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Grounded Theory Methodology

An Overview

ANSELM STRAUSS

JULIET CORBIN

THE purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the origins, purposes, uses, and contributions of grounded theory methodology. We will not address the methodology's suggested procedures or much of the logic lying behind them, as these have been discussed extensively elsewhere (see, e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; see also Charmaz, 1983, 1990). We will assume here that readers either are acquainted with some of those writings or, if sufficiently interested in this chapter, will turn to those sources.

Grounded theory is a *general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. A central feature of this analytic approach is "a general method of [constant] comparative analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. vii); hence the approach is often referred to as the *constant comparative method* (for the original formulation, see Glaser, 1965/1967). Since its introduction 25 years ago, a number of guidelines

and procedures have evolved through the research experience of its users; these are designed to enhance the effectiveness of this methodology in research. The suggested guidelines and procedures allow much latitude for ingenuity and are an aid to creativity (see below for further discussion).

In this methodology, theory may be *generated* initially from the data, or, if existing (grounded) theories seem appropriate to the area of investigation, then these may be *elaborated* and modified as incoming data are meticulously played against them. (For this second point, see Strauss, 1987; see also a similar approach by a sociologist influenced by Glaser & Strauss's *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 1967—Diane Vaughan, 1992; she terms it "theoretical elaboration.") Researchers can also usefully carry into current studies any theory based on their *previous research*, providing it seems relevant to these—but again the matching of theory against data must be rigorously carried out.

Grounded theory methodology explicitly involves "generating theory and doing social research [as] two parts of the same process" (Glaser, 1978,

AUTHORS' NOTE: This summary statement represents the authors' views as participants in, contributors to, and observers of grounded theory's evolution. Others who have been part of this intellectual movement will differ in their views of some points made here and the relative importance we give to them. We thank Leonard Schatzman for his careful reading of the manuscript and some very useful comments.

p. 2). In proposing this approach to the development of theories, Glaser and Strauss were fully cognizant that alternative approaches to creating and elaborating theory—without explicit linkage to actual research—were popular, or assumed, or vigorously argued for (at the time, these included those of Parsons, Merton, and Blau); they still are (see Laumann, Habermas, or Alexander). In that sense, but also in its inclusion of both general guidelines and, over the years, more specific procedures for producing grounded theories, this approach is still unique. Impressed by this radical *research* approach to theory development, Baszanger (1992, pp. 52-53), a French sociologist, has recently commented on the concerted and detailed “hard work” entailed in generating the resultant concepts and tracing their relationships.

Some Similarities and Differences With Other Modes

Similarities

Grounded theory studies share some similarities with other modes of carrying out qualitative research. Sources of data are the same: interviews and field observations, as well as documents of all kinds (including diaries, letters, autobiographies, biographies, historical accounts, and newspaper and other media materials). Videotapes may also be used. Like other qualitative researchers, grounded theorists can utilize quantitative data or combine qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis (see the discussion below, but also see Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 185-220). Advocates of this methodology assume, as do many other researchers, that some form of social science is possible and desirable. Also, as have others, grounded theorists have redefined the usual scientific canons for the purposes of studying human behavior (see explicit discussions in Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. viii, 224; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) assert:

In this book we have raised doubts about the applicability of these [the usual] canons of rigor as proper criteria for judging the credibility of theory based on the use of this methodology. We have suggested that criteria of judgment be based instead on the detailed elements of the actual strategies used for collecting, coding, analyzing, and presenting data when generating theory, and on the way in which people read the theory. (p. 224)

Involved in this commonly shared redefining is an insistence that ours is interpretive work and,

as described below, that interpretations *must* include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study. Interpretations are sought for understanding the actions of individual or collective actors being studied. Yet, those who use grounded theory procedures share with many other qualitative researchers a distinctive position. They accept responsibility for their interpretive roles. They do not believe it sufficient merely to report or give voice to the viewpoints of the people, groups, or organizations studied. Researchers assume the further responsibility of interpreting what is observed, heard, or read (we comment further on this later in the chapter).

Differences

The major difference between this methodology and other approaches to qualitative research is its emphasis upon theory development. Researchers can aim at various levels of theory when using grounded theory procedures. However, most grounded theory studies have been directed at developing substantive theory. This is because of the overwhelming substantive interests of grounded theory researchers rather than the nature of their methodology. As will be discussed later, higher-level “general” theory is also possible, but when grounded this differs from more deductive types of general theory because of its generation and development through interplay with data collected in actual research (for an example, see Glaser & Strauss, 1970). Regardless of level of theory, there is built into this style of extensive interrelated data collection and theoretical analysis an explicit mandate to strive toward *verification* of its resulting hypotheses (statements of relationships between concepts). This is done *throughout the course* of a research project, rather than assuming that verification is possible only through follow-up quantitative research. Enhanced also by its procedures is the possibility of developing theory of great conceptual density and with considerable meaningful variation. *Conceptual density* refers to richness of concept development and relationships—which rest on great familiarity with associated data and are checked out systematically with these data. (This is different from Geertz’s “thick descriptions,” where the emphasis is on description rather than conceptualization.)

Other Distinguishing Characteristics: Procedures

Certain other general procedures have made this methodology effective and influential. Besides the constant making of comparisons, these include the systematic asking of generative and

concept-relating question lines for attaining conceptive “density,” variation. More recently, the diagramming of a “conditioning matrix” (Strauss, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) toward specifying conditions for every level of scale from “micro,” and integrating theory.

