"Dear England" a worked example of thematic analysis by Jamie Enoch

To provide this worked example of thematic analysis, we use an open letter written by Gareth Southgate, the manager of the England national football team, ahead of the final of the Euro 2020 football championship between England and Italy. The open letter, entitled "Dear England", was published on 8 July 2021 on *The Players' Tribune,* an online media platform where professional athletes and sportspeople share first-person stories and perspectives.

The letter garnered wider media interest in the run-up to the Euro 2020 final[1]. Throughout the Euro 2020 competition, the England team had faced boos and online abuse as they took the knee before the start of each match as a statement against racism.[2] The UK's conservative government also became involved, with some ministers supporting England fans' "right" to boo the players, and suggesting that footballers should stick to football and stay out of politics.[3,4]

Against this politicised and polarised backdrop, Southgate's letter exhorts England fans to fully get behind their team, and support its mission to confront racial injustice and promote inclusivity in football and society. At the same time, Southgate talks of his patriotism and loyalty to England, that he traces back to his grandfather's military service during World War II. In doing so, Southgate combines imagery and figurative language around national pride (for example, the importance for him of representing "Queen and country") with more progressive commitments to anti-racism, diversity and inclusion. We believed that the topical nature of the piece, and its interesting approach to defining an English identity and consciousness, would make it a suitable source of data for thematic analysis.

The text is shown on the following pages (pages 3-8), with line numbers used later to refer to the text:

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[1] The competition is referred to as 'Euro 2020' although it was postponed and took place in June-July 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
[2] https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/international/racist-content-evident-in-the-online-abuse-england-players-subjected-to-1.4605084
[3] https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-priti-patel-taking-knee-b1883329.html
[4] https://theconversation.com/taking-the-knee-in-football-why-this-act-of-protest-has-always-been-political-162541

1 Dear England,

2 It has been an extremely difficult year. Everyone in this country has been directly
3 affected by isolation and loss. But we have also seen countless examples of
4 heroism and sacrifice. It's given us all a new understanding of the fragility of life
5 and what really matters. When you think of the grand scheme of things, perhaps
6 football doesn't seem so important. And what I want to speak about today is much
7 bigger than football.

8 As we go into this summer, I know that there will be a lot of emotion tied up in the
9 Euros, and in this England team. I can't possibly hope to speak for an entire
10 country, but I would like to share a few things with you, as we begin this journey.

11 There's something I tell our players before every England game, and the reason
12 that I repeat it is because I really believe it with all my heart.

13 I tell them that when you go out there, in this shirt, you have the opportunity to
14 produce moments that people will remember forever.

15 You are a part of an experience that lasts in the collective consciousness of our
16 country.

17 We saw that during Russia 2018, with the street parties, the barbecues and with
18 every drop of beer thrown into the air in celebration. When England play, it's not a
19 few thousand — or even a few million — watching on subscription. You are
20 representing more than 50 million people.

21 You remember where you were watching England games. And who you were
22 watching with. And who *you* were at the time.

23 The first England match I really remember watching was in the 1982 World Cup,
24 when I was 11. It was the first World Cup England had qualified for in my lifetime
25 and I was obsessed. I had the wall chart, ready to fill in with every result, every
26 goalscorer, every detail.

27 I rushed home from school for England's opener against France to see Bryan
28 Robson score after just 27 seconds! To witness that as a young Manchester United-
29 supporting midfielder whose hero was Robson … well, it's safe to say I was
30 hooked.

31 Later that same year, I watched Luther Blissett get a hat trick in a 9-0 win over
32 Luxembourg. That specific result might have been forgotten by many but it really
33 stuck for me.

34 Every game, no matter the opposition, has the potential to create a lifelong memory
35 for an England fan somewhere.

36 *Why* do we care so much?

37 Like with our own memories of watching England, everyone has a different idea of
38 what it actually means to be English. What pride means.

39 For me, personally, my sense of identity and values is closely tied to my family
40 and particularly my granddad. He was a fierce patriot and a proud military man,
41 who served during World War II.

42 The idea of representing "Queen and country" has always been important to me.
43 We do pageantry so well in Britain, and, growing up, things like the Queen's silver
44 jubilee and royal weddings had an impact on me.

45 Because of my granddad, I've always had an affinity for the military and service in
46 the name of your country — though the consequence of my failure in representing
47 England will never be as high as his. My granddad's values were instilled in me
48 from a young age and I couldn't help but think of him when I lined up to sing the
49 national anthem before my first international caps.

