Choosing Qualitative Software

Debby Kermer, Data Services Research Consultant
University Libraries, Digital Scholarship Center
https://dsc.gmu.edu

Digital Scholarship Center

dsc.gmu.edu

https://dsc.gmu.edu/workshops/

- Software Workshops
- Consultations
- Troubleshooting Help
- Data Management Plans

datahelp@gmu.edu

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What is Qualitative Software?

Computer **A**ssisted
Qualitative **D**ata **A**nalysis **S**oftware
CAQDAS or **QDAS**

https://**infoguides**.gmu.edu/**qual/software**

People to Know:

Dr. Christina Silver, CAQDAS Networking Project
https://www.surrey.ac.uk/computer-assisted-qualitative-data-analysis

Dr. Susanne Friese, Qeluda
https://www.qeludra.com/

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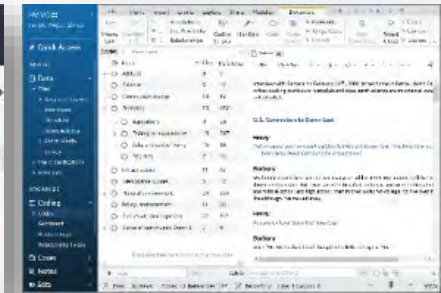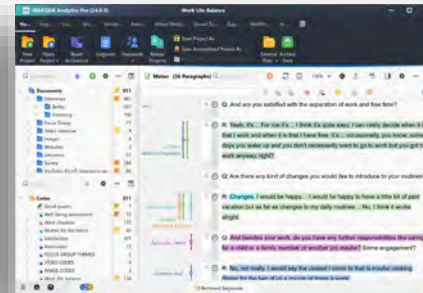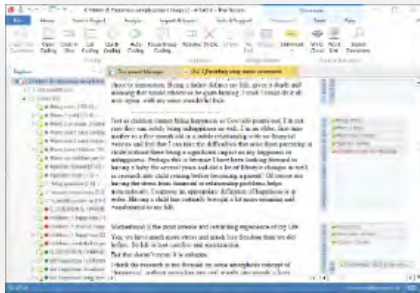# Qualitative Software Options
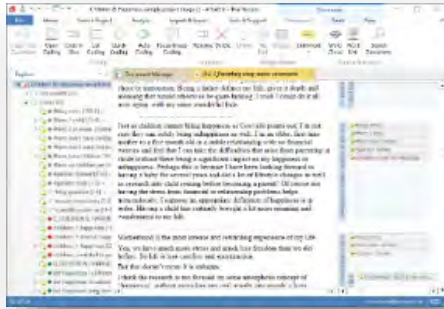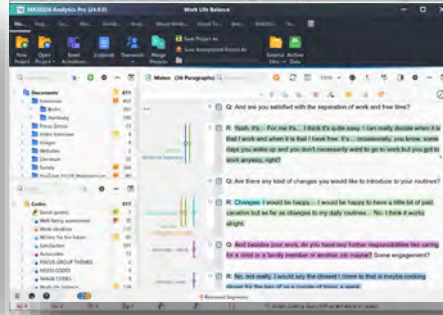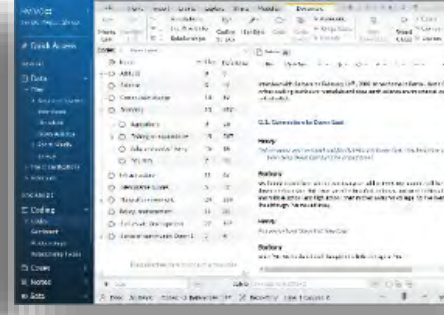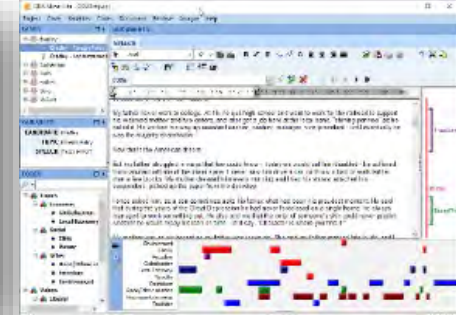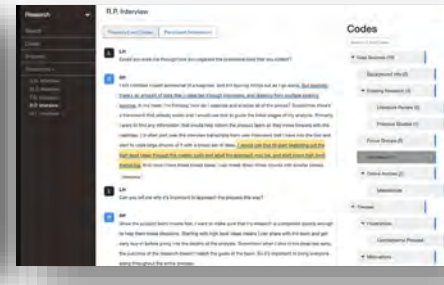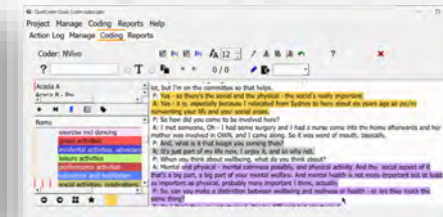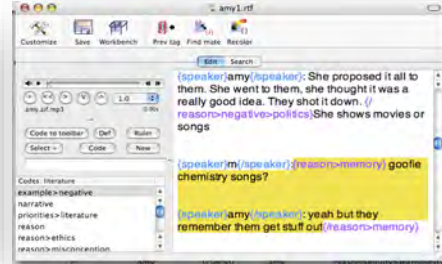
The 4 most popular

