

Qualitative Research: Methods and Analysis

Stacey Coleman



Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Quantitative



NUMBERS
are the data

Objective

Numbers
Categories / Continuous
Nominal, Ordinal, Interval, Ratio

Qualitative



DISCOURSE
is the data

Can be highly
subjective

Free text / words

Photos / Videos

Quantitative versus Qualitative research

- **Quantitative research:**

- We are not really interested in the sample that we study – we are interested in the target population
- Ability to generalise results to target population

- **Qualitative research:**

- Interested in the specific experiences of our sample - the “life-world” of our participants
- Do not attempt to generalise to larger populations

What is Qualitative Research?



“Qualitative research is an enquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of enquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting”

Creswell, 1998/2007

Think about the best way to explore this research question...

What are the perceived psychological benefits of owning pets?

Quantitative?

Qualitative?

What data would
you be looking to
obtain?

What questions do
you think you
would need to
ask?



What does qualitative research involve?

- An understanding of which approach you are following
- A significant amount of time spent gathering data
- Time-consuming and complex data analysis – reducing large sets of data to a few themes or categories
- Long pieces of text/writing incorporating quotes

Why conduct a qualitative study?

- In-depth exploration of a topic
 - Often “HOW?”, “WHAT?” or “WHY?”



Qualitative research

- May be able to answer questions which large quantitative clinical studies cannot
 - Particularly related to the “why?” and the “how”
- Can provide an in-depth understanding of:
 - **How** a person or people make sense of a particular phenomenon, or
 - **Why** people hold specific beliefs or behave in certain ways
- *E.g., qualitative findings can be used to raise awareness of the lived experiences of people working in different professions*

Qualitative research

Is there a lack of current theory / literature / evidence in the area?

Do you want to conduct research in a naturally-occurring environment? E.g., a self-help group



Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Research

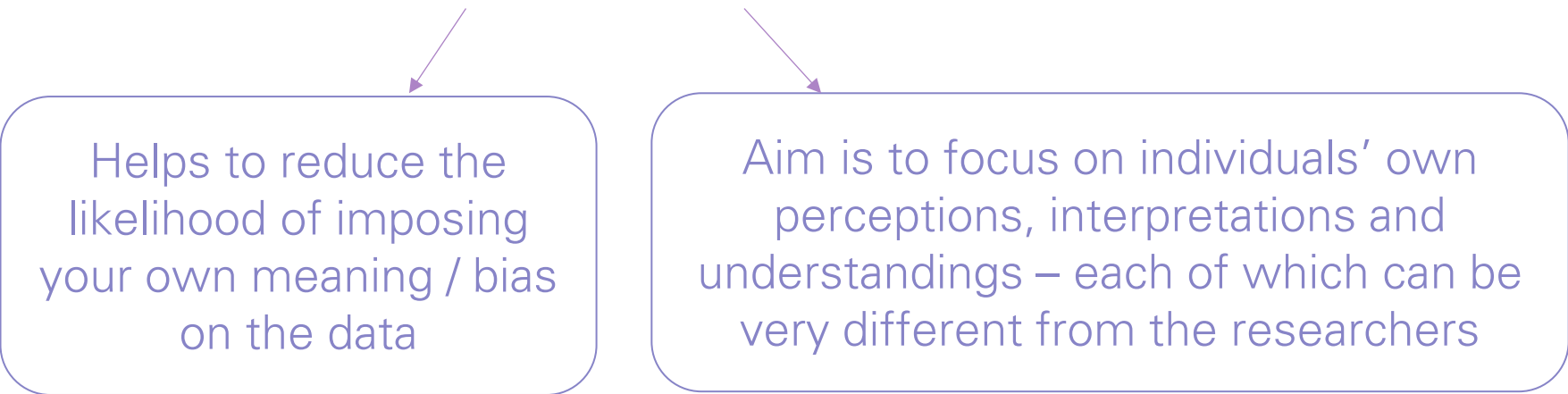


Validity?

- Describing and explaining the target phenomena – from the stories / understandings of individuals
- Fluid, flexible and 'open' – less valid?
- Likely to be **led by participants'** interactions
 - *Their presented accounts; the sense they make of their experiences, interactions, etc*
- Methods designed so that participants can challenge and correct assumptions

Validity?

- Real-life settings – higher ecological validity?
- Reflexivity of researcher – continually **reviewing your own role / position** and its impact on the study itself



Helps to reduce the likelihood of imposing your own meaning / bias on the data

Aim is to focus on individuals' own perceptions, interpretations and understandings – each of which can be very different from the researchers

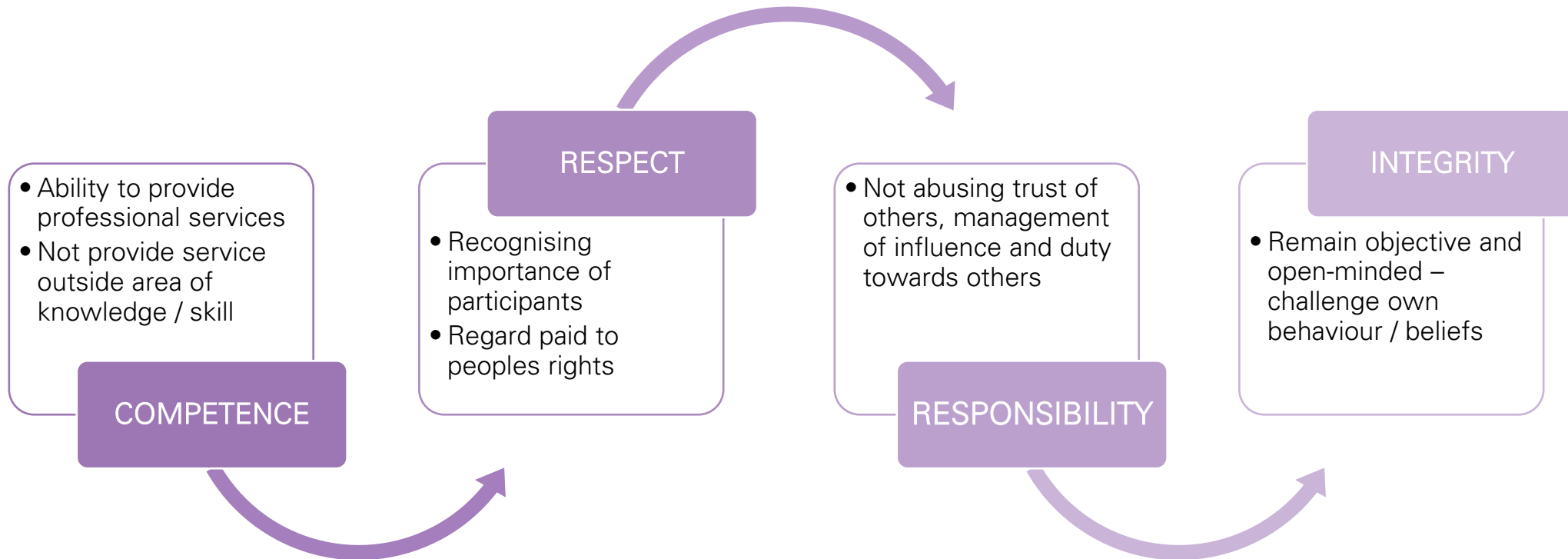
Reliability?

