Worked example of Thematic Analysis (TA).

*Throughout this document you will see a worked example of a thematic analysis of an interview where the **aim of the research was to explore how the participant views the relationship they have with their parents and with their friends.** This is an example only and the themes drawn from it are relevant to this aim. Please do NOT use this data or any of the codes or themes generated from this in your own assignment. They will not be relevant. You must conduct your OWN analysis of the **data sets provided for the assessment**. The data sets and research questions are different to those used here.*

Follow these steps to analyse your data set:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data: This phase involves you reading and re-reading the transcript to become immersed and familiar with its content. You may read through the transcript several times without making any notes.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes- Coding: This phase involves generating succinct labels (called codes) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering your research question(s).

Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning. There are different ways to code and the method will be determined by your perspective and research question(s).

1. Read through the transcript in a systematic fashion and put notes down each of the sides line by line. Identify anything relevant to the topic or aims.

   1st order coding- Try to use specific words or phrases which **_describe_** what is being said in the text by the person being interviewed (the interviewee). These are your 'codes'. Avoid making interpretations at this stage. *Note: you do not need to analyse what the interviewer says in TA.*

   Codes can represent a chunk of text or a specific section/sentence. Highlight this as you go along. You can revise and change the codes later if you want. Try to be inclusive at this stage.

   Put codes in one of the margins. Highlight in the text where the words are, but try to describe using different words to what is given in the text.

   See the example of how your transcript may start to look as you annotate it.

   Notice that most of the text is analysed and highlighted. Read through the transcript a few times to see if you can generate more codes.

Transcript	Codes
I Let's start by thinking about this idea, about whether or not it is possible for parents and children to be friend (.). What is your view about that?	
P Well, it's a difficult one. From my perspective I think it's probably different for different people and it also depends on time.	Unique temporal
I What do you mean when you say it 'depends on time'?	
P Well, when your children are small it is difficult to be friends. There are other things that are more important. Your children need you to be an anchor they can rely on. A kind of, safe port, that they can come home to from the world. It can be tough out there. Kids can be mean to one another and unkind and a parent needs to be that safe place for their children. You have to be, inv…..well not invincible per se…but like that… kind of…strong and able to protect them from all that. Do you know what I mean?	Difficult when young More important things when young Parents need to be safe, reliable Parents need to be safe, reliable Parents protect
I Yes, I think I do know what you mean. Tell me how that relates to our conversation about friendship. What is the connection?	
P Well, we often see, or I do at least, see friends as equals. They are my peers. They have similar troubles and joys, high points and tough times. They support me and I support them, but I can't fix it for them. When your children are small they need to know you can fix it for them when things go wrong. For me, its part of parenting. When they are very little you fix it, as they grow you show them how you are fixing it and gradually get them involved. Then you get them to try fixing it and you support them as they do it. As they get more confident and capable at fixing their own problems and overcoming their own struggles, they need you less as a support. You kind of become more of a sounding board. Someone they can go to, to talk it out, if you know what I mean	Friends are equals Similar experiences Friends support not fix Parents fix things Parents fix things Parents teach Parents support Relationships change with experience Parents sounding board

You need to list all of the codes you have found. Before you move on, look at your codes and consider:

- **Are any duplicated?** Have you got more than one descriptive code that is called something very similar? Look at the text you have highlighted as relevant to that code and see if you can come up with a name that fits both examples. If so merge the codes with the new name.

- **Are they too broad?** Have you got any descriptive codes that have a lot of text in them? Read through the text again and check that you have not been too broad in your coding. Are there differences that mean that some of the text could actually be another code? If so create a new code for that text.

- **Are they too interpretive?** Have you made an interpretation about what the participant is saying (rather than a description of what they are saying) and used that to group highlighted material? Read through the text again and make sure that the name you give to the code describes the participants' views, experiences or perceptions about the topic (not what you think that implies).

