

Two

Writing Analytic Memos

Scrutiny of [the data] offers both empirical certainty and intuitive reminders. Insights emerge also from the subconscious and from bodily memories, never penned on paper. There are serendipitous connections to be made, if the writer is open to them. Writing and analysis comprise a movement between the tangible and intangible, between the cerebral and sensual, between the visible and invisible. Interpretation moves from evidence to ideas and theory, then back again. There can be no set formulae, only broad guidelines, sensitive to specific cases.

(Judith Okely, "Thinking Through Fieldwork," 1994, p. 32)

The purpose of analytic memo writing is to document and reflect on: your coding process and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in your data – all possibly leading toward theory. Codes written in the margins of your hard-copy data or associated with data and listed in a CAQDAS file are nothing more than labels until they're analyzed. Your private and personal written musings before, during, and about the entire enterprise is a question-raising, puzzle-piecing, connection-making, strategy-building, problem-solving, answer-generating, rising-above-the-data heuristic. Robert E. Stake (1995) muses, "Good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking" (p. 19).

What is an Analytic Memo?

Analytic memos are somewhat comparable to researcher journal entries or blogs – a place to "dump your brain" about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more about them: "Memos are sites of conversation with ourselves about our data" (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). Think of a code not just as a significant word or phrase you applied to a datum, but as a prompt or trigger for written reflection on the deeper and complex meanings it evokes. The purpose is researcher

reflexivity on the data corpus, "thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see" (Mason, 2002, p. 5). Coding and analytic memo writing are concurrent qualitative data analytic activities, for there is "a reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon" (Weston et al., 2001, p. 397).

Let me clarify that I use *analytic* memo as my term of choice because, to me, all memos are analytic regardless of content. Some methodologists recommend that you label, classify, and keep separate different types of memos according to their primary purpose: a coding memo, theoretical memo, research question memo, task memo, etc. But I have found it difficult in my own work to write freely and analytically within the bounded parameters of an artificial memo category as a framing device. Dey (1993) notes that memo writing "should be a creative activity, relatively unencumbered by the rigours of logic and the requirements of corroborating evidence. Memos should be suggestive; they needn't be conclusive" (p. 89). I simply write what's going through my mind, *then* determine what type of memo I've written to title it and thus later determine its place in the data corpus (Yes, memos are data) and as such they, too, can be coded, categorized, and searched with CAQDAS programs. Dating each memo helps keep track of the evolution of your study. Giving each memo a descriptive title and evocative subtitle enables you to classify it and later retrieve it through a CAQDAS search. Depending on the depth and breadth of your writing, memos can even be woven as substantive portions into the final written report.

Also important to note here is the difference between analytic memos and field notes. Field notes, as I distinguish them, are the researcher's written documentation of participant observation, which may include the observer's personal and subjective responses to and interpretations of social action encountered. Field notes may contain valuable comments and insights that address the recommended categories for analytic memo reflection described below. Thus, personal field notes are potential sites in which rich analysis may occur. I recommend extracting these memo-like passages from the corpus and keeping them in a separate file devoted exclusively to analytic reflection.

Virtually every qualitative research methodologist agrees: Whenever *anything* related to and significant about the coding or analysis of the data comes to mind, stop whatever you're doing and write a memo about it immediately. Future directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with the analysis, insightful connections, and anything about the researched and the researcher are acceptable content for memos. CAQDAS programs like NVivo, MAXQDA, and ATLAS.ti enable the researcher to instantly insert and link an analytic memo (or comment or annotation) to a specific datum or code. But sometimes "ah-ha" moments of insight

occur at unexpected and inopportune times – in the shower, while driving, eating lunch, etc. So keep a small paper notepad and something to write with, or a hand-held digital audio recorder, nearby at all times for brief jottings or reminders in lieu of computer access. Don't rely on "mental notes to self."

Examples of Analytic Memos

Despite the open-ended nature of analytic memo writing in qualitative inquiry, there are some general and recommended categories for reflection. Below is one of the coding examples from Chapter One. Examples of analytic memo content related to the excerpt follow:

¹ My son, Barry, went through a really tough time about, probably started the end of fifth grade and went into sixth grade. ² When he was growing up young in school he was a people-pleaser and his teachers loved him to death. ³ Two boys in particular that he chose to try to emulate, wouldn't, were not very good for him. ⁴ They were very critical of him, they put him down all the time, and he kind of just took that and really kind of internalized it, I think, for a long time. ⁵ In that time period, in the fifth grade, early sixth grade, they really just kind of shunned him all together, and so his network as he knew it was gone.