ATLAS.ti   dedoose   MAXQDA   NVIVO

These all have:
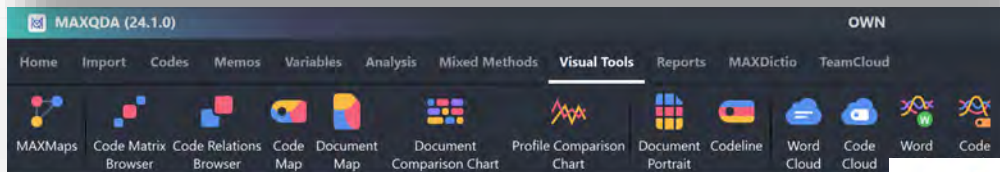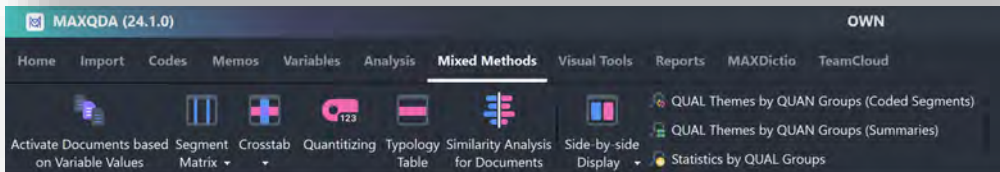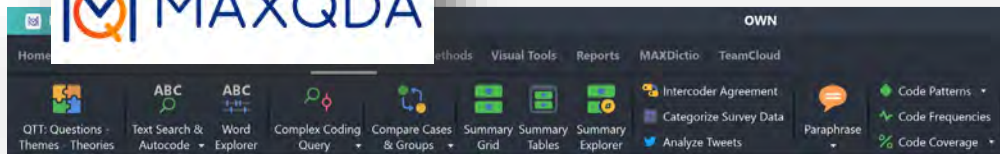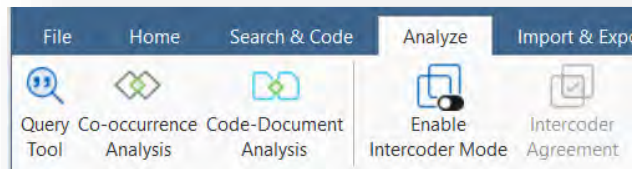
• The same core functions

• Great documentation / tutorials

• Free trial periods

• Sample/Demo projects

• REFI Exchange format

Choose transcription software separately.

