



IMPROVE LIVES

## Not Just Practice: How University Students Cope with Interview Anxiety

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### INTRODUCTION

- Interview anxiety refers to “feelings of nervousness or apprehension” (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004; p. 616) that only emerge in a job interview context
- Coping is a cognitive and/or behavioural response to manage or reduce anxiety
- Previous quantitative studies on coping with job interview anxiety looked at gender differences in coping (Feiler & Powell, 2013, Feeney, McCarthy, & Goffin, 2015), the efficacy of problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping strategies (Feeney et al., 2015), and used social anxiety coping methods as interventions to reduce interview anxiety (Feiler & Powell, 2016)
- Questions remained about patterns of coping over time (e.g., what about *after* the interview?), and if coping occurs consistently whenever anxiety does

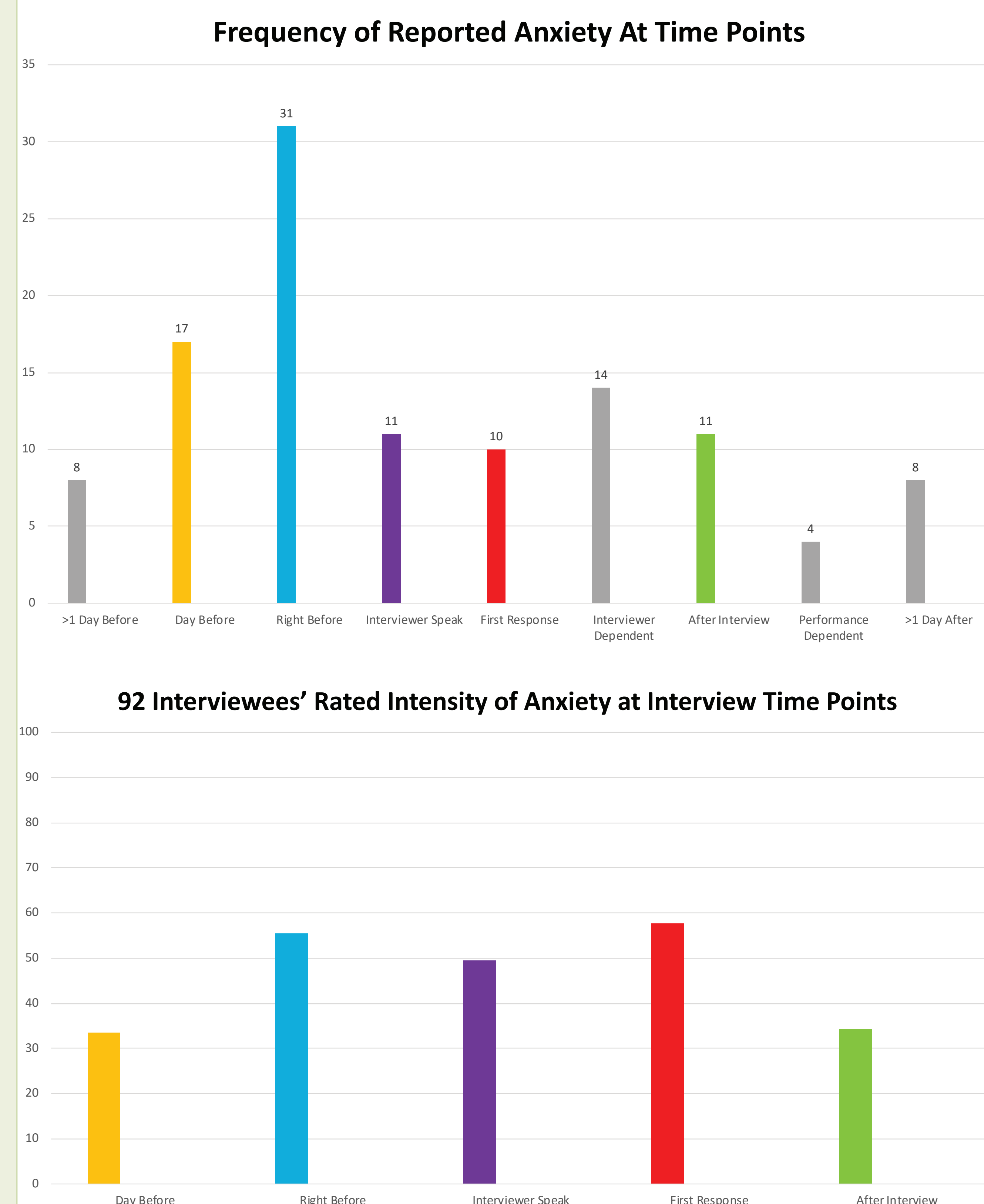
### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. When do students experience interview anxiety?
2. How do students cope with interview anxiety?