As we shall refer to below, a few words about be useful. This matrix can be useful. This matrix can be useful. This matrix can be useful. In the outer rings stand the *most distant* to action/intention rings pertain to those concepts *most closely* upon an action (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, conditions running from individual, community, organizational, suborganizational and subindividual, and collective to phenomenon. In any give at all levels have relevance be traced. “The research specific conditional features pertain to the chosen area; regardless of which particular Corbin, 1990, p. 161).¹

Evolution Use of the Method

Early History

Grounded theory was presented by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). This book had had The first was to offer the *research* was *grounded*—generated. interplay with data collected. This type of theory argued, would contribute to closing the gap between theory and practice (p. vii). Grounded theories were posed against dominant structuralist theories (represented by theorists as Parsons, Merton, Glaser and Strauss regarded as inductive and deductive in nature. The purpose was to suggest the logic of grounded theories. The theoretical framework of grounded theory is a more careful qualitative research

interpretations *must* include voices of the people. Representations are sought for the individual or collective. Yet, those who use these share with many other distinctive positions. They play their interpretive roles efficiently merely to report viewpoints of the people, not studied. Researchers ascribe to the possibility of interpreting or read (we comment in chapter).

Between this methodology to qualitative research theory development. Research levels of theory when procedures. However, most have been directed at theory. This is because of the interests of grounded than the nature of their discussed later, higher-also possible, but when a more deductive types of its generation and play with data collected (for example, see Glaser & Strauss of level of theory, the of extensive inter-theoretical analysis an toward *verification* of statements of relationship. This is done *throughout* the project, rather than as possible only through research. Enhanced also the possibility of developing density and with connection. *Conceptual density* development and in great familiarity with checked out systematically different from Geertz's where the emphasis is on conceptualization.)

Characteristics:

procedures have made and influential. Because of comparisons, these kind of generative and

concept-relating questions, theoretical sampling, systematic coding procedures, suggested guidelines for attaining conceptual (not merely descriptive) "density," variation, and conceptual integration. More recently, the conceptualization and diagramming of a "conditional matrix" (Corbin & Strauss, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) helps toward specifying conditions and consequences, at every level of scale from the most "macro" to the "micro," and integrating them into the resulting theory.

As we shall refer to the conditional matrix below, a few words about this analytic tool should be useful. This matrix can be visualized "as a set of circles, one inside the other, each [level] corresponding to different aspects of the world. . . . In the outer rings stand those conditional features *most distant* to action/interaction; while the inner rings pertain to those conditional features bearing *most closely* upon an action/interaction sequence" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 161). Levels include conditions running from international through national, community, organizational and institutional, suborganizational and subinstitutional, group, individual, and collective to action pertaining to a phenomenon. In any given study, the conditions at all levels have relevance, but just how needs to be traced. "The researcher needs to fill in the specific conditional features for each level that pertain to the chosen area of investigation," regardless of which particular level *it* is (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 161).¹

Evolution in the Use of the Methodology

Early History

Grounded theory was presented initially by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). This book had three avowed purposes. The first was to offer the rationale for theory that was *grounded*—generated and developed through interplay with data collected during research projects. This type of theory, Glaser and Strauss argued, would contribute toward "closing the embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research" (p. vii). Grounded theories and their possibilities were posed against dominant functionalist and structuralist theories (represented by those of such theorists as Parsons, Merton, and Blau), which Glaser and Strauss regarded as inordinately speculative and deductive in nature. The second purpose was to suggest the logic for and specifics of grounded theories. The third aim was to legitimate careful qualitative research, as by the 1960s

this had sunk to a low status among an increasing number of sociologists because it was not believed capable of adequate verification.

Ironically, *Discovery* soon achieved its third aim, becoming an early instance of today's strong rationale that underpins qualitative modes of research. It took about two decades, however, before American sociologists, especially those doing qualitative research, showed much appreciation for the more explicit and systematic conceptualization that constitutes theory. It was then that this aspect of the methodology began to become more widely appreciated, probably in conjunction with increasing numbers of books and papers using this methodology and its suggested procedures. The publication of additional methodological writings—as cited above—by grounded theorists also made it more visible and available.

The simultaneous publication of *Discovery* in the United States and England made "grounded theory" well known, at least among qualitatively inclined researchers and their graduate students in those countries. In the years after its publication, first Glaser and then Strauss taught a continuing seminar in qualitative analysis, grounded theory-style, to graduate students in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of California in San Francisco. Many graduates have published monographs and papers using grounded theory methodology about a variety of phenomena. These writings have undoubtedly contributed to making qualitative researchers increasingly aware of this mode of analysis. This has been true especially for medical sociologists, because the first two grounded theory monographs were about dying in hospitals (Glaser & Strauss, 1964, 1968).

Because grounded theory is a general methodology, a way of *thinking about and conceptualizing data*, it was easily adapted by its originators and their students to studies of diverse phenomena. To name only a few, these included professional socialization (Broadhead, 1983), policy arenas (Wiener, 1981), remarriage after divorce (Cahape, 1983), interaction between builders and a would-be homeowner (Glaser, 1972), homecoming (Hall, 1992), the management of a hazardous pregnancy (Corbin, 1992), ovarian egg donation between sisters (Lessor, 1993), spousal abuse (Lempert, 1992), experiences with chronic illness (Charmaz, 1980), and the work of scientists (Clarke, 1990a, 1990b; Fujimura, 1987; Star, 1989a, 1989b), as well as the development of general theory about status passages (Glaser & Strauss, 1970), negotiation (Strauss, 1978), and the control of information ("awareness contexts") (Strauss, 1987, 1991; for more studies, see the appendix to this chapter). Meanwhile, additional books explicating this style of analysis were also published, contributing to a wider international

awareness of the methodology and its procedures (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; see also Charmaz, 1983, 1990).