50 My belief is that *everyone* has that pride. And that includes the players.

51 What is sometimes forgotten is just *how much* it means to the players.

52 Players are fans too, after all. That's how it starts. It starts with kids sitting in front
53 of TVs, with wall charts and heroes.

54 Undoubtedly, we're in a different era now, where footballers aren't as accessible to
55 fans as they once were. They don't ride the same bus home from games, or meet in
56 the pub for a pint and a post-match analysis.

57 But, despite all the changes in modern football, what cannot be questioned about
58 the current generation of England players is their *pride* in representing this country.

59 This idea that some players don't know what it means to play for England — or
60 don't care — has become something of a false narrative.

61 You don't need to dig deep to realise that.

62 You only need to see what I see when an under-15 comes into St. George's Park
63 for the first time, or when a senior player arrives on their first call-up. The pride for
64 them, their families and their communities back home is *huge*.
65
66 The journey to earn an England cap is an incredibly difficult one, regardless of
67 background or circumstance.

68 Only around 1,200 players have represented England at senior men's level. *Ever*.

69 It's a profound privilege. Don't forget, many of our lads started out at Football
70 League clubs like Barnsley, MK Dons and Sheffield United. Their backgrounds are
71 humble. For them to make it to this point as one of the chosen few in England's
72 history … well, it simply doesn't happen without pride.

73 This is a special group. Humble, proud and liberated in being their true selves.

74 Our players *are* role models. And, beyond the confines of the pitch, we must
75 recognise the impact they can have on society. We must give them the confidence
76 to stand up for their teammates and the things that matter to them as people.

77 I have never believed that we should just *stick to football*.

78 I know my voice carries weight, not because of who I am but because of the
79 position that I hold. At home, I'm below the kids and the dogs in the pecking order
80 but publicly I am the England men's football team manager. I have a responsibility
81 to the wider community to use my voice, and so do the players.

82 It's their duty to continue to interact with the public on matters such as equality,
83 inclusivity and racial injustice, while using the power of their voices to help put
84 debates on the table, raise awareness and educate.

85 Social media has been a key resource in giving our players a platform and has been
86 a positive tool in so many ways. In fact, I feel like this generation of England
87 players is closer to the supporters than they have been for decades. Despite the
88 polarisation we see in society, these lads are on the same wavelength as you on
89 many issues.

90 That said, there are times when my parental instincts kick in. I can't help it. After
91 all, I'm old enough to be a father to most of my players!

92 I see players scrolling on their phones straight after the final whistle and I think
93 … *Hmmm, is that a particularly good idea?*

94 Reading abusive comments on Twitter or Instagram is never going to help
95 performance.

96 There are genuine risks for our players online and I will always want to protect
97 them, but I would never put rules on how or when they use their accounts while on
98 England duty. I trust them and know they are mature enough to make their own
99 decisions, to do what's right for their mental health and to keep being a force for
100 good as we strive for a better society.

101 The last 18 months have put added pressure on everyone, I know. Venting that
102 might have taken place while walking out of the stadium, or in the pub has been
103 transferred online. I get that. However, there are things I will *never* understand.

104 Why would you tag someone in on a conversation that is abusive?

105 Why would you choose to insult somebody for something as ridiculous as the
106 colour of their skin?

107 *Why?*

108 Unfortunately for those people that engage in that kind of behaviour, I have some
109 bad news. You're on the losing side. It's clear to me that we are heading for a
110 much more tolerant and understanding society, and I know our lads will be a big
111 part of that.

112 It might not feel like it at times, but it's true. The awareness around inequality and
113 the discussions on race have gone to a different level in the last 12 months alone.

114 I am confident that young kids of today will grow up baffled by old attitudes and
115 ways of thinking.

116 For many of that younger generation, your notion of Englishness is quite different
117 from my own. I understand that, too.

118 I understand that on this island, we have a desire to protect our values and
119 traditions — as we should — but that shouldn't come at the expense of
120 introspection and progress.
121
122 Regardless of your upbringing and politics, what is clear is that we are an
123 incredible nation — relative to our size and population — that has contributed so
124 much to the arts, science and sport.

125 We do have a special identity and that remains a powerful motivator.

126 In a funny way, I see the same Englishness represented by the fans who protested
127 against the Super League. We are independent thinkers. We speak out on the issues
128 that matter to us and we are proud of that.

