

10 Thematic Analysis

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This chapter provides an introduction to thematic analysis (TA). We highlight the unique features of TA, including its flexibility and its status as a technique that can be used within a wide variety of approaches to qualitative research. We then provide a detailed description of doing TA, using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's six-phase approach to coding and theme development (Braun and Clarke, 2006), illustrated with worked examples from Nikki Hayfield's interview research on bisexual women's (visual) identities. This study has been reported in two papers – one focused on bisexual identities and marginalization (Hayfield, Clarke and Halliwell, 2014) and one focused on appearance (Hayfield et al., 2013) – and we use examples from both. We conclude with additional guidance on successfully completing a high-quality TA of qualitative data.

HISTORY AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Since the term appeared about 40 years ago, 'thematic analysis' has had many different meanings. As well as referring to a method for analysing the concepts underpinning the production of scientific knowledge (Holton, 1973), and a quantitative measure of cognitive complexity (Winter and McClelland, 1978), the term has described a wide variety of methods for analysing qualitative data. It has often been used interchangeably with terms like 'content analysis' to name everything from methods that allow for the quantification of qualitative data (Woodrum, 1984), to more interpretative forms of analysis based on the identification of recurrent themes or patterns in data (Baxter, 1991; Dapkus, 1985). In addition, countless qualitative papers make reference to 'organising sections of the data into recurrent themes' (Kitzinger and Wilmott, 2002: 330) or note simply that 'themes emerged from the data' – often without any discussion of the precise analytic procedures followed or reference to methodological literature. Given this, there has been confusion about what TA is and whether it is a particular approach, and considerable variation in advice around how you go about doing it.

Thankfully, the situation has changed considerably in the last decade, and TA has become a very widely used and recognized method in psychology and the social and health sciences.

The most commonly used approach to TA – that outlined by Virginia and Victoria (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013) – provides an accessible, systematic and rigorous approach to coding and theme development (Howitt, 2010). This is the approach we focus on in this chapter. There are, however, two main approaches to TA that have been developed, and we will briefly outline the differences between these, as they are important.

Our approach can be described as a 'Big Q' approach to TA. Big Q refers to qualitative research conducted within a qualitative *paradigm* (Kidder and Fine, 1987a). Big Q approaches to qualitative research share in common a rejection of the possibility of discovering universal meaning, because meaning is understood as always being tied to the context in which it is produced. Big Q approaches also emphasize the active role of the researcher in the research process, and the importance of embracing researcher subjectivity, rather than viewing it as a 'problem' to be managed (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Our approach to TA is Big Q because we advocate the use of an organic approach to coding and theme development, one that is informed by the unique standpoint of the researcher, and that is fluid, flexible and responsive to the researcher's evolving engagement with their data.

In contrast, 'small q' qualitative research uses qualitative techniques in a (post)positivist paradigm (Kidder and Fine, 1987a). Key motivations in developing small q approaches to TA include making qualitative methods acceptable to quantitative researchers, and seeking to 'bridge the gap' between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Boyatzis, 1998). Small q TA is underpinned by quantitative conceptions of reliability; authors advocate the use of a (predetermined and fixed) 'code book' or coding frame (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012; Joffe, 2011), which is *applied* to the data (the coding frame is typically developed after data familiarization). The use of a coding frame facilitates the use of multiple, independent coders, which allows for the calculation of inter-coder or inter-rater reliability scores. These scores provide a quantitative measure of coding 'accuracy', offering reassurance of the reliability of the analysis (if a kappa of $>.80$ is calculated). From a Big Q perspective, the notion that coding can be more or less 'accurate' is problematic. It appears to be underpinned by the problematic assumptions that the analysis is *in* the data, waiting to be found (see below), and that if two or more researchers agree about coding, it is somehow 'better'. From our Big Q perspective, a 'good' inter-rater reliability score only shows us that the researchers have been trained to apply a coding frame in a similar way, not that the coding is 'reliable' or 'accurate' (Braun and Clarke, 2013). These emphases in small q TA necessarily limit its claimed theoretical flexibility (Boyatzis, 1998; Guest et al., 2012; Joffe, 2011).

Our Big Q approach to TA is theoretically flexible, and one of the key elements that distinguishes it from many other qualitative analytic approaches is that it is a method rather than a methodology. What do we mean by this? A *methodology* refers to a theoretically informed framework for research; and qualitative approaches like interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory, discourse analysis and conversation analysis are methodologies rather than methods. Methodologies are like package holidays – you select the package, not the individual elements of the package. Alongside guidelines for data analysis, methodologies like IPA and discourse analysis come complete with guiding theoretical assumptions and recommendations or prescriptions for particular kinds of research questions

BOX 10.1 DEFINING REALIST, CRITICAL REALIST AND RELATIVIST TA

Type	Definition	Example study
Realist/ essentialist	Reality is 'out there' and discoverable through the research process; people's words provide direct access to reality.	Rance et al.'s (2014) study of women with anorexia assumes that anorexia is a real condition.
Critical realist/ contextualist	Reality is 'out there' but access to it is always mediated by socio-cultural meanings, and, in the case of qualitative analysis, the participant's and the researcher's interpretative resources (so <i>direct</i> access to reality is never possible). People's words provide access to their <i>particular</i> version of reality; research produces interpretations of this reality.	Hayfield et al.'s (2014) study reports bisexual marginalization from bisexual women's perspectives, but also locates their experiences within a wider interpretative context where sexuality is normatively understood in dichotomous 'either/or' terms.
Relativist/ constructionist	There is no external reality discoverable through the research process. Instead, versions of reality are created in and through research. The researcher cannot look through people's words to find evidence of the psychological or social reality that sits behind it. Rather, people's words become the focus of research, and the researcher interprets how these words produce particular realities.	Braun's (2008) study explored the explanatory frameworks that 'lay' people provide for sexual health statistics in New Zealand. Taking a constructionist approach, it treated these accounts as reflecting and reinforcing a certain reality that needs to be taken into account if sexual health promotion is to be successful.

and ideal methods of data collection. In contrast, TA provides a *method* – a set of theoretically independent *tools* for analysing qualitative data. This means doing TA is like arranging your own holiday: you choose which flights you take, where you stay and how you get around. When you use TA, you have to decide what theoretical assumptions will guide your

research, what your research question will be, what type(s) of data you will collect and how exactly you will implement TA.

Qualitative analytic methodologies often have unique aspects that set them apart from other approaches and make them ideally suited to *particular* kinds of qualitative research. In grounded theory, for example, it is theory development (Birks and Mills, 2011); in IPA, it is idiography (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). TA's status as method means that its hallmark is flexibility – you can do it in a wide range of ways, guided by different theoretical frameworks. TA can be used to address most types of research questions (see Box 10.2 below) and to analyse most types of qualitative data, everything from interviews (e.g., Hayfield and Clarke, 2012) and focus groups (e.g., Braun, 2008) to qualitative surveys (e.g., Moller, Timms and Alilovic, 2009), diaries (e.g., Malinen, Rönkä and Sevón, 2010), story completion tasks (e.g., Whitty, 2005), and secondary sources such as newspaper articles and official documents (e.g., Ellis and Kitzinger, 2002). TA can be deployed within a wide range of theoretical frameworks. It can be realist/essentialist (e.g., Malik and Coulson, 2008), critical realist/contextualist (e.g., Hayfield et al., 2014) or relativist/constructionist (e.g., Braun, 2008) (see Box 10.1 for more details). So theoretical independence doesn't make TA *non-theoretical* (as is often assumed) or an implicitly realist/essentialist method (another common assumption).