Developments in Use of Grounded Theory

Although much of the original research using grounded theory procedures was done by sociologists, probably the use of these procedures has never been entirely restricted to this group. Researchers in psychology and anthropology are increasingly using grounded theory procedures. Researchers in practitioner fields such as education, social work, and nursing have increasingly used grounded theory procedures alone or in conjunction with other methodologies. These include phenomenology, in its various social science versions (see Benner, 1989), particular techniques (scales and other instruments), and in combination also with quantitative methods. That practitioners would find grounded theory methodology of use in their studies was signaled as an anticipated possibility in *Discovery*, where Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted, in a chapter titled "Applying Grounded Theory," that an important feature of a grounded theory is its "fitness":

A grounded theory that is faithful to the everyday realities of a substantive area is one that has been carefully *induced* from diverse data. . . . Only in this way will the theory be closely related to the daily realities (what is actually going on) of substantive areas, and so be highly applicable to dealing with them. (pp. 238-239)

As with any general methodology, grounded theory's actual use in practice has varied with the specifics of the area under study, the purpose and focus of the research, the contingencies faced during the project, and perhaps also the temperament and particular gifts or weaknesses of the researcher. For instance, Adele Clarke (1990a, 1990b) and S. Leigh Star (1989a) each utilized historical data in conjunction with fieldwork and interview data because their research purposes included gaining an understanding of historical origins and historical continuities in the scientific disciplines they studied. Carolyn Wiener (1981), in her study of the national alcohol arena and its many participants and issues, largely relied on published contemporary documents supplemented by intensive interviews and observations at conferences. Individual researchers invent different specific procedures. Almost always too, in handling the difficult problem of conceptual integration, they learn that advice given in the methodological writings and/or the grounded theory seminar requires adaptation to the circumstances of their

own thought processes. Personal histories of dealing with particular bodies of data also affect adaptation of the general methodology.

Researchers utilizing grounded theory have undoubtedly been much influenced by contemporary intellectual trends and movements, including ethnomethodology, feminism, political economy, and varieties of postmodernism. Thus the specific uses and views of grounded theory have been either directly influenced or indirectly affected, in terms of thinking through the different assumptions and emphases of alternative modes of analysis (for an instance, see the thoughtful paper by Joan Fujimura, 1991). Our interpretation of this development in the use and conceptualization of grounded theory is not that its central elements—especially constant comparison—are altering, but that additional ideas and concepts suggested by contemporary social and intellectual movements are entering analytically as *conditions* into the studies of grounded theory researchers.

This methodology's stance on such matters is one of openness, including, as we now interpret that openness, in conditional matrix terms. One of the methodology's central features is that its practitioners can respond to and change with the times—in other words, as conditions that affect behavior change, they can be handled analytically, whether the conditions are in the form of ideas, ideologies, technologies, or new uses of space. The general procedure is to ask, What is the influence of gender (for instance), or power, or social class on the phenomena under study?—then to trace this influence as precisely as possible, as well as its influence flowing in reverse direction. Grounded theory procedures force us to ask, for example: What is power in this situation and under specified conditions? How is it manifested, by whom, when, where, how, with what consequences (and for whom or what)? Not to remain open to such a range of questions is to obstruct the discovery of important features of power *in situ* and to preclude developing its further conceptualization. Knowledge is, after all, linked closely with time and place. When we carefully and specifically build conditions into our theories, we eschew claims to idealistic versions of knowledge, leaving the way open for further development of our theories.

Diffusion of the Methodology

In reflecting about the increasing numbers and kinds of research in which grounded theory has been utilized, we have been struck by certain features of its diffusion. Ordinarily, an intellectual trend spreads out from an inventive group or institution largely through face-to-face teaching. In the instance of this methodology, the diffusion

appears largely to have occurred—through its foreign-language translation (e.g., NUD•IST—see Ricliard, & Sharrock, 1992; a 1992; see also Tesch, 1992) to grounded theory

The diffusion of this methodology has recently been increasing: evidence of its spread, types of phenomena, and disciplinary psychology, and sociological diffusion of grounded theory also reached subspecialties we would not have anticipated. It does not always appear in the forms theorists would recognize. For instance, there are significant areas as the use of communication, management, communication areas as the use of computer-aided, and "grounded building of a theoretical methodology of knowledge product the extension of the methodology." (chapter.)

Risks Attending Diffusion

This methodology now appears to be fashionable. Part of the problem is that not all understand important aspects of the methodology (as indicated earlier) in their research. For instance, some researchers fail to understand the basic process but fail to understand the process because they overlook or variation gives a ground conceptual richness. People doing grounded theory studies concentrate on coding as their central and almost exclusive feature of *retical* coding. ("Theoretically how the substantive coding is other as hypotheses to be tested"; Glaser, 1978, p. 72.) Grounded coding, unless done in conjunction with constant comparison, does not induce conceptually rich theories. The risk attending grounded theory is that some researchers concentrate on coding at developing theories. The central feature of the methodology is that the procedures inappropriately replace native methodologies that poses better.

Also, researchers are still critical of "theory methods" because they are too "rigid." Certainly, thoughtful and strictive prior theories and are salutary, but too rigid

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appears largely to have taken place—and is today occurring—through its literature, including foreign-language translations and computer software (e.g., NUD•IST—see Richards, Richards, McGalliard, & Sharrock, 1992; and ATLAS/ti—see Mühr, 1992; see also Tesch, 1990) that claims relationships to grounded theory methods.

