



Harnessing the power of MAXQDA

for conducting social science research

Michael C. Gizzi, Ph.D.

Professor of Criminal Justice, Illinois State University



Introduction

MAXQDA is a professional qualitative software designed for content analysis and mixed methods research. This poster provides an overview of the "Four Stages of Research," a conceptual model I've developed for conducting a qualitative research project. This was designed as tool for effectively using MAXQDA to conduct qualitative legal research, but can be applied to almost any social science qualitative project. MAXQDA has transformed how I conduct my research on the impact and implementation of judicial policies by lower courts.

The **Four Stages of Research** provides a conceptual model for thinking through a research project:

- Identify the research questions and conceptual framework of the research design.
- Collect the data and create a workspace and analytical process to evaluate it in MAXQDA.
- Conduct a thematic analysis of cases, drawing on the software's analytical tools to interpret, refine, and make sense of the data, looking for patterns, quantifying findings, and identifying examples.
- Organize the results and write the final product.

This poster provides an overview of the Four Stages of Research, which is more completely explored in the MAXQDA web tutorials I developed for students wanting to use MAXQDA for qualitative research.

<https://www.4stagesofresearch.com>

Stage 1 - Conceptual Framework

MAXQDA can only be an effective tool if there is a conceptual framework and meaningful questions guiding the research. The initial stage is really no different from that of any other research project. You develop an analytical plan for the research, by identifying initial research questions and conducting a literature review. The literature review should provide the researcher with an initial set of issues to explore. MAXQDA can be used to organize the literature review, and a separate project can be created to content analyze and "code" the key concepts and findings in the literature.

Stage 2 - MAXQDA Workspace

The **second stage** of the research process is where the literature review meets the research design. It includes identifying the data to be analyzed. Data can come in almost any form, including written documents, "tweets" from Twitter, You Tube videos, and audio files. The data can be formatted in Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Adobe Acrobat PDF, audio, video, or text files. Documents can then be easily imported into a MAXQDA project.

The workspace includes the documents to be used, a codebook of concepts to be content analyzed, a spreadsheet-like list of variables to summarize the data, and a space for note-taking. I create a code book by doing a first read through a sample of documents, then refining the codebook, and finalizing the document variables.

The Four Stages of Research

Stage 1

Identify the guiding questions that will shape the study

Develop analytical plan and conceptual framework

Conduct literature review

Identify initial research questions

Stage 2

Create the workspace and set up the process to evaluate the data

Prepare research workspace

Identify data to be studied

Import documents into MAXQDA

Develop Analytical Plan

Create initial list of codes and variables

Categorize by major themes

Stage 3

Thematic analysis of cases. This is the heart of the research.