TA can also take a range of different forms:

- *Inductive TA* refers to analysis primarily grounded in the data, rather than existing theories and concepts. Although pure induction is not possible in most forms of qualitative research – analysis is always shaped by a researcher's theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research training, prior research experiences, and personal and political standpoints – inductive TA aims to stay as close as possible to the meanings in the data.
- *Deductive TA*, by contrast, views the data through a theoretical lens so that existing theoretical concepts inform coding and theme development, and the analysis moves beyond the obvious meanings in the data. For instance, in our research area – critical sexuality studies – a widely used concept has been the notion of a 'male sex drive discourse'. Introduced by feminist psychologist Wendy Hollway (1984) to capture the ways accounts around male heterosexuality were often underpinned by the assumption that men want sex 'anytime, anyplace, anywhere' (Farvid and Braun, 2006), this concept has provided researchers with an interpretative frame that has guided the analysis and interpretation of their data (e.g., Farvid and Braun, 2006; Gilfoyle, Wilson and Brown, 1992; Hayfield and Clarke, 2012).
- *Semantic TA* focuses on the surface meaning of the data, the things that are *explicitly stated*. One way of thinking about the notion of semantic meanings (in research involving participants) is as the explicit meanings participants communicate to the researcher: the obvious ideas and concepts in the data. In coding and analysing semantically, the researcher seeks to remain close to the participants' meanings, while maintaining an awareness that these are always viewed through *their* particular interpretative lens (Smith et al., 2009).

- *Latent TA* focuses on meanings that lie under the data surface – assumptions, frameworks or world-views that underpin semantic meanings. So latent meanings can be thought of as those that participants are not explicitly aware of, or explicitly communicating; they are meanings that become apparent from the vantage point of the researcher. Analysing latent meaning requires more interpretative work on the part of the researcher, including asking questions like ‘What suppositions are required to make sense of things in *this way*?’
- *Descriptive TA* refers to analysis that aims primarily to summarize and describe patterned meaning in the data.
- *Interpretative TA* goes beyond description, to decipher the (deeper) meanings in the data and interpret their importance.

This variability in the application of TA means that it can range from relatively straightforward descriptive overviews of key features in data to more complex, conceptual readings of data that examine the theoretical implications of the analysis. However, it's not the case that latent and interpretative versions of TA are necessarily ‘better’ TA. TA that is primarily semantic and descriptive can be highly sophisticated, and make important theoretical or practical contributions. For example, Rance, Clarke and Moller's (2014) largely semantic and descriptive TA of the interview accounts of women with a history of restricting their intake of food (see example study at the end of the chapter) has important theoretical implications for understanding anorexia.

It is worth noting that while many combinations of these forms are possible, commonly they cluster together into one of two ‘versions’ of TA: (1) a realist/essentialist, inductive, semantic and descriptive approach; and (2) a relativist/constructionist, deductive, latent and interpretative approach.

FORMULATING A RESEARCH QUESTION AND DESIGNING A STUDY

Due to the flexibility of TA the researcher plays an obviously *active* role in designing their TA study: selecting theoretical framework(s), research question(s), method(s) of data collection, and sample, and also in determining how exactly TA will be used, creating an overall good ‘fit’ in design. Fit is an important principle for qualitative research design (Willig, 2001) and provides an anchor in the sea of possibility that is qualitative research. In achieving ‘fit’, all the different elements of the research design must be conceptually compatible. Nikki's study, which we discuss in depth below, was guided by both a political commitment to ‘give voice’ to bisexual women and an academic interest in how bisexual women make sense of their visual identities. A broadly experiential approach to TA (see below), underpinned by a critical realist ontology (Ussher, 1999) and contextualist epistemology (Madill, Jordan and Shirley, 2000), was most appropriate, as was the collection of detailed individual narratives through qualitative interviews. A semantic and inductive approach to coding and analysis meant Nikki stayed close to, and could ‘give voice’ to, the women's meanings.

BOX 10.2 EXAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS SUITABLE FOR TA STUDIES

Broad type of research	Questions about...	Example studies	Broad TA approach in example study
<i>Experiential qualitative research</i> – assumes language is a tool for communicating people's experiences, perspectives and practices; that such things can be 'read off' people's words; language reflects reality.	People's lived experiences of...	Women's lived experiences of body hair growth (Fahs, 2014)	Essentialist
	People's perspectives on...	Young adults' views on pubic hair (Braun, Tricklebank and Clarke, 2013)	Contextualist (critical realist)
	The factors and social processes that underpin particular phenomena	The role of experiential and gendered embodiment in regulating alcohol consumptions (Lyons, Emslie and Hunt, 2014)	Contextualist (focus on embodied experience in a constructionist-lite framework)
	Practices; the things people do in the world	Young lesbian, gay and bisexual people's clothing practices (Clarke and Turner, 2007)	Contextualist
<i>Critical qualitative research</i> – rejects the assumption that the reality of people's experiences sits behind language; rather, reality is constructed in and through language.	Representations of particular subjects and objects in particular contexts	The representation of women's bodies in women's magazines, focusing on 'love your body' discourse (Murphy and Jackson, 2011)	Constructionist (post-structuralist)
	The social construction of a particular topic or issue	The construction of men's talk about weight management on weight loss discussion forums (Bennett and Gough, 2013)	Constructionist

TA is suited to a wide range of research questions – from *experiential* questions about people's lived experiences and perspectives to *critical* questions about the social construction of 'reality' (Box 10.2 offers some appearance- and embodiment-focused example research questions). Research questions that don't fit well with TA are those focused on 'language practice' and 'idiography'. Language-practice questions draw on a theoretically informed and technical body of knowledge about the action orientation of language (Schegloff, 2007; Wiggins and Potter, 2010) – suiting discursive approaches (e.g., discursive psychology, conversation analysis). Although TA *can* productively be combined with some discursive approaches (Murphy and Jackson, 2011), and 'thematic discourse analysis' (Clarke and Braun, 2014), which focuses on generating codes, themes and *discourses* (Taylor and Ussher, 2001), is gaining popularity, TA does not provide the tools for a detailed examination of language use. Neither is TA appropriate for the in-depth scrutiny of the narratives of individual participants (Riessman, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Because of its focus on patterned meaning, and looking *across* data items to identify themes, it is not suitable for use with a single case or a small number of cases.

