DE200 tutorial April 2022: TMA04 Thematic Analysis

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TMA04: The Task

Conduct a thematic analysis of an audio clip from an interview held in the Oral History of British Science archive of the British Library.

Then write an empirical report of **three** themes you have identified in answer to the following research question:

What issues does Jess identify as important for her in maintaining an active and busy life?

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Qualitative Project

The researcher in qualitative research is not a robot.

The researcher inevitably influences the research process

Qual research maximises the influence of the researcher

Interested in *individual* meanings and experiences (within context)

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Sensitivity to context

E.g., to participants' perspectives and the socio-cultural context

To the data - not imposing the researcher's meanings on the data; open to alternative interpretations, complexities and inconsistencies.

Contextualising research in the relevant theory/literature

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Method

Context	Give sufficient information about the participant. Context is important.
Structure	Make sure all the relevant information is included and is logically structured.
Reflexivity	Reflexivity can be written in first person (ideally). It should indicate the processes you went through in analysing the data. Here is an example*:

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Reflexivity

- You must include a statement of your reflexivity in your methodology.
- You may wish to consider how your experiences influence the reading of the data and your interpretation of themes.
- This section acknowledges your role as the researcher in the research and the analytic process by recognising that the methodology is subjective.
- It might also be useful to think about how your values, experiences and knowledge shape the output of your research.

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Reflexivity

- The researcher acknowledges and reflects on their role
  - Separate 'reflexive' section or woven throughout (introduction, methods, discussion)

- Reflexive statement to own your perspective:
  'I am a white, middle class, woman…'

- Personal experiences as an 'insider':
  'it was difficult for me not to see the participants' stories through the lens of my own personal experience'

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Reflexivity example

As a female student heading toward the end of my degree, I began asking questions about my experiences as a heterosexual woman in society. I was struck by the prevalence and acceptance of catcalls, wolf whistles and groping aimed at women my age. I did not understand what was making me so unsettled, until I read Laura Bates' (2015) Everyday Sexism. I was overwhelmed by the stories told by women like myself, and the impact sexism had on their well-being and lives as a whole.

As I delved deeper into literature, I realised the barrage of sexism, subtle and overt, experience by students who I expected to be more protected by their institution. Therefore, the current research is biased in that I examine sexism as something that undeniably exists as a societal problem and this is clearly reflected in the way I review literature and interpret the data. For me, the perceivable bias within the research acts as a protest against sexism. It is necessary to show the impact of sexism and to begin making a difference.

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Data analysis: Interpretation

Choose **three** themes you would like to interpret in your report.

Interpretation is an explanation of your themes - *built up & supported through the presentation of quotes or excerpts from the data.*

(Remember when presenting data excerpts, you need to include the line numbers as they appear in the transcript.)

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Steps of Thematic Analysis

- Step 1: Familiarisation with data
- Step 2: Coding (stage 1 and 2 coding)
- Step 3: Generating/identifying themes
- Step 4: Reviewing themes
- Step 5: Defining themes
- Writing the report

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Example ….

'X' is an overall outstanding lecturer. One, if not the ONLY lecturer on my course that I feel has my best interests at heart and takes an interest in her students. 'X' is always networking and engaging with PR practitioners and agencies to ensure we get the best chances of securing Work Experience or future job vacancies. 'X' always encourages us to raise our chances for employability and helps us with this through her own personal contacts as well as arranging regular CIPR networking events - dedicating her time outside of class. 'X' is fair and organised - which the whole class appreciates - and she is able to communicate her messages well. She explains why we are being taught a certain topic and how this will add to either our employability or personal development. She is always looking for new ways to enhance these two areas, and often drafts in live clients and professionals - which enables us to experience real life simulations, as well as development of our abilities. I could have nominated 'X' for 'Open door', 'outstanding feedback' or 'strongest supervision' because she really is a fantastic influence. I think 'X' is a credit to Solent and I know I would have dropped out in my second year, if it wasn't for her support.

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Activity

1. Make notes/simple observations
2. Can these notes be grouped/categorised? How?
3. How might we interpret them?

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Initial Coding Example

Interview extract	Codes
Personally, I'm not sure. I think the climate is changing, sure, but I don't know why or how. People say you should trust the experts, but who's to say they don't have their own reasons for pushing this narrative? I'm not saying they're wrong, I'm just saying there's reasons not to 100% trust them. The facts keep changing – it used to be called global warming.	• Uncertainty • Acknowledgement of climate change • Distrust of experts • Changing terminology

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Step 2, Stage 1: Initial coding

How do these compare with your codes? Any similarities? Differences? What does this suggest?

