MAXDAYS
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Online MAXQDA workshops coming up...
https://www.qdaservices.co.uk/events

20 & 21 April – Thematic Analysis using MAXQDA
9th -12th May – Qualitative Text Analysis using Digital Tools (MAXQDA)
19th & 20th June – Doing Evidence Reviews using MAXQDA

Spotlight : Doing Thematic Analysis using MAXQDA

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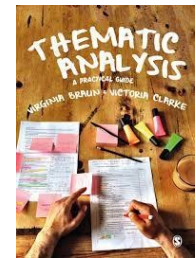www.qdaservices.co.uk   christina.silver@qdaservices.co.uk

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Thematic analysis

- Many different TA approaches – long history
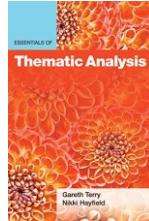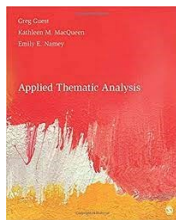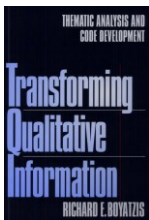
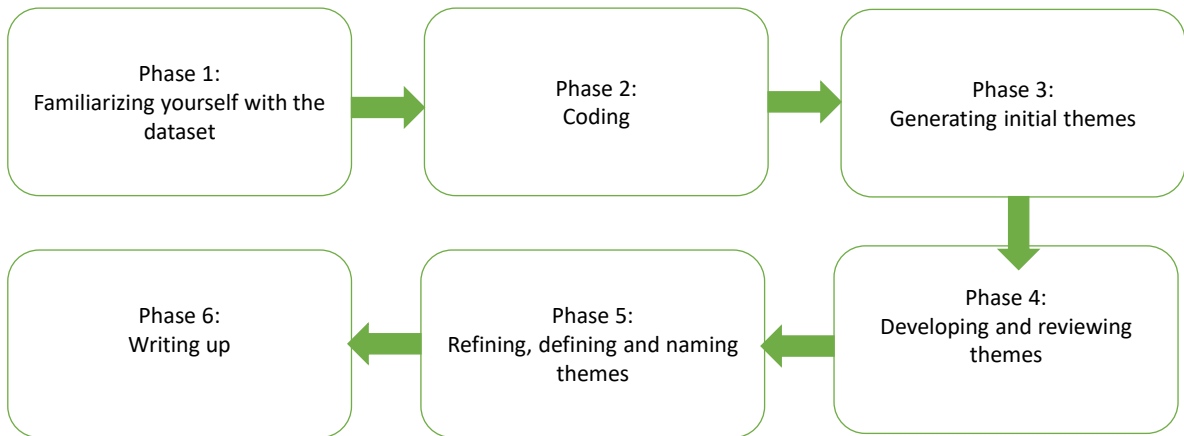- Popularized by Braun & Clarke from 2006

  - Their latest book published 2021

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6 phases of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2021)

| Phase 1:
Familiarizing yourself with the dataset | → | Phase 2:
Coding | → | Phase 3:
Generating initial themes |

| Phase 6:
Writing up | ← | Phase 5:
Refining, defining and naming themes | ← | Phase 4:
Developing and reviewing themes |

04.03.2023

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Today…

powerup your thematic analysis

how can we harness MAXQDA tools powerfully for tasks involved in thematic analysis…?

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Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with the dataset

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the dataset. Here, you become deeply and intimately familiar with the content of your dataset, through a process of immersion. Practically, this involves reading and re-reading your data (and, if working with transcripts of audio data, listening to the recordings at least once), and making (brief) notes about any analytic ideas or insights you may have, both related to each **data item** and the dataset as a whole.

Braun & Clarke 2021:35

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Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with the dataset

How can MAXQDA help?