The organic and flexible nature of TA coding allows for research questions to evolve throughout the course of the research. Nikki's study, for instance, began with a quite focused research question: 'How do bisexual women make sense of their visual identity?' It quickly became apparent that participants wanted to talk more broadly about their bisexual identity and their experiences of marginalization and stigmatization. As the women's experiences of biphobia provided a wider context for their visual identities (and there is limited research on this topic), Nikki broadened her research question to include bisexual women's experiences of bisexual identity and bisexual marginalization. A more common evolution is for a broader question to become more focused. For example, Victoria and Katharine Spence (Clarke and Spence, 2013) began their analysis of lesbian and bisexual women's clothing practices by asking how lesbian and bisexual women make sense of their clothing practices in relation to their sexualities. During coding and theme development, their research question was refined to how lesbian and bisexual women negotiate pressures to look like an authentic individual and an authentic lesbian.

COLLECTING DATA

Ideally, you'll collect 'good' data to analyse thematically. For TA, like most qualitative approaches, whatever types of data are collected, they should provide detailed and complex insights into the topic in question. Although no guarantee of data quality, careful preparation and planning for data collection is important (see Braun and Clarke, 2013). For example, piloting a data collection tool is a useful way to ensure that it generates appropriate and good quality data, especially if you're collecting a small sample.

'What size sample do I need?' is a common – and vexed – question in TA (and much other qualitative research), with no easy answer. Determining the ideal number of data

items depends on your research question and your theoretical approach, as well as practical considerations (such as the time-frame for conducting the research, total time involved in collecting data and preparing it for analysis, and the ease of recruiting participants, if used). The richness of individual data items is also relevant. Generally, fewer are required if individual data items (e.g., an interview) provide detailed, rich data (but keep in mind TA's focus on the generation of themes *across* data items); larger sample sizes can to some extent 'compensate' for shallower data items. Box 10.3 provides some suggestions for *minimum* sample sizes for different types of data in relation to projects of different scopes and sizes. Homogeneity or heterogeneity of sample is another useful question to consider in relation to size. With small TA studies, a more homogeneous, focused sample can help in identifying meaningful themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013). More heterogeneous samples are more practicable in larger TA studies.

Certain data items (e.g., audio-recorded interviews) will require transcription before analysis commences. For TA, a thorough orthographic transcript that captures what was said, and possibly also some basic details of *how* things were said (e.g., particularly notable

**BOX 10.3 RECOMMENDED SAMPLE SIZES
FOR TA STUDIES OF VARIOUS SIZES AND SCOPES**

Data type	Small project (e.g., u/g project)	Medium project (e.g., Master's, Prof Doc)	Large project (e.g., PhD)
Interviews	5/6–10	6–15	15–20 (one study); 30+ (sole data source)
Focus groups	1–3	3–6	3–6 (one study); 10+ (sole data source)
Qualitative surveys	20–30	30–100	50+ (one study); 200+ (sole data source)
Story completion tasks	20–40	40–100	100+ (one study); 400+ (sole data source)
Secondary sources (e.g., media texts)	1–100	1–200	3/4–400+

(Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2013)

pauses or emphasis), are required (see Braun and Clarke, 2013, for guidelines). For example, in the transcript extracts in Boxes 10.5, 10.7 and 10.8 below, underlining is used to signal emphasis on a particular word, and inverted commas to signal the reported speech of self and others.

With your data set collected and prepared, you're ready to begin data analysis. For smaller studies, because the data set is small and focused, we recommended waiting until all data are collected before beginning. In larger TA studies, a more organic, exploratory approach is possible (in which new questions are incorporated and new avenues explored during data collection), and data collection and analysis are conducted simultaneously.

BOX 10.4 SIX PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Familiarization: Data analysis is facilitated by an in-depth knowledge of, and engagement with, the data set. Familiarization – reading and rereading transcripts, listening to audio-recordings, making notes of any initial analytic observations – helps the researcher to move the analysis beyond a focus on the most obvious meanings.

Coding: A systematic process of identifying and labelling relevant features of the data (in relation to the research question). Coding is the first step in the process of identifying patterns in the data because it groups together similar data segments.

'Searching' for themes: The 'search' for themes is not simply one of 'discovery'; the themes are not in the data waiting to be uncovered by an intrepid researcher. Rather, the researcher clusters together codes to *create* a plausible mapping of key patterns in the data.

Reviewing themes: The researcher pauses the process of theme generation to check whether the candidate themes exhibit a good 'fit' with the coded data and with the entire data set, and each has a clear, distinct 'essence' – or central organizing concept. Reviewing may lead to no or few changes, or to discarding the candidate themes and restarting the previous phase.

Defining and naming themes: Writing theme definitions (effectively a brief summary of each theme) and selecting a theme name ensure the conceptual clarity of each theme and provide a road map for the final write-up.

Writing the report: The researcher weaves together their analytic narrative and vivid, compelling data extracts. Themes provide the organizing framework for the analysis, but analytic conclusions are drawn across themes.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006)

ANALYSIS

We now describe the six – recursive – phases Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend for TA (see Box 10.4). Each phase is illustrated with examples from Nikki's interview study with bisexual women. Following these steps closely will hopefully reduce the anxiety that analysing qualitative data can generate in new researchers! Keep in mind that each phase provides the foundation for the next; the more solid the foundations you lay in each phase, the more confidence you can have in your developing analysis.

As you begin, it's crucial to remember that the analysis is not *in* the data, waiting to be discovered by a researcher with the correct tools and skills to do so. Themes do not simply 'emerge' from data. Rather, analysis is constructed at the intersection of the data and the researcher's theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills and experience. To illustrate this, let's consider a short data extract that we often use when teaching TA (see Braun and Clarke, 2012); see Box 10.5. It comes from Virginia and Victoria's research on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students' experiences of university life, and we encourage you to read this data extract now and make a note of any analytic observations you have.

We're always struck by the myriad of different ways people make sense of this short extract. Psychologists, particularly therapists, tend to focus on Andreas' psychological experience: what it must *feel like* to be in the situation he describes. Critical social psychologists tend to focus on the wider social context, and the ways in which Andreas' account is reflective of social *norms* around sexuality. People with no personal or professional experience around non-heterosexualities, and who are embedded in culturally dominant sense-making frameworks around sexuality (neoliberalism and libertarianism; Brickell, 2001), tend to view Andreas as overly fearful and lacking confidence in his sexuality. By contrast, people with personal or professional experience of non-heterosexualities tend to view Andreas as responding rationally to a heteronormative university environment. These interpretations (and others) are neither 'wrong' nor 'right'; they're analytic observations based on researcher experience. What were your observations? What assumptions underpinned your observations?

Phase 1: Familiarization

Familiarization involves spending quality time with your data! You should read through your *entire* data set at least twice. If you have audio data, listen to it (over and above any listening required to transcribe it, although transcription assists familiarization). Try not to just absorb the data as you might absorb information when reading a magazine or listening to the radio. Read in a *curious and questioning* way. You can facilitate this by asking yourself the following types of questions as you read:

- Why are they making sense of things in *this* way (and not *that* way)?
- What assumptions underpin this account?

- What type of world-view does this account imply or rely on?
- How would I feel in this situation?
- What implications does this account have?

