Introduction to Atlas.ti
October 17, 2008

Yuki Kato
Tulane University
ykato@tulane.edu

Danielle S. Rudes
George Mason University
drudes@gmu.edu

The Atlas state-of-mind

- Best designed for grounded theory
- Most flexible of all qualitative software programs and thus the most challenging to learn
- Not an analysis program; it's a concept database

Quick Review of Grounded Theory

- Inductive data analysis process
- Systematic coding of data
  - Codes constructed from ground up
  - Codes modified/combined throughout process
  - Many types of data

(Glaser and Strauss)
Slide 4

How Atlas.ti works

- **Built on low-level tools.**
  - We are used to having one button do everything for us, but in Atlas.ti we need to work through what we want step by step.
- There are multiple ways of doing one thing.
- It is able to do everything at once—no sequencing is required.
- **Designed for “grounded theory” procedures.**
  - Allows for the analysis to unfold and change as you go.
  - Annotate everything—as you go.

Slide 5

Unstructured data

- **QUOTATIONS:** breaking data into chunks
- **CODING:** conceptualizing each data chunk
- **WRITING:** memos (lists) & comments (ideas)

Slide 6

Some orientating terms

- **HU:** Hermeneutic unit = your project file. Each HU contains four main objects.
  - **PD:** primary document = your documents
  - **Quotation:** units of data, meaningful units, segments of data you select
  - **Codes:** names of concepts that your project contains
  - **Memos:** a way to annotate your project that exists as an object itself
Slide 7

**Atlas.ti and Data**

- Atlas does not download the data, it only accesses the data in another location.
- What gets saved in Atlas.ti is...
  - Codes/Links/Memo you create under an HU
- HU is a file that links the data and the information about the analysis.

- HU and Teamwork
  - HU can be shared among team members.
  - Multiple copies of HU can be made and merged later.

- Important note: You cannot change your original document once you’ve begun coding it.

Slide 8

**The PD and the HU**

- The HU is a small file that keeps links to all your PDs and the information about the analysis.
- Once you’ve created an HU, you’ll want to link Primary Documents to it.
- Important note: You cannot change your original document once you’ve begun coding it.

Slide 9

**HU and Teamwork**

- HU is a single user file.
- You can make multiple copies of the HU, name them separately and merge later.
- PDs have to be in same order in each HU copy for successful merge to occur.
RG asks him [the parolee Joe] if he is dirty. Joe hangs his head to his chest and replies yes in almost a whisper/mumble. RG says “Joe, Joe, Joe…what are we going to do with you?” Joe looks down the street and again mumbles “I know, I know”. RG tells him that they’ve been down this road many times before and he says “at the risk of sounding like a broken record, you gotta stop using Joe”. Joe nods his head yes, still looking down the street, away from RG.

**Sample Quotations**

**Quotation 1**

**Quotation 2**

**Quotation 3**

**Quotation as a unit**

**UC** = a quotation

**search**

@ **UCI**

**UC** = a quotation

**Coding quotations**

**CODES**

- Drug use
- Parole violation
- Home visit
- Parole agent rapport
Memo

I've noticed that there are times when parole agents have a seemingly parental relationship with one or more parolees on their caseload. I've seen agents take a paternalistic role and act as if they are the parents of the parolees. For example, RG asks him [the parolee Joe] if he is dirty. Joe hangs his head to his chest and replies yes in almost a whisper. RG says, "Joe, Joe, Joe…what are we going to do with you?" Joe looks down the street and again mumbles "I know, I know." RG tells him that they've been down this road many times before and he says "at the risk of sounding like a broken record, you gotta stop using Joe". Joe nods his head yes, still looking down the street, away from RG.

I've noticed that there are times when parole agents have a seemingly parental relationship with one or more parolees on their caseload. I'd like to look into literature on roles and rapport in case work. Additionally, I'd like to look into some of the issues faced by the Hennepin County Restoring Confidence in Case Organizations (RCO) in their restoration of trust and confidence in the parole system.

Adaptive place

This code applies to both temporarily and permanently appropriated social space for activities that diverge from the intended use of the space but does not disturb others.

Atlas.ti in a nutshell...

You will primarily use Atlas.ti to: break your primary documents down into quotations; code the quotations; link the codes in networks; navigate around your work using the query tool; and take notes as you go using memos and comments.
Slide 16

Networks

- Pictorial images of codes (and sometimes other objects)
- Used for analysis and developing theories

Example:

\[\text{Example of a network diagram.}\]

Slide 17

Query/Supercodes

**Query**: search tool

**Example 1**:

**Example 2**:  
- [adaptive place] AND [loiter] NOT [adult supervision]

**Supercode**: saved query (for repeated uses)

Slide 18

Families (a code filtering tool)

- **Codes**
  - Blatant disregard
  - Subtle disregard
  - Look other way
  - Monkey wrench
  - Incite anger
  - Gossip
  - Cheat the system
  - Lie
  - Reduce effort

- **Family**
  - Workplace Resistance
Slide 19

Hyperlinks

1. Linking of quotations to simplify the analysis
2. Connecting distant quotations
3. Grouping several quotations to count as one
4. Linking quotations across PD

D = Hyperlink

Slide 20

Outputs

5 Key Outputs (and more possible)
1. Quotations for a selected code
2. Codes-PD Table
3. Networks
4. Print text with margin
5. SPSS

Slide 21

Excel Coding Frequency Table (output) example:
- Counts by code by PD
Slide 22

Any questions?

Slide 23

Preparing for using Atlas.ti

- If you're interested in trying it out, you can go to [www.atlasti.com](http://www.atlasti.com) and download a free trial version or buy a copy for yourself.
- Start a new HU using some field notes or a few stored heap file notes from a previous project or any Word documents. (Just start with a few field notes. Don't start with a heap file until it's not problematic.) If you don't have any field notes, it's OK. Atlas will supply you with a simple HU with fields to play with.
- Relax and have fun! Once you learn it, you'll LOVE it.

Slide 24

Thank you!