The diffusion of this methodology seems recently to be increasing exponentially in numbers of studies, types of phenomena studied, geographical spread, and disciplines (education, nursing, psychology, and sociology, for example). The diffusion of grounded theory procedures has now also reached subspecialties of disciplines in which we would not have anticipated their use—and does not always appear in ways that other grounded theorists would recognize as “grounded theory.” For instance, there are studies of business management, communication studies concerning such areas as the use of computers by the physically disabled, and “grounded theory” applied to the building of a theoretical model of the epistemology of knowledge production. (We say more about the extension of the methodology later in this chapter.)

Risks Attending Diffusion

This methodology now runs the risk of becoming fashionable. Part of the risk is that users do not understand important aspects of the methodology (as indicated earlier), yet claim to be using it in their research. For instance, they discover a basic process but fail to develop it conceptually, because they overlook or do not understand that variation gives a grounded theory analysis its conceptual richness. People who think they are doing grounded theory studies often seem to concentrate on coding as this methodology's chief and almost exclusive feature, but do not do *theoretical* coding. (“Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory”; Glaser, 1978, p. 72.) Also, even theoretical coding, unless done in conjunction with the making of constant comparisons, is unlikely to produce conceptually rich theory. Another part of the risk attending grounded theory's rapid diffusion is that some researchers deliberately do not aim at developing theories. Therefore, they ignore this central feature of the methodology, often using its procedures inappropriately or overlooking alternative methodologies that could serve their purposes better.

Also, researchers are still claiming to use “grounded theory methods” because their studies are “inductive.” Certainly, thoughtful reaction against restrictive prior theories and theoretical models can be salutary, but too rigid a conception of induc-

tion can lead to sterile or boring studies. Alas, grounded theory has been used as a justification for such studies. This has occurred as a result of the initial presentation of grounded theory in *Discovery* that has led to a persistent and unfortunate misunderstanding about what was being advocated. Because of the partly rhetorical purpose of that book and the authors' emphasis on the need for *grounded* theories, Glaser and Strauss overplayed the inductive aspects. Correspondingly, they greatly underplayed both the potential role of extant (grounded) theories and the unquestionable fact (and advantage) that trained researchers are theoretically sensitized. Researchers carry into their research the sensitizing possibilities of their training, reading, and research experience, as well as explicit theories that might be useful if played against systematically gathered data, in conjunction with theories emerging from analysis of these data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). Many people still get their conceptions of grounded theory from the original book, and have missed the later more realistic and balanced modifications of that book's purposeful rhetoric.

Quantitative Methods and Grounded Theory

Here is an observation about the historic relationship—or, better, lack of relationship—between quantitative researchers and grounded theory, and what may currently be happening to this relationship. As mentioned earlier, *Discovery* made clear that grounded theory was a general methodology, applicable to quantitative as well as qualitative studies. (“We believe that *each form of data is useful for both verification and generation of theory*, whatever the primacy of emphasis. Primacy depends only on the circumstances of research, on the interests and training of the researcher, and on the kinds of material [needed for] theory. . . . *In many instances, both forms of data are necessary*”; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 17-18.) However, the emphasis and the subtitle of *Discovery* (*Strategies for Qualitative Research*), perhaps combined with the dominance of quantitative methods in sociology and elsewhere for the two decades following its publication, seemingly ensured that only qualitative researchers would pay attention to its messages. Glaser's later publication, *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978), has had its impact almost wholly on qualitative researchers. We ourselves wrote specifically for qualitative researchers, as the titles of our books signaled (see, e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990; but also Strauss, 1987). Increasingly, quantitative researchers seem dissatisfied with purely quantified results and are turning toward supplementary qualitative analyses, while qualitative researchers have become less defensive

about their modes of analysis and more open to working with quantitative researchers on research projects. Sometimes they combine quantitative methods with their qualitative ones. Grounded theory research will undoubtedly be affected by these trends.

Theory and Interpretation

This methodology is designed to further the development of effective theory. Why theory? After all, the entire conception of a social "science" is under attack today, especially by some postmodernist and feminist scholars. This is not the appropriate place to counter that attack (and anyhow, a number of defenders of the scientific faith have reexplained and defended the rationale for science). One certainly does not have to adopt a positivistic position or the procedures and specific methods of the physical and biological sciences to argue for the desirability of a social science.

On the other hand, neither does one have to insist that all social inquiry, or even qualitative research, must lead to the development or utilization of theory. Qualitative modes of interpretation run the gamut from "Let the informant speak and don't get in the way," on through theme analysis, and to the elucidation of patterns (biographical, societal, and so on), theoretical frameworks or models (sometimes only loosely developed), and theory formulated at various levels of abstraction (Tesch, 1990). All of these modes certainly are useful for some purposes and not so useful for others. So we do *not* argue that creating theory is more important than any other mode of interpretation, or that it produces more useful or significant results; we argue only that theory should be grounded in the sense described earlier—in interplay with data and developed through the course of actual research.

That said, we turn next to some very brief remarks directed toward the following questions insofar as they pertain to grounded theories. What does theory *consist* of? What does it look like when presented? What is its relation to "reality" and "truth?" How does it relate to actors' perspectives? Of what use is it, and what responsibilities do researchers/theorists have for producing it?

What Does Theory Consist Of?