BOX 10.5 A GAY MALE STUDENT RESPONDING TO A QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER HE IS 'OUT' AT UNIVERSITY

Andreas: I sometimes try to erm not conceal it that's not the right word but erm let's say I'm in a seminar and somebody- a a man says to me 'oh look at her' (Int: mm) I'm not going 'oh actually I'm gay' (Int: mm [laughter]) I'll just go like 'oh yeah' (Int: mhm) you know I won't fall into the other one and say 'oh yeah' (Int: yep) 'she looks really brilliant' (Int: yep) but I sorta then and after then you hate myself for it because I I don't know how this person would react because that person might then either not talk to me anymore or erm might sort of yeah (Int: yep) or next time we met not sit next to me or that sort of thing (Int: yep) so I think these this back to this question are you out yes but I think wherever you go you always have to start afresh (Int: yep) this sort of li-lifelong process of being courageous in a way or not

(Braun and Clarke, 2012)

Make notes as you go, recording your observations and insights. You'll almost inevitably start by noting fairly obvious meanings, but the more you read in a curious and questioning way, the greater depth of insight you will achieve. End this phase by making notes on your overall observations on the data set. Box 10.6 provides two examples of familiarization notes from the bisexual women's visual identities study – observations first from one interview, then from the entire data set.

BOX 10.6 FAMILIARIZATION NOTES FROM THE BISEXUAL WOMEN'S VISUAL IDENTITIES STUDY

Familiarization notes from Interview 8 (Roxy):

- *There is no way to look bisexual or identify other people as being bisexual.*
- *It does not seem like there are many bisexual people around (bisexual invisibility).*

- She felt she belonged within some (non-sexuality-related) communities and this was clearly important to her (belonging/multiple identities - bisexuality as not a master identity).
- Her experience of lesbian/LGBT groups is that they are not inclusive of bisexuality, which makes her feel that she does not fit in, AND additionally, heterosexual people do not understand bisexuality.
- She distanced her own bisexual identity from how she saw bisexuality being portrayed ('bicuriosity', 'threesomes' and 'promiscuity').

Familiarization notes from entire data set:

- Most of the women directly state that it is not possible to communicate bisexuality through dress and appearance.
- However, it seems more complex than this - the women talked about trying to look bisexual or not heterosexual and not lesbian, thinking people who look like them might be bisexual, some 'looks' (alternative/hippy/goth) might hint at the possibility of bisexuality.
- Dress and appearance are important - to convey individuality, identity, embodiment, performativity, practicality/'comfort', construction of femininity/masculinity and androgyny.
- Participants (sometimes reluctantly) acknowledge that they do assess other people's appearance in relation to sexuality and can recognize certain lesbian looks (mainly 'butch lesbians').
- Communication of bisexuality difficult (through appearance or otherwise) because often others assume sexuality based on partner gender AND overlook the possibility of bisexuality/multiple partners.
- The interviews contain lots of different perspectives on lived bisexuality which seems to relate to involvement with LGBT spaces and bisexual communities/cisgender and transgender/monogamy and polyamory.
- Lots of talk about bisexual identity - as a third identity position 'in between' heterosexual and lesbian/gay OR as a breaking down of binaries.

These bisexual women talked about bisexuality as invisible or, if visible, as represented in ways that do not resonate with their experiences ('bicurious', not really existing, temporary phase, 'sat-on-the-fence', diseased, 'promiscuous', non-monogamous).

Phase 2: Coding

A systematic and rigorous coding process builds solid foundations for theme development. As tempting as it is to skip this phase and start theme identification immediately, coding facilitates deep engagement with the data and the production of an analysis that goes beyond the immediate or obvious. A code identifies and labels something of interest in the data in relation to the research question. As noted above, coding can happen at two levels – semantic

BOX 10.7 A CODED DATA EXTRACT FROM THE BISEXUAL WOMEN'S VISUAL IDENTITY STUDY

Do you think that there is a bisexual look?

(long pause) No. (long pause) Not really.

Although I'm not one hundred percent sure about that but I *(pause)* slightly struggle with the concept of a bisexual look because I don't know whether that means *(pause)* a lesbian look, as in a clichéd 'I don't want to look *(pause)* attractive to men', or what's culturally seen as attractive to men, so I'm going to defeminize myself' *(pause)* and I would say that there's a percentage of lesbians that wish to do that to identify themselves within their cultural group of, y'know, I want to communicate to other women that I'm a lesbian through having a certain look and I want to make it clear to men that I'm completely

unattracted to you, which I would kind of say is a clichéd lesbian look, but I think that's, probably lots of lesbians would, dispute that *(pause)* and I suppose the whole lipstick lesbian thing is another part of that. But I think traditionally there's an aspect of defeminization as a lesbian. (Gemma)

(Hayfield et al., 2013)

No bisexual look (initial response)

Uncertainty about (possibility or necessity of) bisexual look

Bisexual look difficult to grasp

Bisexual look may be similar to a lesbian look

Lesbian look could be a cliché/stereotype

Appearance as a form of communication (of sexuality)

Lesbian looks function to communicate sexuality to (heterosexual) men

Particular appearances attractive to men

Women feminine, lesbians reject femininity

Some (not all) lesbians adhere to cliché/stereotype

Lesbian looks function to communicate sexuality to other lesbians / form community

Lesbian 'look' is an active choice

Appearance is actively constructed

Hesitant to assert existence of lesbian look

Resisting clichés/'stereotypes'

Lipstick lesbian look

'Traditional' lesbian look unfeminine/masculine – butch lesbians

and latent – and most analyses will contain some mix of both. For instance, in Nikki's study, her experiential approach led to primarily semantic codes that stayed on the surface of the data (Box 10.7 shows a coded extract from her study). Semantic codes in Box 10.7 include *no bisexual look* and *bisexual look difficult to grasp*; Gemma communicated these directly in the words she used to talk about bisexual appearance. The code *women feminine, lesbians reject femininity* is a more latent code, however, because Gemma's statement that lesbians 'defeminize' is underpinned by an assumption that women *are* fundamentally feminine, and that lesbians actively *reject* an inherent femininity in order to establish a (butch) lesbian appearance. This latent code moves beyond what is explicitly stated to consider the frameworks the participant uses to explain her world.

How you practically manage the coding process is up to you, and there are numerous techniques to choose from: scribbles on the (wide) margins of each data item; the use of specialist software (Silver and Fielding, 2008) to code selected text electronically; creating a Microsoft Word document for each code, and collating data relevant for each code; or very low-tech cutting and pasting of hard copies of data items onto file cards or sheets of paper for each code. Collating the coded data is essential for the next phase – most of these techniques have the advantage of collating as part of the process; with scribbling on the data items, you need to collate after coding.