- Qualitative research places less emphasis on designs that will set parameters on likely responses
- Many qualitative researchers are less interested in reliability across studies
 - Focus instead on the richness of the data collected
 - Individuality

Ethical issues

British Psychological Society (2021)

Code of Ethics and Conduct



Ethical issues

- Extremely important in qualitative research



Informed
consent

Before data
collection



Deception

Do potential
benefits outweigh
risks?



Right to
withdraw

At any time
without fear of
penalty



Debriefing

After data
collection,
informed of full
aims (and access
to publications if
applicable



Confidentiality

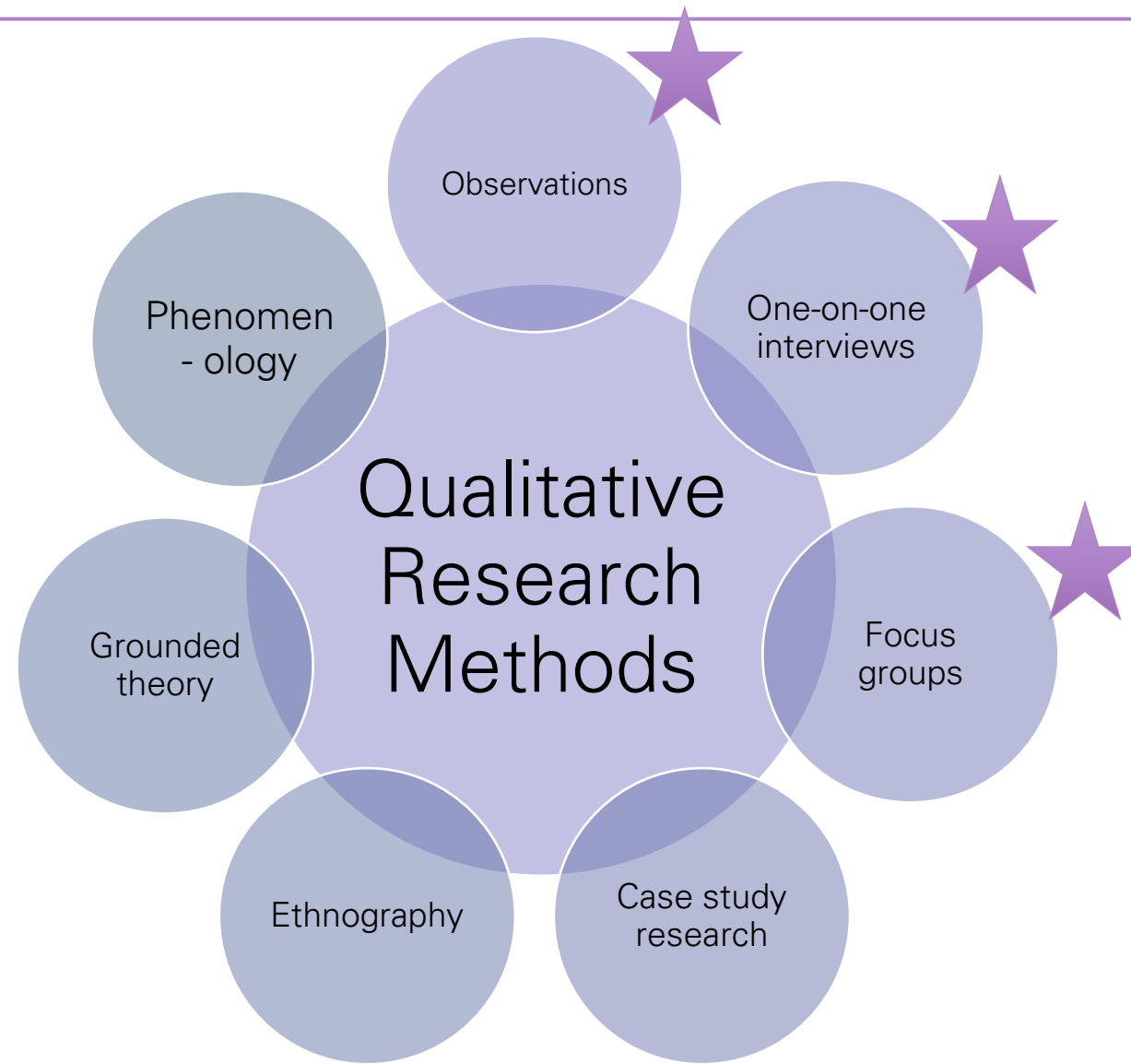
Anonymous?
Storage of
materials
Materials
destroyed after
study

