Thematic Analysis
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**Phase 1: Familiarize yourself with your data.** Braun & Clarke encourage the researcher to develop familiarity with the depth and breadth of the data. They also recommend reading actively, searching for meanings and patterns. I will start taking notes and marking ideas that I may return to in later phases.

**Phase 2: Generate initial codes.** Boyatzis (1998) refers to codes as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way” (p. 63). I will begin to generate codes by reading and coding individual interview transcripts.

Braun & Clarke (2006) provide the following guidelines for this phase:

- Give equal attention to each data item.
- Identify interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of themes.
- Code all data extracts.
- Code for as many potential themes as possible.
- Capture some of the data that surrounds the coded text (to provide context later, if needed).
- Do not ignore or attempt to smooth out tensions or inconsistencies in the data.
- Place individual extracts of data into multiple codes simultaneously, if applicable.

While meanings and patterns are said to “emerge” during this phase, it is important to recognize that themes do not actually reside within the data; “if themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them” (Ely, et. al., 1997, p. 206). So, although Thematic Analysis provides the framework for a researcher to develop codes that stay very close to participants’ own descriptions of their lived experiences, a researcher’s values, perspectives, and preconceived notions affect coding and interpretation.

To provide a “check” on my thinking, two coders will assist me in analyzing transcripts during the first two phases. All three of us will code an initial set of five transcripts, drawn from different organizations. During our discussions, the coders will question my thinking and play “devil’s advocate” in order to help me
identify biases, explore meanings, and clarify interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Phase 3: Search for themes.** A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82, italics in original). Phase 3 shifts the researcher’s focus from the long list of individual codes created in phase 2 toward this broader level of themes. I will search for both manifest and latent themes. Manifest themes are directly observable in the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Latent themes are inferred from a participant’s words or actions; a latent theme “goes beyond the semantic content of the data and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Braun & Clarke’s guidelines for this phase are:

- Consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme.
- Think about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between themes and potential sub-themes.
- Do not abandon any data during this phase.

The product of phase 3 is a collection of potential themes and sub-themes as well as all of the data extracts that have been coded within them.

**Phase 4: Review themes.** The first goal of this phase is to ensure that data attached to each potential theme form a coherent pattern. “A good thematic code,” writes Boyatzis (1998) “is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon [and] is usable in the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the research” (p. 31). The second goal of this phase is to ascertain whether the themes relate logically to the entire data set. Each theme should appear valid when considering all IPR interviews together, and identifiable distinctions should exist between themes. Braun & Clarke’s guidelines for this phase are:

- Identify potential themes that need to be eliminated – those that do not have enough data to support them or that include data that are too diverse.
- Identify potential themes that may be combined.
- If themes do not work in relation to the data set as a whole, return to reviewing and refining codes until a satisfactory “thematic map” (p. 92) emerges.
- When refining themes no longer adds anything substantial, stop.
At the end of phase 4, I will have a sense of the different themes, how they fit together, and “the overall story they tell about the data” (p. 92). At this point, I will conduct a member check (Schwandt, 2001) with IPR interview participants. Patton (2002) believes that researchers “can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that analysis react to what is described and concluded” (p. 560). I will send each participant a narrative description of the themes and/or codes that are relevant to his or her interview. I will invite participants to provide feedback (by phone or e-mail) about my analysis – how well it reflects their perspectives and where opportunities for improvement exist.

**Phase 5: Define and name themes.** Once the member checks has been completed and themes clarified and revised accordingly, deep analysis and detailed description begin. The goal of this phase is to create a narrative about each theme that describes its scope and content and is internally consistent. Braun & Clarke’s guidelines for this phase include:

- Identify the essence of each theme – what is of interest about it and why.
- Ensure that themes are not overly diverse or complex.
- Explain how each theme fits into the broader overall story of the study.
- Describe sub-themes (themes-within-a-theme) when they exist.
- Define each theme using a couple of sentences.
- Choose theme names for use in the final analysis; names should be “concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about” (p. 93).

**Phase 6: Produce the report.** Phase 6 is analogous to Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The write-up the thematic analysis will tell the complicated story of the data in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting way that convinces the reader that the analysis is valid (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Chapter 4 will explore each theme in depth as well as describe connections among the themes. It will also include excerpts from the data set that illustrate each theme and sub-theme.