¹ MIDDLE-SCHOOL HELL

² TEACHER'S PET

³ BAD INFLUENCES

⁴ TWEEN ANGST

⁵ THE LOST BOY

Extensive memo writing, as illustrated below, over just one small passage of coded data, such as that above, is most unlikely. The example is kept deliberately brief to show how the same piece of data can be approached from multiple angles for analytic memo writing.

Analytic memos can reflect on the following (in no particular order of importance):

Reflect on and write about how you personally relate to the participants and/or the phenomenon. Establish connections between yourself and the social world you're studying. Sympathize and empathize with the participants' actions to understand their perspectives and worldviews. In what ways are you similar to them? An analytic memo, based on the data excerpt above, might read:

11 November 2007

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE STUDY: LIVING [PREADOLESCENT] HELL

I can relate. Just change the grade levels to seventh and eighth and Barry's story is my own. I, too, was the teacher's pet, the best little boy in the world.

Some of my peers were such bullying bastards that they made junior high school a living hell for me. I wasn't made bad by the bad-ass influences around me. They just, sigh, put me down all the time, too. School became a place where I dreaded going. Barry probably dreaded it, too.

Reflect on and write about your study's research questions. Focusing on your a priori [determined beforehand] articulated research questions, purposes, and goals as analysis progresses will keep you on track with the project. Start by writing the actual question itself then elaborate on answers in progress. An analytic memo might read:

12 November 2007

RESEARCH QUESTION: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE AND AFFECT

This study addresses: What factors in Barry's past influenced and affected his current condition? Five years after the time frame of the mother's story, he's still loved by his teachers; and yes, he is still a "people pleaser" – very popular among his crowd. His tween years, as he himself put it in another retrospective interview, were "a dead period." And when you lose your friends, it's hell. This middle school dead period seemed to have influenced and affected his moody entry into high school, but he overcame it. So now, the task is learning what happened to Barry beginning in ninth grade that changed him for the better.

Reflect on and write about your code choices and their operational definitions.

Define your codes and rationalize your specific choices for the data. This is an internal "reality check" of your thinking processes, and reflection may generate other possible codes. Glaser (1978) reminds us that through "writing memos on codes, the analyst draws and fills out analytic properties of the descriptive data" (p. 84). An analytic memo might read:

13 November 2007

CODE DEFINITION: TWEEN ANGST

Since Barry is in sixth grade, he's a "tween." The word "tween" is almost limbo-like: in-between; not quite a child, not quite a teen – you're a "tween." This almost has a condescending tone to it. When you're in-between, you're in parentheses. When you're in-between, you're neither here nor there. It's a transition, a phase, a stage, a place where you can get lost, where you can lose yourself if you're not careful.

Angst, the second part of the code phrase, is another choice that's my own word. The mother didn't say it directly, but that's what it seems her son experienced. Angst – or anxious tension – is what so many adolescents go through, but I wonder if they're ever taught that word? Will knowing that what they're going through has a label ease the pain or make it any better? To be rejected is one of the most devastating acts for a tween (and a child and a teenager and an adult). Was he rejected because he was a "people pleaser"? I know I was. It sucks to be good – at least when you're a tween.

Use TWEEN ANGST whenever Barry experienced this state, as described by himself or his mother, during his sixth through eighth grade school years.

Code management systems in most CAQDAS programs will permit you to enter a more concise definition for each code you generate, while CAQDAS memo systems provide more space to reflect and expand on the codes' meanings.

Reflect on and write about the emergent patterns, categories, themes, and concepts. Remember that individual codes eventually become part of a broader scheme of classification. Reflection on how the codes tentatively get placed into categories and/or subcategories, suggest a theme, or evoke a higher-level concept, may begin to create a sense of order to your analysis thus far. An analytic memo might read:

14 November 2007

EMERGENT PATTERNS, CATEGORIES, THEMES, AND CONCEPTS: MIDDLE SCHOOL HELL

MIDDLE SCHOOL HELL seems to be an umbrella code for TWEEN ANGST and THE LOST BOY. Barry says in another interview that those years were a "DEAD PERIOD" for him – an evocative *In Vivo* Code. But I think I focus on the particular by using MIDDLE SCHOOL HELL to represent many students within that age range.