Whichever technique you use, coding begins with a close reading through a data item. (To avoid viewing your data through the lens of the first item you collected, we encourage you to start with a later item.) When you note something of potential relevance to your research question, you code it – that is, you tag the selected data excerpt with a pithy label (the code). A code is typically a short phrase (see Box 10.7) that clearly captures the key aspect you see as important in that bit of data, either in your own words or using a data quotation. One-word codes like 'gender' or 'realism' may make sense when scribbled on data items, but when you're working 'off' your data item, and trying to identify analytically coherent connections between multiple codes, such vague codes are unlikely to successfully evoke the analytic relevance of the data. Good codes are ones that make analytic sense, without needing to see the data; they provide a shorthand analytic 'take'.

After generating your first code, you keep moving through the data; each time you identify something of potential interest, you need to decide if an existing code captures what is of interest or whether a new code is required. As TA coding is flexible and organic, you can tweak existing codes as you work through the data, expanding or contracting them, splitting them into two or more codes or collapsing similar codes together, to better fit your developing analysis. Continue coding throughout the entire data set. Data excerpts can be coded more than once (it's not a case of fitting the data into the 'correct' code) (see Box 10.8 below). Coding should be over- rather than under-inclusive. If in doubt, code it! But use your research question to judge relevance. Given the fluid and flexible nature of TA coding, we recommend at least two rounds of coding the entire data set, to ensure that your coding is thorough. This is especially important if you tweak your coding a lot during your first round of coding. Second coding rounds can also facilitate the development of latent codes.

There's no ideal (or limit on) number of codes for a data set: any recommendations for numbers of codes risks being interpreted as a prescription or target. Moreover, the question 'how many codes?' makes no sense – recall the point we made above: you're not finding *the* analysis already evident in the data; you're constructing *an* analysis that is plausible and robust. You should end this phase with your data thoroughly coded, and all your codes, and the data relevant to each code, collated ready for the next phase. Box 10.8 provides some instances of codes and collated data from the example study.

Phase 3: 'Searching' for themes

You now move up a level of abstraction, from coding to theme development. Although we use 'searching' to describe this phase, you're not looking for something that already exists; rather, you are aiming to *create* a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of your data. In developing themes, you might 'promote' a particularly dense and complex code to a theme (there is no *absolute* distinction between a code and a theme); more commonly, you would cluster together similar codes. The key criteria for determining whether a potential theme *is* in fact a theme is whether it *both* identifies a coherent aspect of the data *and* tells you something about it, relevant to your research question. A theme needs to be underpinned by a *central organizing concept* – or, more simply put, a key analytic point. Weaker themes group together similar codes but lack a central idea that unifies the codes. Consider a candidate theme you've called *Social Support*. If this simply collated the main things the participants said about this issue, it would lack a key point and focus. Presenting and summarizing diverse views does not constitute a theme (especially if summarizing participants' responses to a question – e.g., about social support – because little analytic work has been undertaken). However, if you developed a candidate theme around a central idea that unified participants' various observations about social support, it could work. For instance, *Effective Social Support Facilitates Coping* tells us that views on social support cohered around a relationship between support and coping – a key point. This also highlights the importance of naming themes appropriately (see Phase 5).

It's important to reflect on the relationships between your candidate themes – do they work together to form a coherent analysis? Themes can exist in hierarchical as well as lateral relationships, but we recommend having no more than three theme levels:

- *Overarching themes* tend to be used to organize and structure an analysis; they capture an idea underpinning a number of themes (see Braun and Clarke, 2013).
- *Themes* report in detail on meaning related to a central organizing concept.
- *Sub-themes* capture and develop an important facet of the central organizing concept of a theme (see Braun, 2008).

A very complex thematic analysis, with many different theme levels, suggests a rather fragmented, underdeveloped analysis that requires further theme development. Reflecting on relationships between themes also helps determine the boundaries of each theme – what

BOX 10.8 COLLATED CODES AND ASSOCIATED DATA EXTRACTS FROM THE BISEXUAL WOMEN'S VISUAL IDENTITY STUDY

Prioritizing practicality	Scary lesbians with attitude	Body size matters	Lesbian appearance: short hair	Bisexual appearance: goth
<i>Betty</i>: That's one of my favourite jumpers at the moment, just cus it's really thick and warm for winter, it's been so cold recently <i>Berni</i>: I don't wear sarongs cus I can't walk in them and they just annoy me and I'm too worried about flashing my bits <i>Rose</i>: I did buy a pair of heels when I was about seventeen or eighteen and I wore them for about three weeks. I was in so much pain I just thought 'this is insane'. So I got rid of them	<i>Elizabeth</i>: You've gotta have this atmosphere of 'don't come anywhere near me or I'm gonna beat you up' <i>Adele</i>: One of the big things is the attitude. Really. Just 'don't mess with me' kind of attitude (<i>laughs</i>). And that's before I've spotted the short hair <i>Emily</i>: Not that I y'know, tried to pretend that I was a lesbian when I went out, I wouldn't, but I wouldn't go round broadcasting 'oh yeah I've got a boyfriend at home by the way' in case they like, run you out of the pub	<i>Lucy</i>: I mean the attitude of people about women, and women's image, goes across all sexualities and across all of our culture and is massively judgemental of women <i>Sandy</i>: I was bullied quite extensively at high school, and then I dropped all this weight in the summer before college and it was like I was a different person, and I was so much more confident and, just like I made so many friends and it was like the best two years of my life	<i>Blue</i>: Your archetypal trendy dyke, y'know, skinny, short hair, vest tops, jeans, tattoos <i>Berni</i>: It's easy to spot the lesbian that has short hair because of how she looks but that's what you're spotting, you're stereotyping <i>Elizabeth</i>: If I saw someone in the street and I was to go 'oh they're gay' these are the reasons why. So yeah, normally short hair, piercings <i>Adele</i>: One of the big things is the attitude. Really. Just 'don't mess with me' kind of attitude (<i>laughs</i>). And that's before I've spotted the short hair	<i>Ruth</i>: I'd be more likely to assume that people who look like goths, or skaters, or emos, or the kind of ... hippy indie rock end of the young people's cultural spectrum. I'd think it was more likely that they would be bi <i>Eddy</i>: There is an enormous slew of very femme-y goths <i>Adele</i>: Especially in the evening when people dress up it can get very gothy [...], so there's a lot of corsets and a lot of sort of 'striking' looks

(Hayfield, et al., 2013)

each includes and excludes. Good themes are unlikely to be very narrow and restricted in focus (e.g., based on only one or two analytic observations), nor very broad and sprawling – lacking a clear focus and with lots of sub-themes (see Box 10.10 below).

Drawing thematic maps – figurative representations of the relationships between codes and potential themes – is a useful technique both for developing individual themes and for exploring the relationship between themes. Early thematic maps are often rather complex as they can record many potential patterns identified in the data. Nikki used her early thematic map (Figure 10.1) as a way to document the analytic thoughts and ideas developed during coding, and to get a sense of the overall analysis. However, these ideas were refined considerably as theme development progressed (as Figure 10.2 shows), with some themes discarded, and others retained and refined.

