RETHINKING METHODS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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Contents

written by sociologists or other social scientists. Given that the arguments for qualitative approaches are often essentially social scientific ones rather than peculiarly psychological, at this stage, until more dedicated psychology texts are available, the particular discipline of the author may be of less importance. At the same time I would want to reiterate that, in my view, qualitative approaches do have a particularly valuable part to play specifically in psychological research (Smith, 1995a).

I have referred to specific references as appropriate in the chapter. Two useful general texts on qualitative approaches, both devoting chapters to the stages in an interview project and then also considering other methods, for example participant observation and the use of personal documents, are Burgess (1984) and Taylor and Bogdan (1984). Perhaps the first general or mainstream psychology methods text to give a proper hearing to qualitative approaches is by Robson (1993), which accessibly introduces qualitative and quantitative methods alongside each other. A qualitative approach in current psychology which has been more thoroughly documented is discourse analysis. See Potter and Wetherell (Chapter 6, this volume).

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3 Grounded Theory

Kathy Charmaz

This chapter addresses the question that most beginning qualitative researchers ask: 'How can I gather good data and then what should I do with them?' Starting out on a qualitative research project is an exciting challenge but can be a daunting venture. You can learn to do good qualitative research. Sometimes students and professional social scientists alike believe that an insightful qualitative study only results from the researcher's extraordinary talents. They are wrong. Good qualitative research results from hard work and systematic approaches. That means gathering enough data, synthesizing them and making analytic sense of them.

Grounded theory methods provide a set of strategies for conducting rigorous qualitative research. These methods make the strategies of gifted qualitative researchers explicit and available to any diligent novice. Using grounded theory methods expedites your research, enables you to develop a cogent analysis and stimulates your excitement about and enjoyment of doing research. This chapter will help plan your data collection and give you strategies for handling your data analysis.

In the following pages, I introduce the grounded theory method and show how a novice can apply its basic procedures. Throughout the discussion, I illustrate points by drawing upon my recent social psychological study of experiencing chronic illness. To begin, I provide a short discussion of the logic of grounded theory to explain its basic premises and strategies and to locate it within qualitative research more generally. Next, I discuss data collection objectives and strategies to show how to generate useful data. Then I move on to coding qualitative data and describe how creating categories early in the research shapes subsequent data collection. A discussion of memo-writing follows because it is the crucial intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers. Finally, I compare the procedures of the grounded theory approach with traditional logico-deductive research design to clarify their differences.

The logic of grounded theory

Defining grounded theory

What are grounded theory methods? They are a logically consistent set of data collection and analytic procedures aimed to develop theory. Grounded theory methods consist of a set of inductive strategies for

analysing data. That means you start with individual cases, incidents or experiences and develop progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand your data and to identify patterned relationships within it. You begin with an area to study. Then, you build your theoretical analysis on what you discover is relevant in the actual worlds that you study within this area.

Grounded theory methods provide systematic procedures for shaping and handling rich qualitative materials, although they may also be applied to quantitative data. Grounded theory methods allow novices and old hands alike to conduct qualitative research efficiently and effectively because these methods help in structuring and organizing data-gathering and analysis. The distinguishing characteristics of grounded theory methods (see Charmaz, 1983, 1990; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1993) include: (1) simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research; (2) creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from preconceived hypotheses; (3) the development of middle-range theories to explain behaviour and processes; (4) memo-making, that is, writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories, the crucial intermediate step between coding data and writing first drafts of papers; (5) theoretical sampling, that is, sampling for theory construction, not for representativeness of a given population, to check and refine the analyst's emerging conceptual categories; and (6) delay of the literature review. I will address each of these characteristics throughout the chapter. For the moment consider how these characteristics compare with other methods. Most fundamentally, grounded theory methods explicitly unite the research process with theoretical development. Hence, the rigid division of labour between empiricists and theorists breaks down. Similarly, grounded theory methods blur the often rigid boundaries between data collection and data analysis phases of research. Furthermore, grounded theory methods undermine definitions of qualitative analysis as only intuitive and impressionistic and of quantitative analysis as exclusively rigorous and systematic. A major contribution of grounded theory methods is that they provide rigorous procedures for researchers to check, refine and develop their ideas and intuitions about the data. In addition, these methods enable the researcher to make conceptual sense of large amounts of data. A grounded theory analysis starts with data and remains close to the data. Levels of abstraction are built directly upon the data and are checked and refined by gathering further data (cf. Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Strauss, 1987). In this way, grounded theory studies yield dense conceptual analyses of empirical problems and worlds.

For what kinds of research questions are grounded theory methods appropriate? Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, the creators of grounded theory (1967; see also Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), might answer, 'Every kind.' Grounded theory methods are suitable for studying individual processes, interpersonal relations and

the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes. For example, these methods are useful for studying typical social psychological topics such as motivation, personal experience, emotions, identity, attraction, prejudice and interpersonal co-operation and conflict.

A brief history of grounded theory methods

Grounded theory methods emerged from the fruitful collaboration of sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967, 1968; Strauss and Glaser, 1970) during the 1960s. From its beginnings as a social science to the present, sociology has had a long qualitative tradition of ethnographic fieldwork and case-studies (see, for example, Athens, 1989; Biernacki, 1986; Denzin, 1987a, 1987b; Fine, 1987; Glaser and Strauss, 1965, 1968; Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1963; Hochschild, 1983; Lofland, 1966; Park, 1950; Park and Burgess, 1921; Shaw, 1966; Snow and Anderson, 1993; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958; Whyte, 1955). However, by the 1960s that tradition had eroded as sophisticated quantitative methods gained dominance and beliefs in scientific logic, objectivity and truth supported and legitimized reducing qualities of human experience to quantifiable variables. Proponents of quantification relegated qualitative research to a preliminary exercise to refine quantitative instruments. Simultaneously, a growing division occurred between theory and research. At that time, theory informed quantitative research through the logico-deductive model of research, but this research seldom led to new theory construction.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) challenged: (1) the arbitrary division of theory and research; (2) the prevailing view of qualitative research as primarily a precursor to more 'rigorous' quantitative methods by claiming the legitimacy of qualitative work in its own right; (3) the belief that qualitative methods were impressionistic and unsystematic; (4) the separation of data collection and analysis phases of research; and (5) the assumption that qualitative research only produced descriptive case-studies rather than theory development. They articulated explicit analytic procedures and research strategies that previously had remained implicit among qualitative researchers. Previously, qualitative researchers had taught generations of students through a combination of mentoring and direct field experience (cf. Rock, 1979). Glaser and Strauss changed that oral tradition by offering a clear set of written guidelines for conducting qualitative research. The epistemological assumptions, logic and systematic approach of grounded theory methods reflect Glaser's rigorous quantitative training at Columbia University. The intimate link to symbolic interaction (cf. Denzin, 1995) stems from Strauss's training at the University of Chicago with Herbert Blumer and Robert Park. Through their influence, Strauss adopted both the pragmatic philosophical tradition with its emphasis on studying process, action and meaning and the Chicago legacy of ethnographic research (see especially Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1938; Park, 1950; Park and Burgess, 1921).

