Strauss and Corbin's Coding Methodology
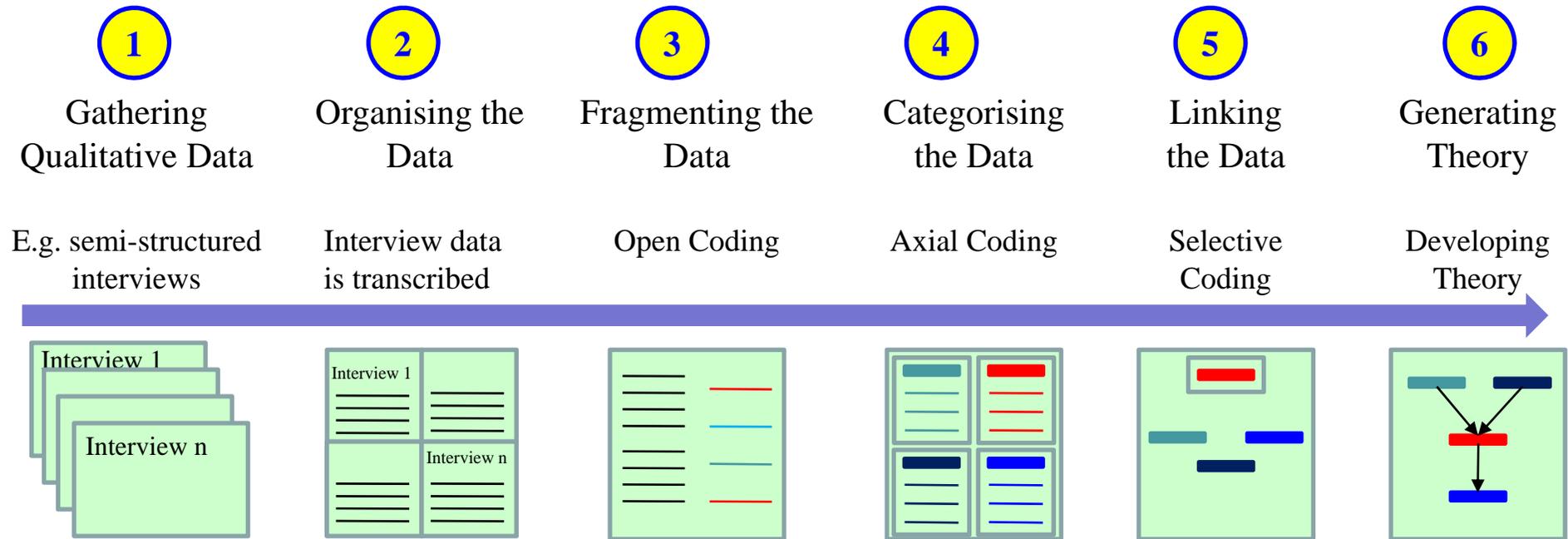
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Strauss and Corbin's coding methodology consists of the following stages:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Gathering Qualitative Data	Organising the Data	Fragmenting the Data	Categorising the Data	Linking the Data	Generating Theory
E.g. semi-structured interviews	Interview data is transcribed	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding	Developing Theory

In order to illustrate these stages , the following research questions are used as an example:

- What factors influence group creative processes?

- What guidelines could be developed in order to ensure an effective creative output?

Interview Transcripts

The interview transcripts will provide information on the questions that you have asked. Using the example described on the previous slide, you may have asked about relationships, group cohesion, communication, emotions, trust and so on. Every sentence and/or paragraph may contain information on one or more of these variables. For example, one interviewee may discuss how effective communication promotes group cohesion. He/she may also have provided an example of this communication and what he/she thought of it e.g. "This form of communication helped motivate me."

Open Coding

Here, you code the transcripts line by line or paragraph by paragraph. You should end up with about 50 codes. You can develop your own codes and/or use the ones that you may have discussed in the research model which you developed at the end of your literature review. You should also add additional codes when necessary.