- 'immersion' = working at the data-level
  - Can happen slow, low or fast, high

- Reading and re-reading (slow, low)
  - HIGHLIGHTING (before import or after)
- Reading and re-reading (fast, high)
  - MAXDICTIO TOOLS (Word Frequencies, Word Combinations, Interactive Word Tree)

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Phase 1: familiarising yourself with the dataset

- Making (brief) notes about analytic ideas
  - Related to each data item: PARAPHRASES, COMMENTS
  - Relates to the dataset as a whole: MEMOS

- Visualising those notes
  - At the data level (margin view)
  - Gathered together (via codes)
  - Exporting

How can MAXQDA help?

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Phase 2: coding

Phase 2: Coding. Here, you work systematically through your dataset in a fine-grained way. You identify segments of data that appear potentially interesting, relevant or meaningful for your research question, and apply pithy, analytically-meaningful descriptions (**code labels**) to them. Your focus is specific, and detailed, with coding aimed at capturing single meanings or concepts. In reflexive TA, you can code at a range of *levels* - from the very explicit or surface meaning (we and many others term this **semantic**), through to the more conceptual or implicit meaning (we and others term this **latent**). Coding isn't *just* about summarising and reducing content, it's also about capturing your 'analytic take' on the data. You code the entire dataset, systematically and thoroughly. When done, you collate your code labels and then compile the relevant segments of data for each code.

Braun & Clarke 2021:35

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Phase 2: coding

- Building on Phase 1 work – **continuation not separate**
  - Categorize paraphrases
  - And/Or...code separately from paraphrasing
- **Capturing 'analytic meaning' – *beyond code labels***
  - colour, sets, hierarchy, memos
- **Collate code labels then compile data segments**
  - This happens as part of the coding process when working in MAXQDA – doesn't need to be a separate step! This allows for continual retrieval/review/recoding - ITERATION

How can MAXQDA help?

Auto-coding may also have a place...

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Phase 3: generating initial themes

Phase 3: Generating initial themes. Here, you aim to start identifying shared patterned meaning *across* the dataset. You compile clusters of codes that seem to share a core idea or concept, and which *might* provide a meaningful 'answer' to your research question. Although we originally identified this phase as *searching for themes*, that language can be misleading: the process is not like an excavation, where meaning is lying there, waiting to be uncovered and discovered through the right search technique. Rather, theme development is an active process; themes are constructed by the researcher, based around the data, the research questions, and the researcher's knowledge and insights. Where codes typically capture a specific or a particular meaning, themes describe broader, shared meanings. Once you've identified potential or *candidate* themes that you feel capture the data and address your research question, you collate all coded data relevant to each **candidate theme**.

Braun & Clarke 2021:35

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Phase 3: generating initial themes

How can MAXQDA help?

- **Identify shared patterned meaning across the dataset**
  - Sub-code statistics, Code Matrix Browser, Code Relations Browser, Crosstabs, Summary Tables,
- **Compile clusters of codes**
  - Code hierarchies, Code sets, Maps, Creative Coding
- **Collate all coded data relevant to each candidate theme**
  - Happens incrementally as carry out earlier tasks

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Phase 4: developing and reviewing themes

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes. Here, your task is to assess the initial fit of your provisional candidate themes to the data, and the viability of your overall analysis, by going back to the full dataset. Development and review involves checking that themes make sense in relation to both the coded extracts, and then the full dataset. Does each theme tell a convincing and compelling story about an important pattern of shared meaning related to the dataset? Collectively, do the themes highlight the most important patterns across the dataset in relation to your research question? Radical revision is possible; indeed, it's quite common. Certain candidate themes may be collapsed together; one or more may be split into new themes; candidate themes may be retained; some or all may be discarded. *You have to be prepared to let things go!* In review, you need to think about the character of each individual theme – its core focus or idea (the **central organising concept**) – and its scope. You also need to starting considering the relationship *between* the themes, and existing knowledge, and/or practice in your research field, and the wider context of your research.