As Glaser and Strauss (1967) have argued, grounded theory methods cut across disciplines. These methods have been widely adopted in education, evaluation research, nursing and organizational studies (see, for example, Chenitz and Swanson, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Martin and Turner, 1986; Price, 1994; Stern, 1994; Turner, 1981). Some grounded theorists (Charmaz, 1990, 1993, 1994c) subscribe to interpretative views of the research process as created through the researcher's disciplinary and theoretical proclivities, relationships with respondents, and the interactional construction and rendering of the data. However, leading grounded theorists (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) portray their methods as compatible with traditional positivistic assumptions of an external reality that researchers can discover and record. As such, I have long argued that grounded theory can bridge traditional positivistic methods with interpretative methods in disciplines like psychology that embraced quantification (Charmaz, 1986). Similarly, Rennie et al. (1988) propose that grounded theory methods can resolve the growing crisis in confidence concerning methods in psychology. To them, grounded theory offers systematic approaches for discovering significant aspects of human experience that remain inaccessible with traditional verification methods. Because grounded theory methods are designed to study processes, these methods enable psychologists to study the development, maintenance and change of individual and interpersonal processes. By borrowing and adapting Glaser's (1978) emphasis on basic social and social psychological processes, psychologists can also gain a deeper understanding of psychological processes.

The place of grounded theory in qualitative research

How then, do grounded theory methods fit with other qualitative research? Grounded theory methods bridge interpretative analyses with traditional positivist assumptions because they are used to discover research participants' meanings; they assume an empirical enterprise, and they provide a set of procedures to follow (see Bigus et al., 1994; Charmaz, 1983, 1986, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Rennie et al., 1988; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). These methods can be employed in any approach ranging from highly interpretative to structured positivist analyses. Interpretative analyses attempt to describe, explain and understand the lived experiences of a group of people (cf. Denzin, 1989b; Giorgi, 1995). The interpretative tradition relies on knowledge from the 'inside'. That is, this tradition starts with and develops analyses from the point of view of the experiencing person (see also Bigus, 1994). Such studies aim to capture the worlds of people by describing their situations, thoughts, feelings and actions and by relying on portraying the research participants' lives and voices. Their concerns shape the direction and form of the research. The researcher seeks to learn how they construct their experience through their actions, intentions, beliefs and feelings.

Positivistic assumptions, in contrast, lead to studies from the 'outside', or those studies that rely substantially more on the observer's concerns and interpretations of the research participants' behaviour. Positivistic assumptions rest on notions of a describable, predictable world that is external to the observer and from which discoveries may be made. Grounded theory methods can be used by researchers who subscribe to realist, objectivist assumptions as well as by those who subscribe to interpretative, constructionist perspectives. According to Van Maanen (1988), a realist rendering of the data is characterized by the absence of the author from most of the text and by the unquestioned authority of the researcher to portray the research participants, to document their lives minutely and to interpret them and their worlds objectively. Van Maanen casts grounded theory studies as realist works, whether they begin with interpretative or positivistic assumptions. He does so because grounded theorists typically provide dispassionate, objectivist accounts of their data and assume that by being objective observers they will discover processes in an external world of their research participants that remains separate from themselves. Grounded theory works are *empirical* studies, whether their data sources are autobiographies, published accounts, public records, novels, intensive interviews, case-studies, participant observer field notes or personal journals. As a result, the empiricism inherent in grounded theory methods makes them less congenial to those postmodernists who advocate abandoning empirical research with thinking, feeling, acting human beings. These postmodernists may, however, be amenable to studying pre-established texts (see Clough, 1992; Denzin, 1991, 1992).

Collecting data

Generating data

Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis means that the researcher's emerging analysis shapes his or her data collection procedures. Such simultaneous involvement focuses grounded theory studies and thus not only directs the researcher's efforts, but also fosters his or her taking control of the data. The early analytic work leads the researcher subsequently to collect more data around emerging themes and questions. By simultaneously becoming involved in data collection and analysis, you will avoid the pitfall of amassing volumes of general, unfocused data that both overwhelm you and do not lead to anything new. If you already have collected a substantial amount of data, of course begin with it, but expect to collect additional data on your emerging analytic interests and themes. That way, you can follow up on topics that are explicit in one interview or observation and remain implicit or absent in others. For example, when a woman with multiple sclerosis remarked to me about having 'bad days', she said, 'I deal with time differently [during a bad day when she felt sick] and time has a different meaning to me' (Charmaz, 1991a: 52). When

we discussed meanings of time, I saw how she connected experiencing time with images of self. On a bad day, her day shortened because all her daily routines – for example, bathing, dressing, exercising, resting – lengthened substantially. As her daily routines stretched, her preferred self shrunk. Until I saw how she defined herself in relation to mundane daily routines, I had not asked interview questions that directly addressed this relationship.[1]

The hallmark of grounded theory studies consists of the researcher deriving his or her analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses. Thus, grounded theory methods force the researcher to attend closely to what happens in the empirical world he or she studies. From a constructionist, interpretative perspective, the grounded theory researcher must then study the meanings, intentions and actions of the research participants – whether he or she observes them directly, constructs life histories with them, engages them in intensive interviewing or uses other materials such as clinical case histories or autobiographies.