129 Of course, my players and I will be judged on winning matches. Only one team can
130 win the Euros. We have never done it before and we are desperate to do it for the
131 first time.

132   *Believe me.*

133   But, the reality is that the result is just a small part of it. When England play,
134   there's much more at stake than that.

135   It's about how we conduct ourselves on and off the pitch, how we bring people
136   together, how we inspire and unite, how we create memories that last beyond the
137   90 minutes. That last beyond the summer. That last forever.

138   I think about all the young kids who will be watching this summer, filling out their
139   first wall charts. No matter what happens, I just hope that their parents, teachers
140   and club managers will turn to them and say, "Look. That's the way to represent
141   your country. That's what England is about. That is what's possible."

142   If we can do that, it will be a summer to be proud of.

143   Yours,

144   Gareth Southgate

Deciding on a research question and our orientation to TA

We undertook a thematic analysis, to consider how Southgate's letter constructs a particular narrative around 'Englishness' and English identity.

The first step before embarking on the analysis itself was to consider the research question we wanted to answer. Our interest was in the political and identity dimensions of Southgate's letter, in light of how Southgate uses the letter to lay out a new narrative of what the England football team stands for, blending elements of a more conservative strand of nationalism with more progressive strands of anti-racism and social justice. Therefore our chosen research question was: **How is English identity constructed in Southgate's "Dear England" letter?**

Southgate's letter was published on a public platform and is written with a huge audience in mind – the whole population of England – within a fraught and polarised political and social context. With that in mind, we believe that the letter cannot be read as a straightforward account of Southgate's thoughts and experiences. If that were the case, then we might be interested in the *manifest* (directly observable) meanings in the data, and go about the TA in a *semantic* way, focusing on the explicit, surface-level content of the data. However, because the letter is written on a highly emotive polarised issue, and in our view is strategized to achieve a specific goal of fostering national unity, we want to pay attention to the *latent* meanings, the more implicit concepts and assumptions underpinning the data. To some extent, this involves adopting a more 'suspicious' approach to interpretation (to use the terminology of Chapter 4).

Relatedly, our approach to TA is *social constructionist*, rather than realist or phenomenological. This is because we are interested in how English identity is constructed within the specific text of the letter at this particular point in history. We are not assuming - as a researcher with a *realist* orientation might - that the letter provides a straightforward, direct account of key, essential features of English identity. Nor are we assuming – as a researcher with a *phenomenological* orientation might - that the letter provides a deeply personal account of Southgate's lived experience. Our social constructionist orientation here fits with our *relativist* epistemological stance, which considers that there is no objective, value-free notion of 'English identity'; instead we are interested in how Southgate draws on cultural and discursive resources, at a specific historical moment, to construct his own specific version of English

identity in his letter. We in turn as the researchers bring our own theoretical assumptions and personal sensibilities to bear on the analysis, as white, left-leaning researchers who live in England but do not personally have a strong sense of identity as English. In this sense, our analysis aims to engage in reflexive TA (as opposed to 'coding reliability' or 'codebook' TA). We recognise our subjectivity as researchers, and our active role as researchers in producing knowledge, rather than assuming that codes and themes exist independently in the data and are simply waiting to be discovered. As such, we need to continually reflect on how our own theoretical assumptions, positions and personal values (particularly around issues of identity) influence our approach to the analysis.

Finally, we chose to adopt a largely *inductive* approach to the analysis, whereby the researcher works directly from the data to develop codes and themes. In contrast, a primarily *deductive* approach might approach the data using a preconceived framework, or - in more reflexive TA - draw on theoretical ideas as lenses through which to interpret the data. (For a good example of this strongly theoretical approach to TA, see Beres and Farvid (2010).) However, as previously discussed in the TA chapter, inductive coding and analysis does not mean that codes and themes are simply sitting there in the data, waiting to be discovered (Braun & Clarke, 2021); instead, the researcher is actively involved in interpreting the data, and producing their own codes and themes through their in-depth engagement with the data.
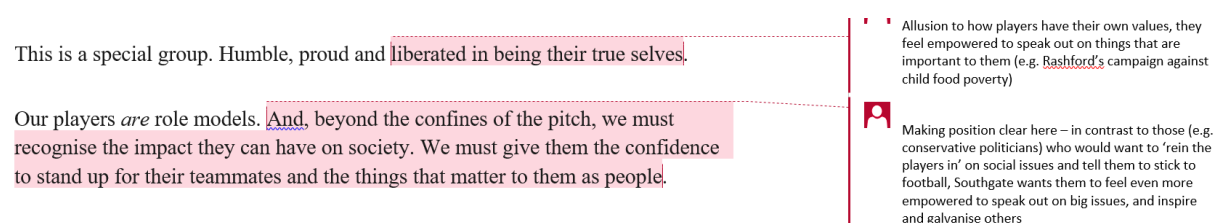