1. Outstanding	2. Best interest, takes an interest	3. Networking agencies	4. Securing work experience
5. Raises chances of employability	6. Helps make new contacts	7. Dedicates time outside class	8. Communicates well
9. Explains why	10. Personal development	11. Drafts in clients/professionals	12. Experience real life simulations
13. Develops abilities	14. Fantastic influence	15. Credit to university	16. Would have dropped out if not for lecturer

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Activity

1. Read the extract on the handout
2. Make notes/simple observations in the right hand margin
3. Can these notes be grouped/categorised? How?
4. How might we interpret them?

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Code 1 Organisation/style of teaching 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13
Code 2 Skills 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13
Code 3 Outside of classroom behaviour 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13
Code 4 Employability opportunities 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12
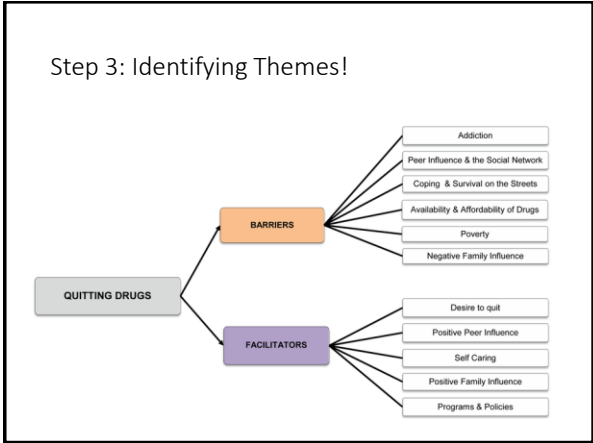Code 5 Admiration of lecturer 1, 14, 15, 16

Stage 2 coding

1. Outstanding	2. Best interest, takes an interest	3. Networking agencies	4. Securing work experience
5. Raises chances of employability	6. Helps make new contacts	7. Dedicates time outside class	8. Communicates well
9. Explains why	10. Personal development	11. Drafts in clients/professionals	12. Experience real life simulations
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Stage 2 coding (still part of step 2)

- Adopting a style of teaching that moves beyond standard academic practices/teaching (Code 1, 2, 3)
Code 1 Organisation/style of teaching; Code 2 Skills; Code 3 Outside of classroom

- Admiration/Respect for lecturer (Code 5)
Code 5 Admiration of lecturer

- Improving employability prospects (Code 4)
Code 4 Employability opportunities 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12

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Step 3: Identifying Themes!

QUITTING DRUGS

BARRIERS
- Addiction
- Peer Influence & the Social Network
- Coping & Survival on the Streets
- Availability & Affordability of Drugs
- Poverty
- Negative Family Influence

FACILITATORS
- Desire to quit
- Positive Peer Influence
- Self Caring
- Positive Family Influence
- Programs & Policies

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Turning Codes into Themes
(Step 3 Theme generation)

Codes	Theme
• Uncertainty	Uncertainty
• Leave it to the experts	
• Alternative explanations	
• Changing terminology	Distrust of experts
• Distrust of scientists	
• Resentment toward experts	
• Fear of government control	
• Incorrect facts	Misinformation
• Misunderstanding of science	
• Biased media sources	

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Step 4: Reviewing Themes

- Does the data support the themes?
- Am I trying to fit too much into a theme?
- If themes overlap, are they really separate themes?
- Are there themes within themes (subthemes)?
- Are there other themes within the data?

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Step 5: Defining Themes

For each theme, ask:
- Is it consistent?
- Is it relevant to the research question?
- Is it supported by illustrative excerpts (quotes) from the data?
- If I take each theme and re-read the interview, does it explain what is said?
- Does the title of each theme fit the narrative?

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Summary

A group of codes that go together represent a pattern in the data (a theme)

Look for relationships between the codes, consider a meaningful label for that theme that you believe captures what it is about

Not all identified codes will necessarily be used, they might not fit into a clear theme or be relevant to your research question

Remember **the process is iterative** so you can go back & forth from codes to themes

Once you have identified your themes, try to write a few notes on each that addresses the research question

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Data analysis

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Tips for Doing and Reporting Thematic Analysis

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Introduction

Relevant literature only

Develop a clear rationale

No discussion of results or interview!