From the beginning, the researcher actively constructs the data in concert with his or her participants (cf. Charmaz, 1990). The first question the researcher must ask is 'What is happening here?' (cf. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992). Perhaps in their enthusiasm to develop an inductive methodology that tightly linked emergent theory and data, Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978) imply in their early works that the categories inhere in the data and may even leap out at the researcher. I disagree. Rather, the categories reflect the interaction between the observer and observed. Certainly any observer's worldview, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical proclivities and research interests will influence his or her observations and emerging categories. Grounded theorists attempt to use their background assumptions, proclivities and interests to sensitize them to look for certain issues and processes in their data. Consistent with Blumer's (1969) depiction of sensitizing concepts, grounded theorists often begin their studies with certain research interests and a set of general concepts.[2] For example, I began my studies of people with chronic illnesses with an interest in how they experienced time and how their experiences of illness affected them. My guiding interests brought concepts such as self-concept, identity and duration into the study. But that was only the start. I used those concepts as *points of departure* to look at data, to listen to interviewees and to think analytically about the data. Guiding interests and disciplinary perspectives should provide grounded theorists with such points of departure for developing, rather than limiting, their ideas. Then they develop specific concepts through the research process as they study their data.

What happens if the data do not illuminate the researcher's initial interests? Often, our research topics are sufficiently general that finding interesting data is not a problem, although we find ourselves pursuing unanticipated leads. Grounded theorists evaluate the fit between their

initial research interests and their emerging data. They do not force preconceived ideas and theories directly upon their data. Rather, they follow the leads that they define in the data, or design another way of collecting data to try to follow their initial interests. Thus, I started with research interests in time and self-concept but also pursued other topics that my respondents defined as crucial. To understand their concerns, I felt compelled to explore the problematics of disclosing illness, something I had not anticipated. As a result, I studied how, when and why ill people talk about their conditions. Still, my interest in time alerted me to see if their modes of informing others about their conditions changed over time.

What kind of data should you gather for grounded theory studies? Rich, detailed data give you explicit materials with which to work. When I ask for rich, detailed data, I ask for full or 'thick' (Geertz, 1973) written descriptions of events observed by researchers, extensive accounts of personal experience from respondents and records that provide narratives of experience (such as transcribed tapes of therapy sessions). Participant observers' field notes, interviewers' transcriptions, patient autobiographies, student journals, may all produce rich, detailed data. It helps if you elaborate upon even detailed raw data such as the typed transcription of a patient conference. Hence, provide the context by describing the structure of the conference, the events leading up to it, the players in it and their unstated concerns (if known or implicit). Similarly, it helps to place a personal interview into perspective by adding a description of the situation, the interaction, the person's affect and your perception of how the interview went. In any case, you need thorough textual renderings of your materials so that you have data that you can study. In short, get as much material down on paper as possible.

Rich data afford views of human experience that etiquette, social conventions and inaccessibility hide or minimize in ordinary discourse. Hence, rich data reveal thoughts, feelings and actions as well as context and structure. In my research, I found that respondents' stories about illness often tumbled out non-stop. For example, one woman stated:

> If you have lupus, I mean one day it's my liver; one day it's my joints; one day it's my head, and it's like people really think you're a hypochondriac if you keep complaining about different ailments. . . . It's like you don't want to say anything because people are going to start thinking, you know, 'God, don't go near her, all she is . . . is complaining about this.' And I think that's why I never say anything because I feel like everything I have is related one way or another to the lupus but most of the people don't know I have lupus, and even those that do are not going to believe that ten different ailments are the same thing. And I don't want anybody saying, you know, [that] they don't want to come around me because I complain. (Charmaz, 1991a: 114–15)

Rich data afford the researcher a thorough knowledge of the empirical world or problem that he or she studies. By having this kind of data, grounded theorists therefore can more readily discern what participants mean and how they define their experiences. Thus, you begin your

interpretations of the data from the respondent's point of view. What you see in the data may not exactly replicate what participants view as going on because you bring different perspectives and concerns to it. (Here I adopt the positivist assumption that it is the researcher's responsibility to find what is 'there' and that it is possible to do so because we already share or can learn to share the language and meanings of those we study.) Having rich data means having detailed texts that allow you to trace events, delineate processes and make comparisons.

The data gathered in grounded theory research become increasingly more focused because the researcher engages in data analysis while collecting data. That data analysis drives subsequent data collection. *The grounded theorist's simultaneous involvement in data-gathering and analysis is explicitly aimed towards developing theory.* Thus, an interviewer will adapt his or her initial interview guide to add areas to explore and to delete questions that have not been fruitful. Many qualitative methodologists refine their questions and follow leads (see Atkinson, 1990, 1992; Berg, 1989; Gubrium, 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Lofland, 1976; Lofland and Lofland, 1994; Seidman, 1991; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984; Smith, Chapter 2, this volume). But grounded theorists do so to develop their emerging theoretical categories (see Abrahamson and Mizrahi, 1994; Biernacki, 1986; Charmaz, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Strauss, 1987). Others may do so to gain 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of concrete behaviour without necessarily looking for thick description that fills out, extends or refines theoretical concepts or enables the researcher to make theoretical connections. In contrast, grounded theorists ask theoretical questions of their thick description. For example, I first became aware of respondents' difficulties about disclosing illness 15 years ago when I interviewed several young adults who agonized over telling room-mates, acquaintances and dates about their conditions. Rather than only obtaining thick description about these difficulties in disclosing, I began to ask myself analytical questions about disclosing as a process and then gathered data that illuminated that process. Among these questions included:

1 What are the properties of disclosing?
2 Which social psychological conditions foster disclosing? Which inhibit it?
3 How does disclosing compare with other forms of telling?
4 How, if at all, does disclosing change after the person becomes accustomed to his or her diagnosis?
5 What strategies, if any, do people use to disclose? When do they use them?

Despite its analytic thrust, grounded theory researchers can both gain thick description and foster theoretical development by listening closely to their respondents, attempting to learn the unstated or assumed meanings

of their statements and shaping their emerging research questions to obtain data that illuminate their theoretical categories.

Making meanings explicit

Grounded theorists aim to analyse processes in their data and thus aim to move away from static analyses. Our emphasis on what people are doing also leads to understanding multiple layers of meanings of their actions. These layers could include the person's (1) stated explanation of his or her action, (2) unstated assumptions about it, (3) intentions for engaging in it, as well as (4) its effects on others and (5) consequences for further individual action and interpersonal relations. Throughout the research process, looking at action in relation to meaning helps the researcher to obtain thick description and to develop categories. How does the researcher study meaning?