However, don't discount "DEAD PERIOD" as a major theme or concept at this time. As I continue analysis, that code may be more conceptual than I think at this point in the study. Something in me doesn't want to let it go. A "DEAD PERIOD" can occur during any portion of a person's life, while TWEEN ANGST is limited to a specific age range.

Reflect on and write about the possible networks (links, connections, overlaps, flows) among the codes, patterns, categories, themes, and concepts. One of the most critical outcomes of qualitative data analysis is to interpret how the individual components of the study weave together. The actual integration of key words from the coding into the analytic memo narrative – a technique I call "codeweaving" – is a practical way of insuring that you're thinking how the puzzle pieces fit together. First-draft diagrams of network relationships between and among concepts are also possible as analytic memo content (see Appendix C for an extended example). Networking makes you think of possible hierarchies, chronological flows, and influences and affects (i.e., cause and effect). The codes just from the data excerpt above are: MIDDLE SCHOOL HELL, TEACHER'S PET, BAD INFLUENCES, TWEEN ANGST, and THE LOST BOY. An analytic memo might read:

15 November 2007

NETWORKS: CODEWEAVING ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL HELL

A codeweaving attempt with this data excerpt is: "Bad influences can turn teacher's pets into lost boys, resulting in tween angst in the limbo of middle school hell." Another version is: "Middle school hell is a site of tween angst: teacher's pets can become lost boys by bad influences." Peer influence, according to the developmental literature, becomes very strong during these preadolescent years. "His network as he knew it was gone" suggests that when friendships decay, children become lost (my term).

[A preliminary sketch of this codewoven process appears in Figure 2.1.]

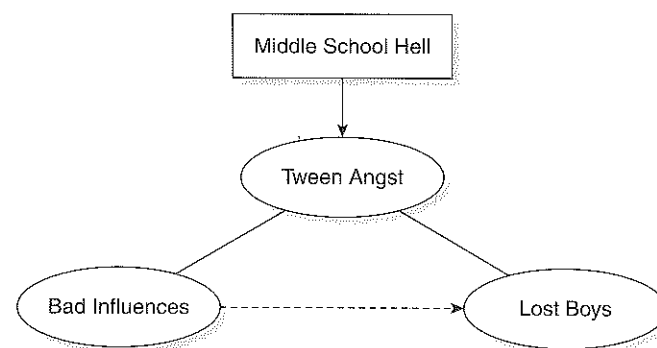


FIGURE 2.1 An analytic memo sketch on codeweaving

Reflect on and write about an emergent or related existing theory. Transcend the local and particular of your study, and reflect on how your observations may apply to other populations, to the bigger picture, to the generalizable, even to the universal. Explore possible metaphors and symbols at work in your data that suggest transferability. Speculate on how your theory predicts human action and explains why those actions occur. Integrate existing theories into or compare them with your own particular study's data. An analytic memo might read:

16 November 2007

THEORY: HUMAN NETWORKS AND POSITIONING THEORY

Who *hasn't* faced rejection at some point in his or her life, especially during the adolescent years? I was particularly struck by the mother's observation, "his network as he knew it was gone." When we lose our "networks," we lose our connections, our links. Like qualitative data analysis, we become isolated "bins" or "nodes" awaiting placement in the overall scheme of things, but risk being discarded or renamed or subsumed if we don't contribute something. Who *hasn't* felt "leftover" or "miscellaneous" at some point in his or her life? Once lost, we go inward; once lost, we hide.

Positioning theory from the 1980s and 1990s might be relevant here. Reflexive and interactive positioning are the dynamics at work within Barry and among him and his peers. But also check out the human development literature, as what's happening here may simply be "classic" alignment with typical adolescent social and emotional trends.

Reflect on and write about any problems with the study. Opportunities to reflect on fieldwork or analytic "glitches" by writing about them may generate solutions to your dilemmas. The act is also a way to raise provocative questions for continued reflection, or to vent any personal frustrations you may be feeling about the study. An analytic memo might read:

17 November 2007

PROBLEM: THINKING OUTSIDE THE CHRONOLOGICAL BOX

I find I'm locking myself into the traditional human development schema: early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc. The trajectory of Barry's life course is falling into the same old patterns of elementary, middle, and high school. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but perhaps I should be thinking of other phase/stage systems for plotting his life course. By default we attribute portions of our lives as "the elementary school years," "the high school years," etc. Maybe I should divide what I'm finding thus far into "turning points" or "milestones" schemas, regardless of grade level?