This phase ends when you reach a point in theme development where you're only making minor adjustments to your candidate themes and feel confident that your thematic map captures your data coding and provides a coherent answer to your research question. When first starting out with TA, keeping Phases 3 and 4 sequential helps build a robust analysis. With experience, the process of theme development and review can become more recursive, moving fluidly back and forth between the two.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

You review your themes in two ways: first, in relation to the collated, coded data for each theme; second, in relation to the entire data set. The first stage of review focuses on the individual themes and checks whether they 'work' in relation to the coded data. It involves rereading all the data associated with the codes for each theme and asking whether the candidate theme is a good (enough) fit with the meanings evident in the coded data. If it is, you proceed to the next stage of review. If not, you need to revise your themes. This can range from some minor tweaking, to discarding all the themes and restarting theme development. In Nikki's study, for example, an early candidate theme related to 'body size and shape', as several of the women talked about their bodies (see Box 10.8 and Figure 10.1). However, in review, it was evident that the theme lacked a central organizing concept, as women's discussions of their bodies were disparate: some took pride in defying the dominant 'thin ideal' (Bordo, 1993) and claiming alternative forms of beauty and femininity; others spoke of being happier when thinner. Some considered body size important in relation to sexuality; others did not. And overall, many said very little about their bodies and body size (despite being asked about it). The combination of lack of coherence and limited data led Nikki to discard this as a candidate theme.

Once your candidate themes have 'passed' review against the coded data, you need to return to your entire data set for a final check for fit. You want an analysis that addresses your research question *and* reflects the content of the data. Each analytic phase takes you further and further away from your data. This review stage provides a check to ensure that both the individual themes and the analysis as a whole capture key meanings and patterns in the data. The outcome of this stage of review can range from few or no changes, to

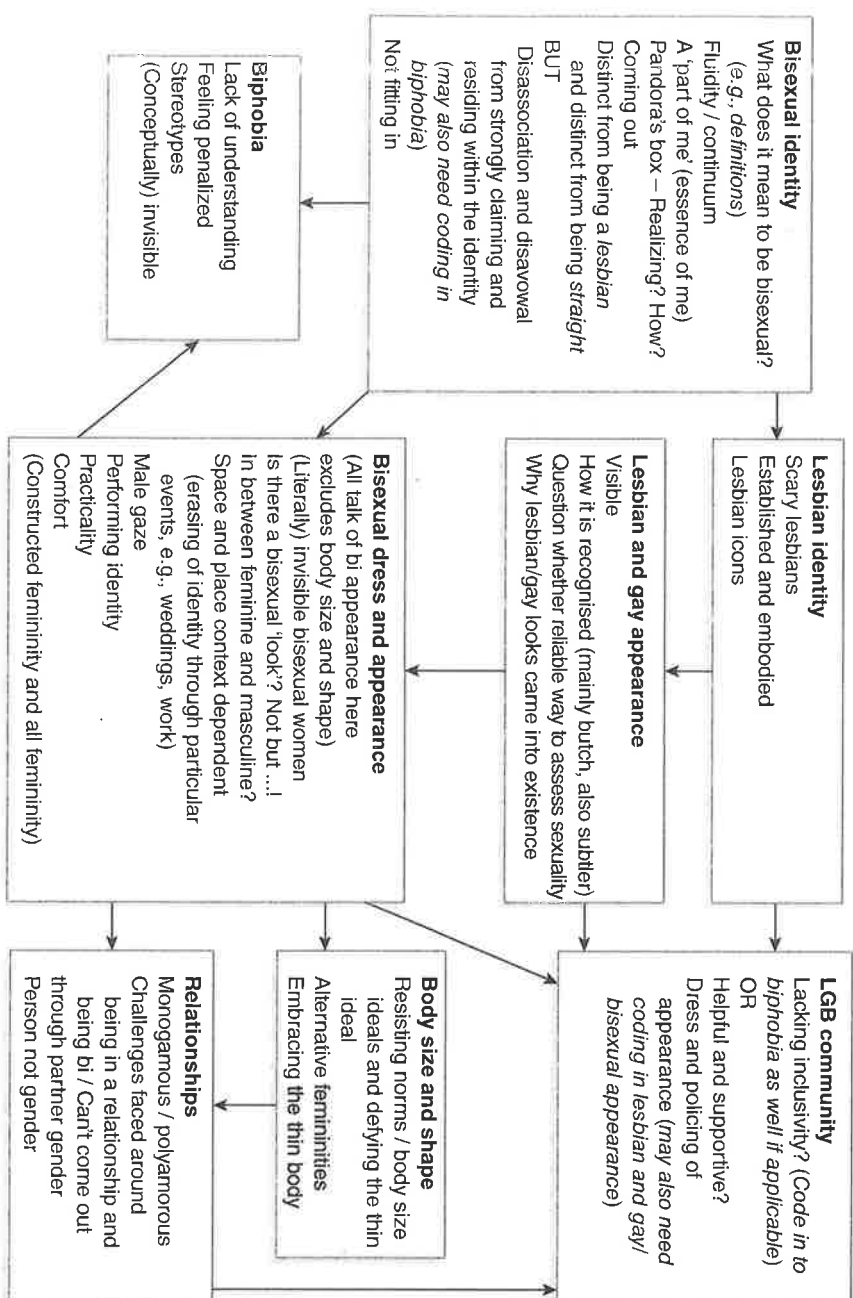


Figure 10.1 First thematic map from the bisexual women's visual identity study (Hayfield et al., 2013)

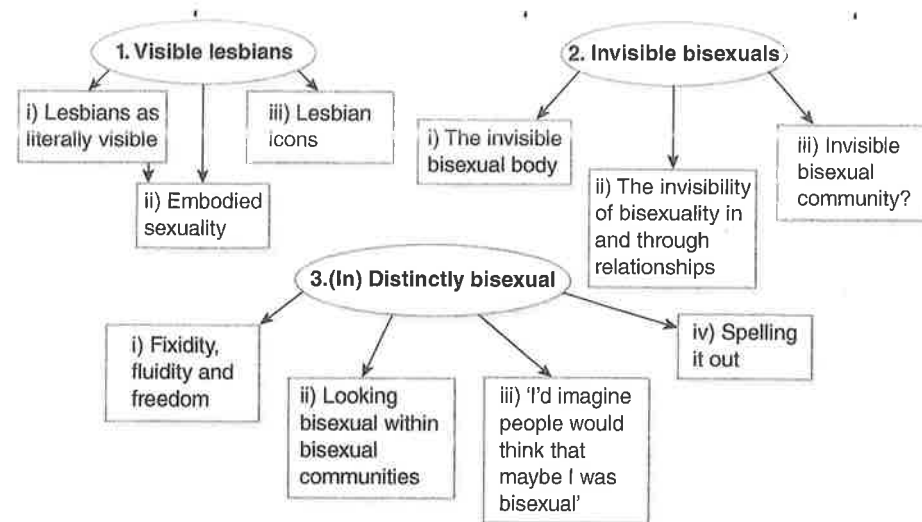


Figure 10.2 Final thematic map from the bisexual women's visual identity study (Hayfield et al., 2013)

discarding candidate themes and returning to theme development. If there is a large mismatch, you may even need to return to coding, to ensure a good match between codes and data content.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Once you are (reasonably) confident that you have generated a robust thematic mapping of your data, understanding both the scope of each theme and how the themes relate together, you begin the process of elaborating each theme and moving towards the write-up of your results. One very useful step is writing *theme definitions*. These are fairly short descriptions (generally a few hundred words in length) explaining the essence (central organizing concept), scope and coverage, and boundaries of each theme (see Box 10.9 for an example). This step helps you to develop and enrich your *analytic narrative* – your (interpretative) commentary on the data. Writing theme definitions also helps you to think about the organization and flow of analysis within each theme, effectively providing a road map for writing up your results.