Unique	Review & tidy descriptive /1st order codes
temporal	1. Duplication ?
Difficult when young	1. Too broad?
More important things when young	1. Too interpretive
Parents need to be safe, reliable	
Parents need to be safe, reliable	
Parents protect	
Friends are equals	
Similar experiences	Friends have similar experiences
Friends support not fix	
Parents fix things	
Parents fix things	
Parents teach	
Parents support	
Relationships change with experience	
Parents sounding board	Parents are a sounding board
Point in time when it changes	
Parents can become friends	
Temporal	
Independence	Independence is a catalyst for friendship
Funny stories	
Sharing stories	
Laughing together	
Qualities that they love	
Equal	Friends are equal
Like other friendships	
Same activities as other friends	
Boundaries of friendship are different when you are a parent	
Some things you can't talk about	
Some subjects make it awkward	Can I make one code for both these bits of text?
Talking about intimacy is off limits with parent friendships	
Talking about intimacy is ok with close friends	
Talking about intimacy is off limits with parent friendships	

2. Now you are ready to start 2nd order coding. Read through the transcript again, paying attention to your first level codes. As you go, make notes in the other margin, these are your second level codes. 2nd level codes usually involve some ***interpretation.***

Think- what do the descriptions you have identified in the text tell you about the topic you are investigating? You need to:

- Create codes that include some interpretation about what the descriptive codes are showing.
- Look at the descriptive codes to see if any of them have a common relationship or meaning. Do they 'go together' in some meaningful way?
- As you create a grouping write some brief comments about what the grouping is showing about the topic or the aims. This is an ***interpretation.***
- Avoid bringing in theory here, though!

- Create a label for your grouping that represents the codes in it. This is an *interpretive code.*
- Note: some descriptive codes names may be relevant to **more than one** interpretive grouping. Put the descriptive codes in as many groupings as they have relevance to.
- As you keep adding descriptive codes to your interpretive groupings you may find that you want to change or re-define the name.
- Or you may find that you want to **break up a grouping** into two separate groups or that you want to **merge two groups**.

The overall idea at this stage is to group similar descriptive/ 1st order codes together into interpretative groupings.

On the next page is a very **simplistic interpretation** of the data and the labels assigned (similarities, differences etc) don't interpret anything and so are not particularly meaningful. If you use phrases or short sentences it gives greater meaning.

Make a table of each grouping:
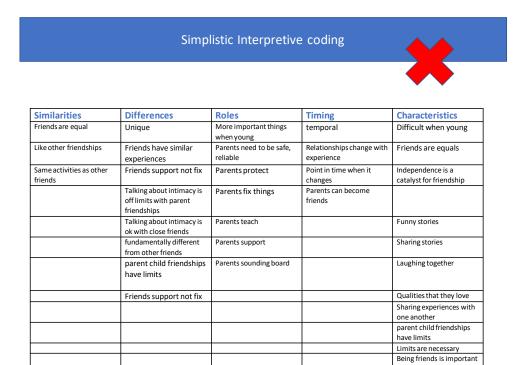
List of descriptive /1st order codes

Unique
temporal
Difficult when young
More important things when young
Parents need to be safe, reliable
Parents need to be safe, reliable
Parents protect
Friends are equals
Similar experiences
Friends support not fix
Parents fix things
Parents fix things
Parents teach
Parents support
Relationships change with experience
Parents sounding board
Point in time when it changes
Parents can become friends
Temporal
Independence
Funny stories
Sharing stories
Laughing together
Qualities that they love
Equal
Like other friendships
Same activities as other friends
Boundaries of friendship are different when you are a parent
Some things you can't talk about
Some subjects make it awkward

Simple Interpretation

Similarities	Differences	Roles	Timing	Characteristics

This is an example of very simplistic coding. Try to avoid this:

Simplistic Interpretive coding ❌

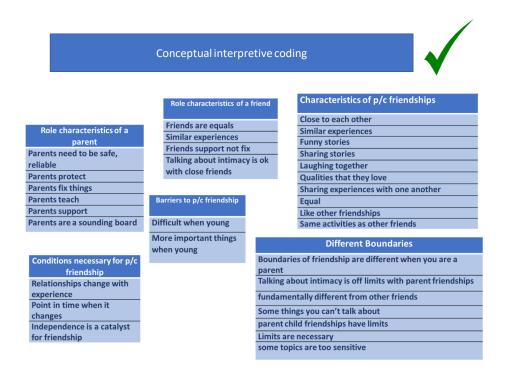| Similarities	Differences	Roles	Timing	Characteristics
Friends are equal	Unique	More important things when young	temporal	Difficult when young
Like other friendships	Friends have similar experiences	Parents need to be safe, reliable	Relationships change with experience	Friends are equals
Same activities as other friends	Friends support not fix	Parents protect	Point in time when it changes	Independence is a catalyst for friendship
	Talking about intimacy is off limits with parent friendships	Parents fix things	Parents can become friends	
	Talking about intimacy is ok with close friends	Parents teach		Funny stories
	fundamentally different from other friends	Parents support		Sharing stories
	parent child friendships have limits	Parents sounding board		Laughing together
	Friends support not fix			Qualities that they love
				Sharing experiences with one another
				parent child friendships have limits
				Limits are necessary
				Being friends is important to both

Activity: This is an example of a more in-depth interpretation. Compare it to the simplistic version. Can you suggest how it is different?