Ethical issues

- **Non-maleficence**
 - Avoid harming participants in any way
 - Duty of care – cannot rely on built-in safeguards regarding responses to questions
- **Beneficence**
 - Research should provide positive and identifiable benefits – not just research for its own sake
- **Autonomy**
 - Participants values and decisions should be respected
- **Justice**
 - All participants should be treated equally

Qualitative Data Collection Techniques





Observations

- Useful in early stages of research
 - Can help to identify parameters of a phenomenon
- Observational research tends to be high in **ecological validity** since observations are made in natural settings
- Host of **uncontrolled extraneous variables**

Interviews

- Not tied to any single approach, theory, etc
- Flexible in format and function
- Data generated can be interpreted in multiple ways:
 - Subjectivities of researchers
 - Purpose of research using the data

Interviews

- Direct interaction between researcher and participant

Social context

Perceived purpose
of the interview

Participants
presentation of self

Power relations

- *The resulting account is a co-construction*

Interviews

Unstructured Interviews

- Avoids imposing researcher assumptions and expectations at the interview design stage
- A single prompt question may be used
- A few prompts prepared, but also spontaneous questions likely to be used



Interviews

Fully-Structured

Rigid structure and order of questions

Semi-Structured

Key questions – allow for elaboration and some deviation

Keep the main topic in focus – include pre-determined probes to contribute to answering the main question

Photo-Elicitation

Use images as prompts

Images may be interviewer-generated or participant-generated

Interviews

Semi-Structured Interviews

- Neutral, open-ended questions aimed at eliciting in-depth responses from participants
- Questions form a prompt to the interviewer
- Should enable participants to express their beliefs, opinions and feelings freely
- Some capacity to further develop interesting / useful content

Face-to-face vs Telephone Interviews



- Suited to exploring issues in depth
- Easier to fully engage in conversation/establish good rapport
- Can pick up on non-verbal cues
 - Confusion, hesitation, anger, distress, etc...



- More cost effective/faster data collection (Breakwell, 2004)
- Fewer negative interviewer effects – visual cues cannot be observed (Groves & Jahn, 1979)
- Suitable when wide geographical location of target sample or resource constraints (funding, time, etc)

Interviews

- Walking and Talking

- Participant shows researcher around a physical space of relevance to them
- Interview conducted by the:
 - Participant: guide the account via the tour. They choose what to present to the researcher
 - Researcher: study-relevant questions, could also ask about particular places / objects that are not shown or discussed by participant (after participant has finished their own account)

Basic principles for developing questions

- 
- 1 Ask questions in a conversational manner
 - 2 Keep questions brief, clear, reasonable, uni-dimensional, and avoid jargon!
 - 3 Get feedback from others on your questions
 - 4 Allow enough time to make revisions

Skills for semi-structured interviews



Use neutral, open-ended questions that aim to elicit in-depth responses from participants

Your questions form a prompt, but are not necessarily adhered to in order

Allow participants to express their beliefs, opinions and feelings **freely**



Do not use loaded or leading questions

Do not use closed questions

Avoid double-barrelled questions

Avoid complex terms or jargon

Avoid double negatives

Categories of questions

Opening

Get acquainted with the participant, feel connected, and build rapport

Introductory

Begin the discussion of the topic

Transition

Moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions

Key

Obtains insight on areas of central concern in the study

Ending

Helps researcher determine where to place emphasis and brings a close to the discussion

TASK

In small groups, construct a set of questions that aim to explore the **psychological effects of social media on self-esteem and body image.**

- a. Practice interviewing a member of another group
- b. Consider how your questions are being responded to
- c. Ask for feedback on your questions and manner of conversation.

After participant has signed consent form:

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Just to remind you that you are free to answer any questions asked today to the extent that you wish. If you have nothing to add at certain points, or don't wish to answer a particular question then please feel free to say that.

Introduction and opening

1. Ok, so you're aware that for the purpose of this study I am interested in exploring professional women in work and their choices over time. As a way to begin, can you please share a little about what it is you currently do and how you ended up in this career?

Career history

2. Can you explain how your current career matches with where you expected or wanted to be?

Life events and decisions

3. I'd like you to have a look at this sheet and think about just one thing – can you make a note of any significant life events and/or decisions that you've made in your life or in your career that you'd like to talk about. This can be anything that you think is relevant to you.

Focus Groups

Group discussion of a small number of people

Sometimes people who have something in common

Sometimes people with very different experiences / views

Focus groups are ideal for eliciting people's own meanings and understandings of phenomena:

- Health and illness (Wilkinson, 2005)
- Poverty and universal credit relief – who is 'deserving' of this?
- A specific intervention for managing anxiety or anger

Focus Groups

- Allows for interaction of participants in response to a particular topic
 - How do people negotiate meaning through interaction?
 - How do they explain, justify, argue...?
 - What understandings do they draw upon to do this?
- Make use of group dynamics to stimulate discussion, generate ideas and gain insights

Focus Groups

- There is no single correct way to 'do' focus groups (Morgan, 2008)
- Group size?
 - Suggested between 6 and 8 people (Wilkinson, 2003)
- Participants and responses are not always individual, reasoned and rational
- Co-constructed during the focus group session – the result of the group discussion and interaction

Focus Groups

- Additional ethical considerations:



Confidentiality
is expected of
all members



Respect to
other speakers
present



Researcher
intervention to be
subtle and
unobtrusive – only
to maintain
productive group



Diffusing difficult
situations?