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Interface Differences
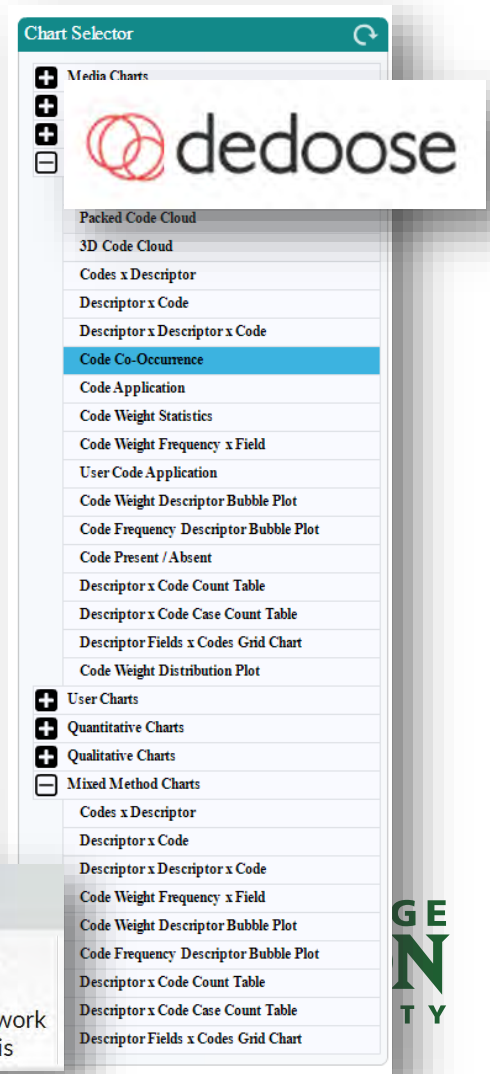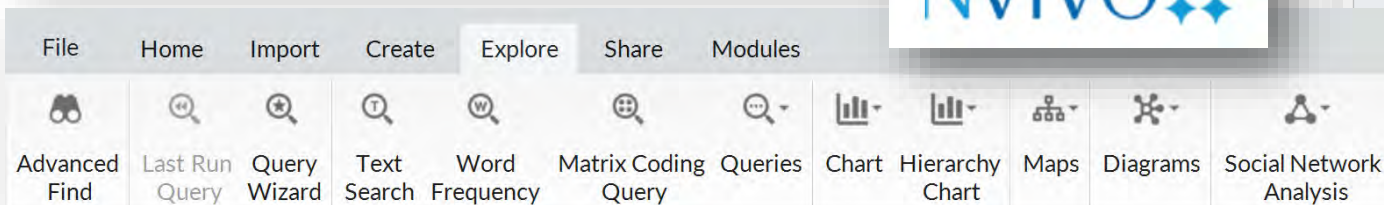
Foundations

- Operating System

- Language

- Data Types

- Automation

- Cost

- Teams

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Operating System

- All support both Mac/OSX and Windows
    - **NVivo** has several major differences (interface, file type)
        - Avoid if compatibility is relevant (e.g., teams).
    - **ATLAS.ti** has minor differences

- **Dedoose** is equivalent to a web app
    - But, you must download a desktop application.
    - It also supports Linux and Chromebook.
    - *Always consider privacy with web applications.*

Languages

- Data
  - All support Unicode
  - **NVivo** does NOT support Right-to-Left Languages

- Analytics and Automated tools
  - Check before choosing

- Researcher
  - **MAXQDA** has the most interface translations, plus tutorial videos in Spanish, German, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, and Polish

Data Types

Universal Support

- Plain Text
- Word Documents
- PDFs

These also support

- Spreadsheets / Survey data *
- Images
- Audio
- Video
- All **but Dedoose** have special importers for other softwares.

* All **but NVivo** spreadsheet rows as individual documents (coded by row id and question).

