

Design Research & Synthesis: Class 9

Managing Data & Defining Themes

Tuesday, October 4, 2011

We've talked a little bit about Analysis:

1. organizing & sorting (affinity diagramming)
2. information architecture
3. transcripts & work modeling

Now that we understand that, let's talk about Synthesis.

What is Synthesis, as it applies to us and our research?

Synthesis:

1. An abductive sensemaking process of manipulating, organizing, pruning and framing data in an effort to gain practical empathy by producing information, knowledge and description.
2. Using this information, knowledge and description to make your insights into something that is easily communicable to the rest of the design team and the stakeholders.

ultimately, the first part is supposed to be invisible to the audience for the second part (client & stakeholders).

it's a messy process, and is often referred to as "the muddy middle" of the design process. this part is going to happen so that, in the end, you come out with a clear, concise and visionary story to share that will allow them to draw the same conclusions you have without going through the cognitive stress that you went through to get there.

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deductive

inductive

abductive

Jon is a Designer.
All Designers are Mortal.
Therefore, Jon is Mortal.

deductive

The output is
guaranteed to be
true, if the premise
is true.

inductive

abductive

All of the designers I've seen wear black t-shirts.

Therefore, the next designer I will see will be wearing a black t-shirt.

deductive

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Gives good evidence that a conclusion is true.

deductive

inductive

abductive

When a designer works on a project, they often draw diagrams of things.

I've drawn a diagram of something and it helped me learn. I'm not a designer, though.

I can abduct that designers draw diagrams to help them learn.

The argument from best explanation, depending on circumstances and experience

In Synthesis, we will derive as much from our research as possible...

And for the gaps, and when we need to conceptualize relationships and insights, we use abductive logic.

“Synthesis methods are the ways in which ethnographic insights are mapped to new, innovative, appropriate, or compelling ideas.

These principles and methods are teachable, repeatable, and understandable. They are creative activities that actively generate intellectual value and that are unique to the discipline of design.”

-Jon Kolko, Methods of Synthesis

We will only embark on initial synthesis in this class.

We are going to synthesize our organized data into insight themes.

Defining Themes

- babies wrapped up in 90 degree weather
- perfume to teach about germs
- people attribute AIDS death to juju bc people “don’t look sick” when they die

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seeing is believing

There is a literal & visceral connection between how people observe the world around them and how they perceive things - even those that are conceptual or intangible.

Defining Themes

the anatomy of a good insight.

-inspirational

-evocative

-holistic

(let's channel Mr. Geertz here)

So, how do we get there from our data?

... by normalizing!!

Defining Themes

1. Enter & sort data

Your data has to be neat and orderly before you can organize it.