Refocus the group
Balance out the
discussion

TASK

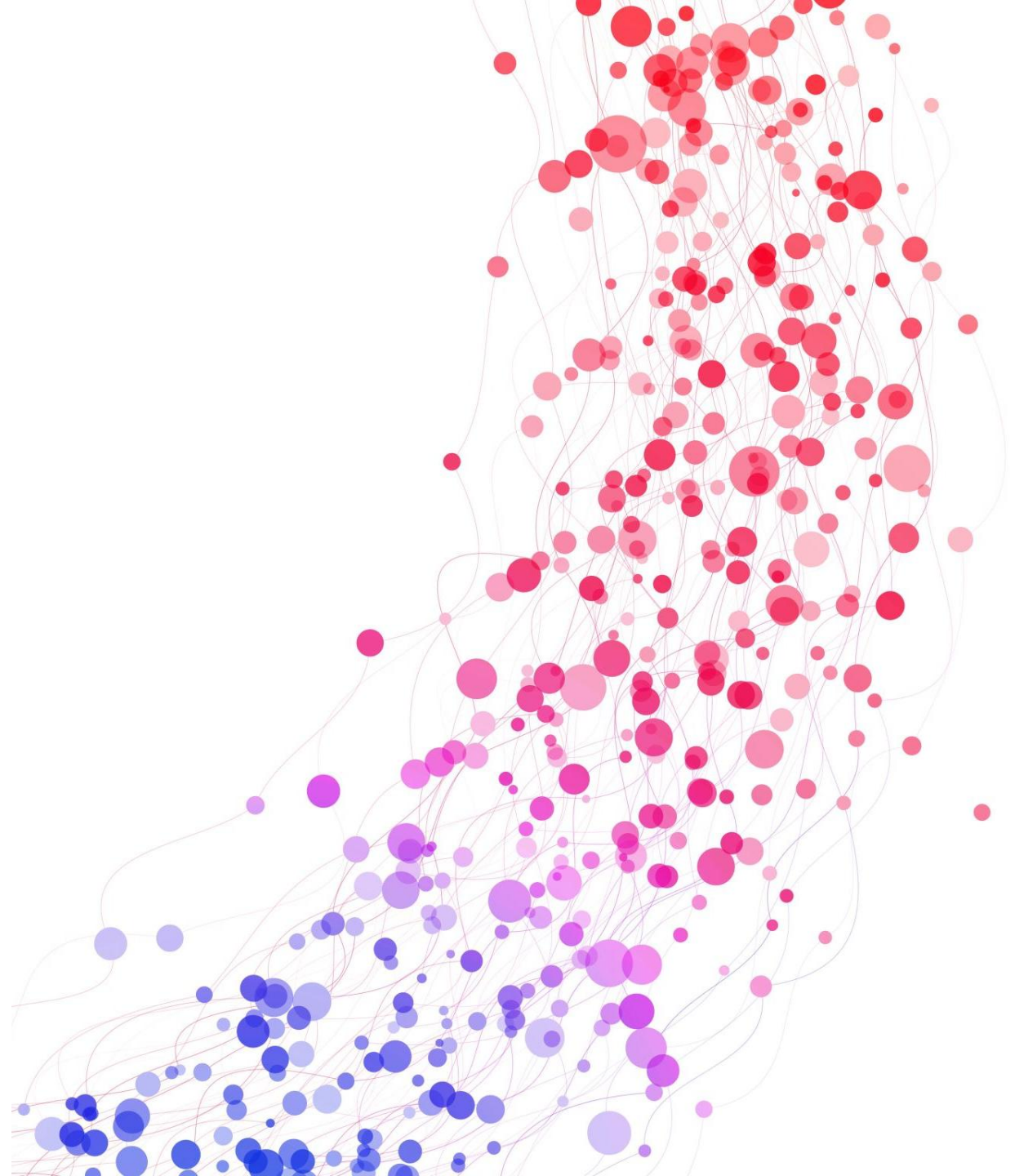
Focus group simulation

The psychological effects of social media on self-esteem and body image.

Research Methods

Qualitative Analysis

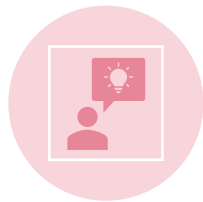
Stacey Coleman



Outline of session:



Features of
qualitative
analysis



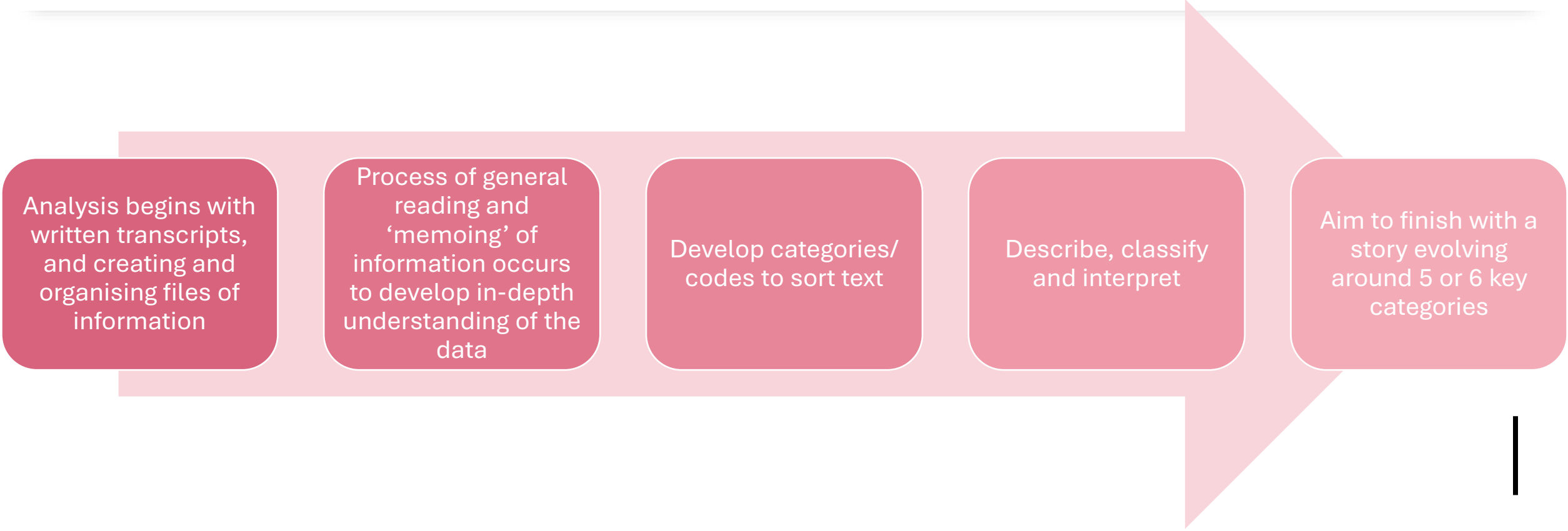
Thematic
Analysis – Braun
and Clarke's six-
phase
framework



