

Guide to Creating an Analytic Memo

Example: Tutor Influences on the Affective Domain

Step 1: Pose a question that seems relevant to the overall Research Question we asked about student needs and how to address them:

Example Analytic Question: According to these 15 writing tutors, what can tutors do to support student learning in the affective domain? [i.e., what can tutors do to affect student motivation, values, self-esteem, etc.]

Step 2: List the codes that seem like they would help you find data that addresses your Analytic Question. You could also peruse the Master Code Key to generate your AQ in the first place. We take note of our process (such as which codes we included in our search) to enhance the **validity** of the study; people can trust our findings when they see that we have a methodical process, and that we have kept track of what we are doing along the way. We can also go back later and easily identify what we have done and if it makes sense to add another code, we can expand the memo very easily because we are keeping track of what we've done. Codes included in this example search: [tutor affective domain]. I went to the "Edit" menu in Adobe Acrobat Reader, chose "Advanced Search" from the drop down menu, and included the exact phrase for a search in the current document, including the brackets.

If you find too many "hits" you may need to make your Analytic Question more specific and search for fewer codes to make it more manageable. I first tried making a broader question that had to do with anything related to the affective domain, and was searching for five different codes. I had an entire page of data copied from Tutor 1 transcript alone, so I realized I needed to narrow the question down, or I may end up with a 15 page Analytic Memo, which would then need to be trimmed down into sub-memos. I opted to narrow my question and I can always go back and ask related questions (such as how instructors can influence student affect, etc.). Everyone will create multiple memos, so you can develop clusters of related questions to make this process approachable and efficient.

Step 3: Conduct a search for each of these terms in each coded transcript, and copy and paste any relevant data (participant's words) and codes attached to them into a new document, which you will call your analytic memo. The step of simply copying and pasting relevant material into the document is called a "data dump." Label the source of each bit of data (i.e., [Tutor 6] or [Instructor 8]) so you will be able to keep track of different opinions (or just a lot of statements from a single source) as you organize the data by moving it around later on.

Step 4: Trim out any data that doesn't go with your codes of interest. By creating an analytic memo, we are *reducing* the data so we don't have to look through everything to find patterns. When we trim out the extraneous stuff, the patterns are easier to find.

Step 5: Use your judgment to group similar bits of data together (along with their codes). You can simply cut and paste within your memo to move the data around. Sometimes just glancing at the other codes that are attached to data can help us to see trends. If possible, try to create a subheading to describe each group of similar types of statements.

Step 6: Write down questions about the process and any observations and interpretations you have to bring to our next Assessment Team meeting. You can add these directly to your analytic memo if you like, so long as any comments you add are clearly delineated from the participant data using brackets so we won't confuse your ideas with the participant data.