Theory consists of *plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and *sets of concepts*.² (Though only plausible, its plausibility is to be strengthened through continued research.) With-

out concepts, there can be no propositions, and thus no cumulative scientific (systematically theoretical) knowledge based on these plausible but testable propositions. (On this point, we recommend Herbert Blumer's ironically titled paper "Science Without Concepts," 1934/1969, in which he clearly outlines the necessity of concepts and conceptual relationships for scientific understanding.)

Grounded theory methodology is designed to guide researchers in producing theory that is "conceptually dense"—that is, with many conceptual relationships. These relationships, stated as propositions, are, as in virtually all other qualitative research, presented in discursive form: They are embedded in a thick context of descriptive and conceptual writing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 31-32; Strauss, 1987, pp. 263-264). Discursive presentation captures the conceptual density and conveys descriptively also the substantive content of a study far better than does the natural science form of propositional presentation (typically couched as "if-then").

Theoretical conceptualization means that grounded theory researchers are interested in *patterns* of action and interaction between and among various types of social units (i.e., "actors"). So they are not especially interested in creating theory about individual actors as such (unless perhaps they are psychologists or psychiatrists). They are also much concerned with discovering *process*—not necessarily in the sense of stages or phases, but of reciprocal changes in patterns of action/interaction and in relationship with changes of conditions either internal or external to the process itself.³ When stages or phases are distinguished for analytic purposes by the researcher, this signifies a conceptualization of what occurs under certain conditions: with movement forward, downward, up and down, going one way then another—all depending on analytically specified conditions. Insofar as theory that is developed through this methodology is able to specify consequences and their related conditions, the theorist can claim predictability for it, in the limited sense that *if* elsewhere approximately similar conditions obtain, *then* approximately similar consequences should occur.

Perhaps a few words should be added to counter possible reactions that this version of theory is overly austere and formal in nature, even if not so in presentation. Earlier we alluded to the relevance ("fit") of substantive grounded theories in terms of what the researcher has actually seen and/or heard, and later more will be said about the relevance of theory in its application. Here we would only note two additional features of grounded theories, regardless of what their levels of abstraction may be. First, theories are always traceable to the data that gave rise to them—within the interactive context of data collecting and data analyzing, in which the analyst is also a crucially

significant interactant. S are very "fluid" (this characterize them by Jo. communication). Becau action of multiple actor phasize temporality and p striking fluidity. They ca new situation to see *if* th and how they *might n* openness of the research. provisional character of grounded theories are not, rather, they are systemat relationships.

What Grounded Theory Looks Like

One reviewer of an ear ter suggested that reader or two extended quotat grounded theory looks l they might sample from writings by us, our work ex-students contained in the appendix to this cha quote from a chapter al context!" that is probably

There are at least five in tions which contribute t tenance of the closed av are then discussed in d pages. Then types of int closed awareness condi descriptively (with quot sensitivity. Then, since authors write:] Inherent context tends toward ir moves either to suspicio terminality. The principa ity . . . require only bric already been adumbrated the structural conditions awareness context may l Those conditions include Some unanticipated discl ming from organizational cur. [More examples ar ations by ward.] New sy are likely to perplex and a longer his retrogressive c it becomes to give him though a very complicated i can be played for his bent somewhat more difficult long time. [More compar given.] . . . Another threat is that some treatments

There can be no propositions, and scientific (systematically theorized) on these plausible but not on this point, we recommend a recently titled paper "Science" (4/1969, in which he clearly defines concepts and conceptual understanding.) Methodology is designed to produce theory that is "concrete," with many conceptual relationships, stated as propositionally all other qualitative discursive form: They are in the context of descriptive and Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 31-53-264). Discursive presence of conceptual density and content of the substantive content of does the natural science presentation (typically couched

ization means that grounded interested in *patterns* of relationships between and among variables (i.e., "actors"). So they are interested in creating theory as such (unless perhaps by psychiatrists). They are interested in discovering *process*—a sense of stages or phases, seen in patterns of action/inaction in relationship with changes of conditions external to the process. Phases are distinguished by the researcher, this signifying what occurs under movement forward, downward, one way then another—under specified conditions. They are developed through this process to specify consequences and the theorist can claim in the limited sense that if similar conditions obtain, the consequences should occur. They could be added to counter this version of theory is in its nature, even if not so we have alluded to the relevance of grounded theories in which the researcher has actually seen there will be said about the application. Here we note some features of grounded theory that their levels of abstraction are always traceable to them—within the data collecting and data analysis is also a crucially

significant interactant. Second, grounded theories are very "fluid" (this is the adjective used to characterize them by Joan Fujimura in a personal communication). Because they embrace the interaction of multiple actors, and because they emphasize temporality and process, they indeed have a striking fluidity. They call for exploration of each new situation to see *if* they fit, *how* they might fit, and *how* they *might not* fit. They demand an openness of the researcher, based on the "forever" provisional character of every theory. For all that, grounded theories are not just another set of phrases; rather, they are systematic statements of plausible relationships.