One view held by some grounded theorists is that meanings can readily be discovered in the research setting. Glaser (1992) states that the significant issues in the field setting, and therefore the significant data, will be readily apparent to the researcher. He believes that anything other than that preconceives the ensuing research. Unlike Glaser, I assume that the interaction between the researcher and the researched *produces* the data, and therefore the meanings that the researcher observes and defines. A researcher has topics to pursue and research participants have goals, thoughts, feelings and actions. Your research questions and mode of inquiry will shape your subsequent data and analysis. That is why you must become self-aware about why and how you gather your data. You can learn to sense when you are gathering rich, useful data that do not undermine or demean your respondent(s). Not surprisingly, then, I believe the grounded theory method works best when the grounded theorist engages in the data collection as well as the data analysis phases of research. That way, you can explore nuances of meaning and process that hired hands might easily miss.

Certainly respondents' stories may tumble out or the main process in an observational setting may jump out at you. But sometimes neither are the stories so forthcoming nor is the main process so obvious. Even if they are, the researcher may need to do more work to discover the subtlety and complexity of respondents' intentions and actions. Closer study and often direct questioning is needed. For example, we do not have a highly developed language with which to talk about time. Thus, many of my research participants' attitudes towards and actions concerning time were unspoken and taken for granted. Yet their stories about illness often were clearly located in conceptions of time and implicitly referred to qualities of experienced time. For example, the woman's statement above referred to the quality and unevenness of her days. If the researcher plans to explore such areas, then he or she often needs to devise ways to make relevant observations or to construct

questions that will foster pertinent responses. To illustrate, I asked my respondents questions like, 'As you look back on your illness, which events stand out in your mind?', 'What is a typical weekday like for you?' Glaser (1992) might say I force the data here by asking preconceived questions of it. Instead, I *generate* data by investigating aspects of life that the research participant takes for granted. At whatever level you attend to your participants' meanings, intentions and actions, you can create a coherent analysis by using grounded theory methods. Hence, the method is useful for fact-finding descriptive studies as well as more conceptually developed theoretical statements.

Perhaps the most important basic rule for a grounded theorist is: *study your emerging data* (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser, 1978). By studying your data you will become much more aware of your respondents' implicit meanings and taken-for-granted concerns. As a novice, you can best study your data from the very start by transcribing your audio-tapes yourself or through writing your own field notes, rather than, say, dictating them to someone else. By studying your data, you learn nuances of your research participants' language and meanings. Thus, you learn to define the directions in which your data can take you. Studying interview audio-tapes, for example, prompts you to attend closely to your respondents' feelings and views. Charles Horton Cooley (1902) pointed out that we live in the minds of others and they live in ours. Your respondents will live in your mind as you listen carefully over and over to what they say. For example, one student in my class remarked:

> What an impact the words had on me when I sat alone transcribing the tapes. I was more able to hear and feel what these women were saying to me. I realized how, at times, I was preoccupied with thoughts of what my next question was, how my eye contact was, or hoping we were speaking loud enough for the tape-recorder. (Charmaz, 1991b: 393)

Paying close attention to respondents' language can help you bridge your research participants' lived experience with your research questions. To do so, you should avoid taking for granted that you share the same meanings as the respondent. For example, my respondents with chronic illnesses often talked about having 'good days' and 'bad days'. Everyone has good days and bad days whether they are talking about work, child care, school or doing research. As a researcher, however, you cannot assume that your views of good days and bad days mean the same thing as your respondents'. So I probed further and asked more questions around my respondents' taken-for-granted meanings of good and bad days (cf. Smith, Chapter 2, this volume), such as: 'What does a good day mean to you?'; 'Could you describe what a bad day is?'; 'What kinds of things do you do on a good day?'; 'How do these activities compare with those on a bad day?' I discovered that good days mean 'minimal intrusiveness of illness, maximal control over mind, body and actions, and greater choice of activities' (Charmaz, 1991a: 50). The meaning of good days also extends

to increased temporal and spatial horizons, to the quality of the day and to realizing the self one wishes to be. But had I not followed up and asked respondents about the meanings of these terms, their properties would have remained implicit.

Certainly starting the research with strong data-gathering skills helps. The skilled interviewer or observer will know when to ask more questions or make more focused observations. Nevertheless, novice researchers can make remarkable gains in skill during a brief time by attending closely to their methods and by studying their data. By gathering rich data and by making meanings explicit, you will have solid material with which to create your analysis.

Coding the data

The first major analytic phase of the research consists of coding the data. In short, coding is the process of defining what the data are all about. Unlike quantitative coding that means applying preconceived codes (all planned before the researcher even collects data) to the data, qualitative grounded theory coding means *creating* the codes as you study your data. The codes emerge as you study your data. By studying your data, you again interact with them and ask questions of them. (Thus, the interactive nature of grounded theory research is not limited to data collection, but also includes the analytic work.) As a result, the coding process may take you into unforeseen areas and research questions.

Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. The crucial phase of coding leads directly to developing theoretical categories, some of which you may define in your initial codes. To begin your grounded theory analysis, start your initial coding by examining each line of data and defining the actions or events that you see as occurring in it or as represented by it. Nonetheless, line by line coding means naming each line of data (see especially Glaser, 1978). Hence, line-by-line coding helps you begin to take an analytic stance towards your work. Line-by-line coding keeps you close to your data. You have to study your data to arrive at codes. Through line-by-line coding, you begin to build your analysis, from the ground up without taking off on theoretical flights of fancy (Charmaz, 1990). Line-by-line coding also helps you to refrain from imputing your motives, fears or unresolved personal issues to your respondents and to your collected data. Some years ago, a young man in my undergraduate seminar conducted research on adaptation to disability. He had become paraplegic himself when he was hit by a car while bicycling. His 10 in-depth interviews were filled with stories of courage, hope and innovation. His analysis of them was a narrative of grief, anger and loss. When I noted that his analysis did not reflect his collected material, he began to realize how his feelings coloured his perceptions of other people's disabilities. His was an

important realization. However, had he assiduously done line-by-line coding he might have arrived at it before he handed in his paper.

From the standpoint of grounded theory, each idea should earn its way into your analysis (Glaser, 1978). If you apply concepts from your discipline, you must be self-critical to ensure that these concepts work. Do these concepts help you to understand and to explicate what is happening in this line of data? If they do not, use other terms that do.

Line-by-line coding forces you to think about the material in new ways that may differ from your research participants' interpretations. Thomas (1993) states that the researcher must take the familiar, routine and mundane and make it unfamiliar and new. Line-by-line coding helps you to see the familiar in new light. It also helps you gain sufficient distance from your and your participants' taken-for-granted assumptions about the material so that you *can* see it in a new light.

