



Thematic Analysis

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Aims of the Session

- ▶ To give an overview of Thematic Analysis.
- ▶ To showcase the analytical phases of a Thematic Analysis.
- ▶ To go through a worked example data is on Moodle.



What is Thematic Analysis

- ▶ Thematic Analysis is a widely used qualitative psychology tool in analysing interview, focus group or diary based data.
- ▶ “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. (Braun and Clarke, 2006)
- ▶ It is a method of processing and analysing the data in rich detail , interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).
- ▶ Despite being widely used, its methodology can be considered unclear (supporters might call this flexible) – and more recently researchers have adopted a hybrid approach of thematic analysis, combining it with other qualitative method of analysis.



Introduction to Thematic Analysis.

- ▶ The term Thematic Analysis has had many different meanings in Psychology.
- ▶ Whilst it has been a popular method there has been some confusion regarding its methodology.
- ▶ However, largely through the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), Thematic Analysis is considered a robust methodology and widely recognised in psychology, social sciences and health sciences.
 - ▶ “Accessible, systematic and rigorous approach to coding and theme development” (Howitt, 2010, cited in Clark, Braun and Hayfield, 2015 p 223).



Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013).

- ▶ TA research is conducted within a qualitative paradigm.
- ▶ 1) REJECTION of the possibility of discovering universal meaning.
 - ▶ Meaning is understood to the context in which it is produced
- ▶ 2) ACTIVE role of the researcher
 - ▶ Embracing research subjectivity.
- ▶ 3) Organic approach to coding and theme development. Unique to the perspectives of the researcher
 - ▶ Fluid, Flexible and Responsive to the researchers evolving engagement with the data.



A key difference between TA and other forms of Qualitative Analysis.

- ▶ It is a method rather than a methodology.
- ▶ Methodology = Theoretically informed Framework.
 - ▶ Alongside guidelines for analysis, there is also guiding theoretical assumptions for particular kinds of research questions.
- ▶ Method = Theoretically independent tools for analysing data.
 - ▶ When you use TA, you have to decided the theoretical assumptions, what your research question will be and the type of data you collect.
 - ▶ Much more flexible.



The Key Steps in Qualitative Research

1. Choosing a topic/research question

2. Constructing an interview schedule

3. Locating participants

4. Conducting an interview or interviews

5. Transcribing the interview material

6. Analysis of data

7. Writing Up



Conducting analysis

- ▶ Thematic Analysis involves searching for themes in interview or other qualitative data.
- ▶ Themes are: “recurrent ideas or topics which can be detected in the material which is being analysed, and which come up on more than one occasion in a particular set of data.” (Hayes 2000:173)



Thematic Analysis (Clarke et al 2015).

- ▶ Familiarisation – reading and re-reading the transcripts.
- ▶ Coding – is the first step in the process of identifying patterns in the data because it groups together similar data fragments.
- ▶ “Searching for themes” – the researcher cluster together codes to create a credible mapping of key patterns in the data.
- ▶ Reviewing the themes – the researcher check whether the ‘candidate’ theme exhibit a good ‘fit’ with the coded and the entire data set, and each has a clear, distinct ‘essence’ or central organising concept.
- ▶ Defining and naming the themes – writing theme definitions and selecting a theme name or label.
- ▶ Writing the Report – produce a narrative (organising framework) showing the analytical journey.



Phase 1: Familiarisation.

- ▶ Spend quality time with your data.
- ▶ Read through the entire data at least twice (during this phase).
- ▶ Try not to absorb the data as you would reading a magazine
- ▶ Read in a questioning way.



Phase 1: Familiarisation.

- ▶ Ask yourself questions as you read for the first few times. Example questions include:
 - ▶ Why are they making sense of things in THIS way? (and not another way).
 - ▶ What assumptions underpin this account?
 - ▶ What type of world view does this account rely on?
 - ▶ How would I feel in the situation?
 - ▶ What implications does this account have?
- ▶ Make notes as you go.
- ▶ Record observations and Insights
- ▶ Try to read in a curious and questioning way.
- ▶ Make notes on your OVERALL observations on the data set.



