

Thematic Analysis: Exercise

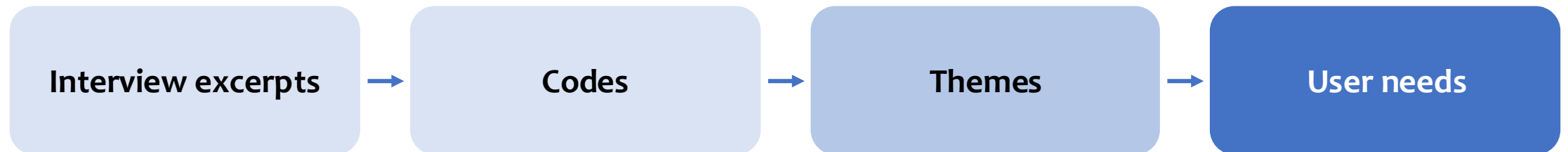
HCI Fundamentals

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Goals

- Practice (some of) the phases of **thematic analysis** on (simulated) needfinding data
- Move from raw interview excerpts to codes, themes, and **evidence-based user needs**
- Reflect on your **role** in the analysis: different groups, different (legitimate) analyses



Recap: Thematic Analysis

“A method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

1 Familiarizing yourself with your data

Reading and re-reading, noting down initial ideas

2 Generating initial codes

Coding interesting features systematically across the entire data set

3 Searching for themes

Collating codes into potential themes

4 Reviewing themes

Checking themes against the coded extracts and the entire data set

5 Defining and naming themes

Refining each theme, with clear definitions and names

6 Producing the report

Telling a convincing story of the data

Today: Phases 1–3 in groups, then **from themes to user needs**, and a shared discussion

Plan for Today (3 phases, ~75 minutes)

0:00	Phase 1 · Familiarize yourself with the data	 10 min
0:10	Phase 2 · Generate initial codes	 20 min
0:30	Phase 3 · Search for themes	 20 min
0:50	From themes to user needs	 10 min
1:00	Share and discuss	 15 min

Work **in groups**. You need: the excerpts (next slides), and something to keep your code list and draw your thematic map (paper, a shared document, etc.)

The Study: Cooking at Home

Research Question

How do young adults living away from their family plan, shop for, and cook their everyday meals?

ID	Participant
P1	23, bachelor's student, shares a flat with two roommates
P2	27, junior engineer, works full-time, lives alone
P3	31, PhD student, lives with a partner
P4	25, working student (part-time job and master's degree), lives alone, tight budget
P5	29, designer, lives alone, recently moved from another city

Data set: 15 fictional excerpts from 5 semi-structured interviews, transcribed verbatim

Data: P1

23, bachelor's student, shares a flat with two roommates

ID	Extract
P1.1	“Honestly the hardest part is not cooking, it’s deciding. I open the fridge at eight in the evening, I’m tired, I look at the stuff and... nothing. I can’t come up with an idea, so I end up making pasta again. Like, four times a week pasta.”
P1.2	“We share the fridge, so half of the time I don’t even know if the eggs are mine or Marco’s. Sometimes I buy something and then I find out he already bought it. Or the opposite, I count on the milk and it’s gone.”
P1.3	“When my roommates and I cook together on Sundays it’s actually fun, we try new things. Alone, I don’t really see the point of making an effort just for me.”

Data: P2

27, junior engineer, works full-time, lives alone

ID	Extract
P2.1	“During the week I get home at seven, seven thirty, and I have zero energy. If a recipe says forty minutes I just close it. I need something ready in fifteen, otherwise I order food, and then I feel bad because it’s expensive and not healthy.”
P2.2	“I tried meal prepping on Sundays, you know, cooking everything for the week. It worked for like two weeks. Then by Wednesday I was sick of eating the same rice and chicken, and I threw half of it away.”
P2.3	“I look up recipes online but it’s a nightmare, you scroll through the life story of the author and ten ads before you get to the ingredients. And then there’s always one ingredient I don’t have.”