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Automated Features / AI

	ATLAS.ti	dedoose	MAXQDA	NVIVO
Identify Themes	✅	❌	✅	✅
Auto-code based on hand coding	❌	❌	❌	✅
Summarize	✅	❌	✅	❌
Paraphrase / Explain	❌	❌	✅	❌
Interactive AI – ask questions, inferences	✅	❌	❌	❌
Uses OpenAI model (sends data to cloud)	✅	❌	✅	❌

✅ *unique feature*

Cost

Approximate pricing	ATLAS.ti	dedoose	MAXQDA	NVIVO
Faculty	$350 / yr	$18 / **month**	$250 * / yr	$1,000 / **perpetual**
Multi-year / yr	$250	$200	$180 *	
Student	$115 / 2yr	$13 / **month**	$100 / 2yr	$120 / **yr**
6 mo	$60	$65 *	$50	
Cost to view?	**No**	**Yes**	Free Reader	**Yes**

* MAXQDA - add $120 / yr for unlimited AI Assist

* Dedoose – with 30 day free trial

see also https://gmu.libanswers.com/disc/faq/398979

Teams

Licenses

- **ATLAS.ti**'s non-student licenses allow multiple users (non-concurrent)

Project Transfer / Cloud Storage

- **Dedoose** has real-time collaboration built-in
- Others offer for additional cost

Comparing Coding

- Combining and reviewing coding
- Calculating Kappa for Inter-rater Reliability

see also https://gmu.libanswers.com/disc/faq/401787

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Core QDAS Functions

- **Code** (apply "codes" to) segments of text

- **Retrieve** the segments of text assigned to a code

Coding
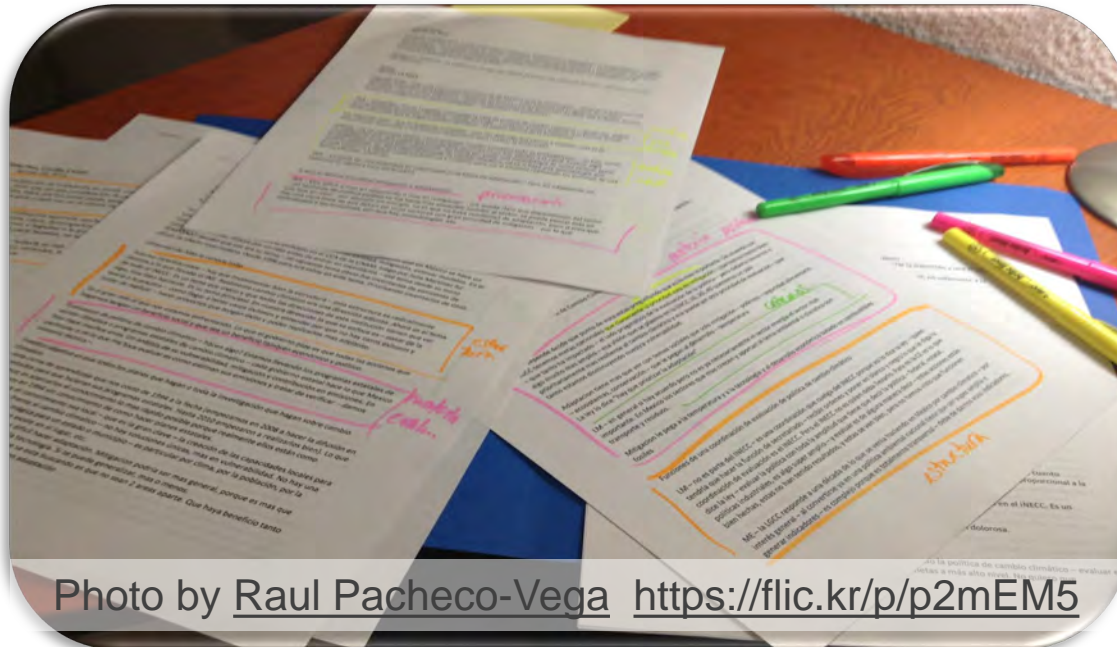
Photo by Raul Pacheco-Vega https://flic.kr/p/p2mEM5

ATLAS.ti	dedoose	MAXQDA	NVIVO
Document	Media	Document	File
Code	Code	Code	Code
Quotation	Excerpt	Segment	Reference