Braun & Clarke 2021:35

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Phase 4: developing and reviewing themes

- **Assess the fit / check themes 'make sense' – level of extracts & dataset**
  - Numerous retrieval options – always connected to source context
- **Radical revision**
  - Smart coding, Creative coding, Sets
- **Consider relationship between themes**
  - Code matrix and relations browsers, crosstabs
- *...with existing knowledge*
  - MAXQDA project as container for all project materials – e.g. literature and data

How can MAXQDA help?

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Phase 5: refining, defining and naming themes

Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes. Here you fine-tune your analysis – ensuring that each theme is clearly demarcated, and is built around a strong core concept or essence. Ask yourself 'what story does this theme tell?' and 'how does this theme fit into my overall story about the data?' Key activities in this phase involve writing a brief synopsis of each theme. You also decide on a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme. In this phase, you still need to be prepared to *let the analysis go*, if your refining process indicates more development is needed.

Braun & Clarke 2021:36

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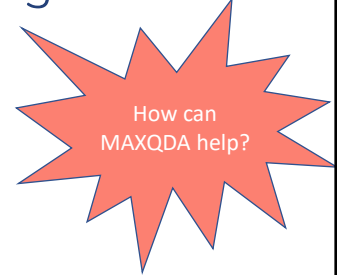## Phase 5: refining, defining and naming themes

- Ensure themes are clearly demarcated
  - Maps, coding queries
- Write brief synopsis
  - Memos, summaries
- Punchy, informative name for each theme
  - Code names, memos

How can MAXQDA help?

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Phase 6: writing up

Phase 6: Writing up. Writing is an integral phase of the analytic process for TA, as it is for many qualitative analytic approaches, so you start writing early on. In reflexive TA, formal analytic writing often starts from Phase 3; the more informal (just for you) writing you do from the start of the process – familiarisation notes and reflexive journaling – can feed into the more formal writing. In *writing up*, you finesse and finish the writing process. Ultimately, you're aiming to weave together your analytic narrative and compelling, vivid data extracts, to tell your reader a coherent and persuasive story about the dataset that addresses your research question. Final writing up also involves producing the introduction, method and conclusion sections of a research report. And a lot of editing. Never underestimate the importance and value of editing.

Braun & Clarke 2021:36

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Phase 6: writing up

- Writing spaces integrated throughout
  - Paraphrases, comments, memos, project log, summaries
- Dynamic / grounded / visual representations of qualitative data and themes
  - Maps, Models – that include coded segments
  - Quote matrices, Charts (e.g. heatmaps illustrating theme saturation)
- Save evidence as proceed
  - Export anything in many formats – e.g. versions of codebook as it develops
  - QTT tool (Questions – Themes – Theories)
- Export selected project elements in structured report
  - Smart Publisher & via QTT

How can MAXQDA help?
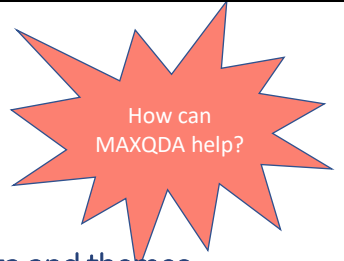
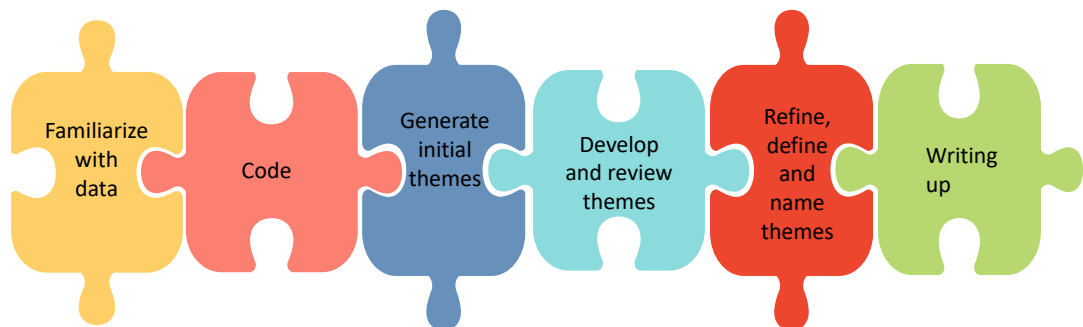04.03.2023   Doing Thematic Analysis using MAXQDA – Christina Silver

