Analysing Interview Data (2)

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Aims of the week 3 and 4 sessions

- To reflect on the nature and purpose of interviews, etc. as a form of qualitative data
- To introduce different processes, techniques and theories for analysing and synthesising data
- To explore different techniques for analysing and coding data

Week 4

- Different approaches to analysing interview data in practice
  - Deductive analysis
  - Inductive analysis
- Overview of assessing and validating interview data analysis
- Review of tools to support analysis

Getting started

- Starting to analyse data early in the research
  - All is data – don't have to wait for interview data!
  - Complementary sources of data: newspaper articles, blogs, official records, archival data, etc.
  - Other people's data, e.g., Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) www.esds.ac.uk, see ESDS Qualidata
  - As soon as interview data is collected

Starting to analyse early may:

- Suggest new questions
- Suggest what to focus on during the interviews
- Give an indication of relevant and non-relevant issues

Assessing interview data and quality of analyses

1. Representative
2. Weighting evidence
3. Checking outliners
4. Use of extreme cases
5. Cross-check codes
6. Check explanations
7. Look for contradictions
8. Gain feedback from participants

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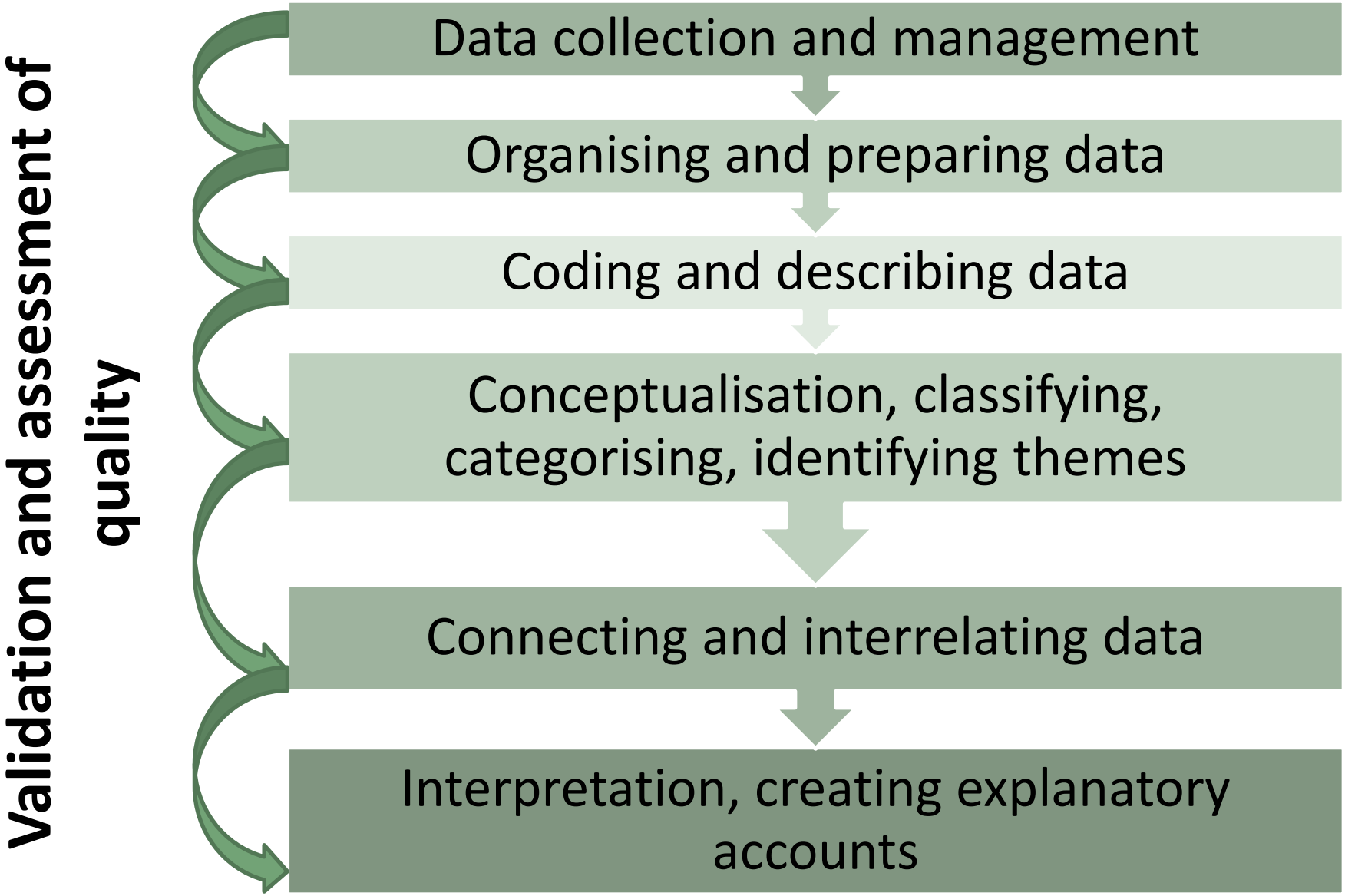
Validating qualitative analysis



