

Thematic Analysis *using Dedoose*

A two-page guide to Braun & Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis — what themes are, how they differ from codes and topic summaries, and where Dedoose fits into the six-phase workflow.

01 · THE METHOD

What is reflexive thematic analysis?

A qualitative method for **identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns** within data — where the researcher's subjectivity is a resource. The reflexive focus foregrounds three key points: **researcher reflexivity, interpretation, and theory**.

A method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning within data — anchored by the researcher's active, reflexive engagement.

— BRAUN & CLARKE · 2006, 2022

02 · THE MOST COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Topic summary ≠ Theme.

TOPIC SUMMARY

What was said.

A descriptive account organized by question or topic.

"Participants reported three barriers to care..."

THEME

What it means.

A pattern of shared meaning anchored by a central organizing concept.

"Care as a site of negotiated trust..."

“

Codes and code categories describe your data. Themes interpret it — and the interpretive leap happens on paper, not in a code tree.

-Dr. Sara E. Grummert

Plot vs Theme. A Useful Analogy.

Plot

What is actually happening in the data?

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Codes | Descriptive labels applied to segments of data |
| Categories | Clusters of codes that share a core idea |
| Memos | In-progress notes and analytic thinking |

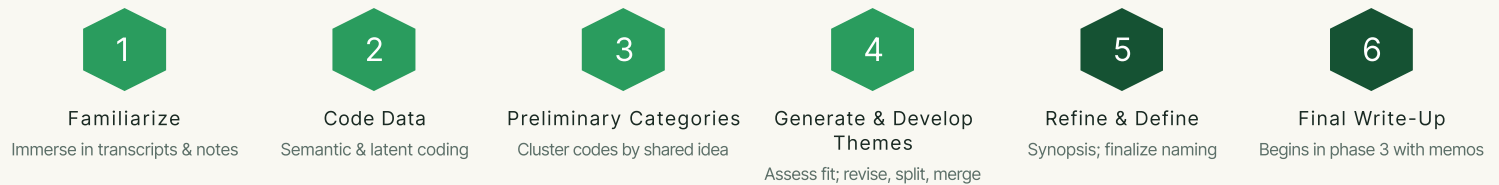
Theme

What is the underlying pattern of meaning?

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Interpretation | Long-form writing, not a code tree |
| Theory | Themes sit inside a conceptual frame you bring |
| Revision | Split, merge, cut, rename — often, and late |

03 · THE WORKFLOW

Six phases, end to end.



IN DEDOOSE

PHASES 1-4

Immersion, coding, categories, and generating candidate themes — all supported inside the platform.

MOVING OUT OF DEDOOSE

PHASES 5 - 6

Refining, defining, and final write-up happen in documents — moving iteratively in and out of Dedoose.

04 · DEDOOSE TOOLKIT FOR THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Matching tools to phases.

01 Media & Excerpts

Familiarize yourself with your data. Highlight, excerpt, and code your data.
Phases 1-2

02 Codebook Development

Hierarchical codebook with definitions, subcodes, and code categories for organization.
Phase 2

03 Memos & Analytic Journaling

Create reflexive notes, draft candidate themes, and review memos linked to excerpts.
Across all phases

04 Charts & Data Visualizations

Visualize code overlap to develop and refine themes; export excerpts to begin writing.
Phases 3-4

A practitioner's checklist

- Keep a reflexive journal from day one.** Track your positionality, assumptions, and shifts in interpretation alongside the coding itself.
- Code at both levels.** Semantic codes capture the explicit content; latent codes capture implicit or conceptual meaning.
- Delay naming themes.** Themes are the last thing you commit to — not the first. Work from codes to categories to candidate themes.
- Expect radical revision.** Split, merge, cut, and rename themes once you return to the full dataset. This is normal, not a setback.
- Leave the platform for phases 5-6.** Export excerpts and memos; move iteratively in and out as you develop your themes and they take shape.
- Test each theme against two questions.** Does it go beyond summarizing the data? Is your theoretical framework weaved into the theme?

PITFALL

Calling a topic summary a theme.

"Barriers to care" is a **topic**. "Care as negotiated trust" is a **theme**. If your theme could be a question in your interview guide, it isn't a theme yet.

PITFALL

Treating codes as findings.

Codes organize data so themes can emerge. A paper whose results section is a list of codes has stopped at phase 2.

REMINDER

Move in and out of Dedoose for deep thinking.

Dedoose supports phases 1-4. Phases 5-6 are writing, diagramming, and re-reading excerpts in context — moving in and out of Dedoose during the latter phases is useful as you develop your candidate themes into your final themes.

REMINDER

Don't leave your reflexivity implicit.

The method's strength depends on making your positionality visible. Memo your reflexive thoughts as you code, create a structured memo format, and report it in your methods section.

05 · NEXT STEPS

Where to go from here.

COURSE

Dedoose 101 & Bring Your Own Data

Cohort-based training. Schedule via immrglobal.org.

CONSULTATION

Applied Methods Consultations

60-minute sessions with a senior IMMR researcher. Schedule via immrglobal.org

READING

Braun & Clarke (2022)

Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide. SAGE Publications — the canonical reference.

CONTACT

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