First read through

Code outcomes and initial variables

Auto-code on key themes and concepts

Evaluate the data

Write memos as interesting points are revealed

Do initial descriptives to look for patterns

Emergence

Use visual tools to look for inter-related concepts

Quantify findings and examples

Stage 4

Writing, analysis, final product

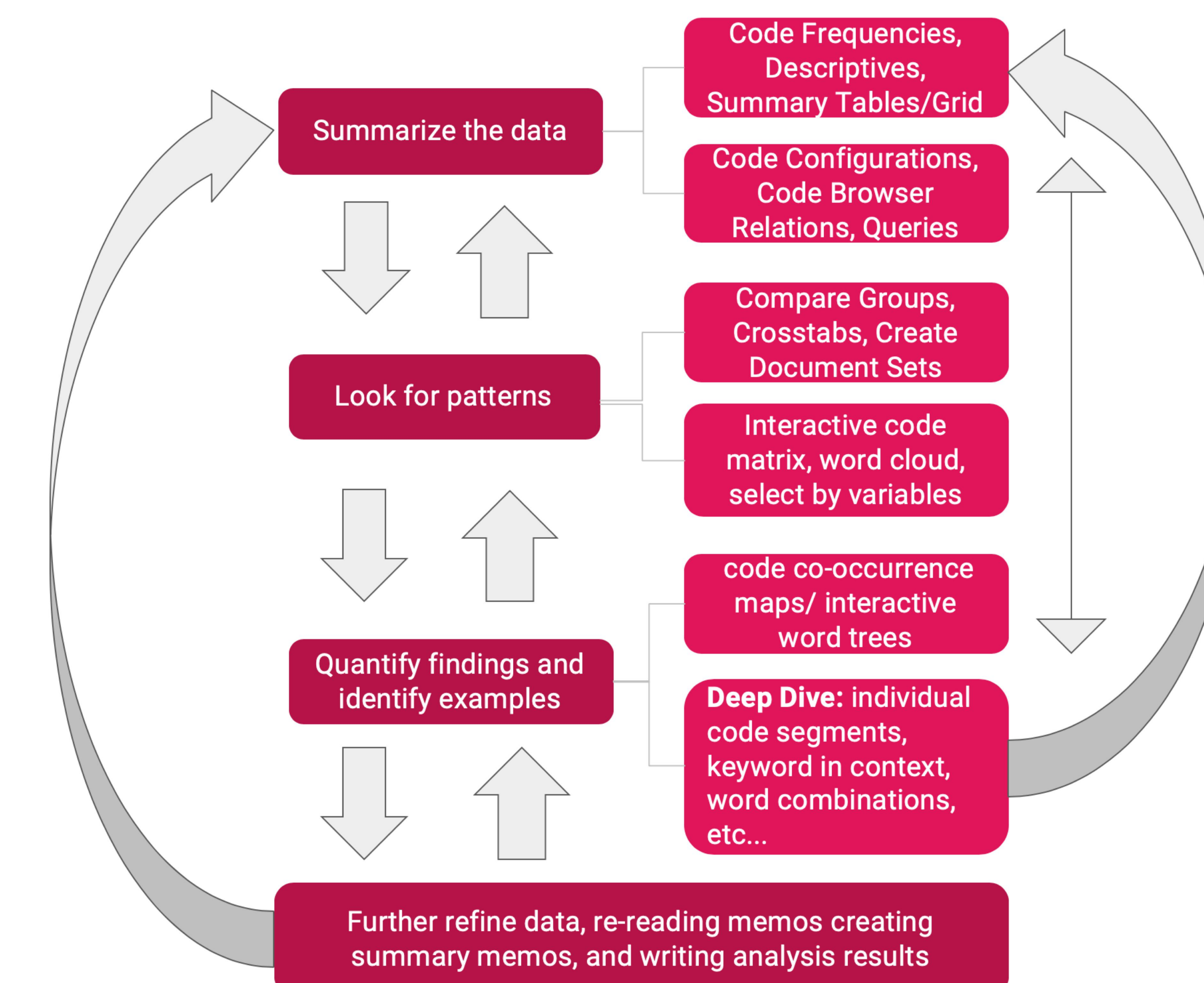
Draw on the descriptive statistics, the coded segments, memos, and visual tools. This is not necessarily a linear process.

Stage 3 & 4 - The Art of Data Analysis

MAXQDA describes itself with the tag line "The Art of Data Analysis." These words capture the heart of the **Four Stages of Research**. Stage 3 and 4 involves reading, coding, writing memos (taking notes), looking for patterns and themes, and then engaging in a thematic analysis of cases.

Once the initial content analysis completed, you can begin the creative and often emergent process of analysis: summarizing the data, looking for patterns, quantifying them, identifying core examples, and then further refining the data and findings. MAXQDA also has a full set of statistical tools that you can use for mixed methods analysis. As this process unfolds, you are ready to write your final product.

Analytical Tools



Thematic Analysis: "Field Performance"