Process of thematic analysis

Having made these decisions about our research question and orientation towards TA, we followed the six phase process of (reflexive) TA described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). Braun and Clarke note that this is a "recursive" (2006: p86) rather than linear process, in that there is movement back and forth between the phases, such that the researcher can return back to earlier phases as codes evolve and the researcher generates new interpretations. While guided by the 2006 and 2019 Braun and Clarke papers, we later became aware of a more recent paper (Braun & Clarke, 2021) which has updated the names for the six phases – these are shown in the title of each phase.

Phase 1 – Familiarisation with the data

The initial phase of analysis involved familiarisation with the data**,** immersing ourselves in the text by reading and re-reading the letter. During this phase, a key priority was to consider the overall flow and structure of the text, while also focusing at a more detailed level on interesting, noteworthy features of content and language. We made notes in the margins of the text (in our case on computer using the Comments function in Microsoft Word) while reading to record these first impressions as we read and re-read the text. An example of these initial notes is shown below in Figure 1.

Fig 1. Examples of notes taken in the familiarisation phase (Phase 1)

> This is a special group. Humble, proud and liberated in being their true selves.
>
> Our players *are* role models. And, beyond the confines of the pitch, we must recognise the impact they can have on society. We must give them the confidence to stand up for their teammates and the things that matter to them as people.

Allusion to how players have their own values, they feel empowered to speak out on things that are important to them (e.g. Rashford's campaign against child food poverty)

Making position clear here – in contrast to those (e.g. conservative politicians) who would want to 'rein the players in' on social issues and tell them to stick to football, Southgate wants them to feel even more empowered to speak out on big issues, and inspire and galvanise others

Phase 2 – Coding the data

Phase 2 involved generating initial codes, by working through Southgate's letter line-by-line, identifying meaning units in the text and labelling these units with a descriptive – or in line with reflexive TA – more interpretative code that aims to encapsulate the meaning. In an inductive TA as undertaken here, we did not approach the analysis with a predetermined approach to coding in mind; instead, the codes were developed through engagement with and interpretation of the letter, with consideration of how codes related to our research question about English identity. It is important to note that there is no right or wrong way to code. Instead, "codes generated need to be meaningful to the researcher, capturing their interpretations of the data, in relation to their research question" (Terry et al., 2017: p26). As Braun & Clarke (2006) state, the same segment of text can be coded once, or several times with different codes; and additionally, not every single segment or line of text has to be coded.

On a practical level, we started the coding by taking a blank version of the source text, and recording initial codes using the Comments function of MS Word; the version of the text annotated with initial notes from Phase 1 was kept on the screen alongside, since the notes from Phase 1 helped with the generation of the initial codes. If using paper copies of transcripts or sources,

the initial notes in Phase 1 could be written in one margin and the initial codes in Phase 2 in the other margin.

Our initial codes were often unwieldy and clunky; for example, sometimes they combined more than one idea within the same code (e.g. "*Inspiration, and pride in England, transmitted across generations*"). At other times, instead of coding for more latent content and reaching a deeper level of interpretation, codes felt too descriptive or too close to the 'semantic', explicit content of the text; for example, "*Privilege of representing England*" was the initial code written at Line 69 where Southgate writes "It's a profound privilege".

In light of this, a second round of coding was then undertaken, where the initial codes were collated into a list, and working back and forth between the codes list and the original text of Southgate's letter, many of the codes were revised, although some were retained in their original form. For example, the initial code for Lines 87-89 was very cumbersome: "*Simultaneous acknowledgement and denial of polarisation; players and fans are all unified on the same issues despite differences*". This was then refined into a code that still aimed to capture the complexity of the ideas in this segment of the letter, but was hopefully more distilled and succinct: "*Unity between players and fans can override political polarisation".* We also tentatively began to think at this later stage of Phase 2 about how a newly refined code might then be relevant to another segment of the text. For example, Southgate states, "You [the players] have the opportunity to produce moments that people will remember forever" (Lines 13-14) and that "Every game, no matter the opposition, has the potential to create a lifelong memory for an England fan somewhere" (Lines 34-35). In the second round of coding, both these segments of text were assigned the code "*Football as generator of collective memory*".