Phase 2 – Coding.

- ▶ What is Coding.....
- ▶ “Coding is the first step in the process of identifying patterns in the data because it groups together similar data fragments”
- ▶ “A systematic process of identifying and labelling relevant features of the data (in relation to the research question)”.
- ▶ (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015 p 230)



Phase 2 – Coding.

- ▶ Coding facilitates deep engagement with the data and the production of an analysis that goes beyond the immediate or obvious.
- ▶ Most data will have a mixture of both **semantic** and **latent** codes.
- ▶ Semantic codes identify the explicit and surface meanings of the data.
 - ▶ The researcher does not look beyond what the participant said or wrote.
- ▶ Latent codes capture underlying ideas, patterns, and assumptions
 - ▶ This requires a more interpretative and conceptual orientation to the data.



How do you record your codes.

- ▶ Ultimately up to you.
- ▶ Writing down on the wide margins?
- ▶ Using a separate MS Word document?
- ▶ Using specialist software (such as Nvivo)?
- ▶ Close reading through a data item.
- ▶ When you note something of potential relevance you code it.
- ▶ Short phrase – captures the key aspect you see as important.
 - ▶ Can use your own words or words from the data.
 - ▶ Try to avoid one word codes – as need to have analytical relevance.

Coding



- ▶ Work through the data – if you see something of interest – you need to decide if an existing code captures it or whether a new code is required.
- ▶ TA coding is flexible and organic – you can tweak old codes as you work through the data.
- ▶ Data excerpts can be coded more than once.
- ▶ Coding should be over rather than under inclusive.
 - ▶ If in doubt – CODE IT.
- ▶ Two rounds of coding for each data set is recommended – e.g. when you have completed the coding, read the excerpt again with a fine tooth comb and see if there are tweaks to the coding.
- ▶ No number or ideal number of codes.

Example of Coding on a transcript.



SAGE

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SAGE Research Methods Datasets Part

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Data	Codes
(Q1) Moderator: What do you think about the apparel industry in Sri Lanka? Who are the customers, competitors, suppliers and influential parties and <i>what</i> is their influence on the business and management controls of the business? Finance Director: Global competition and GSP plus [Generalized System of Preferences] and the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership have a direct impact on our operations, and on management controls. More than 60% of Sri Lankan apparel exports are to the United States and other Western countries. Our operations and controls have to focus on their demands in order to survive in the market. In the meantime, competition in the industry is increasing from emerging countries like Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. So, our controls have always to focus on reducing costs and producing products at competitive prices. The economic environment of our country too is not supportive of the apparel industry because other industries such as tourism and hospitality are growing. Thus finding labour for the apparel industry will be difficult in about another five years because they expect simple and understandable controls on the workflow. When designing controls, we have to think about how to simplify them. So, if we don't go for proper management and controlling strategies and innovation we can't sustain the industry. We have to definitely rely on high end customers. The other influential parties in the apparel sector who influence implementation of controls would be trade unions and the work force because, if any controls are complex and impact on their workloads, they tend to reject or respond to them negatively by reducing production. Pressure groups and organizations concerned with the apparel trade such as the Wages Board of Sri Lanka, Chamber of Commerce, Sri Lanka Institute of Nano Technology, Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association, Sri Lanka Standards and Central Environmental Authority also come into play. For example, as a company	Global statutory rules Customer regulatory demands Influence of changing market conditions Facing changes in the local industry Influence of community perception Facing changes in the local industry Influence of community perception Influence of organized labour Influence of local organized regulations Influence of local regulations



Phase 3 – Searching for Themes.