If your codes take another view of a process, action or belief than that of your respondent(s), note that. You have to make analytic sense of the material rather than viewing it as, say, only a sequence of events or as description. Your respondent may not. How do you make analytic sense of the rich stories and descriptions you are compiling? First, look for and identify what you see happening in the data. Some basic questions may help:

1 What is going on?
2 What are people doing?
3 What is the person saying?
4 What do these actions and statements take for granted?
5 How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?

Try to frame your codes in as specific terms as possible. Make your codes active. By being specific and active you will begin to see processes in the data that otherwise would likely remain implicit. Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992) assume that any observer will find the most significant processes. Perhaps. But what you define in the data also relies in part upon the perspectives that you bring to it. Rather than seeing your perspectives as truth, try to see them as representing one view among many. That way, you will become more aware of the concepts that you employ. For example, try not to assume that respondents repress or deny significant 'facts' about their lives. Instead, look for your respondents' understanding of their situations before you judge their attitudes and actions through the assumptions of your perspective. If afterwards you still invoke previously held perspectives as codes, then you will use them more consciously rather than merely automatically. Of course, observers do vary on the codes that they identify, depending on their training and research interests. In the example of line-by-line coding below, my interest in time and self-concept comes through in the first two codes:

Line-by-line coding

shifting symptoms, having inconsistent days interpreting images of self given by others avoiding disclosure predicting rejection keeping others unaware seeing symptoms as connected having others unaware anticipating disbelief controlling others' views avoiding stigma assessing potential losses and risks of disclosing	If you have lupus, I mean one day it's my liver; one day it's my joints; one day it's my head, and it's like people really think you're a hypochondriac if you keep complaining about different ailments. . . . It's like you don't want to say anything because people are going to start thinking, you know, 'God, don't go near her, all she is – is complaining about this.' And I think that's why I never say anything because I feel like everything I have is related one way or another to the lupus but most of the people don't know I have lupus, and even those that do are not going to believe that ten different ailments are the same thing. And I don't want anybody saying, you know, [that] they don't want to come around me because I complain.

Initial codes often range widely across a variety of topics. Because even a short statement or excerpt may address several points, a researcher could use it to illustrate several different categories. I could use the excerpt above to show how avoiding disclosure serves to control identity. I could also use it to show either how a respondent views his or her illness as inexplicable to others or how each day is unpredictable. When seen from the view of multiple interviews, the excerpt reveals the beginnings of becoming progressively more socially and emotionally isolated. Not telling others about illness leads to withdrawing when ill. Most importantly from a grounded theory perspective, initial codes help you to break the data into categories and begin to see processes. Line-by-line coding frees you from 'going native', or from becoming so immersed in your respondent's categories or worldview that you fail to look at your data critically and analytically. Being critical about your data does not necessarily mean that you are critical of your research participants. Instead, being critical forces you to ask *yourself* questions about your data. Such questions include:

1 What process is at issue here?
2 Under which conditions does this process develop?
3 How does the research participant(s) think, feel and act while involved in this process?
4 When, why and how does the process change?
5 What are the consequences of the process?

Line-by-line coding helps you to make decisions about what kinds of data you need to collect next. Thus, you begin to distil the data and frame your inquiry from very early in the data collection. Your line-by-line coding gives you leads to pursue. To illustrate, you may identify an important process in your fifteenth interview. You can go back to your first respondents and see if that process explains events and experiences in

their lives or seek new respondents. Hence, your data collection becomes more focused as does your coding.

Focused coding refers to taking earlier codes that continually reappear in your initial coding and using those codes to sift through large amounts of data. Thus, focused coding is less open-ended and more directed than line-by-line coding. It is also considerably more selective and more conceptual (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser, 1978). Here, you take a limited number of interesting line-by-line codes and you apply them to large amounts of data. By the time you engage in focused coding, you have decided which of your earlier codes make the most analytic sense and categorize your data most accurately and completely. Yet moving to focused coding is not entirely a linear process. As you gather more data, you will find that some respondents or events make explicit what was implicit in earlier respondents' statements or prior events. This kind of 'Aha! Now I understand' experience prompts you to return to your earlier data and study them with a fresh eye. It also may prompt you to return to an earlier respondent to explore an event or issue that you may have glossed over before or that may have been too implicit or unstated to see.

In the example below, I select the codes 'avoiding disclosure' and 'assessing potential losses and risks of disclosing' to capture, synthesize and understand the main themes in the statement. Again, I try to keep the codes active and close to the data:

Focused coding

avoiding disclosure assessing potential losses and risks of disclosing	If you have lupus, I mean one day it's my liver; one day it's my joints; one day it's my head, and it's like people really think you're a hypochondriac if you keep complaining about different ailments. . . . It's like you don't want to say anything because people are going to start thinking, you know, 'God, don't go near her, all she is – is complaining about this'. And I think that's why I never say anything because I feel like everything I have is related one way or another to the lupus but most of the people don't know I have lupus, and even those that do are not going to believe that ten different ailments are the same thing. And I don't want anybody saying, you know, [that] they don't want to come around me because I complain.

Focused coding allows you to create and to try out categories for capturing your data. A category is part of your developing analytic framework. By categorizing, you select certain codes as having overriding significance in explicating events or processes in your data. A category may subsume common themes and patterns in several codes. For example, my category of 'keeping illness contained' included 'packaging illness', that is, treating it 'as if it is controlled, delimited, and confined to specific realms, such as private life', and 'passing', that is, 'concealing illness, maintaining a conventional self-presentation, and performing like unimpaired peers' (Charmaz, 1991a: 66–8). Again, make your categories as conceptual as possible while simultaneously remaining true to and consistent with your data. I try to make my focused codes active (to reflect what people are doing or what is happening) and brief so that I can view them as potential categories. By keeping codes active, you can see processes more readily. By keeping your focused codes as succinct as possible, you have a head start on creating sharp, clear categories. By raising a code to the level of a category, you treat it more conceptually and analytically. Thus, you go beyond using the code as a descriptive tool to view and synthesize data.

The emphasis on process in grounded theory starts with a substantive process that you develop from your codes. 'Keeping illness contained' and 'packaging illness' above are two such processes. As they work with their data, grounded theorists try to aim for defining generic processes. The two processes above are embedded in more fundamental, generic processes of personal information control about illness and about choices in disclosing that information. For sociologists, generic processes are basic to social life; for psychologists, generic processes are fundamental for psychological existence. A generic process cuts across different empirical settings and problems; it can be applied to varied substantive areas (Bigus et al., 1994; Prus, 1987; Wiseman, 1994). Thus, the grounded theorist can elaborate and refine the generic process by gathering more data from the diverse arenas in which the process is evident. For example, personal information control and choices in disclosing are often problematic for homosexuals, sexual abuse survivors, drug-users and ex-convicts as well as for people with chronic conditions. By concentrating on developing the generic process, you will more readily discover its properties, specify the conditions under which it develops and look for its consequences.