At this point as we embarked on Phase 3, we remembered the idea of TA being a *recursive* process, such that codes could continue to be refined while working through the subsequent phases of analysis. A note of some queries we posed to ourselves while coding are shown in the text box below.

Queries we posed to ourselves in Phase 2

Q: Can/should terms from discursive psychology be used as parts of codes e.g. "Extreme case formulation", "stake inoculation"? Is it meaningful to use such terms as part of a code? Is it problematic bringing terminology from a different method into TA, or does the flexibility allow for this? Would doing so be what Braun and Clarke (2019: p592) describe as problematically "supplementing" their approach with other analytic procedures?

Q: Can codes work in more linguistic elements or should they be purely about the content? E.g. when Southgate talks about the players "speaking out" on racial injustice; and later the fans "speaking out" about the proposed Super League – from a latent perspective, this could be seen as an attempt to show the unity/equivalence of the players and fans. These may be what Braun et al. (2018: p13) refer to as a "feature" of the dataset, rather than a "meaning-based pattern".

Q: Although more interested in approaching the letter attending to latent meanings, quite a lot of the initial codes are semantic. (NB Braun and Clarke (2019) are clear this does not have to be an either-or choice). Should we leave these as they are, and try and code the same segment for latent meaning? Or should we reengage in interpretation to make my initial semantic code a latent one?

Phase 3 - Generating initial themes from the codes and coded data

In this phase of the analysis, we began generating initial themes, working from the codes developed and refined in Phase 2. We aimed to develop clusters of meaningful, salient patterns to tell a story about how English identity is constructed in Southgate's letter to England. At this stage, we used mindmaps to think about how these clusters might be defined and interrelate. The first attempt at generating possible themes is shown in Figure 2.

Producing the mindmap involved thinking about how certain related codes generated in Phase 2 might be clustered within one provisional thematic label; in these cases, the thematic labels developed were more descriptive and summary (e.g. "*Duty and service*" as a potential sub-theme). In other cases, we found that there were interesting relationships and tensions between seemingly distinct codes; in these cases, the potential thematic label to encapsulate these codes was more complex and interpretative (e.g. "*Intergenerational continuity and change of values*" as a potential sub-theme). In certain cases, a single code was included as a potential sub-theme ("*Unity between players and fans can override political polarisation*"), partly because of uncertainty over exactly where and how to incorporate this code into a theme.

Figure 2. Initial mindmap of potential themes and sub-themes
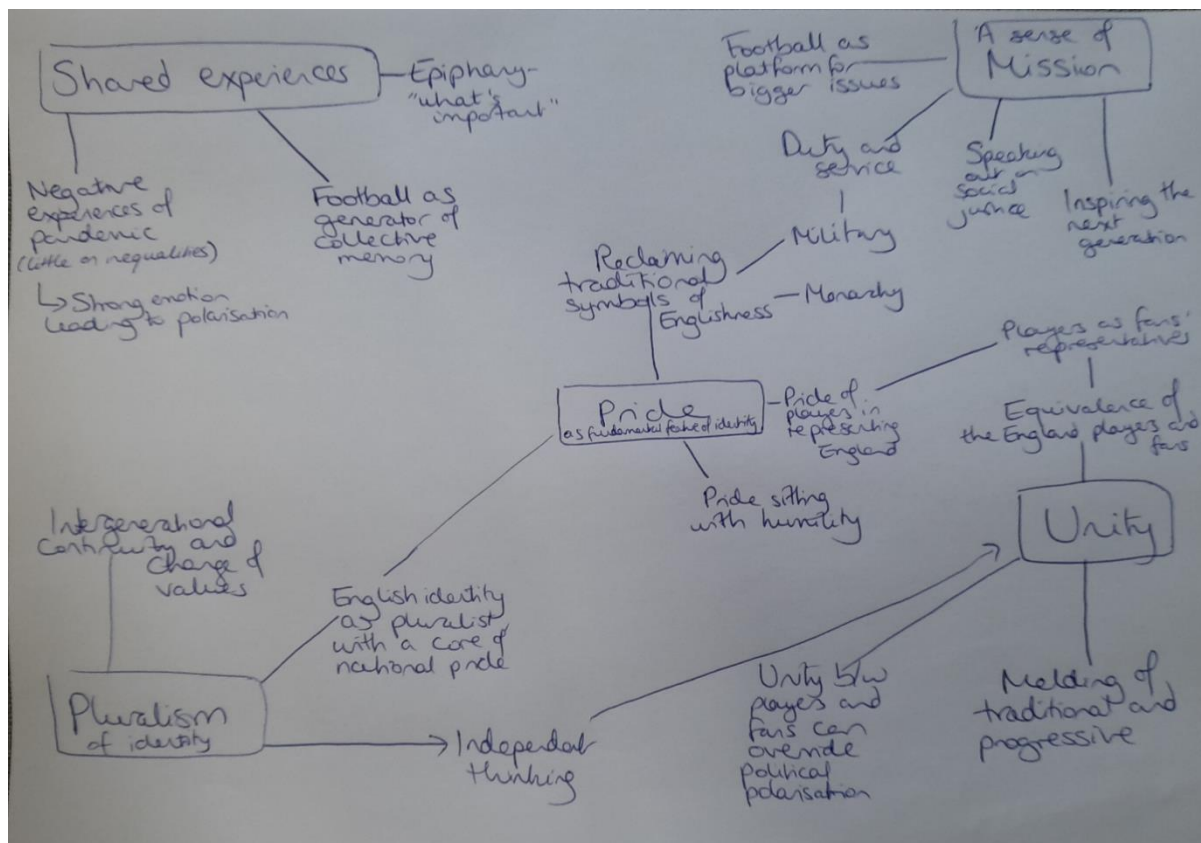
Another strategy to help with generating potential themes is to create a table with possible themes in the first row, and in the cells underneath, the codes that could potentially sit within that theme.