- ▶ Not looking for something that already exists.
- ▶ Aim to create a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of the data.
- ▶ **You may “promote” a complex code to a theme or cluster similar codes to a theme.**
- ▶ A theme should identify both a coherent aspect of the data and tells you something about its relevance to the research question.
- ▶ The theme should represent analytical work.
- ▶ Drawing thematic maps or tables – see write up PowerPoint.
- ▶ Searching for Themes ends when you are only making minor adjustments to the participants themes and feel confident that your themes capture the DATA CODING and answers your research question.



Phase 4 – Reviewing the themes.

- ▶ Review the themes in 2 ways.
- ▶ Do the themes “work” in relation to the codes made (in Phase 2).
- ▶ Re-read all the data involved in the codes.
- ▶ Asking if the theme is a good fit for the codes involved.
- ▶ If not you need to revise your themes.
- ▶ Once satisfied – read the entire data for a final check for fit.
 - ▶ Themes and Analysis must address your research question and reflect the data content.



Phase 5 – Defining and Naming Themes.

- ▶ Once satisfied that you have searched, identified and reviewed themes you begin the process of elaborating each theme.
- ▶ Theme Definitions
 - ▶ Short explanations of the essence of the theme – its scope, coverage and boundaries.
- ▶ Helps with the Analytical Narrative (see the write up material).
- ▶ Try to capture the essence of the themes with the name.

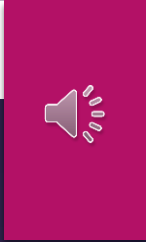


Phase 6 – Write up....

- ▶ See the other slide show on writing up a qualitative report.



Worked Example



Overview

- ▶ Today's thematic analysis worked example.
- ▶ The source for this example is: Willig, C (2013) *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*: Buckingham: OUP. Chapter Eight.





Phase 1: Familiarisation / Initial Encounter with the text.

- ▶ The diary was written by the young man in order to document his experience of change in his life.
- ▶ Read the extract twice and makes notes on your initial observations and insights – things you might wish to consider.
- ▶ **The style of writing**
- ▶ **The way the young man characterises his thoughts**
- ▶ **The concerns that the young man feels are important to his life.**



Phase 1: Willig's comments

- ▶ 1. Style
 - ▶ The author uses powerful metaphoric images ('I am on a train', 'hungry')
 - ▶ The first part of the diary entry (lines 1-5) employs lively and colourful language, the remainder is written in a calmer style
- ▶ 2. The Way the young man characterises his thoughts.
 - ▶ Reference to psychological concepts ('manic states')
- ▶ 3. The concerns that the young man feels are important to his life.
 - ▶ The relationship between freedom and control ('move with the change')



Phase 2: Coding

- ▶ After an impressionistic first encounter with the text, analysis becomes more systematic.
- ▶ The text is organized into codes:
 - ▶ A systematic process of identifying and labelling relevant features of the data (in relation to the research question)".
 - ▶ Coding facilitates deep engagement with the data and the production of an analysis that goes beyond the immediate or obvious.
- ▶ Task – In relation to the worked example I want you to read and re-read the transcript several times and produce codes for the data.
 - ▶ Slides 12 – 16 of this slide show will help in this matter.



Phase 2 – Coding.

- ▶ Willig Identifies 7 Codes
- ▶ 1. Strong feelings (of arousal, of hunger, of excitement, of movement)
- ▶ 2. Psychopathology (concerns about mental health)
- ▶ 3. Hunger (for stimulation, experiences, impressions, for the world)
- ▶ 4. Life Stages ('youth' vs. 'later in life')
- ▶ Before moving on to the final three codes, take ten minutes to identify examples of the above in the text.
- ▶



Phase 2 - Coding

- ▶ Here are the final three Codes (according to Wilig)
- ▶ 5. Need for movement and change ('for me, there has to be movement all the time') [line 12]
- ▶ 6. Need for freedom ('I don't want to plan ahead or commit myself', 'I need to feel free to change') [lines 10 and line 13]
- ▶ 7. Control/agency ('a little out of control; on the edge of control', 'freedom and control together...') [line 2 and lines 14-15]



Phase 3 and 4 – Searching for and Reviewing Themes.