Problems with analysing interview data

- Reliance on first impressions
- Identifying what is relevant
- Tendency to ignore conflicting information
- Emphasis on data that confirms
- Ignoring the unusual or information hard to gain
- Over or under reaction to new data
- Too much data to handle
- Not giving enough time to reflect

Review of terms

Code = a label, tag, name for a piece of text

Theme = a pattern, a group of data or something that emerges from data

Category = term used in grounded analysis for a theme; categories are defined/explained by their **properties**

Inductive = little or no predetermined theory, structure or framework

Deductive = use of structure, theory or predetermined framework

Thematic = identification, analysis and reporting of patterns

Use of software packages

It does not do the analysis for you!

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Use of software packages

Advantages

- Beneficial to analytic approach
- Coding, memos, annotation, data linking all supported
- Efficient search and retrieval
- Able to handle large amounts of data
- Forces detailed analysis

Disadvantages

- Software can dictate how analysis is carried out
- Takes time to learn
- Reluctance to change codes/categories

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Alternatives to software packages

Need good organisational skills and record keeping!

- Combine Word, Access and Excel
- Coloured pens, stickers, photocoping

Deductive approaches

- Use of a structure or predetermined framework
- Researcher imposes own structure or theories on the data for the analytic process
- **Advantages** – relatively quick and easy, informed by literature, useful where probable participant responses are known
- **Disadvantages** – inflexible, possibility of biases, limits in-depth exploration of data, can limit theme and theory development

Deductive data analysis – an example project

- 2002-2008, government funded research
- Aim: to evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance and to evaluate its role in career development and progression
- Longitudinal qualitative study of 50 adults who were recipients of career guidance
- In-depth interviews conducted every year
- Tracked career trajectories

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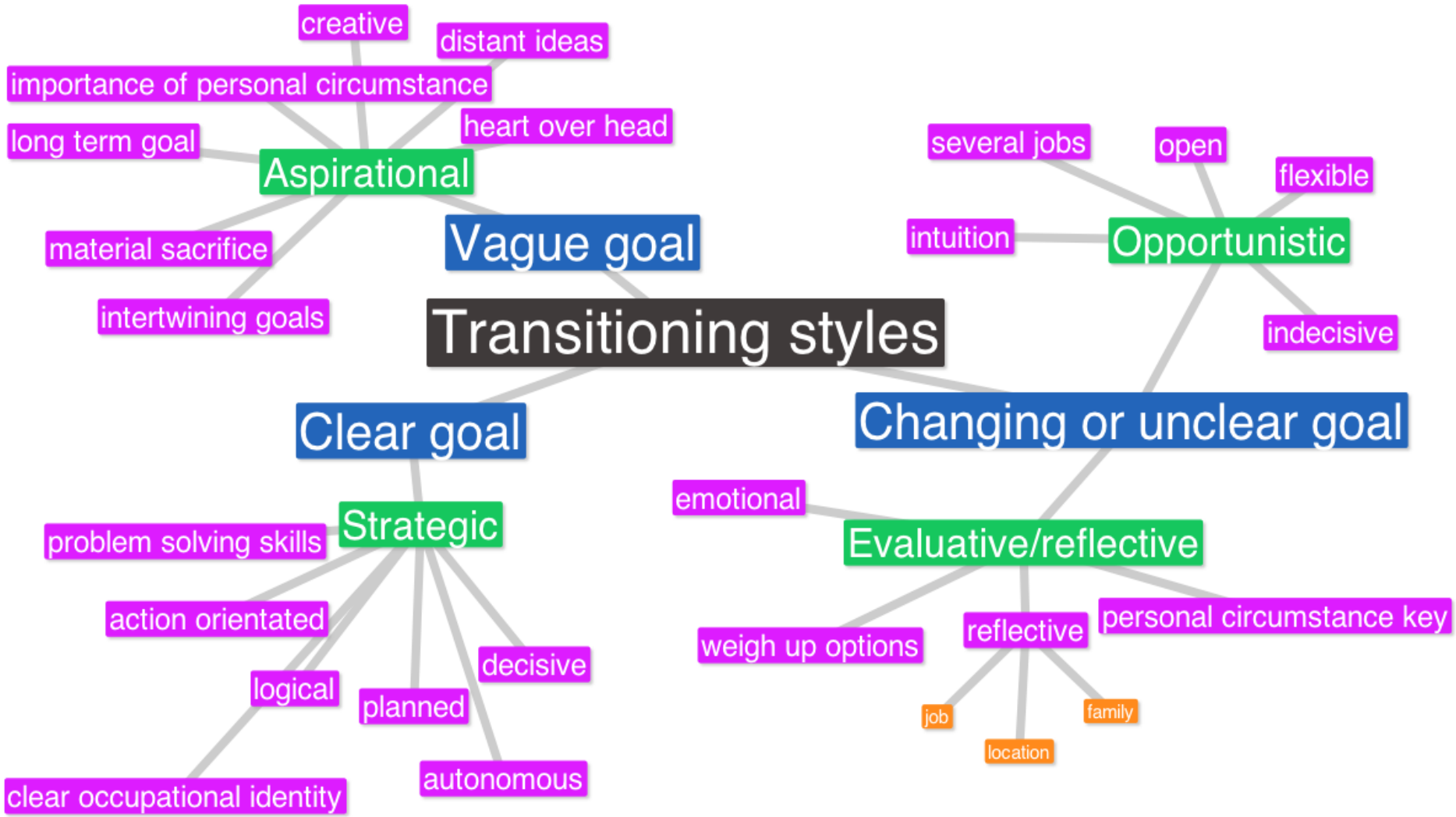
Example – career decision making