Computer Coding

Navigation   Open Document   Coding

Coding Interface

Viewing Document Coding
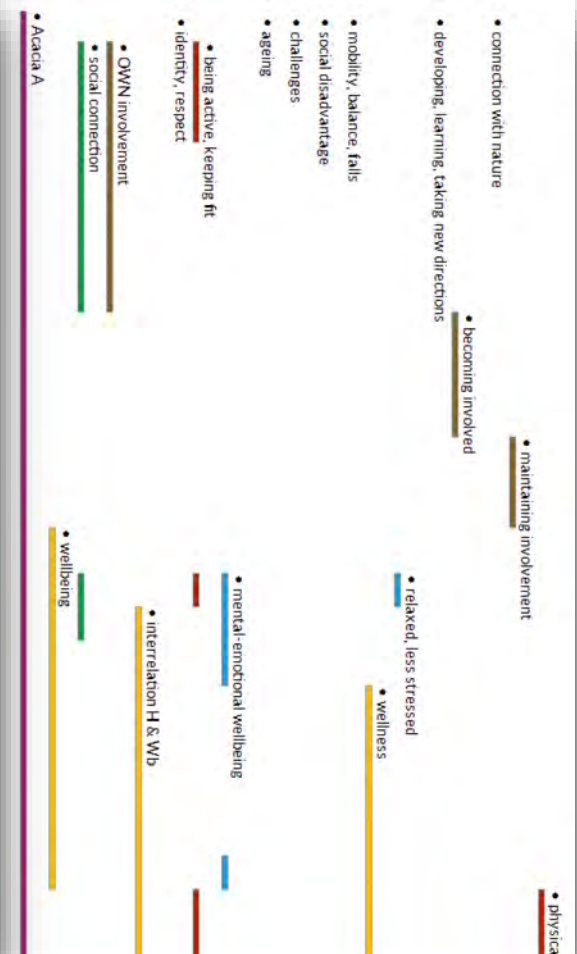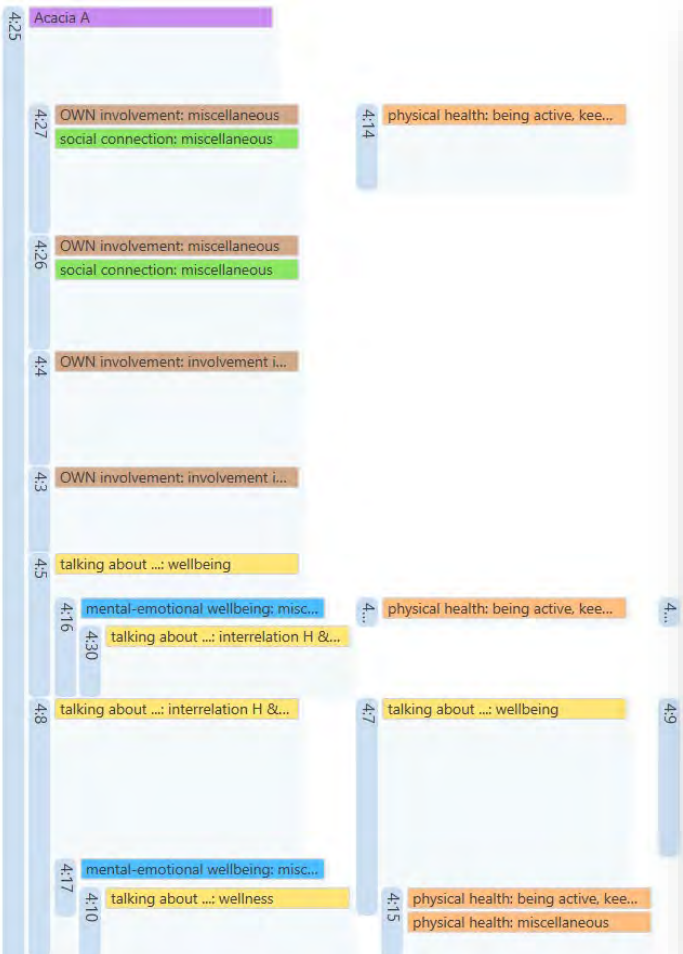
Retrieve, Search, Filter, Query

