Qualitative Coding Analysis

A primer from a quantitative researcher

Terminology: **Code**

- A **code** in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. (Saldaña, 2013)

- Word/phrase which represents a single ideal
  - Time
  - Money
  - Work obligation
  - Family obligation

Terminology: **Category**

- Qualitative **codes** are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity – a pattern – they actively facilitate the development of **categories** and thus analysis of their connections. (Saldaña, 2013)
- Word/phrase to describe a group of codes:
  - Environmental pressure: (Time and money)
  - Competing demands: (Work obligations and family obligations)

Terminology: Theme

- A **theme** is an *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded. (Saldaña, 2013)
- Word/phrase to describe a broader, overarching idea:
  - Barriers to Achieving Learning Goals: (Environmental pressure and Competing demands)
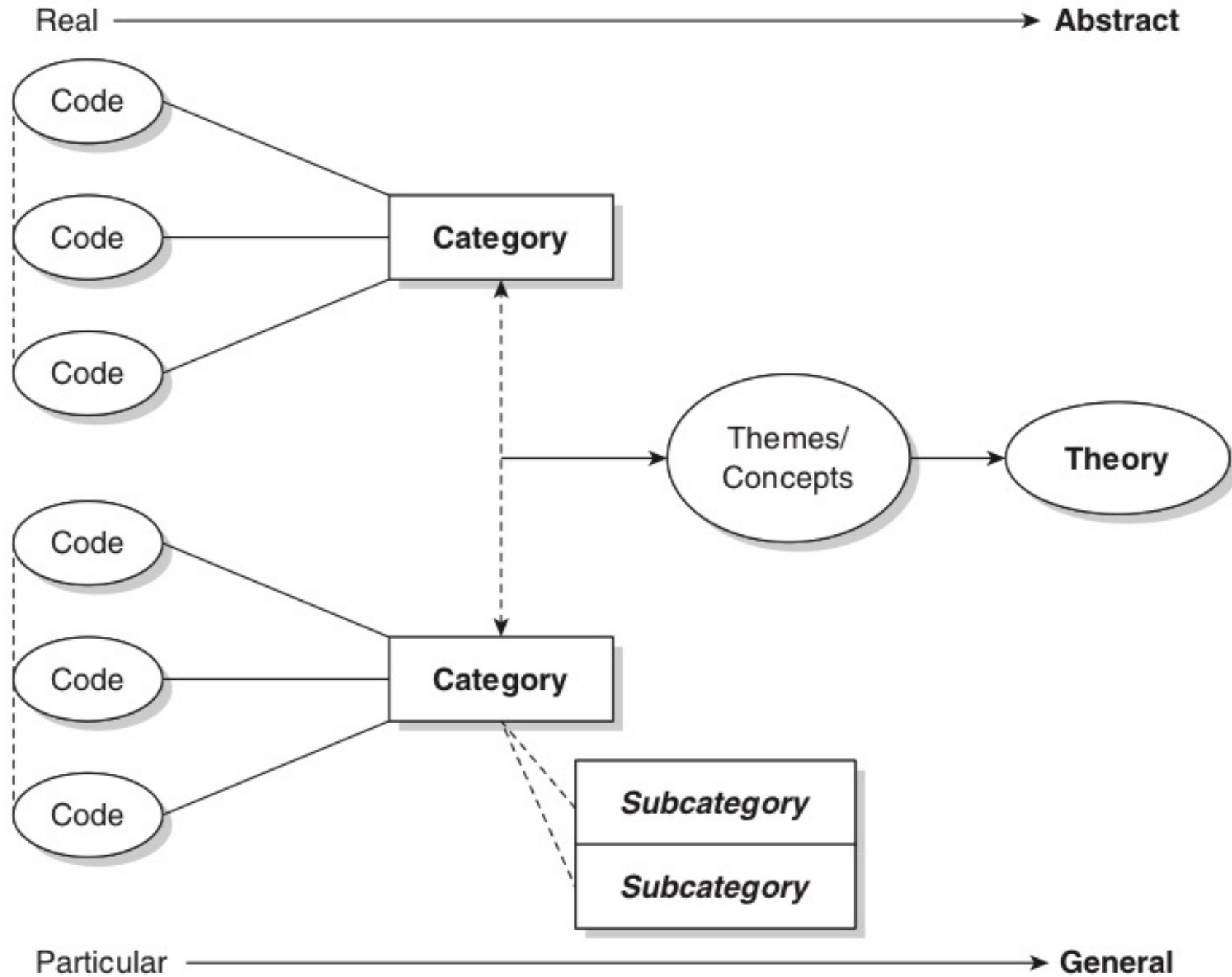
FIGURE 1.1   A streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry

How to code

Coding is a heuristic (from the Greek, meaning "to discover") – an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas to follow. Coding is only the initial step toward an even more rigorous and evocative analysis and interpretation for a report. Coding is not just labeling, it is *linking*: "It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (Saldaña, 2013)

How to code

1. Descriptive coding: Summarizes the primary topics of the excerpt
2. Process coding: A word or phrase that captures action
3. *In vivo* coding: Using the participants' own language
4. Values coding: Attempting to exhibit inferred values, attitudes and beliefs
5. Pattern coding: Coding for patterns in the data

Example:

"There's just no place in this country for illegal immigrants. Round them up and send those criminals back to where they came from."

- In Vivo Coding: "No place"

- Descriptive coding: "Immigration issues"

- Values coding: "Xenophobia"

"All coding is a judgment call" since we bring "our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks" to the process (Creswell, 2007; Mason, 2002)

Coding is cyclical

- Coding is a cyclical process that may require you to recode multiple times.
- Virtually no one gets it right the first time. If you notice that your initial methods choices may not be working for you or not delivering emergent answers you need, be flexible with your approach.
- Virtually all researcher-developed coding schemes are never fixed from the beginning – they evolve as analysis progresses.
- People are not algorithmic automatons. If we're carefully reading and reviewing the data before and as we're formally coding them, we can't help but notice a theme or two (or a pattern, trend, or concept) here and there. Make a note of it when it happens.
- A set of themes is a good thing to emerge from analysis, but at the beginning cycles there are other rich discoveries to be made with specific coding methods that explore such phenomena as participant process, emotions, and values. (Saldaña, 2013)

Explicit categories (scoring)

Thinking about all of your experiences at Harold Washington College (HWC): What can we do to help you feel **comfortable**, **safe**, **valued**, and/or **able to be yourself** in all HWC **physical** and **virtual spaces**? [please use as much space as you need to respond…the text box will expand as you write]

Comfortable:

• Positive, negative, neutral, NA

Spaces

• Physical, virtual, both, neither

Coding is professional development!

- Practicing formal coding can help better train you to discover new themes and patterns in your students' work.

- Reading hundreds of passages from our students provides insight into their perspective.