As you raise the code to a category, you begin (1) to explicate its properties, (2) to specify conditions under which it arises, is maintained and changes, (3) to describe its consequences and (4) to show how this category relates to other categories (cf. Charmaz, 1983, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). You do all this work in your written memos that I outline below.

Categories may be *in vivo* codes that you take directly from your respondents' discourse or they may represent your theoretical or substantive definition of what is happening in the data. For example, my terms 'good days and bad days' and 'living one day at a time' came directly from my respondents' voices. In contrast, my categories 'recapturing the past' and 'time in immersion and immersion in time' reflect my theoretical definitions of actions and events. Further, categories such as 'pulling in', 'facing dependency' and 'making trade-offs' address my respondents' substantive realities of grappling with a serious illness. I created these codes and used them as categories but they reflect my respondents' concerns and actions. Novice researchers may find that they rely most on *in vivo* and substantive codes. Doing so nets a grounded

analysis more than a theory. Nonetheless, studying how these codes fit together in categories can help you treat them more theoretically.

As you engage in focused coding, you attempt to build and to clarify your category by examining all the data it covers and by identifying the variations within it and between other categories. You also will become aware of gaps in your analysis. For example, I developed my category of 'existing from day to day' when I realized that living one day at a time did not fully cover impoverished people's level of desperation. The finished narrative reads:

> Existing from day to day occurs when a person plummets into continued crises that rip life apart. It reflects a loss of control of health and the wherewithal to keep life together.
>
> Existing from day to day means constant struggle for daily survival. Poverty and lack of support contribute to and complicate that struggle. Hence, poor and isolated people usually plummet further and faster than affluent individuals with concerned families. Loss of control extends to being unable to obtain necessities – food, shelter, heat, medical care.
>
> The struggle to exist keeps people in the present, especially if they have continued problems in getting the basic necessities that middle-class adults take for granted. Yet other problems can assume much greater significance for these people than their illness – a violent husband, a runaway child, an alcoholic spouse, the overdue rent.
>
> Living one day at a time differs from existing from day to day. Living one day at a time provides a strategy for controlling emotions, managing life, dimming the future, and getting through a troublesome period. It involves managing stress, illness, or regimen, and dealing with these things each day to control them as best as one can. It means concentrating on the here and now and relinquishing other goals, pursuits, and obligations. (Charmaz, 1991a: 185)

Note the comparisons between the two categories above. To generate categories through focused coding, you need to make comparisons between data, incidents, contexts and concepts. It helps to make the following comparisons: (1) comparing different people (such as their beliefs, situations, actions, accounts or experiences); (2) comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time; and (3) comparing categories in the data with other categories (cf. Charmaz, 1983; Glaser, 1978). As I compared different people's experiences, I realized that some people's situations forced them into the present. I then started to look at how my rendering of living one day at a time did not apply to them. I reviewed earlier interviews and began to look for published accounts that might clarify the comparison. As is evident in the distinctions between these two categories above, focused coding prompts you to begin to see the relationships and patterns between categories.

Memo-writing

Memo-writing is the intermediate step between coding and the first draft of your completed analysis. Memo-writing helps you to elaborate processes, assumptions and actions that are subsumed under your code. When memo-writing, you begin to look at your coding as processes to explore rather than as solely ways to sort data into topics. Making your codes as active as possible from the start enables you to define how various categories are connected in an overall process. Many qualitative researchers who do not write memos become lost in mountains of data and cannot make sense of them.

Grounded theory methods aim towards discovering and defining processes. In that sense, these researchers look for patterns, even when focusing on a single case or individual (see Strauss and Glaser, 1970). Because they stress identifying patterns, grounded theorists typically use their respondents' stories to illustrate points – rather than to provide complete portrayals of their lives.[3] Bring your raw data right into your memo so that you preserve the most telling examples of your ideas from the very start of your analytic work. Provide enough verbatim material to ground the abstract analysis fully. By bringing verbatim material from different sources into your memo-writing, you can more readily make precise comparisons. Thus, memo-writing helps you to go beyond individual cases and to define patterns.

Memo-writing consists of taking your categories apart by breaking them into their components. Define your category as carefully as possible. That means you identify its properties or characteristics, look for its underlying assumptions and show how and when the category develops and changes. To illustrate, I found that people frequently referred to living one day at a time when they suffered a medical crisis or faced continued uncertainty. So I began to ask questions about what living one day at a time was like for them. From their responses as well as from published autobiographical accounts, I began to define the category and its characteristics. The term 'living one day at a time' condenses a whole series of implicit meanings and assumptions. It becomes a strategy for handling unruly feelings, for exerting some control over a life now uncontrollable, for facing uncertainty and for handling a conceivably foreshortened future. Memo-writing spurs you to start digging into implicit, unstated and condensed meanings.

You probably wonder when you should start writing memos. Begin as soon as you have some interesting ideas and categories that you wish to pursue. If you are at a loss about what to write about, look for the codes that you have used repeatedly in your earlier data collection. Then start elaborating on these codes. Keep collecting data, keep coding and keep refining your ideas through writing more and further developed memos. Some researchers who use grounded theory methods discover a few interesting findings early in their data collection and then truncate their research. They do not achieve the 'intimate familiarity' that Lofland and Lofland (1994) avow meets the standards for good qualitative research. You need to show that you have covered your topic in-depth by having sufficient cases to explore and to elaborate your categories fully.[4]

Memo-writing should free you to explore your ideas about your categories. Treat memos as preliminary, partial and immanently correctable. Just note where you are on firm ground and where you are making conjectures. Then go back to the field to check your conjectures. Memo-writing is much like free-writing or pre-writing (Elbow, 1981; see also Becker, 1986). You can do it for your eyes only and use it to help you think about your data. Do not worry about verb tense, overuse of prepositional phrases, or lengthy sentences at this point. Just get your ideas down as quickly and clearly as you can. You are writing to render the data, not to communicate them to an audience. Later, after you turn your memo into a section of a paper, you can start revising the material to make it accessible to a reader. Writing memos quickly without editing them gives you the added bonus of developing and preserving your own voice in your writing. Hence, your writing will read as if a living, thinking, feeling human being wrote it rather than a dead social scientist. From the beginning, you can write memos at different levels of abstraction – from the concrete to the highly theoretical. Some of your memos will find their way directly into your first draft of your analysis. Others you can set aside to develop later into a different focus.