Data: P3

31, PhD student, lives with a partner

ID	Extract
P3.1	“I love cooking, it’s my way of relaxing after a day at the lab. I don’t follow recipes much, I improvise with what’s there. For me the problem isn’t cooking, it’s the shopping: I never have the right things at home.”
P3.2	“I do the shopping in a rush, on the way back, without a list. So I buy what looks good, and then at home I realize I already had two packs of spinach going bad in the drawer. It makes me feel guilty, really, throwing food away.”
P3.3	“My partner and I have different schedules, so we rarely eat at the same time. We keep saying we should plan the week together, but we never actually sit down and do it.”

Data: P4

25, working student (part-time job and master's degree), lives alone, tight budget

ID	Extract
P4.1	“Money is the main thing for me. I check the offers at the supermarket and I plan around what’s discounted. But then I have, like, a kilo of discounted courgettes and I have no idea what to do with them.”
P4.2	“Leftovers are my enemy. Recipes are always for four, so I halve them, and then the second portion sits there for days. Sometimes I forget it completely until it’s too late.”
P4.3	“I’d like to eat better, more vegetables, less frozen stuff. I know what I should do, it’s more that in the moment the frozen pizza is just easier.”

Data: P5

29, designer, lives alone, recently moved from another city

ID	Extract
P5.1	“When I moved here I basically didn’t know how to cook. My mum always cooked. The first months I lived on sandwiches. Then I started with videos, the short ones, because I can follow them step by step.”
P5.2	“I don’t trust myself much. If a recipe says “season to taste” or “cook until done”, I panic. How long is “until done”? I need exact quantities and times, otherwise I’m afraid of ruining everything.”
P5.3	“What motivates me is inviting friends over. When someone is coming I plan, I shop properly, I try something new. When it’s just me, it’s always the same three dishes.”

Step 1: Familiarize Yourself With the Data

10 min

1

2

3

4

5

6

- **Individually**, read all the excerpts once, from P1 to P5
- Read them **again**, in an active way
 - What is interesting? What surprises you? What recurs?
- Jot down **initial ideas** (in the margin, or on a sheet)
- Do not code yet, and do not jump to solutions!
- **As a group**, share your first impressions (last 2-3 minutes)

Output

Individual notes with initial ideas about the data

Step 2: Generate Initial Codes

20 min

1

2

3

4

5

6

- Work **systematically** through all the 15 extracts, giving **equal attention** to each one
- A **code** is a short label for a feature of the data that looks interesting (semantic or latent)
 - Stay close to the data: codes are not themes (yet)
- Code for as **many** potential patterns as possible: an extract can have **several** codes
- Collect your codes in a shared **code list**: one row per code, with the ID of its extract(s), e.g., “P2.1”
- Do not discard what departs from the dominant story

Output

A code list: each code with the IDs of the extracts it applies to

Step 3: Search for Themes

20 min

1

2

3

4

5

6

- Go through your code list, and **group** the codes that seem to belong together
- Give each cluster a provisional name: a **candidate theme**
- Look for relationships: can some clusters be **sub-themes** of a bigger one?
- Codes that do not fit anywhere? A “**miscellaneous**” pile, for now
- Draw a first **thematic map**: themes, sub-themes, and codes
- Do not abandon anything yet!

Output

An initial thematic map with candidate themes and sub-themes

From Themes to User Needs

10 min

- For each theme, formulate **1-2 user needs**
- Needs are **verbs**, not nouns: what people need to accomplish, without prescribing a solution
 - “Users need a way to...”, “Users need to be able to...”
- Link each need to its theme and extracts: needs must be **evidence-based**



“Users need an app that suggests recipes”
a solution



“Users need recipes”
a solution



“Users need a way to use up ingredients before they go bad”
a need, linked to theme 1 (P3.2, P4.1, P4.2)

Share and Discuss

15 min

- Let's discuss
 - Did different groups identify the same themes? Why (not)?
 - Which extracts were the hardest to code or place?
 - Is your most frequent theme also the most important for the research question?
 - Which needs are best supported by the data?
- Share a photo of your final map and needs in the **Telegram group!**
 - “*In-class exercises*” topic

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