Stages of
analysis
explained

Common features of qualitative analysis

There are several common features regardless of which approach is used:



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graph LR; A[Analysis begins with written transcripts, and creating and organising files of information] --> B[Process of general reading and 'memoing' of information occurs to develop in-depth understanding of the data]; B --> C[Develop categories/ codes to sort text]; C --> D[Describe, classify and interpret]; D --> E[Aim to finish with a story evolving around 5 or 6 key categories];
```

Analysis begins with written transcripts, and creating and organising files of information

Process of general reading and 'memoing' of information occurs to develop in-depth understanding of the data

Develop categories/ codes to sort text

Describe, classify and interpret

Aim to finish with a story evolving around 5 or 6 key categories



Transcripts

Transcripts are the basis of your analysis

Transcription should take place as soon as possible after the interview ends

2

3

Nope not at th

Wide margin either side of text

4

5

Great. I'd also like to just reiterate that anything that you mention today that could be traced back to identify you will be replaced with some unidentifiable context - so if you do say the names of any members of your family or friends I will just replace those with different names when writing up this interview. Is that ok?

10

11

Yep that's fine.

Double spaced

12

13

So first of all, can you please describe to me what eating healthily means to you?

14

15

16

Umm – the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of health eating is veg [laughs]. And fruit. I mean... that's not all is it – it's about eating a balanced diet and getting the correct amount of nutrients and stuff, isn't it? And minerals that your body needs to function properly... I think that's what eating healthy mainly

17

18

19

Line numbers