Much of your memo-writing should be directed to making comparisons, what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call 'constant comparative methods'. Hence, you compare one respondent's beliefs, stance and actions with another respondent's, or one experience with another. If you have longitudinal data, compare a respondent's response, experience or situation at one point in time with that at another time. Then, as you become more analytic, start to make detailed comparisons between categories and then between concepts. Through memo-writing, you clarify which categories are major and which are more minor. Thus, memo-writing helps you to direct the shape and form of your emergent analysis from the very early stages of your research.

At each more analytic and abstract level of memo-writing, bring your data along with you right into your analysis. Build your analysis in the memo upon your data. Bringing your data into successive levels of memo-writing ultimately saves time because then you do not have to dig through stacks of material to illustrate your points. The following excerpt serves as an example of memo-writing taken from my own research.

Example of memo-writing

> Living one day at a time means dealing with illness on a day-to-day basis, holding future plans and even ordinary activities in abeyance while the person and, often, others deal with illness. When living one day at a time, the person feels that his or her future remains unsettled, that he or she cannot foresee the future or if there will be a future. Living one day at a time allows the person to focus on illness, treatment and regimen without becoming entirely immobilized by fear or future implications. By concentrating on the present, the person can avoid or minimize thinking about death and the possibility of dying.

Relation to Time Perspective

> The felt need to live one day at a time often drastically alters a person's time perspective. Living one day at a time pulls the person into the present and pushes back past futures (the futures the person projected before illness or before this round of illness) so that they recede without mourning [their loss]. These past futures can slip away, perhaps almost unnoticed. [I then go and compare three respondents' situations, statements and time perspectives.]

Memo-making leads directly to theoretical sampling, that is, collecting more data to clarify your ideas and to plan how to fit them together. Here, you go back and sample for the purpose of *developing* your emerging theory, not for increasing the generalizability of your results. When I was trying to figure out how people with chronic illnesses defined the passage of time, I intentionally went back to several people I had interviewed before and asked them more focused questions about how they perceived times of earlier crisis and when time seemed to slow, quicken, drift or drag. When an experience resonated with an individual, he or she could respond to even esoteric questions. For example, when I studied their stories, I realized that chronically ill adults implicitly located their self-concepts in the past, present or future. These timeframes reflected the form and content of self and mirrored hopes and dreams for self as well as beliefs and understandings about self. Hence, I made 'the self in time' a major category. Thereafter, I explicitly asked more people if they saw themselves in the past, present or future. An elderly working-class woman said without hesitation:

> I see myself in the future now. If you'd asked where I saw myself eight months ago, I would have said, 'the past'. I was so angry then because I had been so active. And to go downhill as fast as I did – I felt life had been awfully cruel to me. Now I see myself in the future because there's something the Lord wants me to do. Here I sit all crumpled in this chair not being able to do anything for myself and still there's a purpose for me to be here. [Laughs.] I wonder what it could be. (Charmaz, 1991a: 256)

Theoretical sampling helps you to fill out your categories, to discover variation within them and to define gaps between them. Theoretical sampling relies on comparative methods. Through using comparative methods, you can define the properties of your categories and specify the conditions under which they are linked to other categories. In this way, you raise your categories to concepts in your emerging theory. By the time you need to conduct theoretical sampling, you will have developed a set of categories that you have already found to be relevant and useful to explain your data. After you decide that these categories best explain what is happening in your study, treat them as concepts. In this sense, these concepts are useful to understand many incidents or issues in your data (cf. Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I recommend conducting theoretical sampling later in the research to ensure that you have already defined relevant issues and allowed significant data to emerge. Otherwise, early theoretical sampling may bring premature closure to your analysis.

Through theoretical sampling, you will likely discover variation within the process you are analysing. When conducting theoretical sampling, you are much more selective than before about whom you obtain data from and what you seek from these individuals. You may focus on certain experiences, events or issues, not on individuals per se, because you want to develop your theoretical categories and need to define how and when they vary. However, observing or talking with individuals is the likely way in which you gain more knowledge about the experiences, events or issues that you seek to treat theoretically. For example, one of my main categories was 'immersion in illness' (Charmaz, 1991a). Major properties of immersion include recasting life around illness, slipping into illness routines, pulling into one's inner circle, facing dependency and experiencing an altered (slowed) time perspective. However, not everyone's time perspective changed. How could I account for that?

By going back through my data, I gained some leads. Then I talked with more people about specific experiences and events. Theoretical sampling helped me to refine the analysis and make it more complex. I then added a category 'variations in immersion' that begins as follows and then goes on to detail each remaining point:

> A lengthy immersion in illness shapes daily life and affects how one experiences time. Conversely, ways of experiencing time dialectically affect the qualities of immersion in illness. The picture above of immersion and time has sharp outlines. What sources of variation soften or alter the picture of immersion and time? The picture may vary according to the person's (1) type of illness, (2) kind of medication, (3) earlier time perspective, (4) life situation, and (5) goals.
>
> The type of illness shapes the experience and way of relating to time. Clearly trying to manage diabetes necessitates gaining a heightened awareness of timing the daily routines. But the effects of the illness may remain much more subtle. People with Sjogren's syndrome, for example, may have periods of confusion when they feel wholly out of synchrony with the world around them. For them, things happen too quickly, precisely when their bodies and minds function too slowly. Subsequently, they may retreat into routines to protect themselves. Lupus patients usually must retreat because they cannot tolerate the sun. Sara Shaw covered her windows with black blankets when she was extremely ill. Thus, her sense of chronological time became further distorted as day and night merged together into an endless flow of illness. (Charmaz, 1991a: 93)

Theoretical sampling prompts you to collect further data that pinpoint key issues in your research by defining them explicitly and by identifying their properties and parameters. Your subsequent memo-writing becomes more precise, analytic and incisive. By moving between data collection and analysis in your memo-writing about your theoretical sampling, you will follow leads, check out hunches and refine your ideas. This way you have solid materials and sound ideas with which to work. Having both will give you a sense of confidence in your perceptions of your data and in your developing ideas about them.