### METHODS

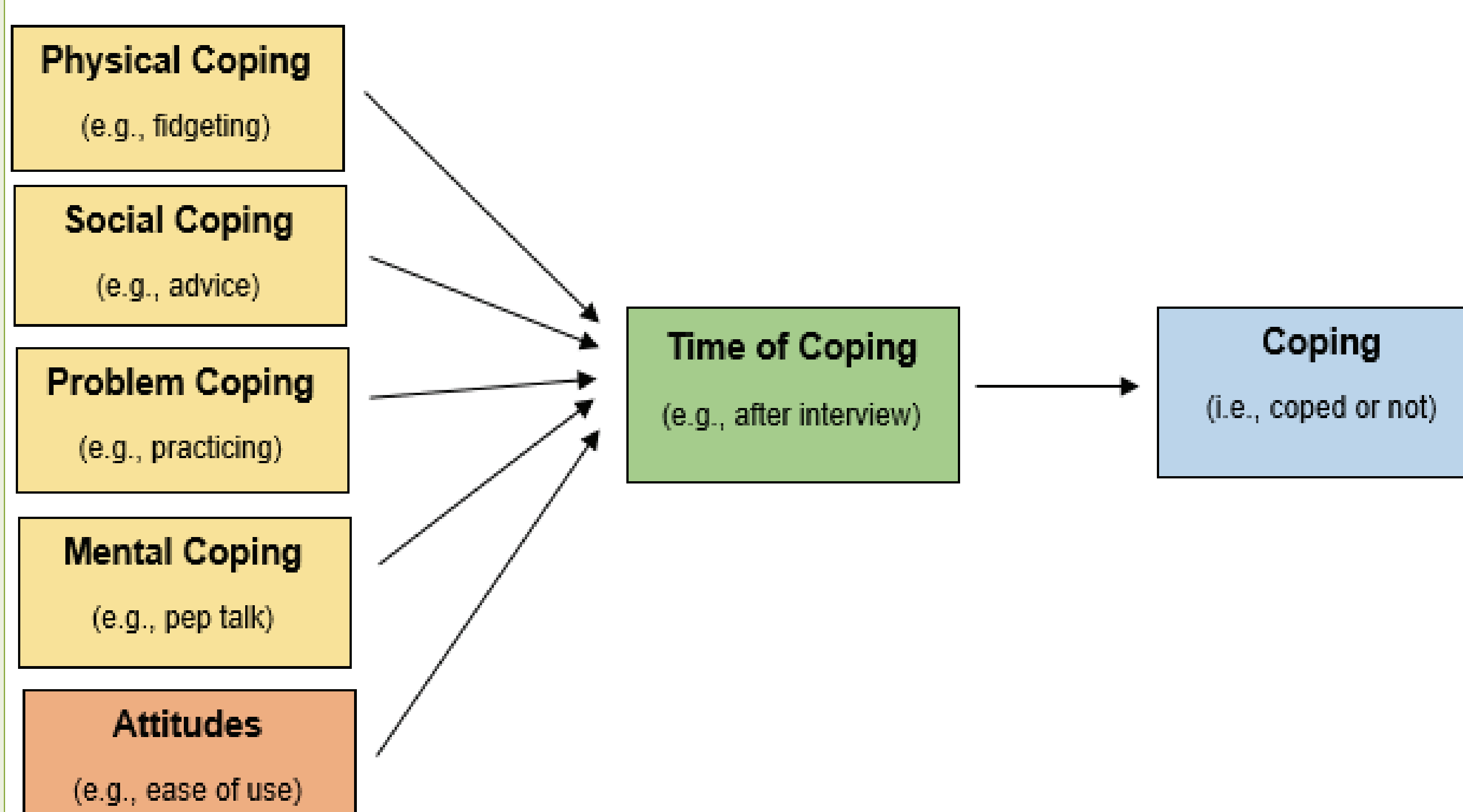
- Qualitative content and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- 10 semi-structured interview focus groups conducted in March 2019, each lasting 1 hour with 2-5 participants
- Total sample: 33 undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Guelph
- Three questions analyzed from focus groups:
  1. Would these feelings or thoughts [of anxiety] you mentioned change as you are in the middle of the interview? What about after the interview?
  2. Some of you have mentioned you feel anxious. Could you describe this anxiety more? When would you say you start feeling anxious, and when does the anxiety stop?
  3. When you feel anxious about interviews, how do you cope with it? When do you cope with it?
- Content analysis of first two questions to answer RQ1; thematic analysis of last question to answer RQ2

### RESULTS: CONTENT ANALYSIS



### RESULTS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

52 initial codes → 33 refined codes → 2 encompassing themes, 5 themes



For textual data, please see handouts provided by Irene

### CONCLUSIONS

- Content analysis offered more nuance than previous descriptive statistics, notably:
  - Anxiety during interview can be *dependent on* interviewees' rapport with the interviewer
  - Anxiety after interview can be *dependent on* interviewees' perceived performance
- Participants most frequently reported feelings of anxiety **right before the interview and day before**, but also were anxious **during the interview** depending on how they did
- Anxiety can persist into the actual interview with similar intensity
- Coping, or a lack thereof, is typically linked to time points in the broader interview process
- Preferred coping strategies differ by time in interview (i.e., spanning from night before to after the interview)
  - Participants were most likely to use **problem coping before, social and mental coping at all time points, and physical coping during the interview**
  - Participants expressed **attitudes** about difficulty of coping in a subtle manner during the interview

### REFERENCES

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT

Thank you to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this project through a grant to Dr. Deborah Powell and Dr. Silvia Bonaccio, and to Kevin Truong for his transcription help.

To learn more about interview anxiety research, you can find the Guelph Selection Lab on Twitter (@InterviewGuelph) and on our University of Guelph website.

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