What Grounded Theory Writing Looks Like

One reviewer of an earlier version of this chapter suggested that readers might profit from one or two extended quotations illustrating what a grounded theory looks like. In turn, we suggest they might sample from the list of substantive writings by us, our working colleagues, and our ex-students contained in the references as well as the appendix to this chapter. Short of that, we quote from a chapter about "closed awareness context" that is probably quite well known:

There are at least five important structural conditions which contribute to the existence and maintenance of the closed awareness context. [These are then discussed in detail for two and a half pages. Then types of interaction that occur under closed awareness conditions are presented both descriptively (with quotations) and with analytic sensitivity. Then, since process is important, the authors write:] Inherently, this closed awareness context tends toward instability, as the patient moves either to suspicion or full awareness of . . . terminality. The principal reasons for the instability . . . require only brief notation, as they have already been adumbrated. First, any breakdown in the structural conditions that make for the closed awareness context may lead to its disappearance. Those conditions include [examples are given]. . . . Some unanticipated disclosures or tip-offs, stemming from organizational conditions, can also occur. [More examples are given, including variations by ward.] New symptoms understandably are likely to perplex and alarm the patient; and the longer his retrogressive course, the more difficult it becomes to give him plausible explanations, though a very complicated misrepresentational drama can be played for his benefit. Even so, it becomes somewhat more difficult to retain . . . trust over a long time. [More comparisons and variations are given.] . . . Another threat to closed awareness . . . is that some treatments make little sense to a

patient who does not recognize that he is dying. . . . At times, moreover, a patient may be unable to cope with his immensely deteriorating physical condition, unless nurses interpret that condition and its symptoms to him. To do this, nurses may feel forced to talk of his dying. Not to disclose . . . can torture and isolate the patient, which runs counter to a central value of nursing care, namely to make the patient as comfortable as possible. . . . The danger that staff members will give the show away . . . also increases as the patient nears death, especially when the dying takes place slowly. . . . This last set of conditions brings us to the question of whether, and how, personnel actually may engineer a change of the closed awareness context. [Examples are given of observations of how this is done.] Indeed, when the family actually knows the truth, the hazards to maintaining closed awareness probably are much increased, if only because kin are more strongly tempted to signal the truth. [There follows then a systematic detailing of consequences: for patients, nurses, physicians, kin, ward, and hospital.] (Glaser & Strauss, 1964, pp. 29-46)

Relationship of Theory to Reality and Truth?

Nowadays there is much debate about these two questions. We follow closely here the American pragmatist position (Dewey, 1937; Mead, 1917): A theory is not the formulation of some discovered aspect of a preexisting reality "out there." ⁴ To think otherwise is to take a positivistic position that, as we have said above, we reject, as do most other qualitative researchers. Our position is that truth is enacted (Addelson, 1990): Theories are interpretations made from given perspectives as adopted or researched by researchers. To say that a given theory is an interpretation—and therefore fallible—is not at all to deny that judgments can be made about the soundness or probable usefulness of it.

All interpretations, whether or not they have the features or status of theory, are temporally limited—in a dual sense. First, they are always provisional, they are never established forever; their very nature allows for endless elaboration and partial negation (qualification). Second, like many other kinds of knowledge, theories are limited in time: Researchers and theorists are not gods, but men and women living in certain eras, immersed in certain societies, subject to current ideas and ideologies, and so forth. Hence as conditions change at any level of the conditional matrix, this affects the validity of theories—that is, their relation to contemporary social reality. Theories are constantly becoming outdated or in need of qualification because, as one of us once wrote:

We are confronting a universe marked by tremendous fluidity; it won't and can't stand still. It is a universe where fragmentation, splintering, and disappearance are the mirror images of appearance, emergence, and coalescence. This is a universe where nothing is strictly determined. Its phenomena should be partly determinable via naturalistic analysis, including the phenomenon of men [and women] participating in the construction of the structures which shape their lives. (Strauss, 1978, p. 123)

In short, theories are embedded "in history"—historical epochs, eras, and moments are to be taken into account in the creation, judgment, revision, and reformulation of theories.

The interpretive nature of grounded theories means that such conceptualizing is an intellectual process that extends throughout the entire course of a given research project. This is a very complex process, and the next pages will in some sense elaborate its complexity.

Multiple Actors' Perspectives and Analytic Interpretations

Grounded theory methodology incorporates the assumption, shared with other, but not all, social science positions concerning the *human* status of actors whom we study. They have perspectives on and interpretations of their own and other actors' actions. As researchers, we are required to learn what we can of their interpretations and perspectives. Beyond that, grounded theory requires, because it mandates the development of theory, that those interpretations and perspectives become incorporated into our own interpretations (conceptualizations).

Grounded theory procedures enhance this possibility, directing attention, for instance, to *in vivo* concepts that reflect actors' own deep concerns; or its procedures force researchers to question and skeptically review their own interpretations at every step of the inquiry itself. A major argument of this methodology is that *multiple perspectives* must be systematically sought during the research inquiry. This tenet contributes to building theory inclusive of lay conceptions and helps to prevent getting captured by those. Perhaps not every actor's perspectives can be discovered, or need be, but those of actors who sooner or later are judged to be significantly relevant must be incorporated into the emerging theory. (In the language of our contemporaries, multiple "voices" are attended to, but note that these are *also* interpreted conceptually by the researcher who follows our methodology.) Coding procedures—including the important procedures of constant comparison, theoretical questioning, theoretical sampling, concept devel-

opment, and their relationships—help to protect the researcher from accepting any of those voices on their own terms, and to some extent forces the researcher's own voice to be questioning, questioned, and provisional.

In grounded theory, concepts are formulated and analytically developed, conceptual relationships are posited—but we are emphasizing here that they are inclusive of the multiple perspectives of the actors. Thus grounded theories, which are abstractions quite like any other theories, are nevertheless grounded directly and indirectly on perspectives of the diverse actors toward the phenomena studied by us. Grounded theories connect this multiplicity of perspective with patterns and processes of action/interaction that in turn are linked with carefully specified conditions and consequences.