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Using MAXQDA for thematic analysis:
maximize flexibility, iteration, transparency

– because everything is CONNECTED

Familiarize with data   Code   Generate initial themes   Develop and review themes   Refine, define and name themes   Writing up
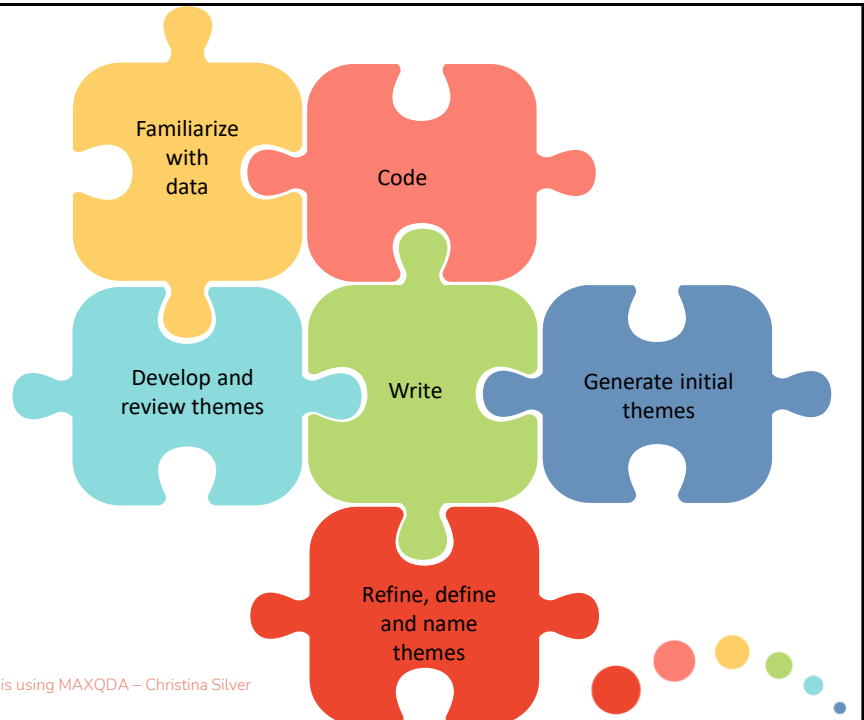
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Move the pieces around …without losing connection

Familiarize with data

Code

Develop and review themes

Write

Generate initial themes

Refine, define and name themes

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References

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- Gizzi M.C. & Rädiker S (eds.) (2021) **The Practice of Qualitative Data Analysis: Research examples using MAXQDA**. MAXQDA Press.

- Schmieder C (2018) A thematic analysis to evaluate an education program: constructing and using a large organizational dataset in Woolf & Silver **Qualitative Analysis using MAXQDA: The Five-Level QDA method**. Routledge
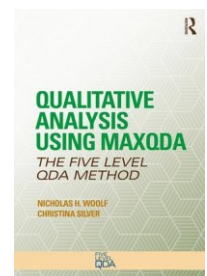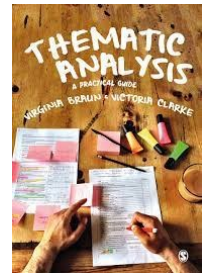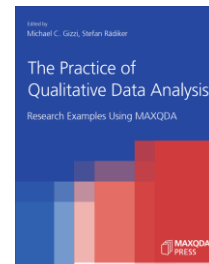
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Thank you…

….questions, comments…

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