-paste procedures, hanging papers on the wall, post-it tags…

• Should I use Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)?
  • ATLAS.ti, NVivo, Nudist, Ethnograph, AnSWR, HyperRESEARCH, winMAX, MAXQDA, Transana, RQDA, CAT (Coding Analysis Toolkit), TAMS Analyser…
WHEN TO USE COMPUTER SOFTWARE TO ASSIST QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS?

• Consider, for example,
  • the size of the research material.
  • the structure of the research material.
  • the aims of the current study.
  • the research questions, designs, and analysis methods characteristic to your own field of study.
  • your own attitudes towards computer programs in general and readiness to learn new things.
  • availability of the possible software and the support (technical and methodological!) for its usage in your research community.

WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH CAQDAS (e.g. ATLAS.ti)?

• Explore various types of research material
  (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, and video documents)
• Organize and save research material
• Mark and analyze data segments (that is coding)
• Save ideas and thinking process
• Visualize abstract or theoretical ideas
• Create relationships
• Make comparisons
• Increase transparency and credibility of the research process by proceeding systematically and documenting the process
WHAT YOU CAN'T DO WITH CAQDAS (e.g. ATLAS.ti)?

Researcher is searching for meanings, a computer for character strings.
Cheers to that small (?) of a difference!
(Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 206)

Unclear research problem or vague analytical approach is not solved by the assistance of a qualitative data software.
(Jolanki & Karhunen 2010, 404)

Researcher is still the key to successful analysis, not the computer software!

CODING – WHAT IS IT?

• Classifying, categorizing, creating nodes, coding…
  • Finding, marking, and labeling of the essential data segments from the perspective of the research task / problem

• Questions to be considered
  • Whether to “let the codes to emerge” during the analysis process or use ready-made lists of codes?
  • To which extend should one try to identify presumptions and to “stay tuned” for new openings?
  • Inductive, abductive, or deductive way of thinking and working?
  • From large scale to smaller one or the other way around?
FROM CODING TO INTERPRETATION!

“Coding is already part of the analysis!”

“Codes demand interpretation!”

LITERATURE REVIEW – WORK IN PROGRESS

• Systematic literature review (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011)

• Emphasis on, for example:
  • the general role of utilizing QDA software
  • the methodological traditions mentioned
  • the main benefits and limitations of the usage of QDA software
USING CAQDAS (e.g. ATLAS.ti) – BENEFITS

- The administration and organization of qualitative research material eases.
- Several types of research materials can be analyzed at the same time or only one part of the research material can be chosen for the analysis.
- The actual analysis that is coding is fairly simple to perform.
- Quotations can be easily searched and copy-pasted to a final research report.
- Abstract ideas and connections between concepts can be visualized.
- Remarks, thoughts, and comments can be saved and archived.
- The amount of potential mistakes decreases.
- The consistency and transparency of the analysis process increase.
- Might deepen the researcher reflexivity (Woods, Macklin, & Lewis 2015).

- At best CAQDAS (e.g. ATLAS.ti) can be a device for thinking!

USING CAQDAS (e.g. ATLAS.ti) – CHALLENGES

- Qualitative analysis is (at times) handcraft and it will be so even if software is being used!
  - The program is not doing the analysis for you but instead it assists you doing the analysis!
  - The usage of CAQDAS does not equal to quality nor to credibility.
- Be aware of the basic logics the software is being based on!
  - You might not need all the options available.
- The codes created do not equal to insightful qualitative analysis!
  - Do I see the forest for the trees?
  - Do not let yourself get lost! ("Mess of codes", "Code jungle", "Drowning in codes"…)
  - You may still need to think over again! Interpret!
- Beginning might be hard!
  - Do not stop too early!
  - Do not give up!
  - Do not hesitate to try out! Be creative!
... AND FROM WHERE COULD I GET IT?

- Availability may differ between universities.
- Free demo version available (ATLAS.ti 7)
- ATLAS.ti 4 (old in many ways)
- ATLAS.ti 5 and 6 (working still quite well)
- ATLAS.ti 7 (in use, for example, at the University of Jyväskylä and University of Tampere)
- ATLAS.ti 8 (will be released later in 2015)
  - Note: Support for the older Version 6 ends with the release of ATLAS.ti 8. Upgrade to ATLAS.ti 7 now and get v.8 free of charge later this year.
- Used to be only for Windows; now also for Mac and Mobile for the iPad and Android

SOME TIPS: RELATED WEBSITES, GUIDES, AND LEARNING MATERIALS

- ATLAS.ti – official website:
  - [http://www.atlasti.com](http://www.atlasti.com)
- The program’s internal guide in PDF format etc.:
  - See: Help > ATLAS.ti Help and Help > More Resources > Open Manual / Contact Support
- Official Facebook community:
FURTHER READINGS, e.g.

- Friese, S. (2012). Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti. London: Sage. (For v.6)
- Friese, S. (2014). Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti. 2nd ed. London: Sage. (For v.7)

REFERENCES