Axial Coding

Axial coding involves two processes: (a) categorising the open codes and (b) exploring the axial codes' properties and dimensions

(a) Grouping the similar open codes into categories. You should have between 5 and 10 axial codes

(b) Exploring the properties and dimensions – generally each category can fit into a continuum e.g. good vs. bad; effective vs. ineffective. Emotions, for example, can be positive or negative. These are the dimensions. Axial coding also includes exploring the properties of each dimension e.g. relaxed and having fun would be properties of positive emotions

Example:

Interview Transcript

Open Codes

Axial Codes

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Selective Coding

Selective coding involves choosing one of the axial codes as your core concept. This will depend on the aim of your research. If you are exploring communication, for example, you would choose this axial code as your core concept. On the other hand if you are examining emotions, then you would choose this code as your core concept. After choosing your core concept, you need to relate the other axial codes to your core concept. This is achieved by using your data to support these relationships. For instance, in the example, the data suggests that there is a positive relationship between the creative problem solving session and enjoyment, fun and relaxation.

As you play around with the axial codes and relationships, you should keep a paper trail of your thoughts and ideas. These are called memos and provide a route map of your thinking from open coding all the way through to the development of your theory through selective coding. This provides evidence of validity.

Example:

Axial Codes

Categorise Open Codes

Creative Processes
• CPS Session
• CPS Technique
• CPS Process
• Time
• Imagination

Communication
• Communication • Writing

Emotions   **Output**
• Enjoyment   • Enjoyment
• Relaxed   • Fun
• Fun   • CPS Output
• Motivation • Motivation

Etc

Properties & Dimensions

Creative Processes

Effective   Ineffective
• Structured   • Lack of
  CPS   structure
  Technique   • Lack of
• Enough   Time
  Time   • Etc
• Etc