- ▶ Not looking for something that already exists.
- ▶ Aim to create a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of the data.
- ▶ **You may “promote” a complex code to a theme or cluster similar codes to a theme.**
- ▶ A theme should identify both a coherent aspect of the data and tells you something about it relevant to the research question.
- ▶ The theme should represent analytical work.
- ▶ Drawing thematic maps or tables – see write up PowerPoint.
- ▶ Searching for Themes ends when you are only making minor adjustments to the participants themes and feel confident that your themes capture the DATA CODING and answers your research question.

Task



- ▶ Read slide 17, 18 and 19 of this presentation and see if you can develop themes for the data set.
- ▶ Aim to create a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of the data.
- ▶ **You may “promote” a complex code to a theme or cluster similar codes to a theme.**
- ▶ A theme should identify both a coherent aspect of the data and tells you something about it relevant to the research question.
- ▶ The theme should represent analytical work.



Phase 3, 4 and 5 - Themes

- ▶ Willig identifies three themes from the worked example extract.
 - ▶ Theme 1: Psychological states
 - ▶ Theme 2: Needs
 - ▶ Theme 3: Control
-
- ▶ Look at the codes that Willig highlighted Highlight which codes fit under which themes.



Developing Themes - Willig's suggestions:

- ▶ Theme 1: Psychological states
 - ▶ Code Strong Feelings,
 - ▶ Code: Psychopathology
 - ▶ Code: Life Stages

- ▶ Theme 2: Needs
 - ▶ Code: Hunger
 - ▶ Code: Need for Freedom
 - ▶ Code: Need for Movement.

- ▶ Theme 3: Control
 - ▶ Code - Control



Production of a summary table

- ▶ A summary table is produced to obtain a clear overview of codes, themes and related quotations
- ▶ When you write up a thematic analysis report, the results/discussion section should contain a summary table.
- ▶ See Qualitative Report Write up PowerPoint to see an example of a summary table.



Answer the Research Question

- ▶ Looking at the themes developed, write a couple of paragraphs answering the research question:
- ▶ How does the young man experience the process of change in his life?
- ▶ The paragraphs **should refer to the themes and be supported by quotations from the data.**



- ▶ This approach is known as ‘inductive thematic analysis’
- ▶ Inductive thematic analysis allows the themes to emerge from the data.
- ▶ Inductive thematic analysis does not test hypotheses. It seeks to answer a general research question that is often descriptive in nature.



Your research!

- ▶ **Formulate a research question that will guide your analysis**
- ▶ You may change the question as you go along if, for instance, the data suggests a different one is more appropriate or you can't find any themes relating to your question



- ▶ You will then follow the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006)
- ▶ Familiarisation – reading and re-reading the transcripts.
- ▶ Coding – is the first step in the process of identifying patterns in the data because it groups together similar data fragments.
- ▶ “Searching for themes” – the researcher cluster together codes to create a credible mapping of key patterns in the data.
- ▶ Reviewing the themes – the researcher check whether the ‘candidate’ theme exhibit a good ‘fit’ with the coded and the entire data set, and each has a clear, distinct ‘essence’ or central organising concept.
- ▶ Defining and naming the themes – writing theme definitions and selecting a theme name or label.
- ▶ Writing the Report – produce a narrative (organising framework) showing the analytical journey.



Identification of themes:

- ▶ What ideas, concerns, emotions, etc. recur throughout the article?
- ▶ What codes are similar with each other and can be grouped / clustered together?
- ▶ What codes might be considered complex and unique (so cannot be grouped) but important enough to be considered a theme.
- ▶ How do they help you address your research question?



Now it's over to you:

- ▶ Data preparation
- ▶ Formulating a research question
- ▶ The Familiarisation of the Data
- ▶ Coding
- ▶ Theme Development.