Analysis must be systematic
and verifiable

Analysis involves gathering,
structuring, and interpreting
non-numerical data

Analysis requires time!

Analysis is jeopardised by
delay

Analysis should entertain
alternative explanations

What to do with qualitative data



Transcribe data
verbatim

(note: 1 hour of
audio typically = 10
hours of
transcription)



Remain systematic
and organised



Engage in the
appropriate analysis
to interpret data
effectively.

Thematic Analysis:

“the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78)



Analysis

What does the data say?



Interpretation:

What does it mean?

Analysing and Interpreting Data

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- 1 _____

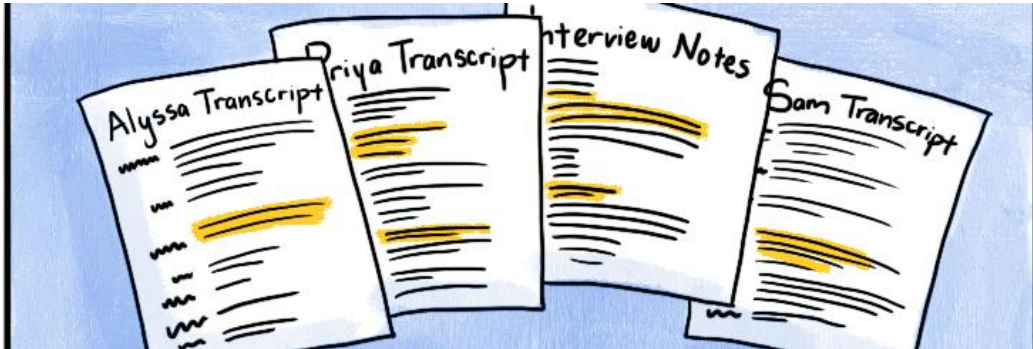
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- 3 _____



Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis

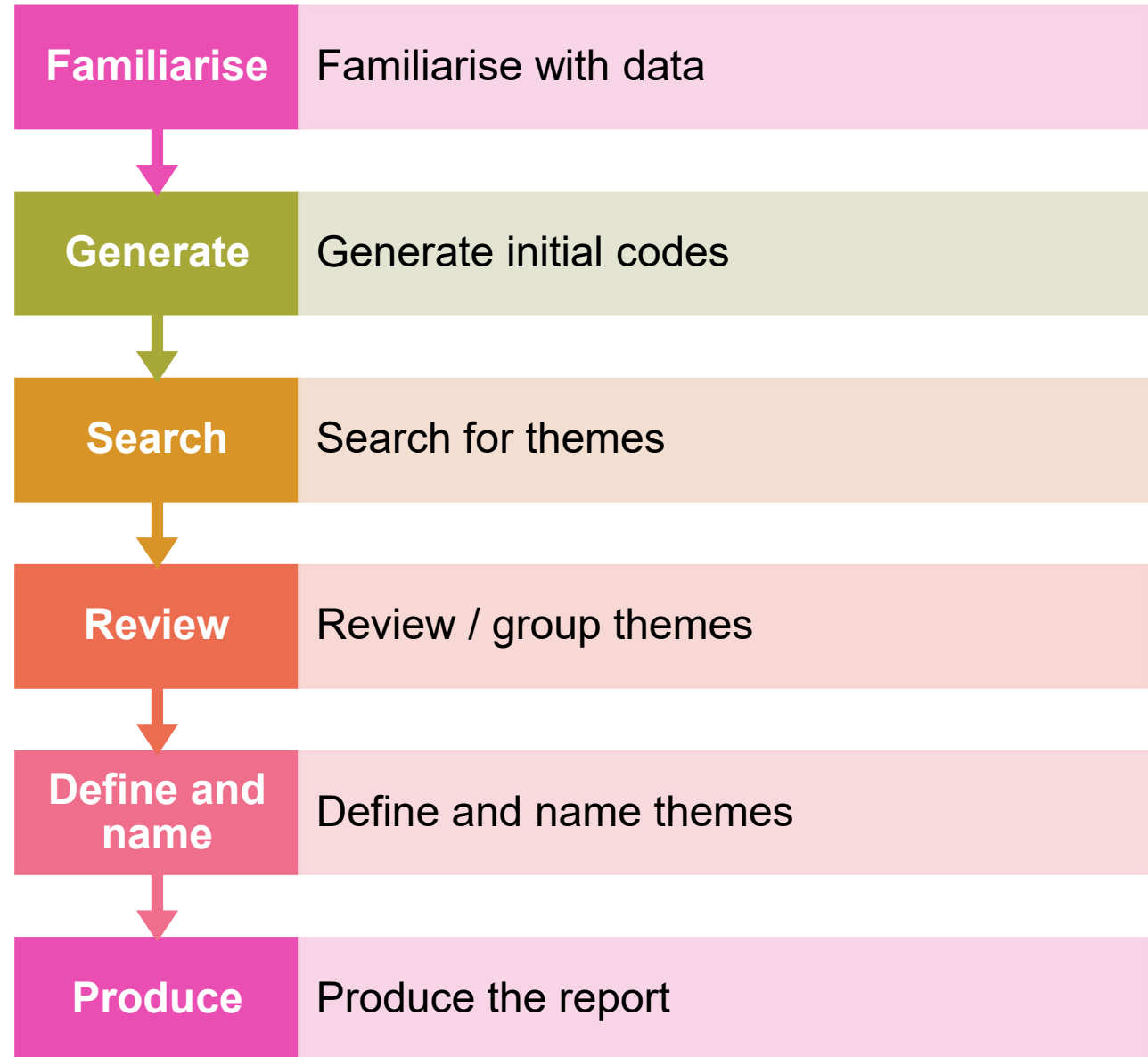


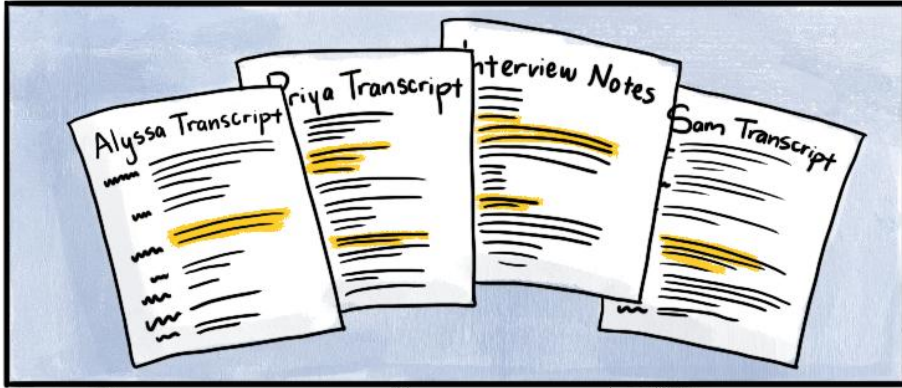
Involves reading through a data set to identify **patterns or themes**

TA is more than simply summarising qualitative data

Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)





Phases of thematic analysis

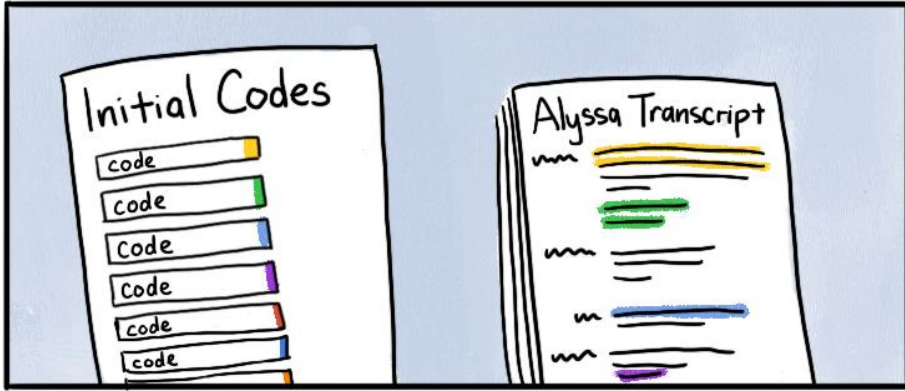
(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Familiarise

Familiarise with data



- Read the transcripts, and then re-read them many more times
- Make notes here if you feel you need to
- The purpose of this stage is to allow you to be very familiar with the entire body of data (i.e., all interviews / focus groups)
- The key is **immersion** – consider breadth and depth of the content



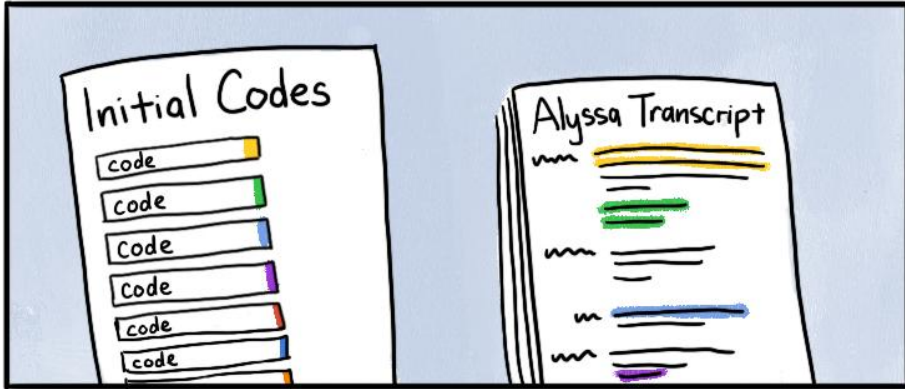
Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Generate

Generate initial codes

- Codes are labels that mean something to you – they need to make sense to you as the interpreter
- A code = a word, a short phrase, or a term that represents an idea
- Highlighting the transcript is useful here to match up the data (quotes) with your initial ideas