As we reflected on the mindmap of initial themes, it was clear there was a lot further to go in producing themes that provided a meaningful, compelling story of how English identity is constructed in Southgate's letter. Many of the initial ideas for a theme e.g. "Shared experiences" felt too generic and descriptive, lacking the sense of significance or meaning with which this topic is imbued within the letter itself. In a different way, "Unity" also felt too simplistic a title for a theme, more like a nondescript topic summary than a fully-fledged theme title which could tell a story; however, we wanted a theme title that would encapsulate how fundamental and constant the emphasis on unity is throughout the letter. "Pluralism of identity" felt a little more interpretative, but potentially also opaque and bland. The final two potential themes generated, "Pride as a fundamental feature of identity" and "a sense of mission" felt more convincing, and resonated with both the content and rhetoric of the letter, but we still felt that they required further work.

Terry et al. (2017) suggest that high quality themes should be distinctive, without too much overlap, even though it is important to also consider relationships between distinct themes. However, in our initial mindmap (Figure 2), many potential sub-themes were linked to more than one theme. This was not a problem at this early stage, but it indicated a need to redefine the themes and re-evaluate our view of the distinct, central thematic concepts in the data.

Phase 4 – Reviewing and developing themes

In this phase of reviewing themes, we took the potential themes generated in Phase 3 and returned to the coded segments of the data, the dataset as a whole, and our research question. In essence, we wanted to think about how well or badly our themes might tell "a distinctive and meaningful story that answers the research question" (Terry et al., 2017). At this stage, it is important for the researcher to be willing to "let go" of themes developed early on, in order to prevent "analytic "thinness" or conceptual overlap" (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2018, p13).

Braun and Clarke (2006) define two levels of this reviewing phase, where Level 1 focuses on the coded extracts, and Level 2 looks at the dataset as a whole, in both cases to consider how well the developing themes represent patterns of meaning. At this stage, to help with Level 1, we found it helpful to create a table with the potential candidate themes, with extracts from the text and the relevant code within the potential themes. An example is shown in Figure 3. Highlighting the recursive nature of TA, we found that even as we compiled the table, codes were revised or reassigned, demonstrating the iterative and non-linear nature of these phases of analysis.

Figure 3. Screenshot showing Excel spreadsheet, with potential candidate themes generated in Phase 3, with associated extracts and codes


At this point, moving between the table (Figure 3) and the mindmap from Phase 3 (Figure 2), it became clearer that certain themes or sub-themes initially developed did not quite fit or cohere. In particular, we saw a lot of overlap and porousness between the candidate themes from Phase 3, and realised that certain candidate themes (e.g. "*Shared experiences*") were not actually meaningful to our research question on English identity.