Demographic Grouping

RN
A
C
D

<2 yrs
A
E

Dr
B
E
F

10+ yrs
C
F
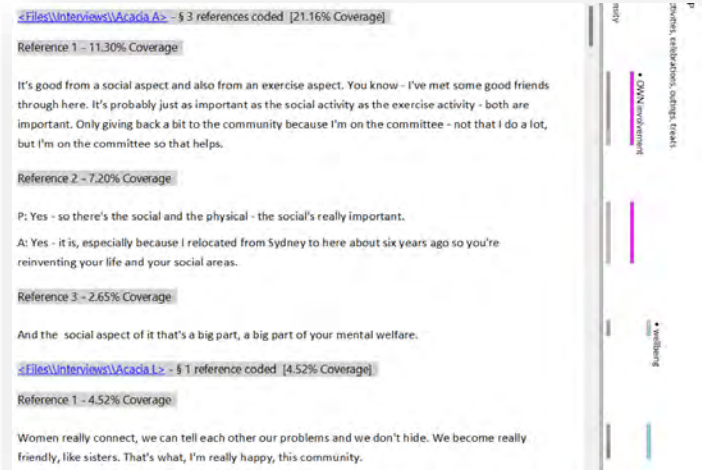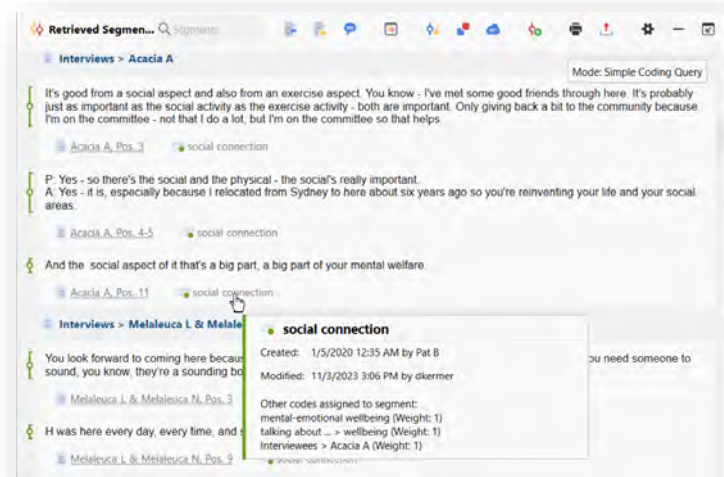