Effective theoretical coding is also greatly enhanced by theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This consists of disciplinary or professional knowledge, as well as both research and personal experiences, that the researcher brings to his or her inquiry. This point links with previous discussion of the conditional matrix, because the more theoretically sensitive researchers are to issues of class, gender, race, power, and the like, the more attentive they will be to these matters. The procedures of theoretical sampling and constant comparison are allied with theoretical sensitivity.

Apropos of theoretical sensitivity, we should add that in all modes of qualitative research the interplay between researcher and the actors studied—if the research is intensive—is likely to result in some degree of reciprocal shaping. This is because researcher and data (words and phrases, actions, videotapes) speak to each other. In grounded theory studies, the conversation is centered on theoretical analysis, so the shaping is also related to the process of becoming increasingly theoretically sensitive. During or at the end of the study, the researcher may give information back to the actors, in the form of a final theoretical analysis or framework or, more frequently, through observations informed by an evolving theory. In turn, the theorist, over the course of the research project, may be much affected by the experience of analysis itself (contributed to in some sense by the respondents). Also, the theorist is affected by experiences *with* the respondents, who may not incidentally be contributing ideas, concepts (including *in vivo* concepts), and enduring perspectives to the analysis. In short, the researcher-theorist is becoming increasingly theoretically sensitized, including, as noted earlier, scrutinizing the literature for received theories that might possibly be relevant to the emerging theory developed largely through the continuing conversation with "the data."⁵

Theorists' Responsibility and Uses of Theory

Emphasizing as it does of social research, grounded theory practitioners toward theory. Thereby they have obligations of their professions. However, we also believe (as do others) that we have obligations to those studied: obligations to ourselves and to others—to give an account in the context of their own lives. We owe it to our "subjects" to put in print what we have learned and indications of why we have it. Furthermore, grounded theory "must" be data if it is to be applied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Fullness to the substantive area, is a practical fullness in the practical fullness can be a matter of direct application.

Certainly, this does not mean that theory must have immediate application yet we do have an obligation at least to those social workers and commitments. These commitments to develop or use theory in some practical application to wider audiences than are disciplinary or professional *specific* groups, organizations we have studied. Translating substantive theory is not necessarily ultimately the responsibility of actual practitioners "in the field" of a successful application of two researchers/theorists. researcher/nurse educators is the extension of theory into a model fairly direct of nursing care and to practice (Woog, 1992).

Grounded theories can be possibly influential either to policy makers or to the practice of the former, within health care (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It offers a critique of the practice and a blueprint for a rath-er typically been rejected by policy readers but has opened standing to those not so arranged.

Our stand on this third society, seems at variance

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Theorists' Responsibilities
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Emphasizing as it does the theoretical aspects of social research, grounded theory pushes its practitioners toward theoretical interpretations. Thereby they have obligations to contribute to the knowledge of their respective disciplines or professions. However, we who aim at grounded theories also believe (as do many other researchers) that we have obligations to the actors we have studied: obligations to “tell their stories” to them and to others—to give them voice—albeit in the context of their own inevitable interpretations. We owe it to our “subjects” to tell them verbally or in print what we have learned, and to give clear indications of why we have interpreted them as we have. Furthermore, as noted in *Discovery*, a grounded theory “must correspond closely to the data if it is to be applied in daily situations” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 238). And this faithfulness to the substantive data, this “fit” to a substantive area, is a powerful condition for usefulness in the practical life of the theory. Its usefulness can be a matter of “understanding” as well as of direct application.

Certainly, this does not mean every grounded theory must have immediate or direct application, yet we do have an obligation also toward “society,” at least to those social worlds toward which we have commitments. These commitments carry responsibilities to develop or use theory that will have at least some practical applications, that can be of service to wider audiences than are strictly constituted by our disciplinary or professional colleagues or even the *specific* groups, organizations, or social worlds that we have studied. Translation of even well-grounded substantive theory is not necessarily immediate, and ultimately the responsibility may rest on educators or actual practitioners “in the field.” One example of a successful application through combined efforts of two researchers/theorists (a sociologist and a researcher/nurse educator) and clinical nurses/educators is the extension of the concept of “trajectory” into a model fairly directly applicable to the giving of nursing care and to research on nursing care (Woog, 1992).

Grounded theories can also be relevant and possibly influential either to the “understanding” of policy makers or to their direct action. As an instance of the former, we point to a policy book on health care (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that offers a critique of the present health care system and a blueprint for a rather different one that has typically been rejected by practical-minded policy readers but has opened horizons of understanding to those not so committed to current arrangements.

Our stand on this third obligation, to the wider society, seems at variance with others taken by

those who would confine actions, or reform activities, only to improving the lot of the people actually studied. Because all theory carries implications for action, we would not so confine its applicability. Careful grounded theory is likely to be used, and used in ways other than any dreamed of by us researchers/theorists—far beyond our commitments and desires. Hence we bear the special responsibility of attempting to reach at least the audiences that we ourselves wish to reach.