In particular, in Level 2 of this phase as we returned to the text as a whole, we began to realise that the initial candidate themes did not appropriately tell a key story that we were discerning in our coded extracts. Namely, that in our view, Southgate's letter deliberately seeks to build bridges across England's different, diverse coalitions: players and fans, older and younger generations, conservatives and progressives. Particularly of interest from an English identity perspective is how Southgate appears to draw parallels between his grandfather's military service in World War II and today's England players taking a stand on issues of social justice, particularly against racial injustice. In doing so, he brings together symbols and discourses that appear to sit at polar opposites of the socio-political spectrum, in a pluralist vision of English identity with patriotism and pride at its heart. The letter thus aims to go beyond dualisms of tradition and progress, continuity and change, representing many of these polarised positions as false or illusory dichotomies.

Articulating to ourselves this aspect of the construction of English identity in Southgate's letter helped us to reconsider the boundaries, structures and interrelationships of the different themes. Indeed, in order to try and sharpen the boundaries of the themes and avoid blurriness between them, we defined two new themes which involved collapsing many of our initial themes from

Phase 3, and identifying new cross-cutting connections between codes that we developed into new themes and sub-themes. These are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Mindmap of potential themes and sub-themes generated through the Phase 4 review process
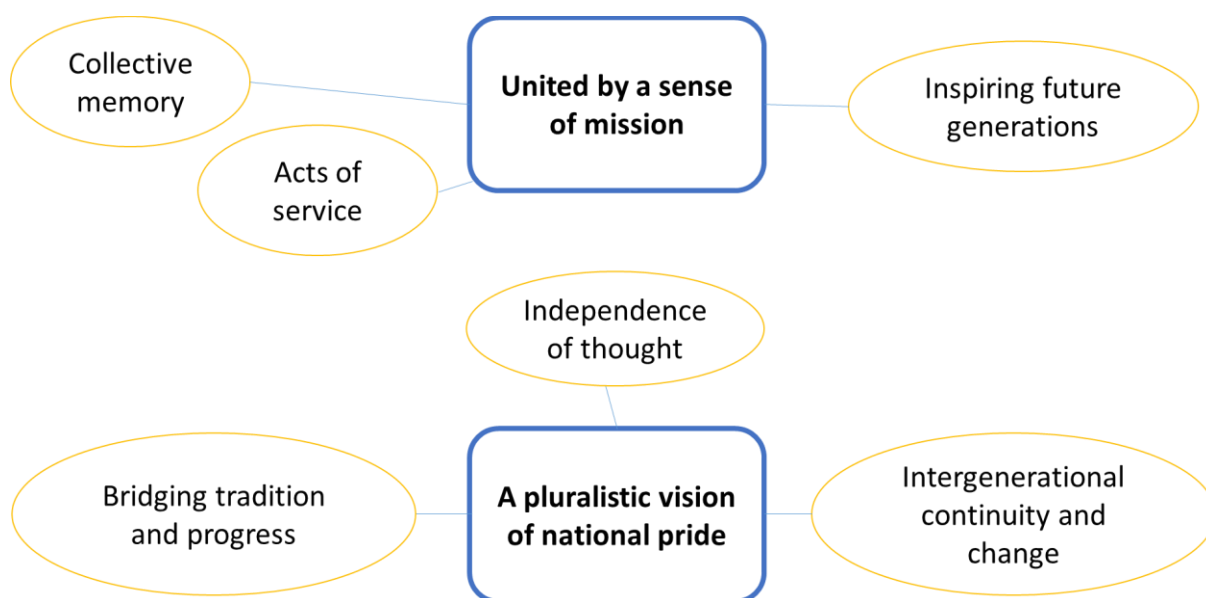
In particular, we became more comfortable with developing themes and sub-themes at a more latent level, even where these included some semantic codes that were somewhat incongruous. For example, the sub-theme "*Acts of Service*" now included coded extracts about Southgate's grandfather's military service (Lines 45-47) and the England players speaking out against racial injustice (Lines 82-84). This development of the sub-theme at a more interpretative level was possible by paying attention to aspects of the language as well as content; for example, by using the term "duty" (Line 82) to refer to players' engagement with social justice issues, Southgate constructs this not as a political act but as a morally necessary one.