Finalizing the name of each theme is another part of the theme development process. Good *theme names* capture the essence of each theme – and may use a particularly compelling data quotation to do so (see Hayfield et al., 2014). We enjoy the creative potential of this process, and often develop theme names that are playful or reference popular culture. For example, we have named themes after popular sayings, album and song titles, and even the 'seven deadly sins' (see Braun and Clarke, 2013).

BOX 10.9 VISIBLE LESBIANS THEME DEFINITION, FROM THE BISEXUAL WOMEN'S VISUAL IDENTITY STUDY

The theme *visible lesbians* captures participants' observations that lesbian women have a visual identity, if they want it, as well as (some) cultural visibility. Bisexual women identified and described a 'lesbian look', despite being hesitant to do so and trying to 'resist' the notion of appearance stereotypes. The 'butch lesbian', who participants constructed as masculine and highly visible, was the most commonly identified 'lesbian look'. Many participants also named more specific and nuanced lesbian looks (e.g., baby dyke), reflecting a cultural awareness of lesbian communities. The women understood lesbian appearance as both visible on the body and as embodied. It was not only a lesbian's clothes and hair which conveyed her sexuality; it was a combination of this and a lesbian's body, walk and 'attitude'. Participants also noted some cultural visibility and role models for lesbian women, identifying lesbian 'icons' in film and television. However, the women (often) distanced *themselves* from lesbian looks, effectively positioning bisexuality as distinct from lesbian identity.

(Reported in Hayfield et al., 2013)

WRITING UP (TA PHASE 6)

There is no clear separation between analysis and writing in TA. You start writing as soon as you begin your analysis (noting initial observations on the data), so 'writing up' involves compiling and editing existing analytic writing as well as producing new writing. As there are no particular requirements for how you frame and contextualize TA studies, we recommend following general guidance for writing up qualitative research here (e.g., Braun and Clarke, 2013). In the method section of your report, you need to identify how you chose to implement TA, and explain why your choices are appropriate. In the results, how many themes should you cover? There is no precise formula, as it depends on the complexity of your analytic map, the depth of each theme, and the style and focus of your report. That said, we consider six to be the maximum possible, and our analyses often report fewer. A key issue to consider is the order in which you present your themes. If one 'main' theme contextualizes the other themes, present this first (see Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Your theme definitions will help you to identify key points to make in presenting your themes, but writing up will develop the analysis further. The analytic write-up contains two elements: data excerpts and analytic commentary. It's rarely practical (or desirable) to evidence every analytic observation with examples from the data. Instead, provide examples for your key observations (your analytic 'headlines'). It's not unusual to have certain participants who are particularly articulate, but avoid being seduced into just presenting quotations from them. In Nikki's study, she managed this by presenting longer narratives from the more

articulate women, balanced with shorter excerpts from others. So although you don't *need* to quote every single data item (and it may not be possible due to sample size), do quote a wide sample of your data items to provide strong evidence of patterning *across* data. There are some other pitfalls to avoid when writing up to produce a good TA. Box 10.10 summarizes these.

BOX 10.10 GOOD AND BAD PRACTICES WHEN REPORTING A TA

Element of the analysis	Bad practices in analysis	Good practices in analysis
Balance between analytic narrative and data extracts	Little in the way of analytic narrative – at the most extreme, we have encountered themes that consisted of one summary sentence followed by a long string of 20 or so data extracts.	A good balance of analytic narrative and data extracts. Main analytic claims appropriately evidenced. The reader has enough information to assess the validity of the author's interpretations.
	Analytic narrative supported by very few data examples – at the most extreme, we have encountered write-ups with no example data extracts <i>at all</i> , leaving the reader no basis for 'validation' of the author's analytic observations.	
Selection of data extracts	Most or all of the extracts come from the same (small number of) participants/data items.	The selected extracts powerfully illustrate the analytic claims, and clearly and convincingly demonstrate the patterning of meaning in the data.
	The extracts presented are not particularly vivid or compelling (raising questions about the validity of the analytic claims).	
	Only one data extract provided to evidence patterning in the data.	
Fit between data and analytic claims	There is a poor fit between the data extracts and the analytic claims; the extracts don't clearly demonstrate the author's analytic claims.	There is a good fit between data and analytic claims, and all obvious interpretations of the data are considered.
	Other obvious interpretations of the data are not considered.	

Character of individual themes	Some or all of the themes are thin and sketchy, consisting of one or two analytic observations (closer to a code than a theme). The themes simply identify an area of the data but don't tell the reader something about it; it's not clear if the theme is underpinned by a central organizing concept.	Each theme is underpinned by a central organizing concept (any sub-themes clearly demonstrate a facet of this central concept), and is of a suitable scope.
	The themes are unwieldy and overly complex, and thus lack coherence.	
Relationship between themes	There is lots of overlap between themes and thus the individual themes lack a distinct identity.	Each theme is distinct, and together the themes provide a cogent analysis in relation to the research question.
	There is no clear relationship between the themes presented; the themes do not form a coherent analysis.	

In terms of the balance between analytic narrative and data excerpts, aim for at least a 50:50 ratio (with greater emphasis on the analytic narrative – more like 70:30, or even 80:20 – for more conceptual analyses; for an example, see Nicolson and Burr, 2003). Data extracts can be used either illustratively or analytically (Braun and Clarke, 2013). When used illustratively, extracts provide one possible example of an analytic observation – see Box 10.11. The exact extract could be removed, and substituted with another, without any disruption to the analytic narrative (e.g., Braun, Tricklebank and Clarke, 2013). When used analytically, the specific features of a particular data extract matter, as the analysis develops around them and comments directly on them (e.g., Braun, 2008). Some qualitative approaches (e.g., discursive psychology, conversational analysis) primarily, or exclusively, use data analytically; others use data illustratively (e.g., grounded theory). In TA, both are appropriate, and a single analysis can incorporate both styles (e.g., Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Another major consideration when writing up is whether to weave together your results with the existing literature (a combined results and discussion, followed by a short general discussion/longer conclusion), or to present your results with little or no reference to existing literature, followed by a separate discussion where you contextualize your results in relation to existing scholarships (followed by a short conclusion). Whereas most qualitative approaches encourage the use of one particular format for presenting results,

BOX 10.11 EXTRACT FROM BISEXUAL WOMEN'S VISUAL IDENTITY STUDY, SHOWING DATA USED ILLUSTRATIVELY

'The term "bicurious" was often understood to encapsulate the notion of bisexuality as an attention-seeking strategy, which the women also disassociated from their own "genuine" sexuality:

