

Do not Forget to Write Memos

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Abstract

The process of writing memos is foundational to Glaserian classic grounded theory because it enables the researcher to engage in important preconscious and conscious processing as a theory is being developed. If a person waits to write down a given memo or thought, then the likelihood is great that the idea will be permanently missed. And a lost idea is a lost opportunity in Glaserian classic grounded theory that should not be experienced.

Keywords: Glaserian classic grounded theory, forgetting, jotting, writing memos

Without going into specific details, I am dealing with some personal issues and have a journal into which I write thoughts and ideas. Recently, I was involved in an unrelated task and had a valuable thought that I would have wanted to write down but did not. I believed that I would remember it for later. Sadly, such was not the case. As I reflect on that lost and potentially beneficial therapeutic moment, I recall reading in Glaser's (2012) work "stop and write when the Grounded Theory (GT) methodology puts you in that ready position" (p. 1). More specifically, Glaser (2014) stated: "Interrupt any activity to stop and write a memo on any idea" (p. 19). Later in the same 2014 source, Glaser had commented more forcefully that "your memory is not your memory, your memos are your memory" (p. 33). This statement has great value because writing down memos as soon as the idea comes is a great way not to forget it. Glaser (2013) stated

Jot a reminder memo so the idea is not lost. If you do not have enough time or are tied up in a situation, memo jot to memo later. A memo jot can be on any piece or scratch of paper. Grammar is irrelevant as one never shows the memo to anyone. The cliché is 'stop, jot' at any moment, anywhere (p. 4).

And, if writing a memo is not possible at a given moment, then jotting down an idea or even creating an audio note so that a more developed memo could be written later would suffice (Glaser, 1965). Had I followed the comments of Glaser, two very important things may very well have occurred. First, not

only would the idea have been written down for further study and reflection, but also through that needed reflection, I might have made and discovered important connections which could have helped me as I deal my specific issues.

From a less personal perspective, writing memos allows for the processing of preconscious and conscious ideas to take place (Chametzky, 2023a; Glaser 2014). Through memo writing (along with its associated and important analysis process [Chametzky, 2023b; Glaser, 1965]), the researcher is able to uncover previously hidden connections between and among codes which will help form the emergent theory. The researcher must not underestimate the value and importance that memos have because without them, preconscious ideas and previously hidden connections would not become evident. Without being able to make such connections, a researcher would not be able to develop a clear theory. The aphoristic dictum to temporarily stop an activity to write down a memo (Glaser, 2014) is valuable for all Glaserian classic grounded theorists—regardless of experience level—because it is a valuable skill to have.

The value of memo writing beyond the necessity in Glaserian classic grounded theory cannot be overstated. To understand this statement more fully, there is value in understanding that "the beauty of classic grounded theory is that it is all around us. We just need to be open to seeing and experiencing it" (Chametzky, 2022, p. 44). When scholars can understand and realize that grounded theory, and tangentially how

people deal with issues, is not limited to an academic paper or presentation but exists in the real, everyday world, then one may take this understanding a bit further and notice how grounded theory can be valuable in our daily lives. But to discover this idea consciously requires that we write down and capture memos or at least jot down valuable ideas for later review. Only then, truly, can we scholars, educators, and human beings understand the depth, breadth, and beauty of grounded theory and how it is all around us. That realization starts with writing memos.

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