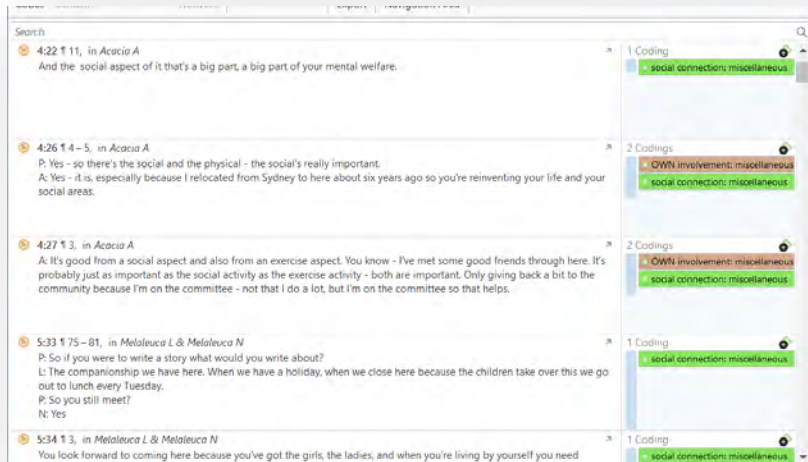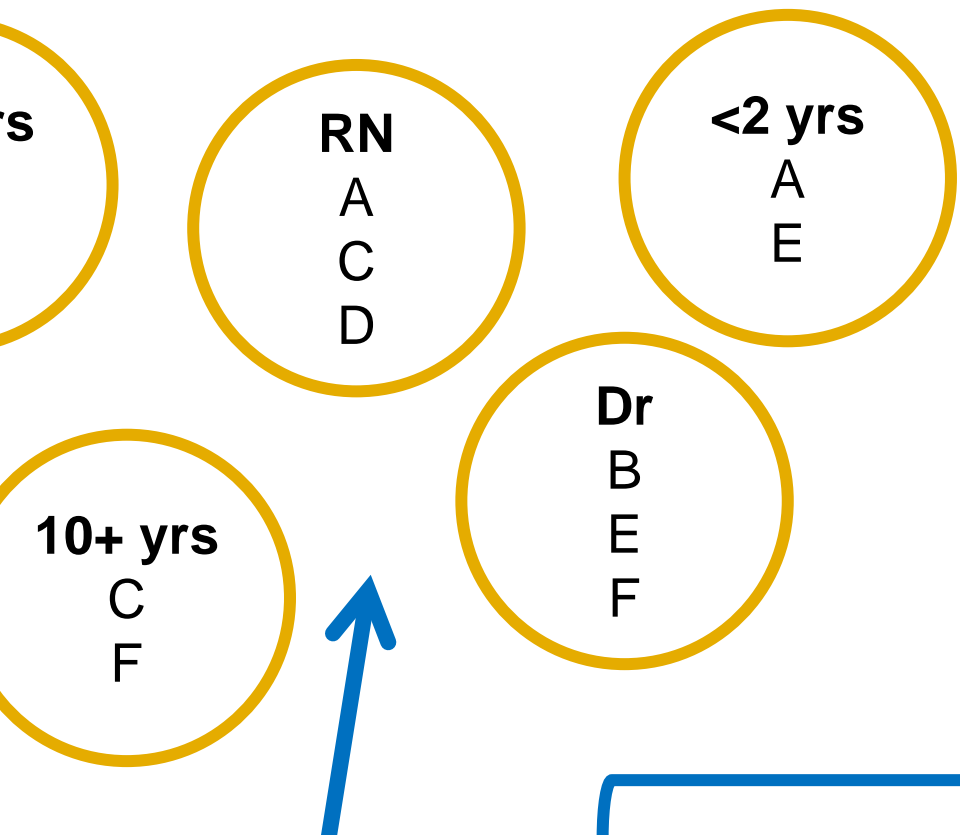
ID	Job	Years	…
A	RN	< 2	…
B	Dr	2-5	…
C	RN	10+	…
D	RN	6-9	…
E	Dr	< 2	…
F	Dr	10+	…