- Purpose of this stage is to simplify the data and focus on key characteristics



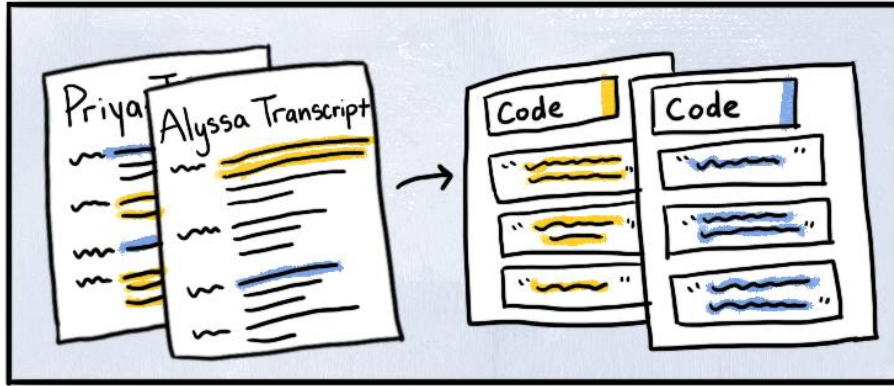
Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Generate

Generate initial codes

- Codes or labels can be anything you think is relevant, such as...
- Something the participant says more than once
- Something surprising (unexpected)
- The participant explicitly says it is important
- A lack of information (withholding a response, stuttering, etc)



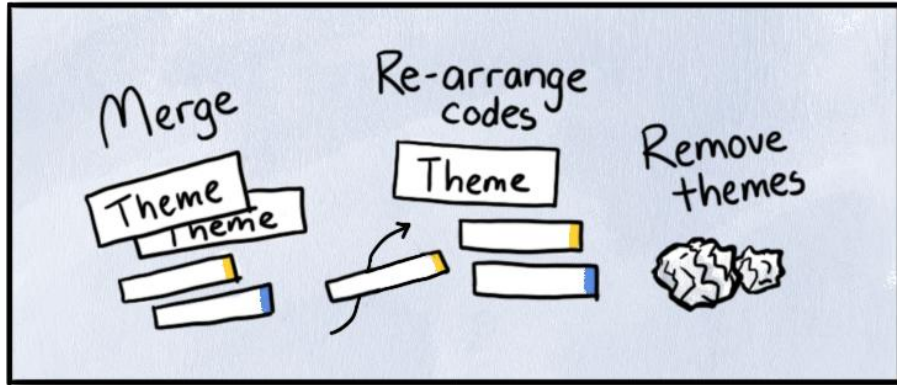
Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Search

Search for themes

- A 'theme' is the subjective meaning of the data
- During this phase you want to start grouping together codes
 - 'cutting and pasting' of information
- Highlighting in the previous phase becomes useful here
- Start to consider quotes that support themes



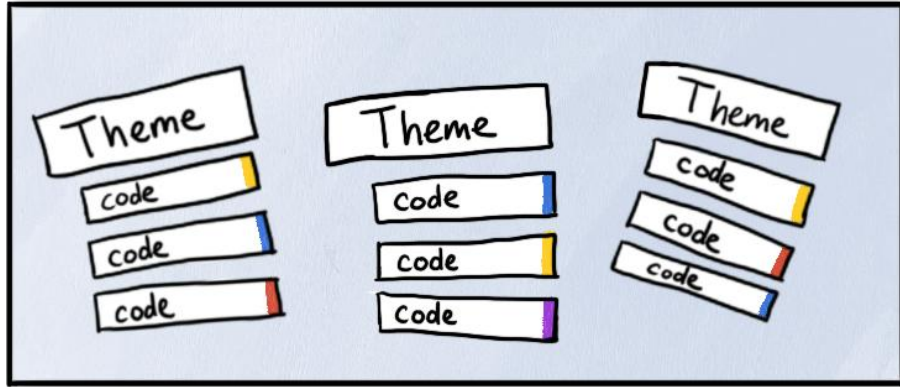
Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Review

Review themes

- Want to make sure themes are coherent and distinct from one another
- Themes may be deleted, collapsed, merged, and sub-themes may be identified
- Do the themes make sense?
- Does the data support your themes?



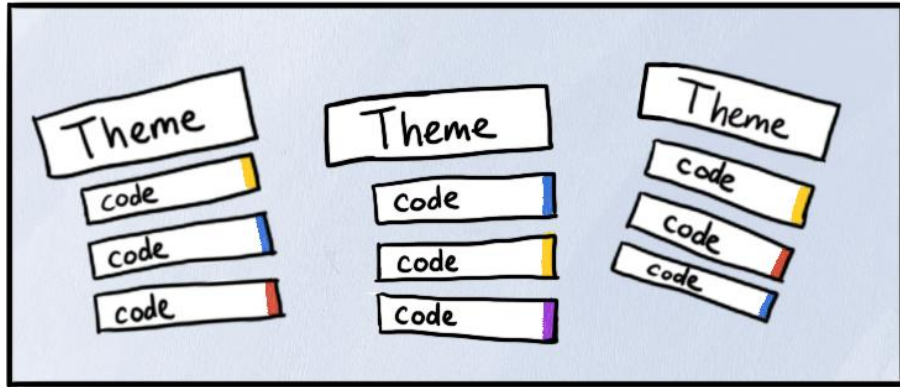
Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Define and name

Define and name themes

- At end of previous phase, you should have a good idea of the different themes, how they fit together, and how the narrative will start to play out (interpretations)
- Phase 5 = refining and finalising themes
- Begin to write analysis for each theme and tell the story of how each theme has developed



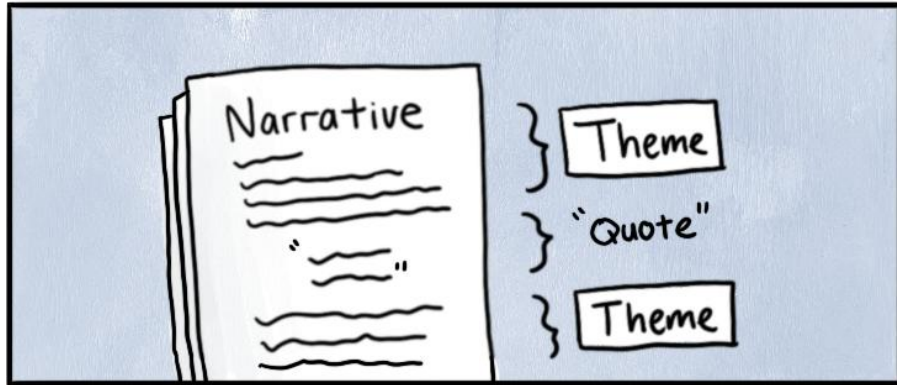
Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Define and name

Define and name themes

- Renaming themes often occurs during this stage
- Theme names – short, punchy, and explanatory



Phases of thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Report

