

# Example

To illustrate the points made above, the following excerpt is included from a set of field notes I created as part of the study of Unified Studies. I have labeled the entries with codes to indicate the kinds of field notes they are. I don't usually do that when I take the field notes because it takes extra time to think about what kind each entry is. I do often label the two kinds of reflective notes while I am writing them though, using the code presented below. Other qualitative inquirers use different systems for categorizing their work. For instance, see [Appendix B](#) to review how Marné Isakson did it.

**DP-** Description of a person in the situation

**DV-** Descriptive reconstruction of verbal dialogue (quotation if person's name is followed by a colon, otherwise it is a paraphrase)

**DN-** Description of non-verbal communication

**DS-** Description of the physical or historical setting in which the action is taking place

**DE-** Description of events and actions

**DO-** Description of the observer (me) and my relationship to what was going on, including audit trail notes on methods of doing the study

**RA-** Reflective analysis or synthesis note, searching for patterns and relationships

**RF-** Reflective notes on my feelings and frame of mind as the inquirer

## Aug 31, 1989

**DS** This is the first day of class in the Unified Studies program this year. We are going to begin with introductions. The 70 or so students are coming into the double classroom with the accordion divider latched open. The co-teachers, Sid and Cheryl, are in their adjoining office making last minute preparations. This is the 16th year of this program. It combines several different disciplines into a holistic experience that lasts all day every other day for juniors and seniors who must apply for admission. They spend at least one day per week on outings into the surrounding mountains, museums, places of business, the state legislature, and other learning settings.

**DO** I sat down about 7:55 and four of the student teaching interns sat with or around me. Teresa is sitting with students at a table nearby and Tim is at another on far side of the room. They are the other two interns.

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**RF** I wish I had done that. I feel weird all gathered together in this corner of the room with the people I already know while all the students are over there waiting to be known.

**RA** I wonder if the students are feeling the same sort of thing that I am feeling just now? Do they feel nervous and so they are gathered in groups with the people they already know or are they wishing they knew someone so they could do that?

**DO** I probably won't take notes most of the time today, just so I can really get into participating with everyone.

**DE** 8:03 We're starting!

**DV** Cheryl: It already feels like we're into the year with our planning. There is nothing I would rather be doing than this, the short summer notwithstanding. I like working with Sid. Let me know if you want to be called something else. . . .

**DE** Cheryl began to call roll by calling out the students' names while they stood briefly so everyone could see them.

**RA RF** Knowing these people will be together all day makes it feel like we can really take our time getting to know each other.

**DP** Dahrl (an intern) is sitting by me. She is my younger sister by nearly 13 years. She is going to spend this year learning to teach in this setting and also in an AP history class setting. She has told me how nervous she is and how excited too. She can't decide whether to quit her night job so she can dedicate all her time to this experience or not. Her hair is curly and dark brunette. She looks older than the students for sure (her judgment as stated to me several times) but attractive (judging from the comments from some of the students who have talked to me' I added this entry September 15). She is dressed semi-casually in denim jeans and a dark forest green cotton blouse. Her white Rebocks look brand new.

**DN** The students are all very quiet. There is a little nervous laughter now and then when someone stands up to be introduced but almost no one is really talking, except Cheryl. I see a lot more long hair on the guys than I am used to seeing. At least half of the guys have hair to their shoulders or longer. Nearly all the guys have high top boots or shoes.

**RA** I thought long hair had been out for awhile.

**RA** Wonder how they decided where to sit?

**DE** 8:12 Cheryl is still reading roll.

**DV** She just asked: Hey guys' shhh please.

**RA** This is the first time she has said anything about noise' 9 minutes into the class.

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**DE** She finished reading the roll and now Sid is starting to talk.

**DV** Sid: There is no text for this class and if you miss a day, you can't read up and make it up. Missing a day will kill your opportunities, you're out the experience. It is a whole day's worth of time. I would make a commitment now to participate; if you don't, you will be in a bad situation.