Keyword in context

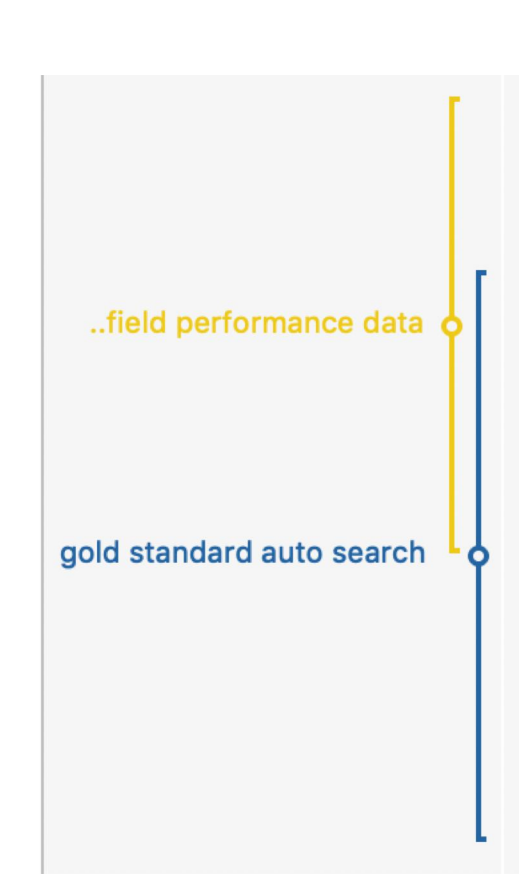
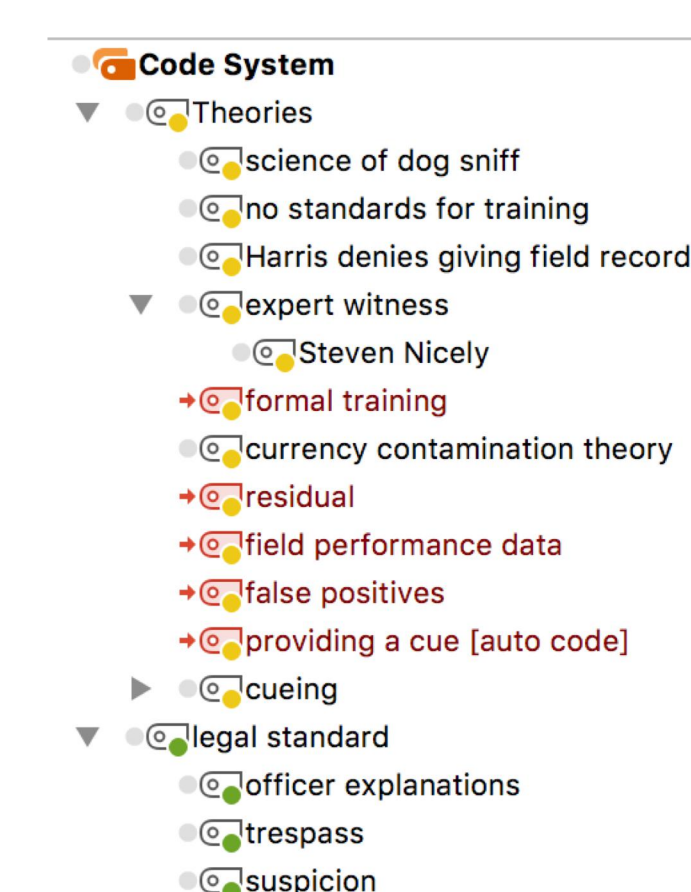
Code	Field performance data	Preview
1-DC, Maine, USVWhite	23	a [*4] dog's field performance as the gold standard in evidence, when in most cases they have
21- US COA, 7th circu...	28	treated the dog's field record as a " gold standard in evidence, when in most cases they have
22- US COA, 7th circu...	64	treat "a dog's field performance as the gold standard in evidence, when in most cases they have
28- US COA, 8th circu...	36	of a dog's field performance as the gold standard in evidence, when in most cases they have
31-DC, Iowa, US v Si...	82	a dog's field performance as the gold standard in evidence, when in most cases they have
47- COA, Arizona, Stat...	110	a dog's field performance in the field "as the gold standard in evidence because such data "may not capt...
66-DC, South Dakota...	50	the dog's performance in the field "as the gold standard in evidence" for several reasons. id. at 1056
68-DC, Hawaii, Unite...	32	a dog's field performance [*8] as the gold standard in evidence, when in most cases they have

Code Co-Occurrence Model

Summaries with Coded Segments - Harris-reliability-study.mx18

Code	Coded segments
Theories/field performance data	In the instant case, the defendant has offered no reason why he should... [*6] be an information beyond that contemplated by the Supreme Court in the run-of-the-m drug-sniffing dog case. He relies on <i>United States v. Thomas</i> , 726 F.3d 1086 (9th Cir. Motion at 8-9, but incorrectly characterizes that opinion as "affirm[ing] the importance types of requests made here[un]t," id. at 8. In <i>Thomas</i> , the Ninth Circuit directed the dist in that circuit to provide the following information when a defendant "requests dog-hist discovery to pursue a motion to suppress": the handler's log, training records and score

Codebook and Content Analysis



...and his... than a coin flip (59.5%). The Supreme Court, however, recently rejected a proposed rule that would have treated the dog's field record as a "gold standard." To the contrary, it said, the record is of "relatively limited import." *Florida v. Harris*, 133 S. Ct. 1050, 1056, 185 L. Ed. 2d 61 (2013); see also *United States v. Funds in Amount of \$100,120.00*, 730 F.3d 711, 724 (7th Cir. 2013) ["*11"] (recognizing that *Harris* changes the district judge's analysis). Instead, "evidence of a dog's satisfactory performance in a certification or training program can itself provide sufficient reason to trust his alert." *Harris*, 133 S. Ct. at 1057. In order to assess whether the police adequately trained their dog, the *Harris* Court instructed trial judges to hold a probable-cause hearing: