

# Illuminating Theology With Psychological Science

## Thematic Analysis



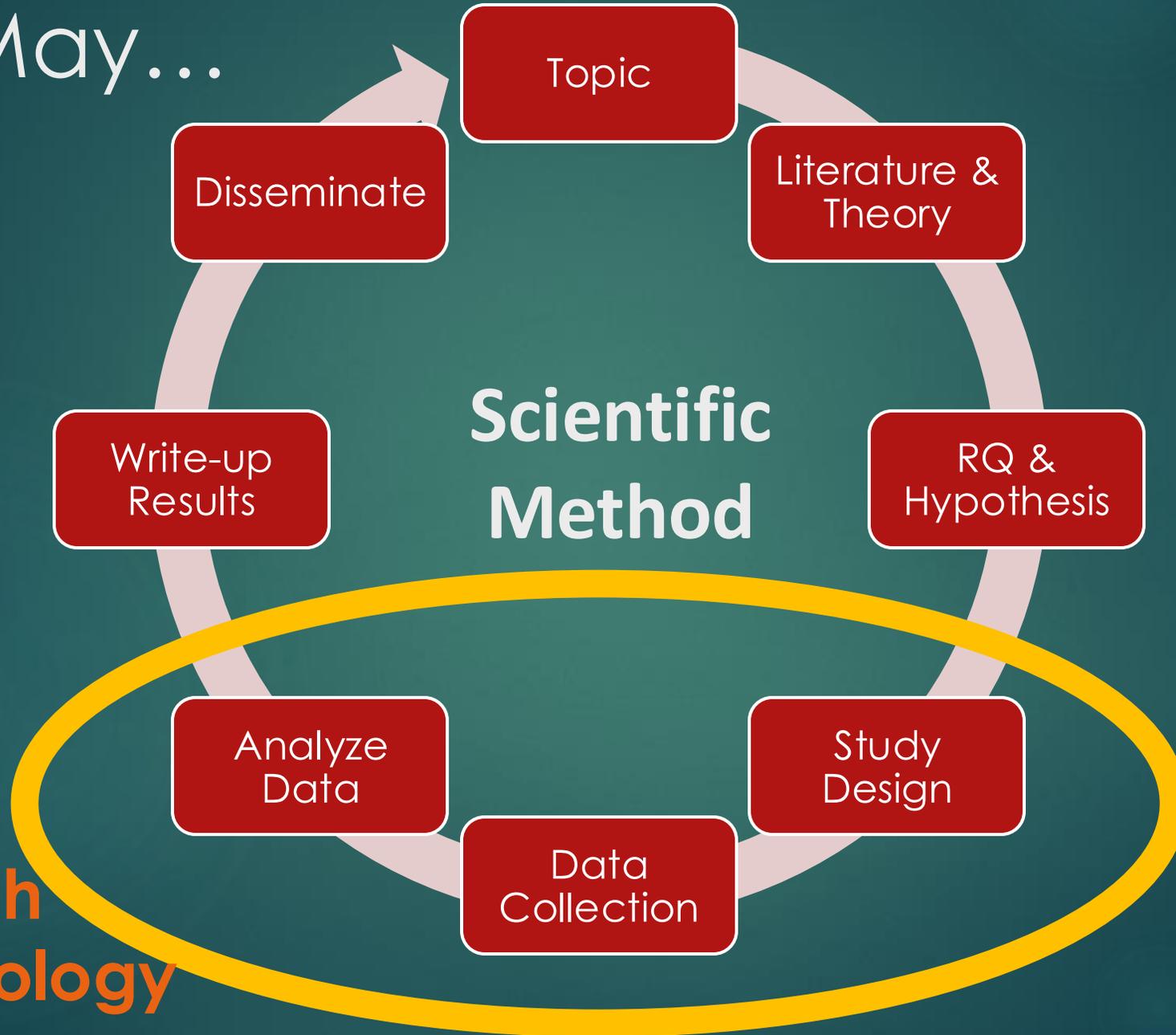
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# Thematic Analysis

KAREN K. MELTON

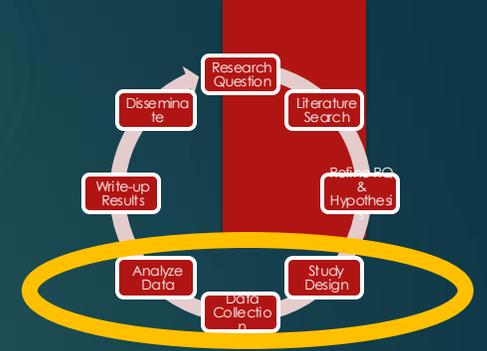
MAY 2024

Last May...



Research  
Methodology

# Research Methodology



## Quantitative (QUAN)

- ▶ Measuring variables-numerical data
  - ▶ Surveys
  - ▶ Physiological instruments (HR, oxytocin)
- ▶ Experiment, Cross-sectional
- ▶ Statistical models- relationships
- ▶ Understand, describe, predict

## QUALITATIVE (QUAL)

- ▶ Descriptive (non-numerical) data
  - ▶ Interviews
  - ▶ Observations
  - ▶ Documents
  - ▶ Audio-visual
- ▶ Natural-setting or Lab
- ▶ Personal accounts of experiences
- ▶ Meaning-making of “HOW” individuals perceive the world

# QUAL Analysis

- ▶ Narrative Analysis
- ▶ **Thematic Analysis**
- ▶ Conversation Analysis
- ▶ Phenomenological Analysis
- ▶ Grounded Theory Analysis
- ▶ Ethnographic Analysis
- ▶ Case Study Analysis
- ▶ Discourse Analysis
- ▶ ...and more ....

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HANDOUT

# Today's Agenda

HANDOUT

## CHAPTER 4

# THEMATIC ANALYSIS

*Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke*

Until recently, thematic analysis (TA) was a widely used yet poorly defined method of qualitative data analysis. The few texts (Boyatzis, 1998; Patton, 2002), chapters (Hayes, 1997), and articles (Aronson, 1994; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Tuckett, 2005) often came from outside psychology and were never widely taken up within the discipline. Instead, qualitative researchers tended to either use the method without any guiding reference or claim some mix of other approaches (e.g., grounded theory and discourse analysis [DA]) to rationalize what essentially was TA. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed TA (in relation to psychology) in a “systematic” and “sophisticated” way.

### WHAT IS THEMATIC ANALYSIS?

TA is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning *across* a data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. Identifying unique and idiosyncratic meanings and experiences found only within a single data item is not the focus of TA. This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

- ▶ Chapter by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark
- ▶ APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology
- ▶ Similar Journal Article  
Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77-101.



“...ANALYSTS ARE LIKE SCULPTORS, MAKING CHOICES ABOUT HOW TO SHAPE AND CRAFT THEIR PIECE OF STONE (THE “RAW DATA”) INTO A WORK OF ART (THE ANALYSIS).”

- Braun & Clarke



**SUCCESSFUL THEMATIC ANALYSIS:**  
**CAN OUR POPULATION SEE THEIR**  
**EXPERIENCES REFLECTED**  
**(MORE LIKE ART, NOT A MIRROR)**



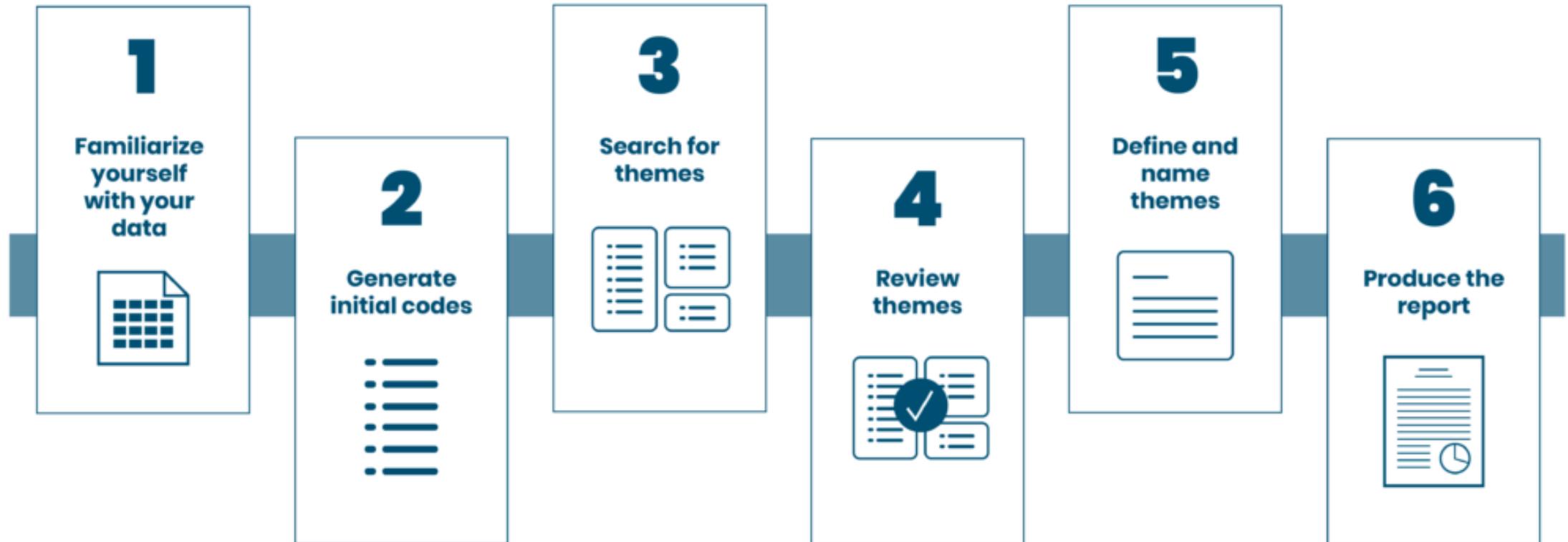
# What is Thematic Analysis (TA)?

- ▶ a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning across a data set
  - ▶ Systematic: there is a process (6 phases/steps)
  - ▶ Patterns of Meaning: Themes
  - ▶ Data: Video, Audio, Text

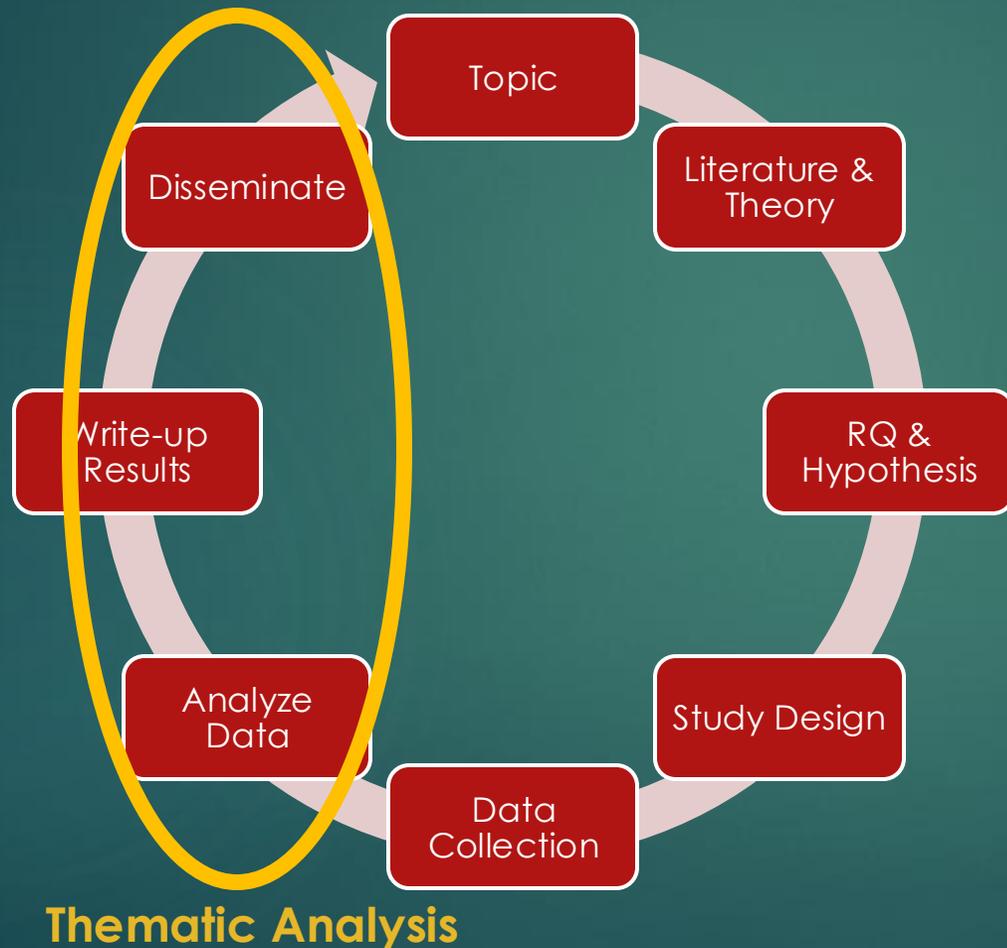
# Three Approaches to TA

- ▶ **coding reliability TA;**
  - ▶ Most closely associated with the positivist paradigm
  - ▶ Multiple coders can apply the same codes to a dataset
- ▶ **codebook approaches to TA,**
  - ▶ More deductive approach to coding, Closed-coding
- ▶ **the reflexive approach to TA**
  - ▶ More inductive approach to coding, Open-coding

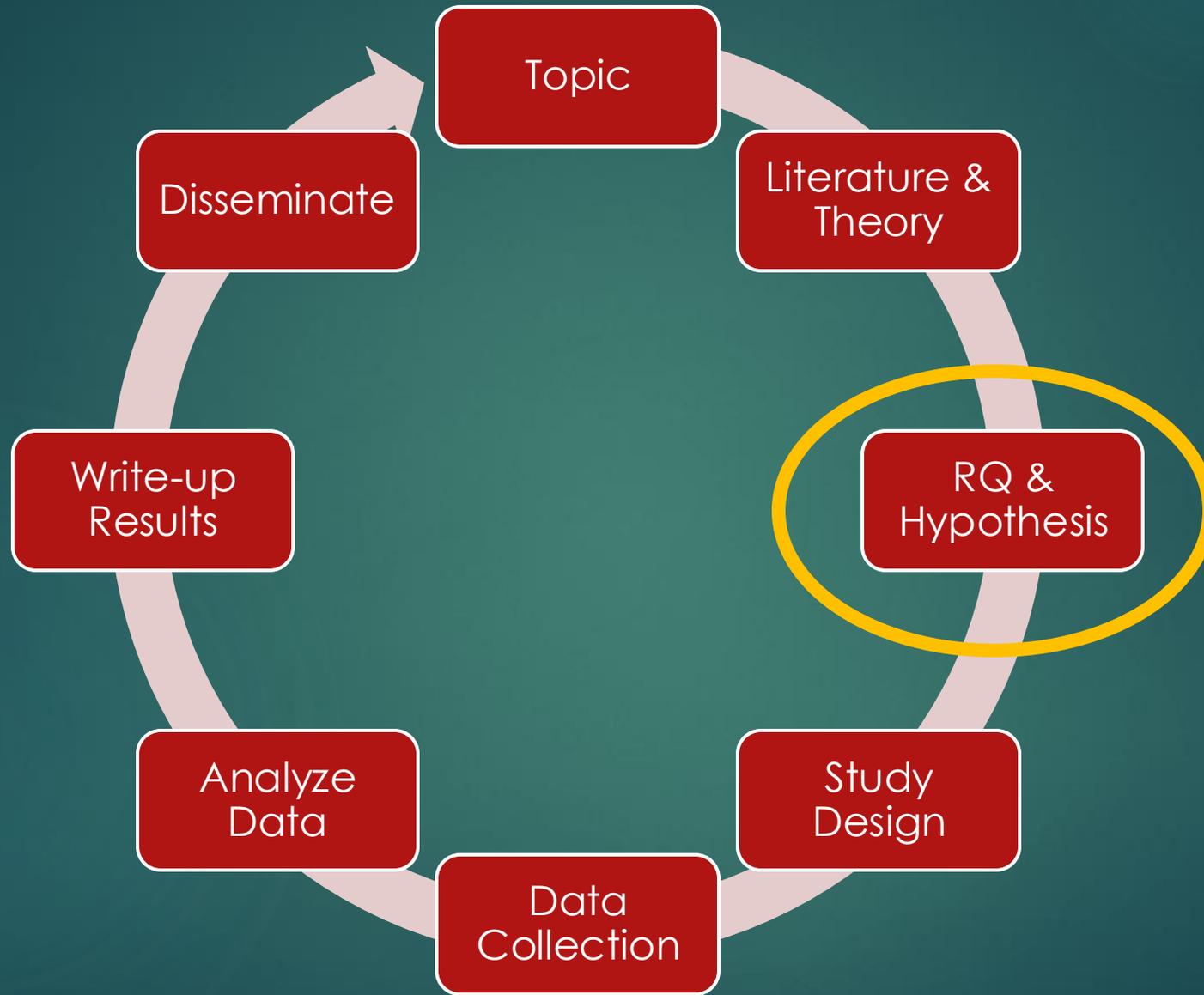
# Phases of thematic analysis



# These steps assume...



- ▶ Topic
- ▶ Lit Review
- ▶ Research question identified
- ▶ Design the study
- ▶ Data collected
- ▶ Data transcribed

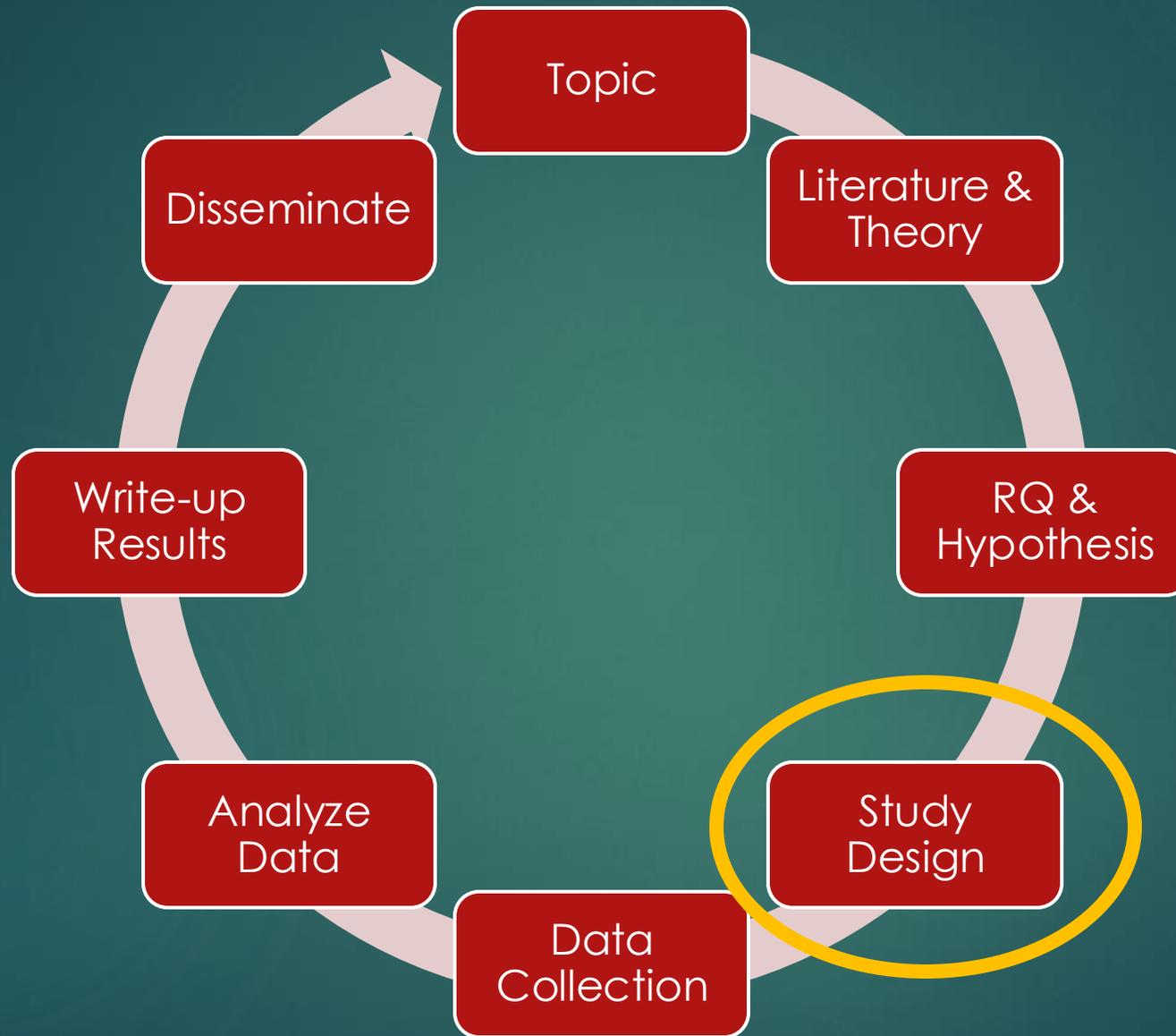


# Variety of Research Questions

- ▶ Individual experiences
  - ▶ e.g. what is it like to experience depression? How do people make sense of being fat?
- ▶ • People's views and opinions
  - ▶ e.g. what are people's views on living near wind farms? How do people make sense of transracial adoption?
- ▶ People's behaviors or practices – the things they do in the world, or their accounts or perceptions of their practices
  - ▶ e.g., How do married heterosexual couples manage their household finances? What role does clothing play in the development of a gay or lesbian identity?
- ▶ The reasons why people think or feel or do particular things and the factors or processes that underpin and shape particular experiences or decisions
  - ▶ e.g., what factors influence the decision to become a vegetarian? How do social norms shape the experience of chronic pain?

# Variety of Research Questions

- ▶ Identifying and exploring the rules and norms that govern particular social practices
  - ▶ e.g., what are the expectations and conventions governing the behavior of new fathers? What norms and expectations do people navigate in using online 'dating' sites?
- ▶ How particular social objects are represented in particular contexts
  - ▶ e.g., How is 'female sexuality' represented in men's magazines? How is 'the family' represented in Christmas advertising?
- ▶ How social objects are constructed/the discourses surrounding a particular social object
  - ▶ e.g., How is the notion of a 'healthy body weight' constructed in focus groups with young women? How do young men construct 'masculinity'?



# Types of Data

- ▶ interviews,
- ▶ focus groups,
- ▶ qualitative surveys,
- ▶ story completion tasks,
- ▶ diaries,
- ▶ vignettes,
- ▶ secondary sources e.g., printed materials, online and electronic materials, and broadcast media and film

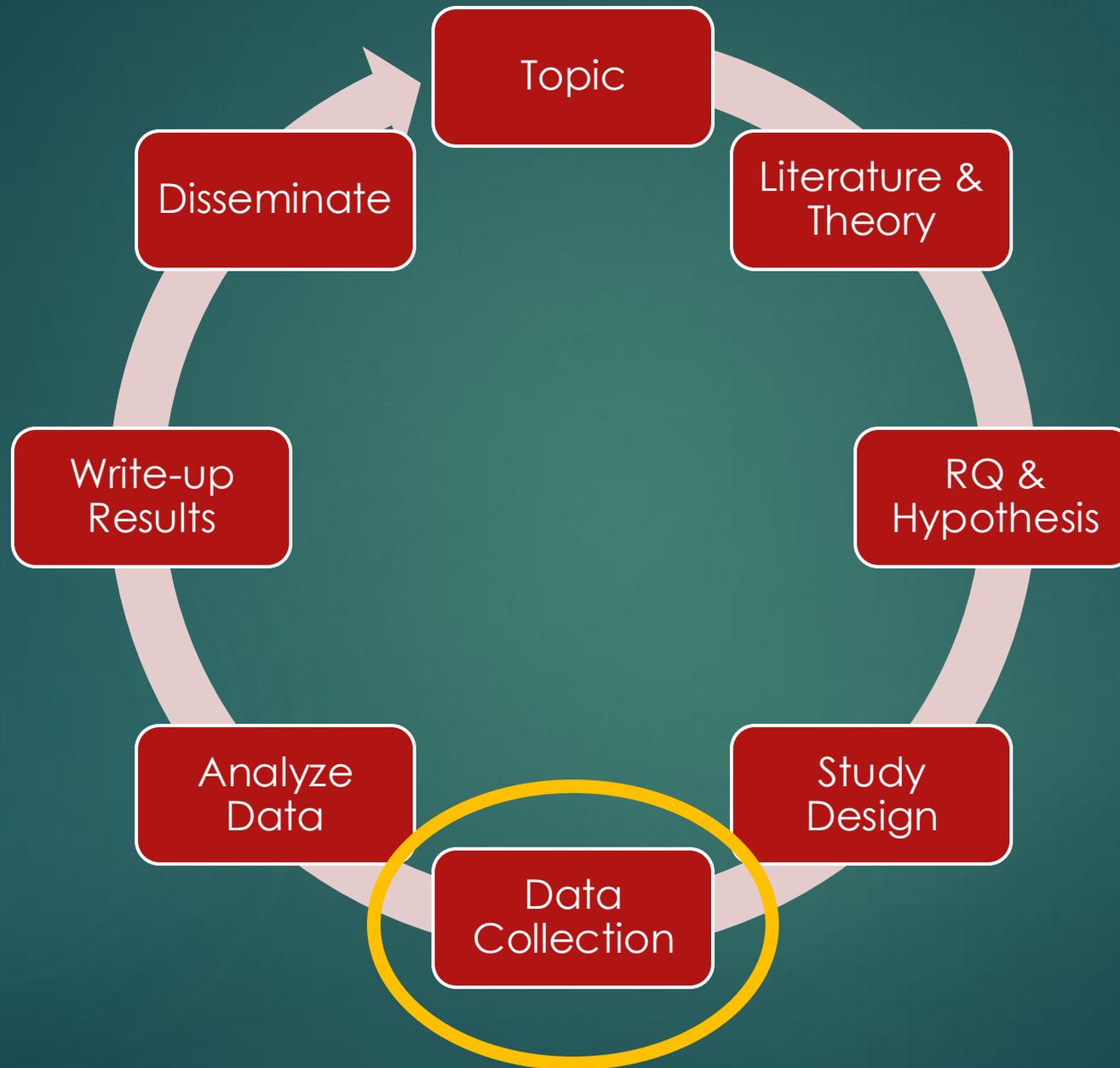
# Sample Size: How many interviews?

- ▶ Generally: Small: 6-10, Medium: 10-29, Large: 30+
- ▶ Depends ... on your field, and **saturation**
  - ▶ Saturation: No new relevant information emerges with additional interviews
- ▶ Stopping rule (Jo-Ann Tsang)
- ▶ AI & online tech is changing this conversation

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'user interviews'. The header includes navigation links for Product, Pricing, Company, Resources, and Participants, along with Sign Up and Sign In buttons. A main headline reads 'We connect researchers and participants' with a sub-headline 'Get fast access to quality participants or earn money by participating in studies.' and a 'Sign up free' button. An illustration depicts two people connected by a tangled line. At the bottom, a green banner states 'TRUSTED BY RESEARCH TEAMS AT' and lists logos for Adobe, Spotify, Pinterest, intuit, NN/g, and amazon.

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'Otter.ai'. The header features the Otter.ai logo and a Menu icon. The main headline is 'Introducing Meeting GenAI' with a blue 'Start for Free' button. Below this, the text reads 'Never take meeting notes again. Get transcripts, automated summaries, action items, and chat with Otter to get answers from your meetings.' At the bottom, it says 'AI Meeting Assistant' and 'Get automated meeting notes and...'

The screenshot shows a page titled 'NVivo Automated Coding with AI' under the heading 'In-Depth Software Tours'. The text describes automated insights and AI-powered auto-coding features. It includes two video thumbnails: 'Autocoding by Existing Coding Patten...' and 'Autocoding by Theme...'. Below the thumbnails are the labels 'Autocoding pattern-based coding' and 'Autocoding to identify themes'.

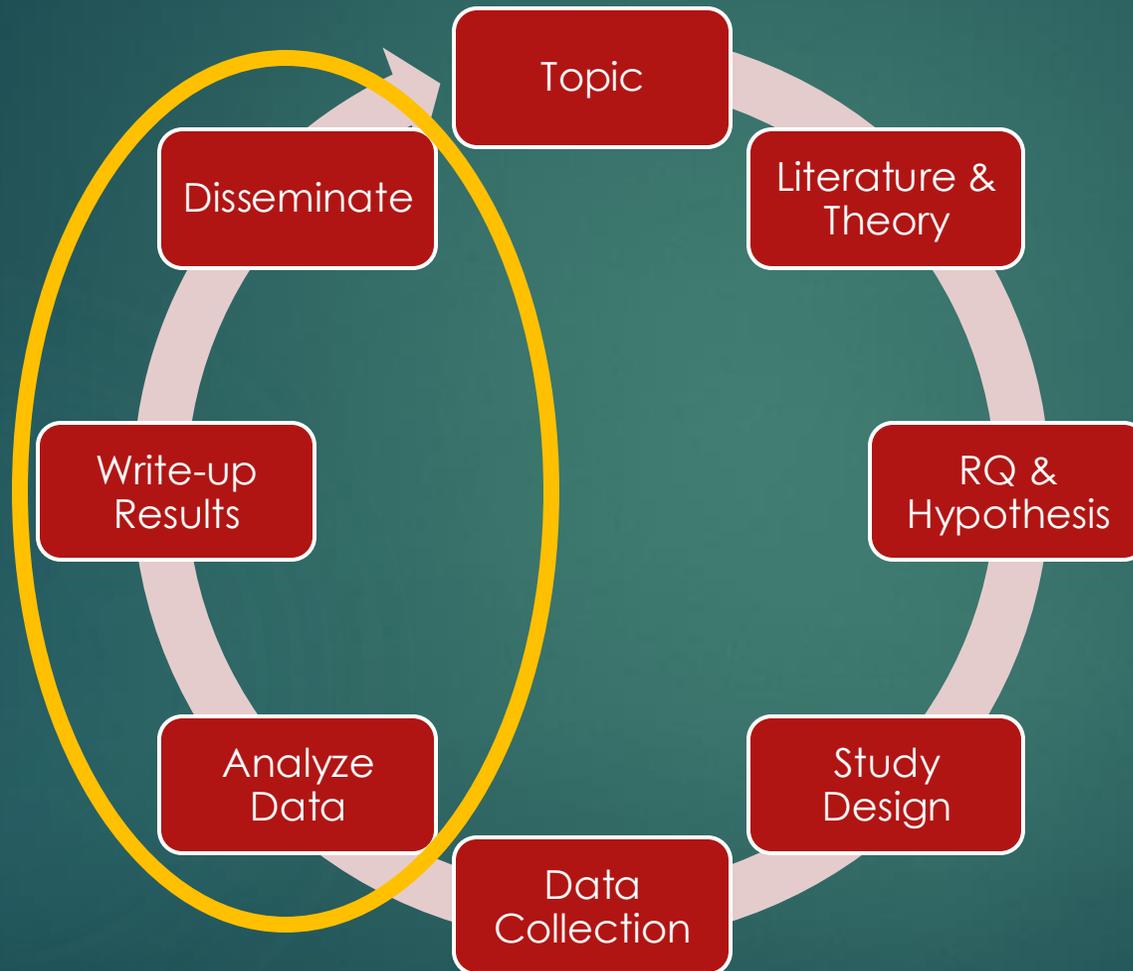


# Orthographic transcription

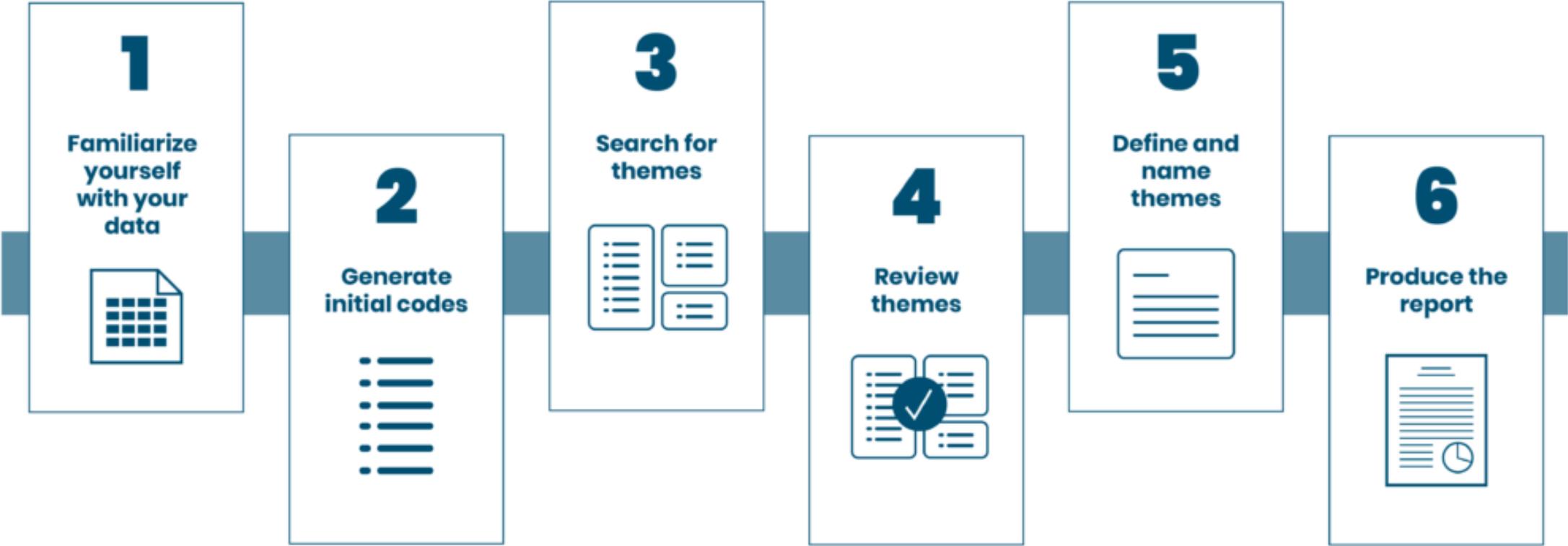
reproducing all spoken words and sounds

- ▶ hesitations,
- ▶ false starts,
- ▶ cutoffs in speech (indicated by a dash; e.g., thin-),
- ▶ the interviewer's guggles (e.g., mm-hm, ah-ha),
- ▶ laughter,
- ▶ long pauses [indicated by (pause)],
- ▶ strong emphasis (indicated by underscore)
- ▶ commas signal a continuing intonation, broadly commensurate with a grammatical comma in written language;
- ▶ inverted commas are used to indicate reported speech;
- ▶ three full-stops in a row (. . .) signal editing of the transcript

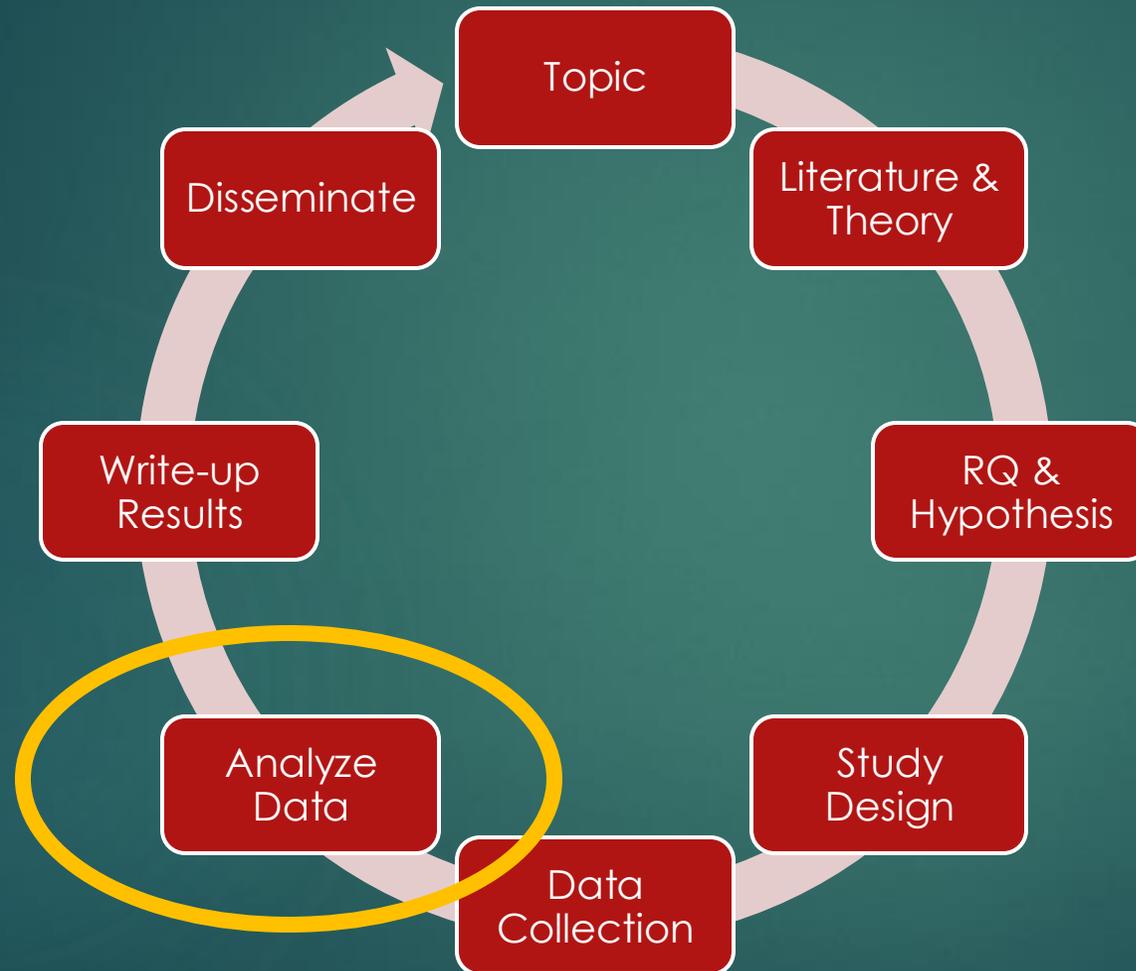
# Thematic Analysis



# Phases of thematic analysis



# Thematic Analysis



# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

## Phase 1: Familiarizing Yourself With the Data

- ▶ **Goal:** become intimately familiar with your data set's content and to begin to notice things that might be relevant to your research question
- ▶ **How**
  1. - Clean the transcribed Ai data
  2. - Listen/Read and reread the data
  3. - Note any initial ideas

### Clean Verbatim Transcript Example

Steve: Welcome back, Brad. This is the second part of our interview, and I want to get through these as quickly as possible because I know you have somewhere to be.

Brad: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Steve: It says on the website you worked doing graphic design for a local branding agency before branching out and starting your own business.

Brad: Yes.

Steve: Was that a conscious choice?

Brad: Yes.

Steve: Sorry, one sec. We can hear the fan.

Charlene: [inaudible 00:27]

Steve: No, no, that's perfect. Thanks, Charlene. Good.

Was starting your own company intentional, or did you just sort of fall into it?

Brad: Actually, sort of both. I started out doing it as a favor for a friend. I didn't really know what I was doing at the time, but at some point I found out I was having some success with that, and so I started doing it for local businesses and restaurants.

Then it kind of took off from there, and then I figured, well, if I'm going to be taking on all these new clients I might as well get a website going and make something out of this, you know?

Steve: Sure. What kind of challenges did you experience when you were starting out, that you weren't expecting?

# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

## Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

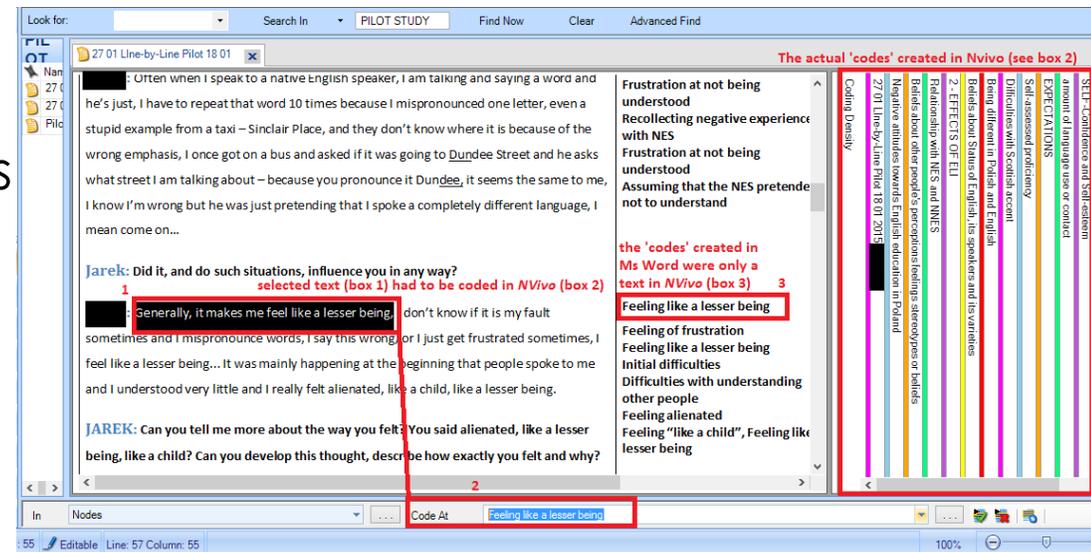
### ▶ Goal: Begin the analysis by identifying codes

Codes are labels for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question

### ▶ How

Read the transcript. Every time you identify something that is potentially relevant to the research question, code it (label it).

- Mark the text and
- Write down the associated code



Software for Coding: NVivo

# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

## Phase 3: Searching for Themes

### ► Goal: Give shape to your data

A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set

### ► How

1. - collapsing or clustering codes to reflect a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data
2. - thematic map or table outlining



“...analysts are like sculptors, making choices about how to shape and craft their piece of stone (the “raw data”) into a work of art (the analysis).”

- Braun & Clarke



# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

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# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

## Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

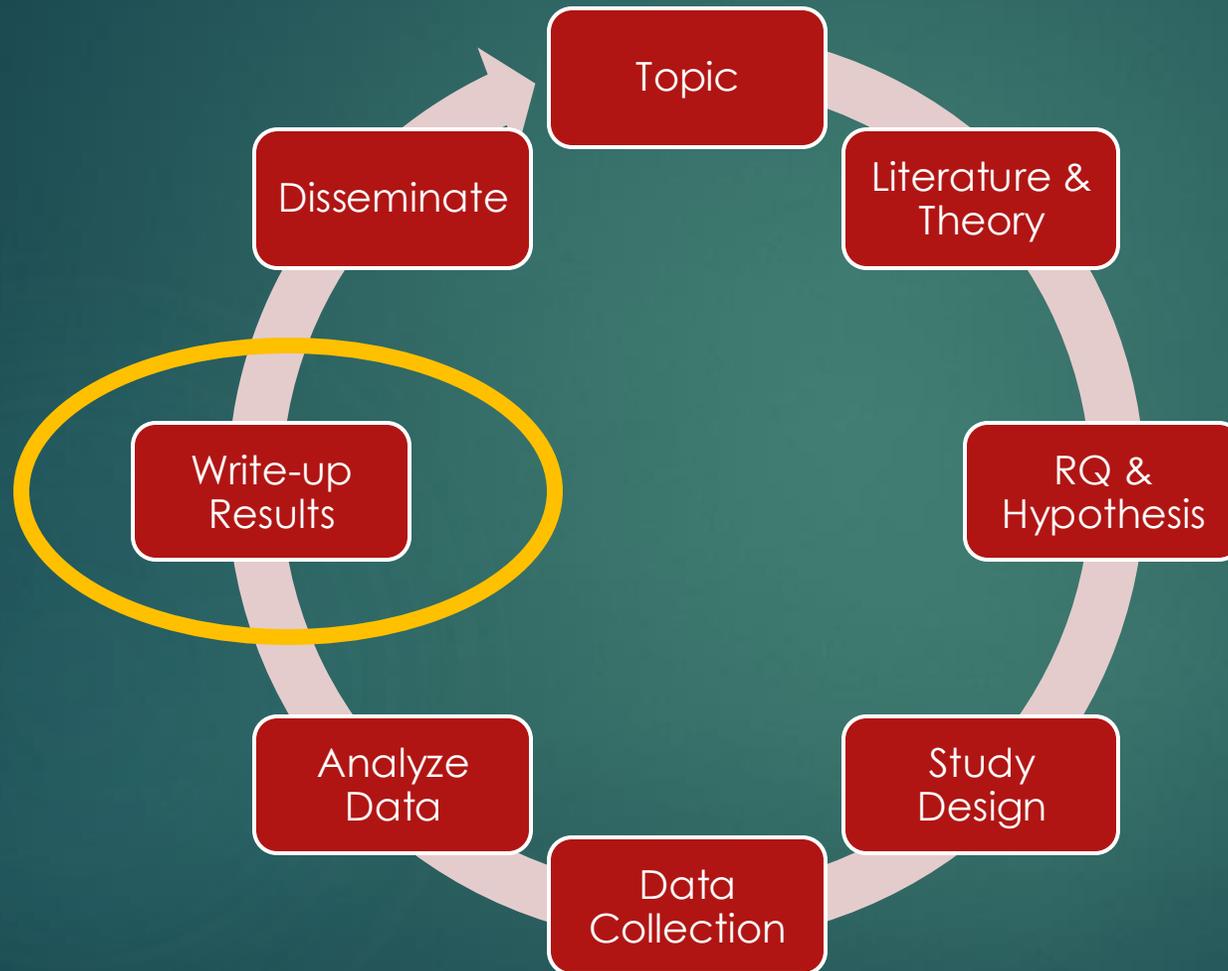
▶ **Goal:** Quality check- themes that capture the most important and relevant elements of the data, the overall tone, in relation to your research question

▶ **How**

1. - ask key questions (see box)
2. - check your themes against the collated extracts
3. - redraw the boundaries of the theme
4. - good name?

- Is this a theme (it could be just a code)?
- If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell me something useful about the data set and my research question)?
- What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include and exclude)?
- Are there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme *thin* or *thick*)?
- Are the data too diverse and wide ranging (does the theme lack coherence)?

# Thematic Analysis



# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

## Phase 5: Defining and Naming themes

- ▶ **Goal:** clearly state what is unique and specific about each theme
- ▶ **How**
  1. - for each theme, create a clear definition and description of the theme
  2. - provide 1-2 example quotes
  3. - address the “So what?” What is relevant or useful here to answering the RQ?
  4. - interconnections between themes

Exhibit 4.3  
Definitions and Labels for Selected Themes

*Theme 1. “There’s always that level of uncertainty”: Compulsory heterosexuality at university.* Maps the participants’ experiences of (infrequent) homophobia and (*constant*) heterosexism and highlights tensions experienced in relating to (straight) others, particularly people who are common sources of heterosexism and overt homophobia (i.e., straight men; members of religious and non-White groups), and feelings, or fear, of exclusion and not belonging. Heterosexism meant participants negotiated their sexual identities in an uncertain environment and experienced constant (but minimized) fear of people’s reactions to their sexuality. They had expected university students to be liberal and open minded and were surprised and disappointed they weren’t. But they felt this applied if you were “straight-acting,” indicating university is a safe space only if you are a “good gay.” Participants’ experienced difficulty coming out at university but also internalized and took responsibility for these difficulties rather than viewing coming out as something that is difficult because of compulsory heterosexuality. Although participants expressed some anger about experiences of overt homophobia, some homophobic and heterosexist “banter” (e.g., antigay humor) was acceptable if from friends—an indication that friends were comfortable with their sexuality but wasn’t acceptable if from strangers. The heterosexual assumption and compulsory heterosexuality were typically framed as a to-be-expected part of normal life.

*Theme 2. “I don’t go out asking for trouble”: Managing heterosexism.* Outlines the ways the participants modified their speech, behavior, and practices to avoid heterosexism and homophobia and continually monitored people and the environment for evidence of potential heterosexism or homophobia. They constantly weighed whether it was safe to come or be out with a particular person or in a particular space. The participants typically assumed responsibility for managing heterosexism (they don’t “ask” for trouble) and accepted this as a normal part of life. They seemed to lack a sense of entitlement to live free from heterosexism and a political and conceptual language with which to interpret their experiences of heterosexism and homophobia.

*Theme 3. “I’m not hiding, but I’m not throwing it in people’s faces”: Being out (but not too out) at university.* Focuses on the degree to which the participants were out and open about their sexuality at university and the management of sexual identity amid competing pressures to be a “happy, healthy gay” (comfortable with and open about their sexuality, with a “fully realized” gay identity) and a “good gay” (not too “overt”; not “forcing” their homosexuality on others).

*Theme 4. Mincing queens versus ordinary guys who just happen to be gay.* Focuses on participants’ resistance to a gay identity as a “master status” (Becker, 1963), an identity that overrides all other identities—they wanted to be seen as an ordinary guy who just happens to be gay. They took responsibility for carefully managing other people’s perceptions of their sexual identity, acutely aware that it takes very little to be judged as “too gay” (a “bad gay”). They felt very limited by popular conceptions of gay men and worked hard to distance themselves from the image of the camp gay man, the “mincing queen,” the *Sex and the City* gay best friend, the gay style guru . . .

# Thematic Analysis



# 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

## Phase 6: Producing the Report

▶ **Goal:** dissemination

▶ **How**

1. - answer your research question
2. - storytelling
3. - choose vivid examples
4. - embedded in a scholarly field

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### How suicide-bereaved family members experience the inquest process: a qualitative study using thematic analysis

Ailbhe Spillane <sup>1a,b</sup>, Karen Matvienko-Sikar<sup>a</sup>, Celine Larkin<sup>c</sup>, Paul Corcoran<sup>a,b</sup> and Ella Arensman <sup>1a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Public Health, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland; <sup>b</sup>National Suicide Research Foundation, Cork, Ireland; <sup>c</sup>Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, USA

#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Suicide bereavement confers unique risk and distress. In several countries, bereaved family members are called on to attend an inquest, an official public inquiry into deaths caused by external factors. The current study aimed to explore how suicide-bereaved family members (n = 18) experienced the inquest process, through qualitative semi-structured interviews.

**Method:** Participants were identified via coroner's records and had previously taken part in a case-control study.

**Results:** Qualitative findings indicated four overall themes with respect to family members' experiences of the inquest process: "inquest as fearfully unknown", "structural processes of the inquest", "enduring public and private pain to obtain answers" and "gaining answers and making sense". Most family members experienced distress and fear as a result of several elements of the inquest process. Some participants had positive experiences but these did not outweigh the distress experienced by the majority of family members regarding their overall experience of the inquest process.

**Conclusions:** Key recommendations include informing family members of the main aspects and purpose of the inquest process beforehand, adapting the process to maximise the privacy and comfort of the bereaved relatives, and restricting graphic evidence being heard, where possible, to minimise distress experienced by family members.

#### ARTICLE HISTORY

Accepted 17 December 2018

#### KEYWORDS

Inquest; coroner; qualitative; suicide; bereavement; family members

# JARS-QUAL

HANDOUT



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## Journal Article Reporting Standards Meta-Analytic, and Mixed Methods Publications and Communicat

Heidi M. Levitt  
University of Massachusetts Boston

John W. Creswell  
University of Michigan Medical School

Ruthellen Josselson  
Fielding Graduate University



## APA Style JARS Journal Article Reporting Standards

### JARS-Qual | Table 1

#### Information Recommended for Inclusion in Manuscripts That Report Primary Qualitative Research

#### Title Page

##### Title

- Identify key issues/topic under consideration.

##### Author Note

- Acknowledge funding sources or contributors.
- Acknowledge conflicts of interest, if any.

##### Abstract

- State the problem/question/objectives under investigation.
- Indicate the study design, including types of participants or data sources, analytic strategy, main results/findings, and main implications/significance.
- Identify five keywords.

##### Guidance for Authors

- Consider including at least one keyword that describes the method and one that describes the types of participants or phenomena under investigation.
- Consider describing your approach to inquiry when it will facilitate the review process and intelligibility of your paper. If your work is not grounded in a specific approach to inquiry or your approach would be too complicated to explain in the allotted word count, however, it would not be advisable to provide explication on this point in the abstract.

##### Introduction

##### Description of Research Problem or Question

- Frame the problem or question and its context.
- Review, critique, and synthesize the applicable literature to identify key issues/debates/theoretical frameworks in the relevant literature to clarify barriers, knowledge gaps, or practical needs.

##### Guidance for Reviewers

- The introduction may include case examples, personal narratives, vignettes, or other illustrative material.

##### Study Objectives/Aims/Research Goals

- State the purpose(s)/goal(s)/aim(s) of the study.
- State the target audience, if specific.
- Provide the rationale for fit of design used to investigate this purpose/goal (e.g., theory building, explanatory, developing understanding, social action, description, highlighting social practices).

##### Study Objectives/Aims/Research Goals (continued)

- Describe the approach to inquiry, if it illuminates the objectives and research rationale (e.g., descriptive, interpretive, feminist, psychoanalytic, postpositivist, critical, postmodern, constructivist, or pragmatic approaches).

##### Guidance for Authors

- If relevant to objectives, explain the relation of the current analysis to prior articles/publications.

##### Guidance for Reviewers

- Qualitative studies often legitimately need to be divided into multiple manuscripts because of journal article page limitations, but each manuscript should have a separate focus.
- Qualitative studies tend not to identify hypotheses, but rather research questions and goals.

##### Method

##### Research Design Overview

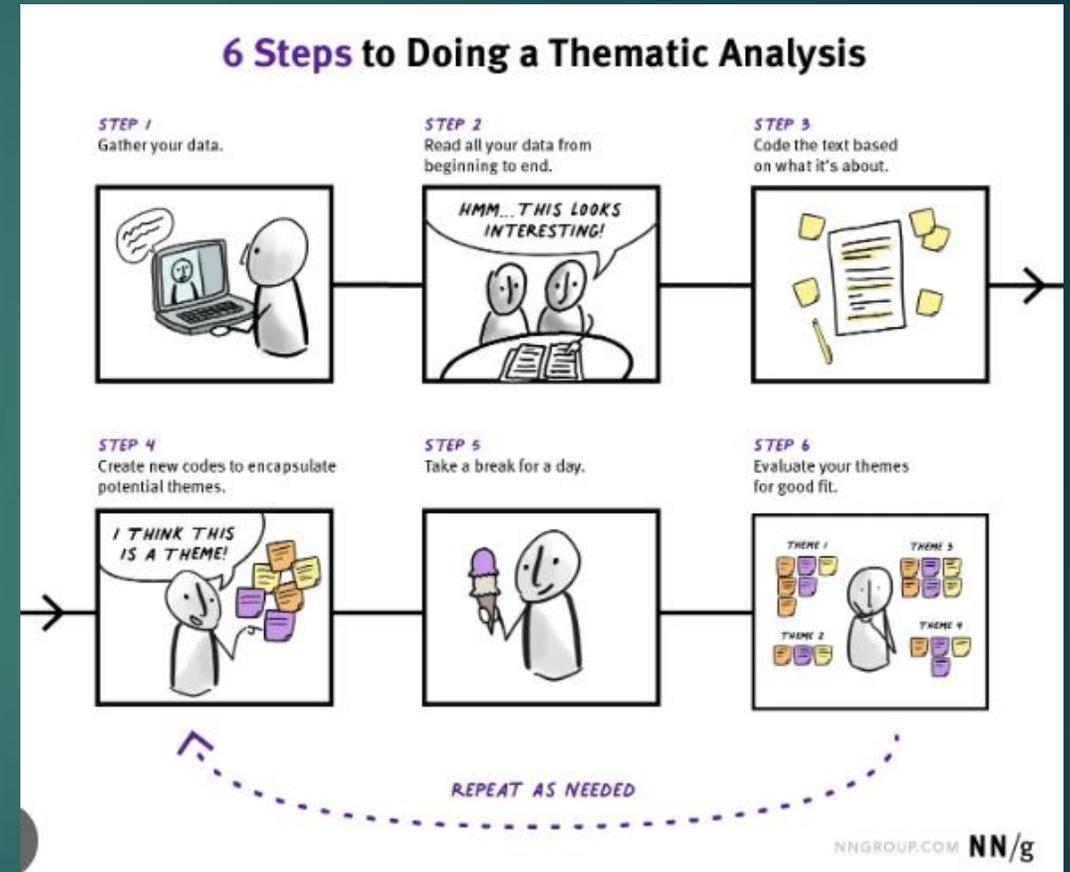
- Summarize the research design, including data-collection strategies, data-analytic strategies, and, if illuminating, approaches to inquiry (e.g., descriptive, interpretive, feminist, psychoanalytic, postpositivist, critical, postmodern, constructivist, or pragmatic approaches).
- Provide the rationale for the design selected.

##### Guidance for Reviewers

- Method sections can be written in a chronological or narrative format.
- Although authors provide a method description that other investigators should be able to follow, it is not required that other investigators arrive at the same conclusions but rather that the method description leads other investigators to conclusions with a similar degree of methodological integrity.
- At times, elements may be relevant to multiple sections and authors need to organize what belongs in each subsection in order to describe the method coherently and reduce redundancy. For instance, the overview and the objectives statement may be presented in one section.
- Processes of qualitative research are often iterative versus linear, may evolve through the inquiry process, and may move between data collection and analysis in multiple formats. As a result, data collection and analysis sections might be combined.
- For the reasons above and because qualitative methods often are adapted and combined creatively, requiring detailed description and rationale, an average qualitative Method section typically is longer than an average quantitative Method section.

# Advice for Beginners

- ▶ Skill to be developed.
- ▶ Start with a topic that you know very well.
- ▶ Start with a small sample.
- ▶ Find a mentor.
- ▶ Let the process guide your Reality.
- ▶ Use the tools available to you, and that makes sense for your project.



# Resources

## CHAPTER 4

# THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke

Until recently, thematic analysis (TA) was a widely used yet poorly defined method of qualitative data analysis. The few texts (Boyatzis, 1998; Patton, 2002), chapters (Hayes, 1997), and articles (Aronson, 1994; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Tuckett, 2005) often came from outside psychology and were never widely taken up within the discipline. Instead, qualitative researchers tended to either use the method without any guiding reference or claim some mix of other approaches (e.g., grounded theory and discourse analysis [DA]) to rationalize what essentially was TA. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed TA (in relation to psychology) in a “systematic” and “sophisticated” way.

### WHAT IS THEMATIC ANALYSIS?

TA is a method for systematizing, and offering insight into, the meaning of data across a data set. It is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities. TA is a method for systematizing, and offering insight into, the meaning of data across a data set. It is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

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## A worked example of Braun and Clarke’s approach to reflexive thematic analysis

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### Abstract

Since the publication of their inaugural paper on approach has arguably become one of the most ducting thematic analysis (TA). However, confusi specific approach to TA appropriately. The autho researchers who purport to adhere to this appro such—fail to adhere fully to the principles of ‘re the course of numerous publications, Braun and C the constitution of RTA and attempted to clarify r found in the literature. This paper will offer a wor temporary approach to reflexive thematic analysis of the confusion regarding the position of RTA am TA. While the data used in the worked example ha ing education research and was examined to ascer the example offered of how to implement the RT other contexts and research topics.

**Keywords** Reflexive · Thematic analysis · Braun · Clarke

## Answers to frequently asked questions about thematic analysis

### Reflexive TA | the basics

- »What’s the difference between a code and a theme?
- »What’s the difference between a subtheme and a theme?
- »What’s the difference between a domain summary and a theme?
- »What is a central organising concept and why is it important in thematic analysis?

### Reflexive TA in context: contrasts with other types of thematic analysis

- »What’s the difference between reflexive thematic analysis (e.g., ‘Braun & Clarke’) and other approaches?
- »What’s the difference between thematic coding and TA?

### Reflexive TA in context: contrasts with other analytic approaches

- »What’s the difference thematic analysis and IPA?
- »What’s the difference between thematic analysis and grounded theory?
- »What’s the difference between constructionist thematic analysis and discourse analysis?
- »What’s the difference between thematic analysis and (qualitative) content analysis?

### Doing Reflexive TA

- »I’ve collected five interviews – is that enough for a TA?
- »Why are we critical of the notion that ‘themes emerged’ from data?
- »Why don’t we advocate multiple-coders and inter-rater reliability for reflexive TA?
- »How many themes should I have?
- »Are latent codes/themes better than semantic ones?

HANDOUTS

# BONUS RESOURCE: Reflexivity

HANDOUT

MEDICAL TEACHER  
2023, VOL. 45, NO. 3, 241–251  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>

MEDICAL  
TEACHER

Taylor & Francis  
Taylor & Francis Group

AMEE GUIDE

OPEN ACCESS 

## A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149

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### ABSTRACT

Qualitative research relies on nuanced ju  
is often addressed superficially or overloc  
Guide, we define reflexivity as a set  
through which researchers self-conscious  
and context influence the research proce  
researchers' subjectivity. We also describe  
ferent paradigmatic choices. We then ad  
the intertwined personal, interpersonal, n  
into being and offer specific strategies  
With the growth of qualitative research i  
tive researchers carefully consider their  
their decisions at all stages of their resea  
onstrating how reflexivity can be used to

### Practice points

- Qualitative researchers should capitalize on reflexivity throughout their research process.
- Reflexivity should be oriented towards personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual issues in the research.
- Reflexivity should involve concrete practices.
- The entire research team needs to collaborate on reflexivity processes.
- Reflexivity should be multi-dimensional and presented throughout the whole manuscript when writing up research.

- ▶ A set of practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research process



# Questions