Reflect on and write about any personal or ethical dilemmas with the study.

Ethical issues of varying magnitude arise in virtually every study with human participants. Most of these dilemmas are usually unforeseen, based on what participants unexpectedly bring to interviews or what the researcher observes in the field that counters her value, attitude, and belief systems. Reflection keeps you attuned to these matters and may help you brainstorm possible solutions. An analytic memo might read:

18 November 2007

ETHICS: WHAT CAN/SHOULD I ASK?

I'm still hesitant to ask Barry to talk more about that "dead period" in middle school. He seems evasive about it, looks downward whenever it's brought up. I don't want to cause him any emotional distress, but at the same time I feel I need to find out more about that time period in his life. Maybe asking his mother to talk about those years rather than Barry will get the info to help me plot his life course? Barry knows that I'm interviewing her, so it's no secret.

Reflect on and write about future directions for the study. Each qualitative research project is unique and cumulative in nature. The more you interview participants and observe them in natural social settings, the more ideas you generate for possible future research action. As data collection and analysis progress, you may discover missing elements or a need for additional data. You may even reconceptualize your entire initial approach and find inspiration from a new insight about the phenomenon or process under investigation. An analytic memo might read:

19 November 2007

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: ADDITIONAL TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

If possible, track down some of Barry's teachers from middle school and see if I can get IRB [Institutional Review Board] and their principal's permission to interview them about Barry. It would be interesting to hear what they remember about him from educators' perspectives. Also interesting would be for me to ask them about the TWEEN ANGST code and see how they react.

One of the things I'm learning is how little I really know about middle and junior high school students. Since I work with elementary and high school youth for my

labs, I have a pretty good handle on them. But the tween years are elusive to me. Find a site and get back in touch with what happens from sixth through eighth grades.

Reflect on and write about the analytic memos generated thus far. Corbin & Strauss (2008) note that beginning memo writing tends to start off simply and descriptively, while later writings become more substantive and abstract (p. 108). Though this may happen on its own accord, the researcher will also have to consciously achieve it. It is worthwhile to periodically review the stock of analytic memos developed thus far to compose "metamemos" that tactically summarize and integrate what's been developed to date. This method also provides the researcher a "reality check" of the study and analysis in progress. An analytic memo might read:

20 November 2007

METAMEMO: IN-BETWEEN

After scanning the analytic memos thus far, I notice recurring themes about "tween," "middle," "lost." I recall a lecture I heard about humans being caught "in parentheses" as a significant transitional state. Barry at this stage is also in many transitions: from elementary to high school, from child to adolescent, from teacher's pet to lost boy. There's that "betwixt and between" phrase that sticks in my head, but it seems so trite. Barry on the classic "hero's journey" is another metaphor that comes to mind – the protagonist who must undergo severe trial and loss of self to find oneself again. Perhaps my attempt to systematically categorize these data is proving useful for what could become an evocative narrative analysis instead? Like Barry, I too feel caught in parentheses and IN-BETWEEN something as this analysis progresses. That can be a good thing, though – a place for inward reflection, deep introspection – before that breakthrough moment – I hope.

Reflect on and write about the final report for the study. Extended analytic memos can become substantive "think pieces," suitable for integration into the final report of your study. As you "write out loud," you may find yourself composing passages that can easily be edited and inserted directly into the finished text. Or, you might use analytic memo writing as a way to ponder the organization, structure, and contents of the forthcoming final report. An analytic memo might read:

21 November 2007

FINAL REPORT: TWO VOICES

Make certain to cite the mother's observation, "His network as he knew it was gone" as an introductory quote for the section on Barry's "dead period."