Communication

Effective   Ineffective
• Writing

Etc

Selective Coding

Core Category

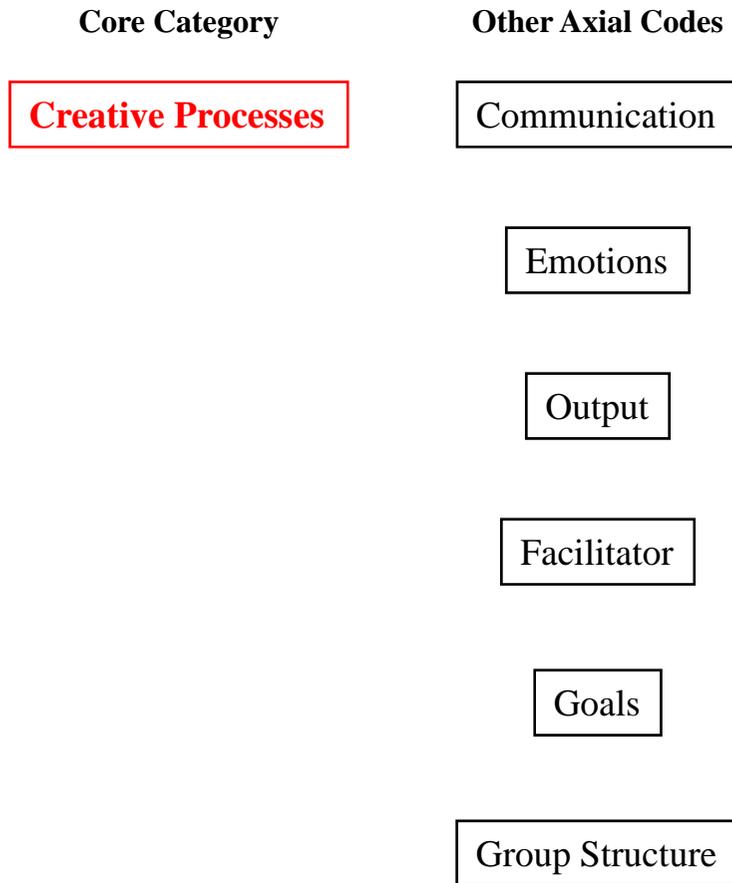Creative Processes

Other Axial Codes
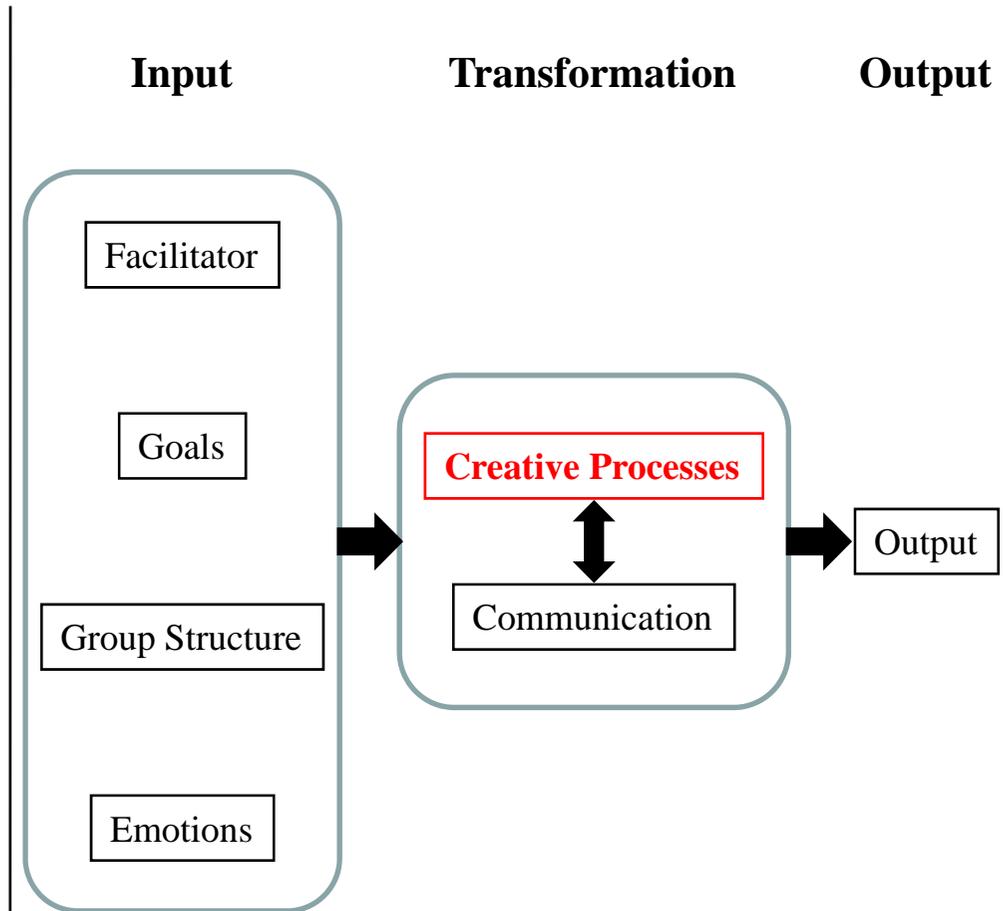
Communication

Emotions

Output

Etc

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Developing the Theory

Example:

Selective Coding

Core Category	Other Axial Codes
Creative Processes	Communication
	Emotions
	Output
	Facilitator
	Goals
	Group Structure