- organize data points
- label per codes
- make things traceable

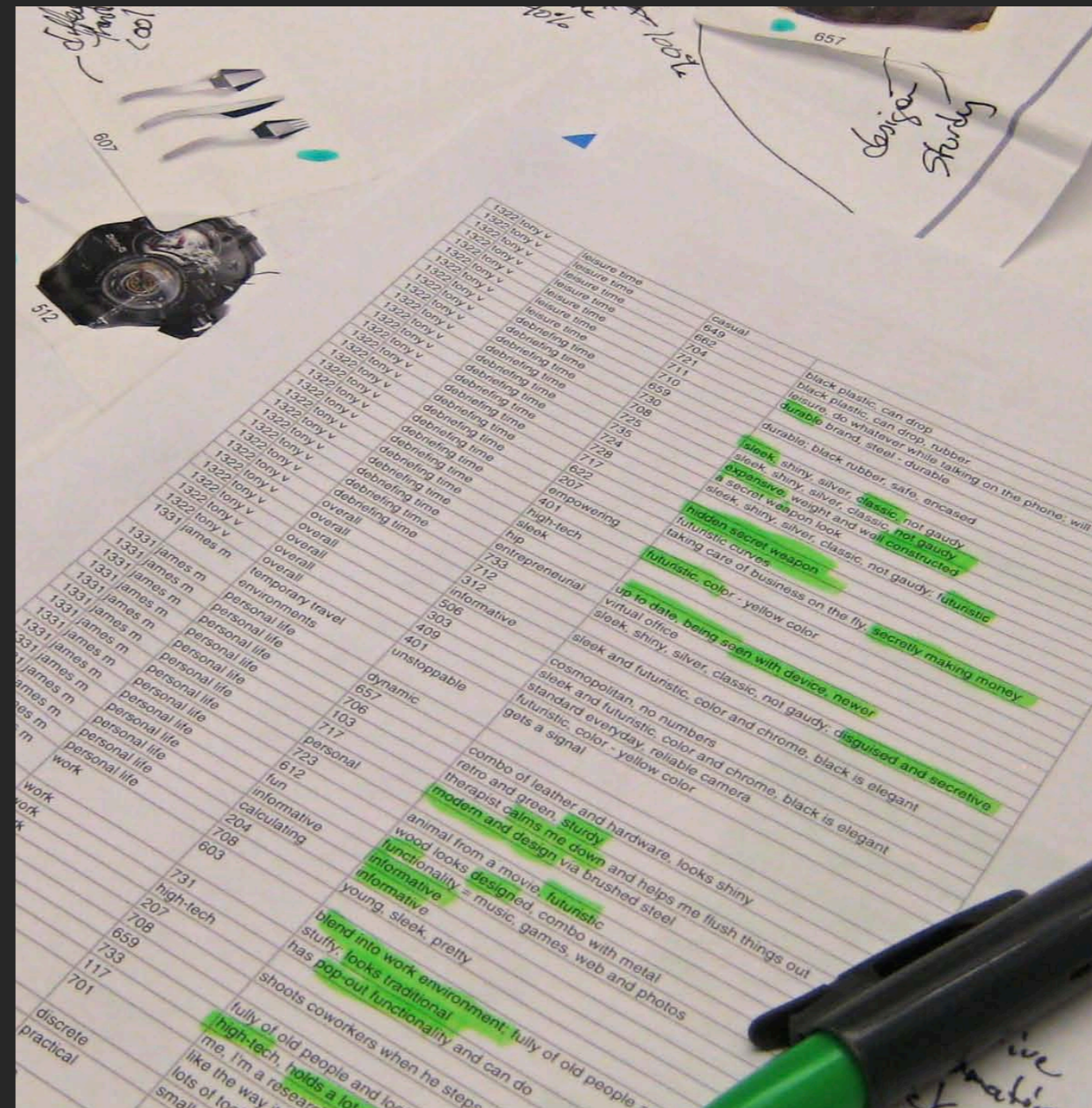


- voice of the customer is important
- lives forever
- good way to tie ideas (concepts) back to voice of the customer
- not based on opinions
- each individual idea is a separate point of data
- why we <3 xls - visually explore data, sort in different ways (by demographic, region, theme, etc) - more versatile than post-its

2. Normalize Data

Find commonalities and patterns across the data.

- consolidate patterns
- quantify patterns
- define patterns
- make patterns credible



Coding similar responses the same way to help identify patterns

-one person talks about not wanting their phone to break when it drops, the other talks about worrying about it getting scratched - both are concerned ab. Durability - code: durable

Defining Themes: Activity

1. Make groups of like ideas
2. Give each group a simple title
3. Write a description for each group (try to summarize the notes, write in the language of the consumer by using their words when possible)

After your Participatory Interviews:

1. Take all of your notes and put them into the XLS sheet
2. Organize all data points, tag and begin to indicate themes/tags
3. Revisit your Contextual Inquiry work models. Migrate each insight, breakdown, design idea and other data point of note into the XLS sheet (you may need to revisit your transcripts, or also your video).
4. Do an externalization exercise (affinity diagramming works great) to start defining patterns or commonalities across all of your research.