**DV** 8:18 Cheryl: We're starting a new program this year and you dang well better make it work. This program has been going for 16 years. At the beginning we were going to include social studies, but we didn't find anyone who really wafted to do the work without a text. This year we are going to include social studies because some of our student teachers are specialized in that area. Sid and I hate failure, so we will do whatever we have to make it work. Another teacher here at the school is going to help.

**DV** She talked briefly about Ted Sizer's ideas and the district's interest in this program.

**RA** I remember that the principal said Cheryl is involved with the committee on Shift in focus.

**DO** I need to follow up and find out what that entails and if it has anything to do with what is going on here.

**DV** Cheryl: Let's talk about the calendar.

**DE** Sid looked and discovered there is something wrong with the calendar. He sent Tim to fix it.

Cheryl launched into a talk.

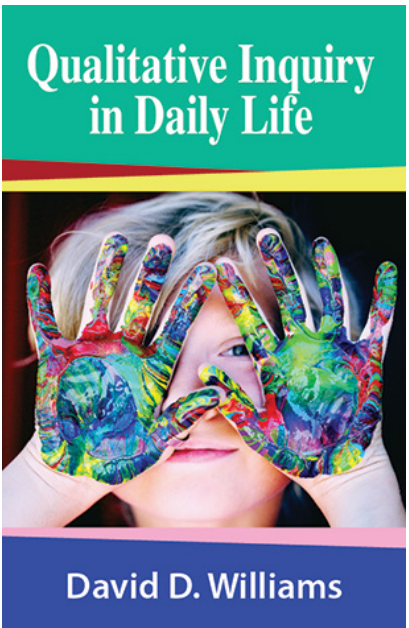
**DV** Cheryl: You have to be doing. Can't wait for Cheryl and Sid to entertain you. We are facilitators, providers. Aides will be involved in this too and you should let them and appreciate it. They are being asked to help us; so don't even think of asking them not to mark you late or whatever' don't compromise them. They are your same age, but they have different responsibilities. We try to operate on a person to person basis in here, not on position to position. We treat people really well in here. So you do the same with the aides. I don't mean to be negative, but if any of you are doing very negative things, we will ask you to go somewhere else. Not because I don't like you but because we don't want to sacrifice 75 other people because of a negative draw. Rub silver and gold together and they get embedded with each other. Same with people. So I do all I can to be around positive people. Hope you felt this room was different than most when you walked in here. I like being in such environments. Same with being outside' that perspective puts things into a better way of seeing things. I hope you will do the same. Think about your friends. Are they taking you up or down. What are you doing for them.

**RA** This sounds like a statement of her philosophy. Sounds very much like what I have read in the disclosure document she and Sid give out and also like the presentations I have heard

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them make to students at BYU who were thinking about doing their student teaching in this program. Some of the themes I see being mentioned here that I want to follow-up on and document are: teachers as facilitators, students responsible for their own learning, respecting one another and each other's responsibilities, developing person-to-person relationships rather than a position-to-position orientation, the importance of a positive environment for learning, using settings other than the classroom to expand learning perspectives, and the use of mini-lectures or pep talks to communicate the teachers' values and expectations.

**DS** The students are sitting around 12 groups of tables (3-4 tables have been pushed together to form these groups) in plastic chairs. The carpet in the room is a dirty green, torn in several spots but freshly vacuumed. All along the North upper wall of the room are several mounts of animal busts' mule deer, antelope, mountain goat, etc. There are three dividers (about 7 feet tall and 10 feet long) on rollers along the West end of the room that are covered with colorful posters showing people skydiving, sail boarding, skiing. Some show scenes from nature with no people in them. The dividers seem to be blocking the view in from the double doors that are built into the West wall. The South wall of the room is a really a movable wall that could be opened to include a neighboring room. There are several blackboards on all the other walls. There are no desks. There is a door in the East wall that is opened now to let in the cooler air from outside.



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