Conceptual interpretive coding ✔️

Role characteristics of a parent
Parents need to be safe, reliable
Parents protect
Parents fix things
Parents teach
Parents support
Parents are a sounding board

Conditions necessary for p/c friendship
Relationships change with experience
Point in time when it changes
Independence is a catalyst for friendship

Role characteristics of a friend
Friends are equals
Similar experiences
Friends support not fix
Talking about intimacy is ok with close friends

Barriers to p/c friendship
Difficult when young
More important things when young

Characteristics of p/c friendships
Close to each other
Similar experiences
Funny stories
Sharing stories
Laughing together
Qualities that they love
Sharing experiences with one another
Equal
Like other friendships
Same activities as other friends

Different Boundaries
Boundaries of friendship are different when you are a parent
Talking about intimacy is off limits with parent friendships
fundamentally different from other friends
Some things you can't talk about
parent child friendships have limits
Limits are necessary
some topics are too sensitive

Answers:

- You might have noticed that the 2nd order coding labels for the in-depth version use phrases and short sentences, rather than the one word used in the simplistic coding.
- These phrases give greater interpretation and meaning to the groupings, for example, a simplistic code is *similarities*, but this does not tell us what the *similarities* are about…
- A more detailed interpretation of *similarities* is *characteristics of parent and child relationships*. This has combined the grouping *similarities* and taken some first order codes from other groupings that fit with the new label. This is a more interpretative grouping.
- The in-depth version has re-organised the *characteristics* and the *role* groups into the more specific *role characteristics of a friend* and *role characteristics of a parent* groupings. This has created more meaningful groupings that can be focussed towards addressing the research question.

Before you move on to the next stage (stage 3, searching for themes), look at your codes and consider:

- **Are any duplicated?** Have you got more than one interpretive code that is called something very similar? Look at the text you have highlighted as relevant to that code and see if you can come up with a name that fits both examples. If so merge the codes with the new name.
- **Are they too broad?** Have you got any interpretive codes that have a lot of text in them? Read through the text again and check that you have not been too broad in your coding. Are there differences that mean that some of the text could actually be another code? If so create a new code for that text.
- **Are they too theoretical?** Have you unwittingly brought theory into your interpretation? Bringing theoretical concepts into the analysis too early can limit your ability to think widely and broadly about possible interpretations. Think again about the name you have given the code and leave theory out for now.

Recap: Before you move onto stage 3 you should have completed all of the stages above. Remember you may have to repeat the process several times before you are happy that the codes you have represent the data. This is good practise in qualitative analysis. You may even revisit it on different days.

You also need to ensure that all of the 1st order/descriptive codes you identified are grouped into **one group** only and that the label given for the 2nd order/interpretive code represents the codes within that group.

It might look something like this:

Conceptual interpretive coding ✔

Role characteristics of a parent
- Parents need to be safe, reliable
- Parents protect
- Parents fix things
- Parents teach
- Parents support
- Parents are a sounding board

Role characteristics of a friend
- Friends are equals
- Similar experiences
- Friends support not fix
- Talking about intimacy is ok with close friends

Characteristics of p/c friendships
- Close to each other
- Similar experiences
- Funny stories
- Sharing stories
- Laughing together
- Qualities that they love
- Sharing experiences with one another
- Equal
- Like other friendships
- Same activities as other friends

Barriers to p/c friendship
- Difficult when young
- More important things when young

Conditions necessary for p/c friendship
- Relationships change with experience
- Point in time when it changes
- Independence is a catalyst for friendship

Different Boundaries
- Boundaries of friendship are different when you are a parent
- Talking about intimacy is off limits with parent friendships
- fundamentally different from other friends
- Some things you can't talk about
- parent child friendships have limits
- Limits are necessary
- some topics are too sensitive

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