Barry's mother is becoming quite a prominent figure in this study. At first she was a supplemental participant, interviewed primarily to gather additional info on Barry's life course. But I now see how her influences and affects on her son's life course have played very major roles. Barry speaks quite fondly of her and considers her a tremendous nurturer of who he is and who he is becoming. It would be interesting

to edit and piece together portions of their separate interviews into a two-voice narrative – one providing commentary on the other:

- BARRY: In elementary school I was always picked on a lot, so I was always trying to fit in.
- SANDY: Barry went through a really tough time about, probably started the end of fifth grade and went into sixth grade. When he was growing up young in school he was a people-pleaser and his teachers loved him to death. Two boys in particular that he chose to try to emulate were not very good for him. They were very critical of him, they put him down all the time, and he kind of just took that and really kind of internalized it, I think, for a long time. In that time period, in the fifth grade, early sixth grade, they really just kind of shunned him all together, and so his network as he knew it was gone.
- BARRY: It's kind of a dead period.
- SANDY: At Lakewood Middle School he had a really tough time, real tough. The first day of school in seventh grade, some – I'll use the term "gang-banger," but I don't know – was picking on a little kid. And Barry said,
- BARRY
AND SANDY: "Hey man, get off his case."
- SANDY: And from that moment on, all of the tension was focused on him. From the time he entered Lakewood to the time he left Lakewood, he was a target by the bad guys. That was a very tough time for him.

Finally, the ATLAS.ti CAQDAS manual recommends that memos can also be used as community "bulletin board" postings for multiple research team members to share information and exchange emergent ideas about the study as analysis progresses.

To recap, analytic memos are opportunities for you to reflect on and write about:

- how you personally relate to the participants and/or the phenomenon
- your study's research questions
- your code choices and their operational definitions
- the emergent patterns, categories, themes, and concepts
- the possible networks (links, connections, overlaps, flows) among the codes, patterns, categories, themes, and concepts
- an emergent or related existent theory
- any problems with the study
- any personal or ethical dilemmas with the study
- future directions for the study
- the analytic memos generated thus far
- the final report for the study

Ultimately, analytic memo writing is the transitional process from coding to the more formal write-up of the study (see Chapter Five). Your reflections on the topics listed above collectively generate potential material for formulating a set of core ideas for presentation. Substantive analytic memos may also contribute to the quality of your analysis by rigorous reflection on the data.

Coding and Categorizing Analytic Memos

Analytic memos themselves from the study can be coded and categorized according to their content. The descriptive titles in the examples above enable you to group related memos by reflections on NETWORKS; EMERGENT PATTERNS, CATEGORIES, THEMES, AND CONCEPTS; ETHICS; METAMEMOS; etc. The subtitles function as subcodes or themes and enable you to subcategorize the contents into more study-specific groupings – for example, analytic memos about specific participants, specific code groups, specific theories in progress, etc. CAQDAS programs provide these classification functions for organized review and reflection.

Analytic memos generate codes and categories

One principle I stress throughout selected profiles in later chapters is that, even after you've coded a portion of your data and categorized the codes into various lists, analytic memo writing serves as an additional code- and category-generating method. By memo writing about the specific codes you've applied to your data, you may discover even better ones. By memo writing about your puzzlement and loss for a specific code for a particular datum, the perfect one may emerge. By memo writing about how some codes seem to cluster and interrelate, a category for them may be identified. Codes and categories are found not only in the margins or headings of interview transcripts and field notes – they are also embedded *within* analytic memos. Corbin & Strauss (2008) provide meticulous and in-depth examples of this procedure in their third edition of *Basics of Qualitative Research*.

The cyclical collection, coding, and analytic memo writing of data – a process generally termed "theoretical sampling" – are not distinct linear processes but "should blur and intertwine continually, from the beginning of an investigation to its end" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 43). This is one of the major principles developed by grounded theory's premiere writers, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, and elaborated in future writings by Juliet Corbin, Kathy Charmaz, and Adele E. Clarke.

Grounded theory and its coding canon

Briefly, grounded theory, developed in the 1960s, is generally regarded as one of the first methodologically systematic approaches to qualitative inquiry. The

process usually involves meticulous analytic attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that ultimately lead to the development of a theory – a theory “grounded” or rooted in the original data themselves.

In this coding manual, six particular methods are considered part of grounded theory’s coding canon (though they can all be used in other non-grounded theory studies): In Vivo, Process, Initial, Focused, Axial, and Theoretical Coding. (In earlier publications, Initial Coding was referred to as “Open” Coding, and Theoretical Coding was referred to as “Selective” Coding.)