- Theme of decision making was apparent across all participants' stories
- Different transitioning styles were noted
- Analysis of longitudinal data revealed that styles were consistent over time

Example – Career decision making typology

Fourfold typology:

1. Strategic
2. Opportunistic
3. Aspirational
4. Evaluative


Transitioning styles
Vague goal
Aspirational
creative
distant ideas
importance of personal circumstance
heart over head
long term goal
material sacrifice
intertwining goals
Clear goal
Strategic
problem solving skills
action orientated
logical
planned
decisive
autonomous
clear occupational identity
Changing or unclear goal
Opportunistic
several jobs
open
flexible
intuition
indecisive
Evaluative/reflective
emotional
weigh up options
reflective
personal circumstance key
job
location
family

Example – career decision making

Strategic style

- Proactive in decisions
- Analysis of advantages and disadvantages
- Problem-solving skills
- Reflection on options
- Focus on one solution/goal
- Determined goal
- Rational
- Planned/planful
- Marginalisation of emotions

Description

- Representing a more focused career decision making style […] based on cognitive processing. Here, an individual bases their choices on a process of analysing, synthesizing, weighing up advantages and disadvantages, and setting plans to achieve goals.

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Activity 1: Deductive analysis

Aim: to use the proposed coding framework to code the interview transcript

Reflect on:

- The deductive process – easy or difficult?
- The codes and code descriptions

Grounded theory (an inductive approach to analysis)

Grounded theory

- Systematic approach to enquiry
- Simultaneous data collection and analysis
- Inductive, comparative, iterative and interactive
- Driven by data
- Process of looking for relationships within data
- Remaining open to all possibilities
- Can be influenced by pre-existing theory, previous empirical research, own expectations

GT: The constant comparative method

1. Comparing incidents
2. Integrating categories and their properties
3. Delimiting the theory
4. Writing the theory

"Although this method of generating theory is a continuously growing process – each stage after a time is transformed into the next – earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously during the analysis…"

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 105)

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How is it done in practice…

- Constantly comparing incidents
- Uses three techniques:
  - Coding
  - Memo writing
  - Theoretical sampling

Coding

- “What is this incident about?”
- “What category does this incident indicate?”
- “What property of what category does this incident define?”
- “What is the ‘main concern’ of the participants?”

Memo writing

- Aim: to store ideas for further comparisons and refinement
- Will be the main source of data in the writing-up phase
- Noting ideas as they occur
- Grammar/syntax/presentation
- Raising questions…
- Memos allow the researcher to find convergences (and divergences) in the data and to structure them into a coherent framework

Theoretical sampling

- Making decisions as to what data to collect and how
  - Within available data?
  - Beyond the initial unit of analysis?
  - To investigate opposing views
  - To replicate previous observations
  - To answer specific questions
  - To fulfil specific categories
  - To extend emergent theories

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Theoretical saturation

- Suggests the end of the process
- When further analyses make no, or only marginal improvements to the theory

Writing-up the theory

- Memos will contain the material for the writing up
- There is no need to ‘think-up’ or try to remember the content as it has been already written by the researcher (Glaser, 1998)
- The outline of the thesis will be naturally defined by the categories and how they are related