Introduce literature, not the study (until the end)

Finish with a clear research question

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Method

Give	Give sufficient information about the participant. Context is important.
Make	Make sure all the relevant information is included and is logically structured.
Be	Reflexivity can be written in first person (ideally). It should indicate the processes you went through in analysing the data. Here is an example*:

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Reflexivity example

As a female student heading toward the end of my degree, I began asking questions about my experiences as a heterosexual woman in society. I was struck by the prevalence and acceptance of catcalls, wolf whistles and groping aimed at women my age. I did not understand what was making me so unsettled, until I read Laura Bates' (2015) Everyday Sexism. I was overwhelmed by the stories told by women like myself, and the impact sexism had on their well-being and lives as a whole. As I delved deeper into literature, I realised the barrage of sexism, subtle and overt, experience by students who I expected to be more protected by their institution. Therefore, the current research is biased in that I examine sexism as something that undeniably exists as a societal problem and this is clearly reflected in the way I review literature and interpret the data. For me, the perceivable bias within the research acts as a protest against sexism. It is necessary to show the impact of sexism and to begin making a difference.

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Results/Analysis

- Coding should be thorough
- Check that the theme definitions make sense
- Themes should be discrete
- In your appendices, show which codes fit into each theme.
- Label appendices
- Say what the themes are at the start of the results section
- Avoid discussion in the results section.
- Stay faithful to what the participant says
- Define/introduce each theme.
- Provide some narrative/analysis for quotes

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Checklist for Thematic Analysis

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	Appropriate detail and have been checked for accuracy
Coding	2	Each data has been given equal attention
	3	Coding process is thorough, inclusive and comprehensive
	4	All relevant extracts for all themes have been collated
	5	Themes have been checked against each other
Analysis	6	Themes are internally coherent and distinctive
	7	Data has been analysed - interpreted, made sense of
	8	Analysis and data match each other
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided

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Data analysis: Interpretation

<u>Don't let the data speak for itself!</u>
Provide an account of what the data means by explaining how it fits into the theme you have identified & the research study.

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Example structure of results/findings section

Title: Results

1st paragraph: The method of data analysis is specified (i.e. thematic analysis for this assessment) and the process of data analysis is outlined (i.e. the coding approach - Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Subsequent paragraphs: Present each theme as a sub-headings (in bold) and present the analysis (interpretation) with excerpts to evidence your claims.

Try to use 'eye-catching' or vivid excerpts here. You need to make sure you present equal amount of quotes from both transcripts.

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Example 1st paragraph

Three themes were identified that represent the participants' beliefs and expectations concerning alcohol in a health context. The first theme proposes freedom and regulation (and the balance achieved between the two) as critical to understanding attitudes to alcohol. The second theme discussed the role of the female friendship group in providing both a platform for drinking and curtailment on over-consumption. The third theme describes alcohol as a potent drug with sought effects and adverse side-effects that needed to be managed.

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Example subsequent paragraph

Theme 1: The urge to drink and the cost of drinking

This theme explores alcohol as a drug and management of its negative consequences. Being drunk felt good, but drinking brought on fears and horrors. The urge to drink Sarah liked how alcohol altered her mood and increased confidence:

That really good feeling you get off drink, like that really good buzz—I think that's the best part of it … you think you look better, I think you just kind of feel better … and you think, 'Oh, this is great!' (Lines 26-28)

Consciousness of the body as a machine for processing alcohol is reflected in Amy's anticipatory calculations and awareness of how many doses were in a bottle of vodka:

I'll get more into me before I go out to save money … that will sustain you throughout the night of a nice happy drunkenness. (Lines 71-72)

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Subsequent paragraph

Theme 2: The fear and the horrors.

Hangovers and overconsumption represented the downside of alcohol effects, yet were managed without disruption to drinking patterns. Talking about a recent drinking bout, Eimear described blackouts as one ill-effect of alcohol as a drug:

I don't think I did anything to embarrass myself but I do have loads of blackouts from the night– times. It's not that I was off my face, but there was so much continuous drinking that I can't remember. (Lines 92-93)

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Discussion

Recap the findings (themes)

Avoid introducing new findings (and any quotes) in the discussion.

Make sure you discuss each theme in relation to the literature.

Don't discuss things in the transcript that you have not covered in the results section. If it's important, it should be presented in the Findings.

Any limitations of the study?

Include a conclusion – take home message, potential applications/implications/directions for future research

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