In Vivo, Process, and Initial Coding are First Cycle methods – coding processes for the beginning stages of data analysis that fracture or split the data into individually coded segments. Focused, Axial, and Theoretical Coding are Second Cycle methods – coding processes for the latter stages of data analysis that both literally and metaphorically constantly compare, reorganize, or “focus” the codes into categories, prioritize them to develop “axis” categories around which others revolve, and synthesize them to formulate a central or core category that becomes the foundation for explication of a grounded theory. Categories also have “properties” and “dimensions” – variable qualities that display the range or distribution within similarly coded data.

Each of these six coding methods will be profiled in later chapters, but the thing to note here is the coding processes’ ongoing interrelationship with analytic memo writing, and the memos’ reorganization and integration into the final report of the study. Figure 2.2 presents a very reduced and elemental model of developing “classic” grounded theory for reference. Note how analytic memo writing is a linked component of the major stages leading toward the development of theory.

I minimize the number of analytic memo examples in the coding profiles that follow because I myself find reading extensive ones in research methods textbooks too case-specific and somewhat fatiguing. If you wish to see how a trail of analytic memos progresses from First through Second Cycles of coding with the same data excerpt, see the profiles for Initial, Focused, Axial, and Theoretical Coding.

Analytic Memos on Visual Data

A perceived problem is the coding of visual data such as photographs, print materials (magazines, brochures, etc.), internet websites, video, and other items in addition to the physical environments and artifacts of fieldwork (room décor, architecture, participant dress and accessories, etc.). Despite some preexisting coding frameworks for visual representation, I feel the best approach to analyzing visual data is a holistic, interpretive lens guided by strategic questions. Rather than one-word or phrase codes (which are still possible, if desired), the

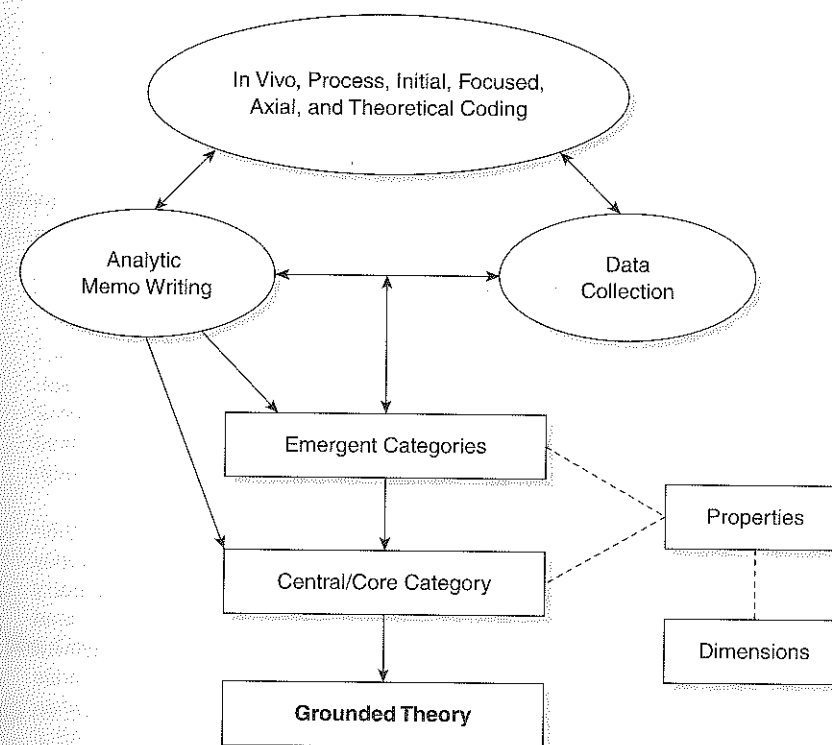


FIGURE 2.2 An elemental model for developing “classic” grounded theory

researcher’s careful scrutiny of and reflection on images, documented through field notes and analytic memos, generate language-based data that *accompanies* the visual data. Any descriptors we use for documenting the images of social life should employ rich, dynamic words. Adele E. Clarke’s (2005) “Mapping Visual Discourses” chapter in her text *Situational Analysis* presents a thorough list of questions to consider from the perspectives of aesthetic accomplishment (“How does the variation in color direct your attention within the image?”) to contextual and critical readings (“What work is the image doing in the world? What is implicitly and explicitly normalized?”) (pp. 227–8).