I think there's a certain type of bisexuality that is visible and I don't think that's real bisexuality [...] There's so much of a focus on, a sort of faux bisexuality as being something to attract men. The actual true sexuality is lost in that [...] I think the media just don't really want to accept it or understand it [...] all the sort of stereotypes, the pornographic stereotypes and the bicurious stereotype is very dismissive, it's like it's not a real sexuality, it's not a real thing [...] because biness is so invisible in society, unless you're bicurious. (Marie)

There was like about a million people that were bicurious [on the social networking website 'Facebook']. And actually bicurious just means I wanna shag with a woman and a man really, it doesn't mean [laughter] that you're thinking that you might be bisexual and you wish to explore these feelings, because you wouldn't be doing that on a site, wearing nothing but your underwear. (Roxy)

This resonates with quotes from bisexual men and women in various published materials, where the concept of bicuriosity, and those who identify themselves as bicurious, are seen as problematic in shoring up negative media and pornographic portrayals of bisexuality, which are positioned as the underpinnings of negative understandings of bisexuality (Eisner, 2013). Eisner highlights that such logic is problematic, because it represents people who associate with one form of bisexuality marginalizing an alternative form of bisexuality, which in turn creates notions of "good bisexuals" and "bad bisexuals" (Eisner, 2013: 185).

(From Hayfield et al., 2014)

TA can work with both – the choice depends on the analysis (and, sometimes, external requirements such as the 'house style' of a particular journal). If you have used TA deductively and/or have made greater use of latent coding, it is likely that contextualizing your data in relation to existing theory and concepts is important (e.g., Braun, 2008). If your analysis is more semantic and descriptive, but nonetheless you can spot lots of micro-connections between your analysis and the wider literature, then a combined results and discussion is a good choice (e.g., Huxley, Clarke and Halliwell, 2014). If the connections between your analysis and the literature are more macro and relate primarily to your overall analytic conclusions, then a separate results and discussion is appropriate (see Opperman et al., 2014).

BOX 10.12 15-POINT CHECKLIST FOR A GOOD TA

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do and what you show you have done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006: 96)

CONCLUSION

As noted above, we do not subscribe to the notion that TA can be 'reliable' in the same way that quantitative research aims to be. However, this doesn't mean that 'quality' is not a concern in TA. Throughout this chapter, we have provided guidance on how best to implement TA to produce a 'good quality' analysis. Quality TA is not a question of universal absolutes, but is reliant on the subjectivity of the researcher and their rigour and scholarship. Box 10.12 provides a 15-point checklist for successfully implementing TA.

Although TA is often thought of as a foundational or 'starter' method, we hope we have demonstrated that it's not inherently less sophisticated than approaches that provide fully formed methodologies (e.g., grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)). Because of its flexibility, TA does provide a good starting point for your qualitative research journey, and you can apply the skills you learn from TA when using most other qualitative approaches. As TA can run the gamut from fairly basic, descriptive overviews of semantic meaning to highly sophisticated, conceptually informed interpretations of latent meaning, you can both progress from TA to other approaches, and progress from implementing TA in a way that's fairly rudimentary to producing cutting-edge, complex TA. In Box 10.13, we present three good examples of TA studies.

BOX 10.13 THREE EXAMPLES OF GOOD TA STUDIES

To illustrate the range of possibilities with TA, each study offers a different version: experiential/essentialist (Rance et al., 2014), critical realist/contextualist (Hayfield et al., 2014), and critical/constructionist (Braun, 2008).

On eating disorder clients' perceptions of their female therapists' bodies

Women with eating disorders often observe and assess body-related stimuli, but little is known about whether, and if so, how and with what consequences, this occurs in the therapy room. Rance, Clarke and Moller's (2014) inductive/descriptive TA study aimed to explore how women diagnosed with anorexia, or with a history of restricting food, who had been receiving counselling from a female therapist, observed and assessed their female therapist's body. Nicola Rance conducted interviews with 11 women who saw themselves as recovered or 'on the road to recovery'. The interviews included questions about the female therapists' body/weight and shape, and three themes were generated around this topic: (1) '*Wearing eating disorder glasses*' captured the ways women viewed the world through an 'anorexia lens' and had an almost uncontrollable tendency to assess and compare themselves, in

a skewed or distorted way, to the bodies of other women; (2) *'You're making all sorts of assumptions as a client'* explored how the women's 'eating disorder glasses' informed their experiences of therapy, including assumptions around their therapist's body and, therefore, professional competence; (3) *'Appearance matters'* explored the impact of the women's assessments on their resistance to, or engagement with, therapy. The results suggest practitioners should reflect on the ways their bodies might be perceived and interpreted by clients.

On bisexual women's experiences of bisexuality and bisexual marginalization

Based on interviews Nikki Hayfield conducted with 20 self-identified bisexual women, Hayfield, Clarke and Halliwell's (2014) inductive and (broadly) semantic, critical realist TA focused on the ways women talked about their experiences of bisexual marginalization or 'biphobia'. Previous research indicates that bisexuality is not well understood by non-bisexual people, is often conceptualized negatively, and the validity of bisexual identity has sometimes been called into question (McLean, 2008; Morrison, Harrington and McDermott, 2010). The three themes identified in women's accounts highlighted and explored: (1) how bisexual women felt excluded from heterosexual society *and* lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, both of which were portrayed as lacking an understanding of bisexuality and bisexual people; (2) how others dismiss bisexuality as an authentic identity, which the women themselves experienced it as; and (3) how bisexuality is both (hyper)sexualized and also stigmatized through popular cultural representations. The paper recommended that future researchers further explore the impact of bisexual marginalization on bisexual women (and men).

On national identity explanations for sexual health in Aotearoa/New Zealand

New Zealand has very poor sexual health statistics. Virginia Braun ran 15 focus group discussions with younger New Zealanders to identify everyday understandings that might help improve sexual health (Braun, 2008). The latent/deductive and critical/constructionist TA reported in this paper focused on one dominant theme in participants' account: a particular 'New Zealand persona' that was evoked in explaining sexual health statistics. Such explanations, based on a national character/identity, clustered into four distinct, sometimes contradictory, sub-themes: (1) New Zealanders are binge drinkers and are unconcerned about sexual safety when under the influence; (2) New Zealanders are poor communicators, and therefore do not and cannot communicate to ensure sexual safety; (3) New Zealanders are conservative about sex, yet at the same time highly and complacently sexual; and (4) New Zealanders are inherently 'laid back', captured in sayings such as 'she'll be right' and 'no worries', which means they are unconcerned about *personal* sexual health risk. An emphasis on national identity – rather than *personal* – characteristics shifts responsibility for sexual health from the individual, and suggests agency lies beyond the individual. The analysis suggests that if we focus sexual health promotion efforts at the individual level, a mismatch in messages might doom them to failure; promotion based within a national 'identity' framework might offer a fruitful avenue for prevention.