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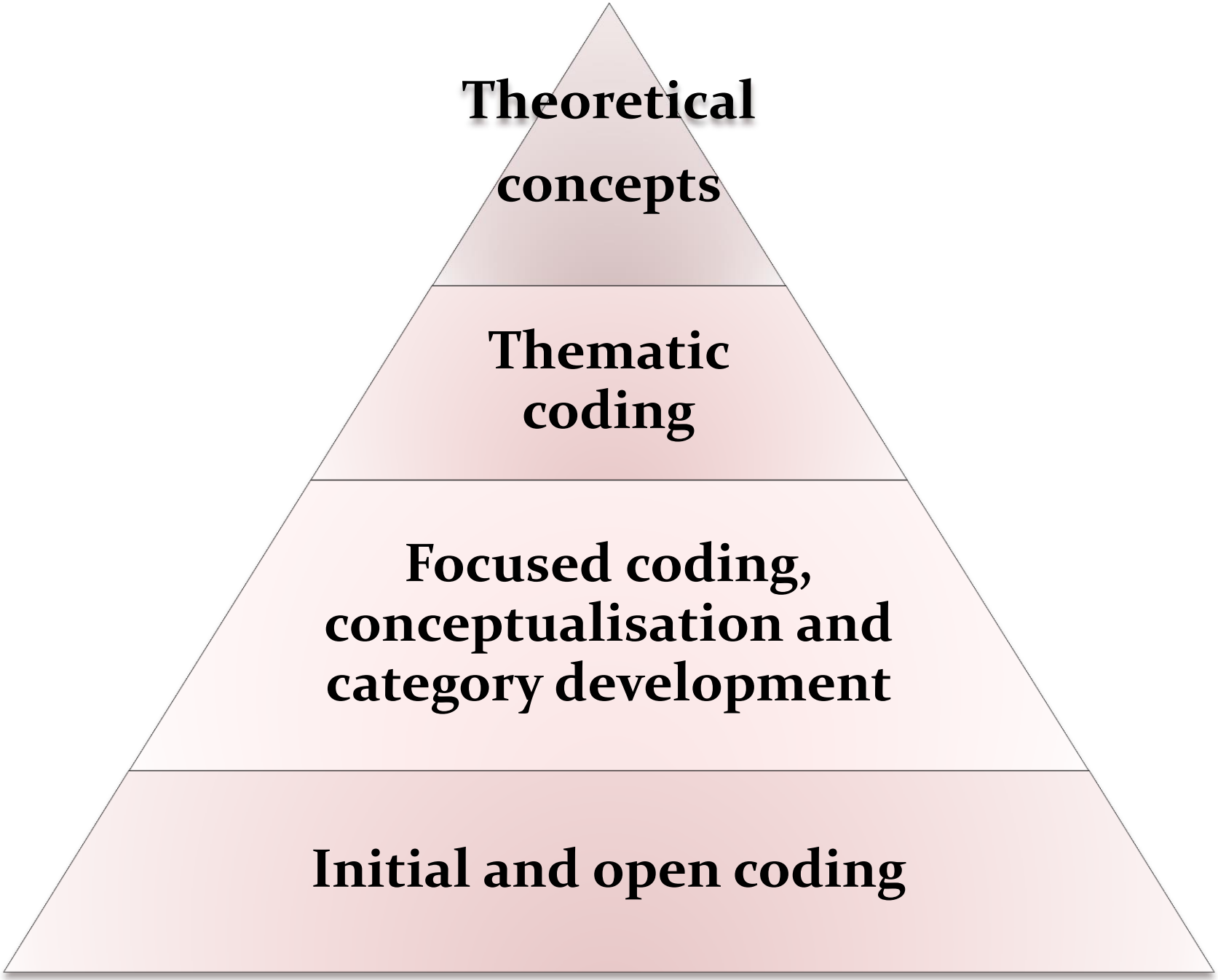
The role of examples and verbatim quotes

- Too many quotes may make the writing-up more difficult to read as they affect the 'flow' of the argument.
- However, quotes may be useful to provide a more vivid picture of what is going on.
- A risk with using quotes is that they make reference to specific rather than conceptual entities, thus it is important to use them in moderation.

In terms of supply side, there is evidence to suggest that there is not a shortage of workers (both paid and unpaid) who want to work in this way. It was suggested that for people engaged in this form of work "it's often not a desperate need, it's a desire for a breadth of experience, variety, almost to prove yourself" (Representative, Slivers of Time). For instance, one retired worker expressed a desire to do something else or new, so for her engaging in this form of work provided a variety of opportunities. Although she was keen to try out new work experiences, she still wanted to be selective about which jobs she would accept:

> *"Before I retired I was in my last job for 15 years, so I am very keen to all varieties of work. The Slivers of Time work is a complete change as I've always been in administration or finance. I've been offered survey work, but it's not me […] not what I want to do. I wouldn't want to be working in a restaurant or behind a shop counter."* (Kate)


Theoretical concepts
Thematic coding
Focused coding, conceptualisation and category development
Initial and open coding

Activity 2: Inductive analysis

- Aim: to undertake line-by-line coding, start memos and draw out clusters
- Make notes on what you are finding, your ideas, assumptions – these are your memos

Reflections on the process…

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