

## Major Parts of an Analytic Memo & the Step by Step Process of Creating it:

**1. Analytic Question:** This is the question that you want to answer about student needs or how to meet them. It is broad and open ended, giving room for unexpected answers to arise, if they exist in the data. The analytic question limits your query to a manageable topic and focuses your search for relevant data so you will have a doable amount to work with.

**2. Codes Included in this Search:** To efficiently find the relevant data, we need make sure our analytic question aligns with one or more of the standardized codes in the Master Code Key. Specifying the codes you'll search for helps you plan your memo to address your analytic question, and keeps track of your process to show it is methodical and reproducible (scientific and valid). It also helps us to make sure we won't overlap much in the topics we probe into.

**3. Data Dump:** In this stage, you search the folder of coded transcripts for the code(s) you listed above, and you copy and paste all relevant information from the coded transcripts into your memo. Along with the relevant participant data and codes, copy the question that the participant is responding to in order to show the context, particularly for short responses that won't fully make sense out of context (you'll put it in brackets to show it wasn't the participant's words). Label each piece of data with the source of information (instructor or tutor # in brackets). These labels allow us to go back to the original source if necessary, and allow us to see if multiple statements on the same theme come from multiple participants or one participant who was particularly concerned with the topic.

**4. Organize...** After the data dump stage, the next stage of making an analytic memo is to organize the data in groups under subheadings. Grouping similar issues together is the way we find themes across participants. We should really sit up and take note when three or more participants address the same issue, particularly since we asked open ended questions and they had a limitless number of possible responses they could have made. Creating a subheading for each group of similar comments helps you identify the common denominator of the group: the theme you were looking for.

**and Annotate:** Not every participant comment will fit in a group. You can develop a "Miscellaneous" category as a catch all for data that doesn't seem to have commonalities with others. For each interesting or notable participant comment in a Misc. category, include an interpretive note in brackets to highlight its significance. You may very well want to include a summary of some of these salient comments in your Overview at a Glance section, because they might be great fodder for a focus group question to find out how others think about that issue.

**5. Overview at a Glance:** While we're placing this section near the top of the memo as a type of executive summary to orient the reader, it is the final step to identifying and synthesizing what you found while creating the memo. This is where you give the highlights of what you've observed while organizing and annotating your memo. We will primarily refer to this section when developing focus group questions to confirm possible trends or obtain reactions from a wider group to weigh in on intriguing comments.