After filling out your theoretical categories, and ordering them through sorting the memos you have written about them, you are ready to start writing the first draft of your paper (see Becker, 1986; Richardson, 1990; Wolcott, 1990). As you write, try to explicate your logic and purpose clearly. That may take a draft or two. Then outline your draft to identify your main points and to organize how they fit together. (But do not write your draft from an outline – use your memos.) Your main argument or thesis may not be clear (to you as well as to others) until you write and rework several drafts. As your argument becomes clearer, keep tightening it by reorganizing the sections of your paper around it.

What place do raw data such as interview excerpts or field notes have in the body of your paper? Grounded theorists generally provide enough verbatim material to demonstrate the connection between the data and the analysis, but give more weight to the concepts derived from the data.[5] Their analytic focus typically leads grounded theorists to concentrate on making their theoretical relationships explicit and on subordinating their verbatim material to it (cf. Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). Unlike most other grounded theorists, I prefer to present many detailed interview quotes and examples in the body of my work. I do so to keep the human story in the forefront of the reader's mind and to make the conceptual analysis more accessible to a wider audience (see, for example, Charmaz, 1991a, 1994a, 1994b).

After you have developed your conceptual analysis of the data, then go to the literature in your field and compare how and where your work fits in with it. At this point, you must cover the literature thoroughly and weave it into your work explicitly. Then revise and rework your draft to make it a solid finished paper. Use the writing process to sharpen, clarify and integrate your developing analysis. Through writing and rewriting, you can simultaneously make your analysis more abstract and your rendering and grounding of it more concrete. In short, you hone your abstract analysis to define essential properties, assumptions, relationships and processes while providing sufficient actual data to demonstrate how your analysis is grounded in lived experience.

Conclusion

Grounded theory methods contrast with traditional logico-deductive research design. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) noted long ago, grounded theory starts from a different set of assumptions than traditional quantitative research design. The inductive nature of these methods assumes an openness and flexibility of approach. Thus, you follow the leads gained from your view of the data, not from the careful and exhaustive literature review of the traditional research design. A fundamental premise of grounded theory is to let the key issues emerge rather than to force them into preconceived categories. Traditional research design, in contrast, is theory-driven from extant theories in the field. Hence, traditional research design requires the investigator to prestructure each phase of the research

process to verify or to refute these extant theories. In short, each step is necessarily preconceived.

The grounded theorist builds the research as it ensues rather than having it completely planned before beginning the data collection. Similarly, you shape and alter the data collection to pursue the most interesting and relevant material. This approach differs sharply from the traditional research design with its structured instruments that are used in the same way with each research subject.

The purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theoretical analysis of the data that fits the data and has relevance to the area of study. The procedures within the method are then aimed to further theory development. Traditional research design generates data, not theory, to test existing theories by logically deducing hypotheses from them. By offering a set of systematic procedures, grounded theory enables qualitative researchers to generate ideas that may later be verified through traditional logico-deductive methods.

Nonetheless, as Glaser and Strauss originally claimed, grounded theory qualitative works stand on their own because they: (1) explicate basic (generic) processes in the data; (2) analyse a substantive field or problem, (3) make sense of human behaviour; (4) provide flexible, yet durable, analyses that other researchers can refine or update; and (5) have potential for greater generalizability (for example, when conducted at multiple sites) than other qualitative works. But are most grounded theory works actually theory? No, not at this point. At present, most grounded theory researchers have aimed to develop rich conceptual analyses of lived experience and social worlds instead of intending to create substantive or formal theory. They wish to pursue more basic questions within the empirical world and try to understand the mysteries and puzzles it presents. Thus, these grounded theorists have given greater emphasis to developing analytic categories that synthesize and explicate processes in the worlds they study rather than to constructing tightly framed theories that generate hypotheses and make explicit predictions. Nonetheless, grounded theory methods provide powerful tools for taking conceptual analyses into theory development. For this reason, grounded theory methods offer psychologists exciting possibilities for revisioning psychological theory as well as useful strategies for rethinking psychological research methods.

Notes

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1 Her comment provided a valuable source of *comparison*, along with being something to corroborate. For example, this piece of data allowed me to frame new questions: To what extent do people view themselves as separated from or embedded in their daily routines? Which daily routines? How does sickness affect their view? When do they claim the self that they experience while ill? When do they reject it? For a contrasting view of another person with multiple sclerosis, see Hirsch (1977: 169–70).

2 Grounded theorists assume that professional researchers, unlike student initiates, already have a sound footing in their disciplines. That is why they recommend using disciplinary concepts and perspectives to *sensitize* the researcher to look for certain processes and topics, but not to blind them to other issues. So any well-trained researcher already possesses a set of epistemological assumptions about the world, disciplinary perspectives and often an intimate familiarity with the research topic and the literature about it. The point is for any grounded theory researcher to remain as open as possible in the early stages of the research. The use of sensitizing concepts and perspectives provides a place to *start*, not to *end*. Hence, grounded theorists develop their sensitizing concepts in relation to the processes they define in their data. For example, I took the concept of identity and developed a framework of identity levels in an identity hierarchy (Charmaz, 1987). In contrast, the logico-deductive model in a traditional model of research necessitates operationalizing the previously established concept as accurately as possible.

3 Recent critics from narrative analysis and postmodernism argue that the grounded theory emphasis on fracturing the data (that is, breaking them up to define their analytic properties) does not allow sufficient attention to the individual (see, for example, Conrad, 1990; Riessman, 1990). These critics now argue that the task of the social scientist is to reveal the totality of the individual's story. Most individuals I interview do not want their whole stories revealed, or their identities exposed. Nor would they have agreed to participate in the research if telling their stories in entirety had been my intent. To date, grounded theory studies have not focused on individual narratives per se. However, that certainly does not mean that grounded theory methods inherently preclude such a focus.

4 Of course, the thoroughness of your work also depends on whether you are doing it for an undergraduate exercise, a graduate thesis or a professional publication.

5 To date, there is little agreement how much verbatim material is necessary in qualitative research more generally. Some narrative analysts and postmodernists advocate emphasizing the individual's story (see Conrad, 1990; Richardson, 1992; Riessman, 1990) and developing new ways to present it (see, for example, Ellis and Bochner, 1992; Richardson, 1992). Grounded theory works, in contrast, usually take a more traditional social scientific approach of making arguments, presenting and explicating concepts, and offering evidence for assertions and ideas. But compared to those qualitative studies that primarily synthesize description, grounded theory studies are substantially more analytic and conceptual.