ATLAS.ti	dedoose	MAXQDA	NVIVO
Code Group	Descriptor	Variable	Attribute
	Descriptor Set		Classification

What Represents a Person?

- Everything in a single document

- Parts of a single document
  - Dedoose: must copy focus group transcripts
  - MAXQDA special tools → Speaker

- Anything in a particular code
  - Not available in Dedoose
  - NVivo special tools → Case

Matricies

- Code x Code

- Code x Document

- Aggregate either by group (e.g., demographic, parent code)

Memoing

- **What** can be commented on

- **Separation** of different types of comments (e.g., paraphrase)

- **Visibility** of comments

ATLAS.ti	dedoose	MAXQDA	NVIVO
Memos, Comments, Quotation Names	Memos	Memos, Comments, Paraphrases	Memos, Annotations, See also links

Extra Features

- Networks / Relationships
    - Atlas.ti Desktop = Networks, Relations, Links
    - NVivo = Relationships, Relationship Types, Network Sociogram

- Mind Mapping / Drawing
    - MAXQDA = MAXMaps, Creative Coding
    - NVivo = Project map

- Special Note Taking
    - MAXQDA = QTT – Questions, Themes, Theories
    - NVivo = Framework Matrices

Software
Features & Limitations

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@ ATLAS.ti Web

- Great choice for simple small projects (≤ 20 text documents)

- Fewer features and thus easy to learn, all the basics

- Monthly pricing, or included with ATLAS.ti Desktop licenses.
  - Students = $10 / month
  - Faculty = $24 / month

- Cannot hide others coding.

https://infoguides.gmu.edu/qual/atlasti-web

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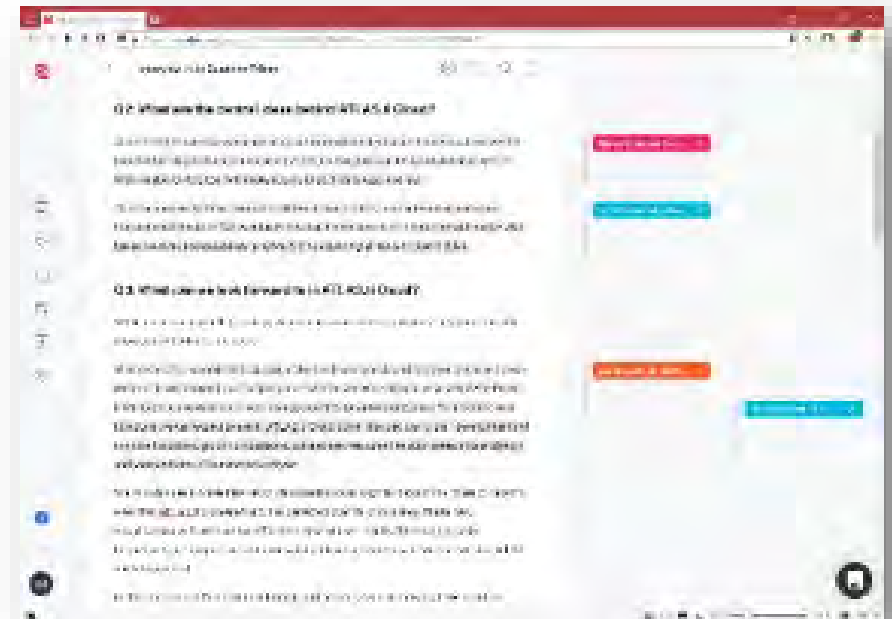
Unique Features

- Nice dashboard view
- Menu of queries
- Coded text is always colored
- Code weighting

Recap

- Web-based, all OS supported (though requires installation)

Limitations

- Coded text is always colored
- Must use test feature for multi-coder reliability (kappa)
- No direct import of reference manager articles/data

Recap

- To utilize descriptors for focus groups, must copy transcripts
- Cannot view project without a license

MAXQDA

Unique Features

- Identical on Mac & PC
- Quickest code-document queries with activation
- Colored highlighting and emoji's(!)
- Great for summarizing (+ AI)
- Code weighting

Recap

- Separate paraphrasing, commenting, and memoing

Limitations

- Overly complicated menus
- Unimpressive visualizations
- Non-standard toolbar and right click menus

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ATLAS.ti

Unique Features

- **Comments** are pervasive
- Straightforward interface
- Good visualizations
- Code Networks and Links
- Most AI features

Recap

- **Free demo mode**, easy to view project w/out license
- Non-student **licenses are multi-user**/concurrent

Limitations

- Interface can get cluttered
    - Best for grounded theory.
- Cannot choose where project file is stored. Must export.

Recap

- **Grouping limited** to document and code groups and code folders. (no variables)

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NVIVO

Unique Features

- Most grouping options (e.g., folders) for large or combined projects
- Most clean interface
- Selective code aggregation
- Can redo saved searches

Recap

- All data in native form
- Most intuitive characteristics tools (Cases)

Limitations

- Memos not well integrated
- Promotes 3D Graphs

Recap

- Does not handle RTL Languages (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew)
- Different on Mac & PC
- Expensive, no view only

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Questions?

https://infoguides.gmu.edu/qual

https://dsc.gmu.edu

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