Produce the report

- Start to tell the story of your data
- Themes should be fully considered – communicate to read about the validity of analysis
- Ensure a coherent story is told and use vivid quotes
- Go beyond description and ensure your own interpretative analysis comes through

Narrative example

Theme 1: The impact of past experiences

As the interviews progressed it became clear that John's past experiences affected how he coped with the risk assessment process. Two main sub-themes were identified: having a personal experience of cancer, and prior medical experiences.

Personal Experience of Cancer

John stated that: *"Having already had cancer, and survived it, I suppose in a way I was a bit blasé about [how I felt when waiting for my risk results]"*. He went on to further comment:

"I know when I was initially diagnosed XX years ago it was a bit of a shock.....but I've always thought, as long as I know what the problem is, and I know what's going to be done about it, I can cope with it".

Displaying themes



Themes, sub-themes, and exemplar quotations should be provided in a table within your results section



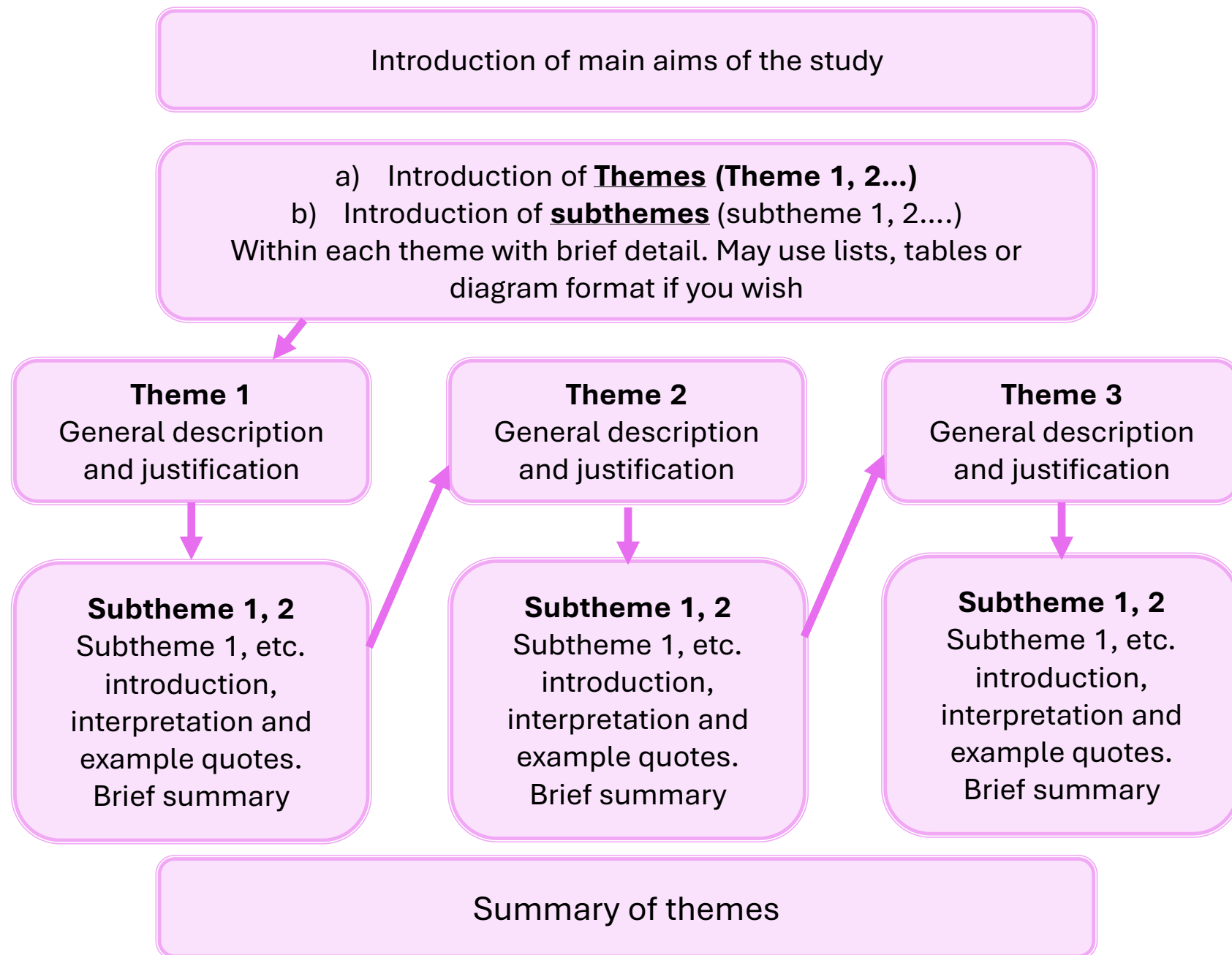
Also in appendices (may have a larger table)

"That's life"	The effects of life transitions upon the sibling relationship.
"How do I understand who I am?"	Exploring identity and the concept of self.
"They did their best"	Parenting styles and the Impact upon the adult sibling relationship.
"they were always there"	Perceived support in the sibling relationship
"It is normal to fight"	The influence of the experience of conflict within the sibling relationship.
The society of family.	

Final considerations re: themes

- Are some themes/sub-themes present in some talk but absent from other?
- Are some present in more than one person's talk but spoken about differently
 - Could be in different interviews or in a focus group





Example of TA – all stages

Stages of Thematic Analysis: 15-minute video