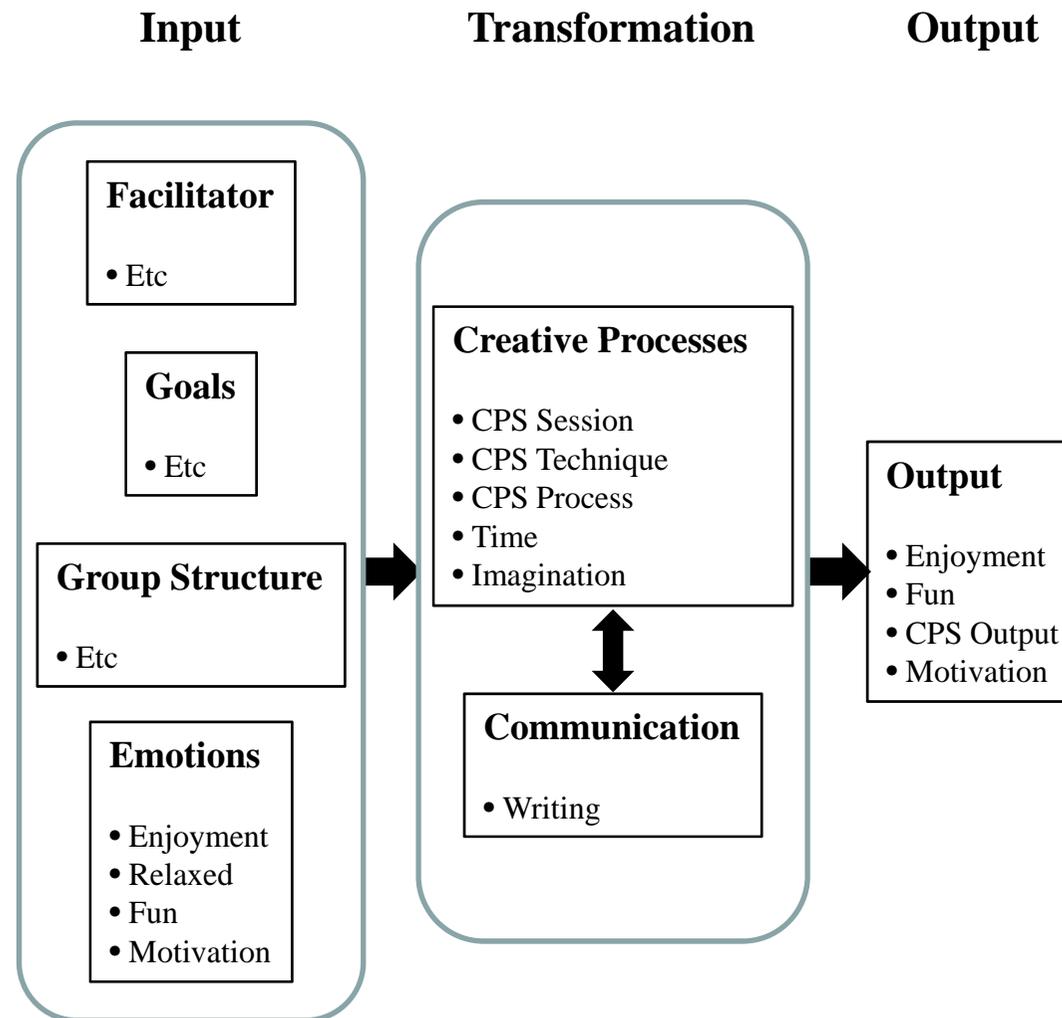NB These last three axial codes have been added to this example in order to provide enough codes to illustrate the development of the theory.

Input   **Transformation**   **Output**

Input group:
- Facilitator
- Goals
- Group Structure
- Emotions

Transformation group:
- **Creative Processes**
- Communication

Output

This model can then be expanded further by adding in your open codes

Input   Transformation   Output

Facilitator

• Etc

Goals

• Etc

Group Structure

• Etc

Emotions

• Enjoyment
• Relaxed
• Fun
• Motivation

Creative Processes

• CPS Session
• CPS Technique
• CPS Process
• Time
• Imagination

Communication

• Writing

Output

• Enjoyment
• Fun
• CPS Output
• Motivation

This model would then be explained by using your interview data – quotations – to support the variables and relationships. In addition, you would also use the properties and dimensions to discuss the model. For instance, you could describe the impact of a poor facilitator (or no facilitator) on the creative processes and group communication as well as the resulting output. Likewise, you could explore the impact of an effective facilitator on these other variables. From this, you could develop a set of guidelines for developing effective creative processes plus some implications for management.

References

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California.