

Evaluating and reviewing TA research: A checklist for editors and reviewers

We (Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke) regularly encounter published TA studies where there are mismatches between various elements of the report and practice. We have developed the following checklist for editors and reviewers, to facilitate the publication of coherent and quality thematic analysis – of all forms.

Please note this is an early version of the checklist which we will likely evolve; we welcome feedback and comments; please [email these to us both](#).

Evaluating methods and methodology

1. Is the use of TA justified, even if only very briefly? And, is it consistent with the research questions, and theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the research? Is there a good 'fit' (conceptual coherence) between the methods of data collection and TA?
2. Do the authors clearly specify which approach to TA they are using? Is this consistently applied throughout the paper?
3. Is there evidence of problematic assumptions about TA? For example, treating TA as one, homogenous, entity, with one set of – widely agreed on – procedures; assuming grounded theory concepts apply to TA without any discussion or justification (saturation, constant comparative analysis, line-by-line coding); assuming TA is only a data reduction/descriptive/inductive/deductive approach, and thus has to be supplemented with other methods or procedures. Are any supplementary phases or methods justified and necessary or could the same results have been achieved simply by using TA more effectively?
4. Are the theoretical underpinnings of the use of TA clearly specified (e.g. ontological, epistemological assumptions, guiding theoretical framework(s)), even when using TA inductively (inductive TA does not equate to analysis in a theoretical vacuum)?
5. Do the researchers 'own their perspective', even if only very briefly? This is especially important when the researchers are engaged in feminist/critical research and when representing the 'voices' of marginal and vulnerable groups, and groups to which the researcher does not belong.
6. Are the analytic procedures used clearly outlined, even if only very briefly?
7. Is there evidence of conceptual and procedural confusion? For example, Braun and Clarke (2006) is the claimed approach but different procedures are used such as a codebook/coding frame, multiple independent coders and consensus coding, inter-rater reliability to establish coding reliability, and themes are conceptualised as analytic inputs not outputs and therefore the analysis progresses from theme identification to coding. Is it clear that the authors have read and fully understood Braun & Clarke (2006)?

Evaluating the analysis/findings/results

8. Is it clear what the themes are? Would the paper benefit from some kind of overview of the analysis: listing of themes, narrative overview, table of themes, thematic map?
9. Are themes merely domain summaries (summaries of domains or *areas* of the data, that is, summaries of everything the participants said about a particular topic or in relation to a particular question, with no unifying concept underpinning the claimed 'theme')? Have the data collection questions been used as themes? Are domain summaries appropriate to the purpose of the research? If so, if the authors are using Braun & Clarke (2006) TA, is this divergence in the conceptualisation of themes discussed? Would the paper benefit from further analysis being undertaken and the reporting of fully realised themes? Or would the paper benefit from

describing the approach used as one reflecting a different approach to TA (e.g. coding reliability, codebook)?

10. Is a non-thematic contextualising information presented as a theme? (e.g. the first theme is a domain summary providing contextualising information but the remaining themes are fully realised themes) Would the paper benefit from this not being presented as a theme but as contextualising information?
11. In applied research, do the reported themes give rise to actionable outcomes?
12. Are there conceptual clashes and evidence of conceptual confusion in the paper? (e.g. claiming a social constructionist approach while also displaying a concern for positivist notions of coding reliability, or claiming a constructionist approach but then treating participants' accounts as a transparent reporting of their experience and behaviour)
13. Is there evidence of weak or unconvincing analysis? Is there too many or too few themes, confusion between codes and themes, mismatch between data extracts and analytic claims, too few or too many data extracts, overlap between themes?