First, below is a set of field notes about Barry’s onstage performance work – three-dimensional, kinetic visual data – in one of his high school play productions of a modern farce. Unlike the observation of natural social life, observation of live or video-recorded theatrical performance takes into account both planned and spontaneous action by the actor’s body and voice:

Compared to other actors, Barry’s movements are sharp, crisp, economic. He maintains still poses in compositions, does not steal focus. His voice is clear, good volume, articulate, wide variety, range. He is dynamic, has good energy, believable in his dialogue. Even when there’s an error with a rope (as part of the

set that falls) he covers well. Unlike other actors, he does not "foot-fudge," wander, or rock. The others overact, miss the comic timing, speech is sometimes sloppy, difficult to hear. Barry has a leading man quality about him, a presence. He looks handsome, blonde hair cut close – had it long recently – sturdy build, the physique of a beginning football player.

Rather than coding this documented set of visual (and verbal) data in the margin, an analytic memo about this field note set focuses on the visual discourses:

10 November 2007

VISUAL DATA: BARRY'S PHYSICALITY

A good actor needs what Howard Gardner calls "kinesthetic intelligence." Barry, as a high school actor, displays a heightened awareness of it on stage, though in everyday life his physicality is relaxed, even "dumpy." This intelligence comes from metacognition and technique, an attunement to and consciousness of everything your body is doing during performance. Not everyone has this skill, even university actors.

The majority of male Hollywood celebrities are handsome, well-built, and their fan base is drawn to their physical appearance. The beautiful, even in everyday life, also tend to be the popular. In the classroom, I notice girls surrounding Barry before class begins. His "leading man" presence not only means playing a lead role in a play, but leading others who are willing to follow in organized activity. Though he is aware of his body, he is not arrogant about it, which perhaps adds even more to his charisma and appeal. In high school (and adulthood), when you've got looks, you've got an advantage. His I would code: COMFORTABLE CONFIDENCE.

The still image of a digital photo permits nuanced visual analysis, but Walsh et al. (2007) note that digital video data of action can be coded multiple times for in-depth detail by replaying the file while focusing on different aspects with each "pass." The co-authors, plus Lewins & Silver (2007), profile several software programs (e.g., Transana, The Observer) that can code digital video, but they also note each one's limitations, such as cost, currency, and user-friendliness. Several CAQDAS programs (e.g., ATLAS.ti and NVivo) can store and enable digital video for coding in addition to text.

As a theatre practitioner I was trained to design for the stage, so visual literacy is a "given" in my ethnographic ways of working. Today's mediated and visual cultures seem to indoctrinate and endow all of us by default with visual literacy – heightened awareness of images and their presentation and representation. From my readings of various systematic methods for analyzing visual data, I have yet to find a single satisfactory approach that rivals the tacit capabilities of human interpretation and reflection. Trust your intuitive impressions when analyzing and writing about visual materials.

The next chapter begins with an overview of how to use this manual to guide you through its First Cycle coding methods profiles, and how to select the most appropriate one(s) for your particular qualitative research study.

Three

First Cycle Coding Methods

As the process of naming and locating your data bits proceeds, your categories divide and subdivide. Learn to be content, however, with your early, simple coding schemes, knowing that with use they will become appropriately complex.

(Corrine Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, 2006, p. 150)

The Coding Cycles

In theatre production, a folk saying goes, "Plays are not written – they're rewritten." A comparable saying for qualitative researchers is, "Data are not coded – they're recoded." Some methodologists label the progressive refinement of codes in a study as "stages" or "levels." But to me, the reverberative nature of coding – comparing data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category, category back to data, etc. – suggests that the qualitative analytic process is cyclical rather than linear.

The coding methods in this manual are divided into two main sections: First Cycle and Second Cycle coding methods (see Figure 3.1).

First Cycle methods are those processes that happen during the initial coding of data and are divided into seven subcategories: Grammatical, Elemental, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, Procedural, and a final profile entitled Themeing the Data. Each subcategory's major characteristics will be explained in a brief introduction later in this chapter. Most First Cycle methods are fairly simple and direct.

Second Cycle methods (see Chapter Four) are a bit more challenging because they require such analytic skills as classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building. If you have taken ownership of the data through careful First Cycle coding (and recoding), the transition to Second Cycle methods becomes easier. But be aware that codes are not the only method you should employ, as noted anthropologists George and Louise Spindler (1992) attest: "only the human observer can be alert to divergences and