Phase 5 – Defining, naming and refining themes

In Phase 5, the aim is to define, name, and refine the themes**.** This stage can involve writing a short summary or abstract of each theme as developed so far. As Terry et al. (2017) suggest, this process of defining and writing a summary definition of the theme can help us determine if the theme is too "thin", and does not provide enough depth or detail to tell an analytic story. Alternatively, the process can help us to realise if there is too much detail in one theme,

meaning that the theme is too complex or it lacks a unifying thread. The latter part of this phase follows on from the theme definition, as the researcher may realise their previous 'working title' for a theme is not the best way to encapsulate what is contained in the theme summary.

To give an example, we focus on our candidate theme "A pluralistic vision of national pride" shown in Figure 4. The initial theme definition for this theme is as follows:

> *Southgate's letter constructs a vision of English identity which is pluralistic, but fundamentally underpinned by a shared sense of pride. This pluralism manifests in his notion of English identity where there is space for both symbolic traditions and social progress. For example, Southgate presents his own personal values and identity as constructed through the memory of his grandfather's military service, and the British monarchy. At the same time, he constructs his and the players' commitment to social justice and anti-racism as entirely compatible with English patriotism (a discursive move which arguably rebuts right-wing discourse of 'taking the knee' as unpatriotic or Marxist). Southgate constructs English identity as a concept in continual evolution and reinvention, aware that younger generations may conceive of Englishness very differently to him and to other generations. However this is counteracted by an emphasis on national pride, and the cycle of players inspiring young fans to become players, as constants that go beyond generational divides. To help validate this plurality of views on English identity, Southgate constructs independence of thought, 'speaking out' on what is important, as a quintessential quality in which all those who identify as English can take pride. This construction provides a (arguably rather utopian) basis for common ground where a range of many possible and seemingly incompatible English identities can respectfully co-exist.*

Q: Is the language in this theme definition too discursive, or suspicious, for TA?

Writing this summary definition of the theme helped to clarify the relationships between the different sub-themes, and the fact that in our view these do fit together well and provide enough richness to tell an analytic story.

Previously, we were wondering whether the focus on intergenerational continuity/change overlapped too much with the sub-theme "*Inspiring future generations*" contained within the other main theme, "*United by a sense of mission*". However, the process of summarising the themes allowed us to see that Southgate's focus on similarities and differences between different generations' conceptions of English identity is a thematic concept distinct from the notion of inspiring future generations as a unifying goal for the England team and country as a whole. Therefore our themes and sub-themes did not change significantly from those developed in Phase 4; but after Phase 5, we had a stronger sense of where the precise boundaries lay within and between our themes and sub-themes.

Phase 6 – Writing up the report

The final phase involves the production of the research report. It is important to see writing the report as a "final test of how well the themes work" (Braun et al., 2018, p14), and to remember that it is never too late to rework the codes, themes, or even the research question.

When writing up, data extracts are drawn upon from the original texts, and Terry et al. (2017) draw a distinction between using extracts illustratively or analytically. Using extracts "illustratively" essentially means using extracts as examples to illustrate key elements of the theme's story. Using extracts "analytically" means going more in-depth into particular details of interest, picking up on salient features of content (*Q:* or language?) in the extract and analysing these features, potentially by drawing on theory or prior literature. In the same analysis, both approaches can be used. Our analysis, with our social constructionist orientation and interest in *how* English identity is constructed through Southgate's letter, lends itself better to using extracts analytically. An example of how we might write up our analysis is shown below, where we include the first paragraph of our write up of the theme "*A pluralistic vision of national pride*" (we have chosen this theme as it corresponds to the theme definition included in Phase 5):

Southgate constructs a pluralistic vision of English identity, where each individual can define their own notion of Englishness, but these all share a core, foundational sense of pride. For example, Southgate states:

> "Everyone has a different idea of what it actually means to be English. What pride means." (Lines 37-38)

The possible plurality of views on English identity is made very explicit in the first sentence; this is juxtaposed with the staccato phrasing of "What pride means" that immediately follows, suggesting a synonymy between Englishness and pride. Southgate's vision of Englishness is a broad church, but one where pride is non-negotiable.

A key point we wish to illustrate with this example is that an extract should not be introduced and then simply left to 'speak for itself' (especially where extracts are used analytically rather than illustratively). Instead, it is important to analyse and interpret noteworthy features of the extract, in order to enrich exploration of the theme and so shed more light on aspects of the research question.

This worked example of TA does not constitute a full analysis in any sense. However, we hope it demonstrates the thinking that goes on in the process of conducting a thematic analysis and some of the insights such a process can generate.

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