Higher-Order Grounded Theories

In *Discovery*, a chapter titled “From Substantive to Formal Theory” (1967) begins with a very important set of ideas; indeed, they seem even more important now. Their significance lies both in the continued predominance of substantive theory (or substantive studies *sans* theorizing) and the paucity of higher-level social theories that are *grounded in specific research inquiries*. Here is the quotation:

Since substantive theory is grounded in research on one particular substantive area (work, juvenile delinquency, medical education, mental health) it might be taken to apply only to that specific area. A theory at such a conceptual level, however, may have important general implications and relevance, and become almost automatically a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal [or as is more usually said, “general”] theory. . . . Substantive theory is a strategic link in the formulation and generation of grounded formal theory. We believe that although formal theory can be generated directly from data, it is more desirable, and usually necessary, to start the formal theory from a substantive one. The latter not only provides a stimulus to a “good idea” but it also gives an initial direction in developing relevant categories and properties and in choosing possible modes of integration. Indeed it is difficult to find a grounded formal theory that was not in some way stimulated by a substantive theory. Often the substantive and formal theories are formulated by different authors. Sometimes in formal theory the substantive theory is implicit, having been developed previously by the author or another writer. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 79)

In the pages that followed this statement, Glaser and Strauss noted the drawbacks of formulating formal theory on the basis of data from only one rather than several substantive areas. In a book published three years later (1970), those authors presented a formal theory about status passages

that was both a development of previous conceptualizations and based on data amassed from a multitude of substantive areas. A later book offered a theory of negotiation (Strauss, 1978), taking off from a theoretical formulation known as "negotiated order" (Strauss, Bucher, Ehrlich, Sabshin, & Schatzman, 1963, 1964), and from an examination of data drawn both from various substantive areas and several monographs or social and political theorists' writings. Earlier, Strauss (in a 1970 work reprinted in 1987, pp. 306-311) published a paper titled "Discovering New Theory From Previous Theory" that suggested in detail how a grounded substantive theory could be greatly extended, leading either to a more elaborated substantive theory or to formal theories developed in conjunction with multiarea data. (For similar discussions of substantive and formal theories, see Glaser, 1978, pp. 143-157; Strauss, 1987, pp. 241-248.)

As mentioned earlier, Diane Vaughan (1992), a thoughtful theorist and excellent researcher, has written about an alternative but related approach to producing general theory. She advocates "theory elaboration," which consists of taking off from extant theories and developing them further in conjunction with "qualitative case analysis." By *theory*, she means "theoretical tools in general," including (formulated) theory, models, and concepts. By *elaboration*, she means "the process of refining the theory, model or concept in order to specify more carefully the circumstances in which it does or does not offer potential for explanation" (p. 175). (Her examples, however, are mostly of her own grounded theories and research, but she also utilizes some existing substantive grounded ones.) From reading her, we have gained an appreciation of further techniques for attaining theories that are more general, that embrace but transcend the substantive while at the same time linking those with previous theories (see also Gerson, 1991). It is apparent that we will face complexities in developing theories at different levels or degrees of abstraction. These complexities have not yet been clarified in the literature. (The terms *general* and *formal* are too crude to catch those degrees or levels of theory.)

So here is a challenge that should be faced by anyone who believes theory should be grounded! We should not settle only for substantive theories, no matter how stimulating or useful they are—for furthering theory development, for understanding phenomena, for *Verstehen* of people and actions, or for their practical use in guiding behavior or policy. General theory also has its place as a powerful tool for all those same purposes. The danger of such theorizing is not that it is abstract—for that can be a great advantage—but that it can be speculatively remote from the phenomena it purports to explain. Grounded theory

methodology insists that no matter how general—how broad in scope or abstract—the theory, it should be developed in that back-and-forth interplay with data that is so central to this methodology.

Yet whether general or substantive theory is sought, there is a potential danger in using this methodology if a researcher is overly familiar with and attached to the concepts and conceptual frameworks presented in previous grounded theory studies. The danger is that these may be used without genuine grounding in the current study. They too must be grounded in the interplay with data, just as are those taken from other sources.

Social and Intellectual Trends and Grounded Theory

To round off this chapter, the editors of this volume have requested that we make a guess at what the future might hold for grounded theory. Crystal gazing is not our forte, but we can at least anticipate the following. First, consider certain strong social and intellectual trends that are likely to affect greatly the awareness, rejection, and varied uses of this methodology:

1. the continued fragmentation of traditional social and behavioral science disciplines into subdisciplines, each with its currently distinctive issues, types of data, and often specific research procedures
2. an increasing interest in and the presumed necessity for social research within various professions and their subunits, and directed toward an increasing or at least changing set of issues
3. a continued reliance on qualitative methods alone or in conjunction with quantitative ones, by increasing numbers of professional and disciplinary researchers
4. an increasing interest in theoretical interpretations of data, along with divergent definitions of theory believed to fit the nature of one's materials
5. a continuation of the current trend of antagonism toward anything that goes by the name of science and especially toward its canons
6. the spread of postmodernism, but a variegated spread, given that there are many and sometimes divergent directions within this general intellectual movement

7. a continued trend toward the use of programs to order data, with visual and interactive displays
8. in the world at large, a trend toward and even greater emphasis on collective identities, requiring improvement in the meanings and uses of language

All of these trends suggest a need for use and evaluation of grounded theory. You will, of this generation, have to pass through the stages of the comparative method of research circa 1940. You will have to survey methodology, and you will have to reject it for one reason or another. You will have to use it in its current form, or adapt it to your needs, or combining it with other methods. You will have to use it in a way that is appreciably different from the way it was used in the past.

So at least it can be said that the previously noted trends are in mind, that the following are likely to occur:

1. Researchers in different professional areas are likely to use grounded theory with and use or adapt it to their own needs.
2. Adaption will include the use of other methodological approaches, such as phenomenological, grounded theory, and grounded theory combined with quantitative methods. The emphasis will be on qualitative projects.
3. Particular fields of research will use grounded theory with other methods. Researchers will consider them together. The combinations of grounded theory, grounded theory, and grounded theory will be used in the latter with more research methods.
4. An increasing number of researchers will include the use of grounded theory, and grounded theory will become more sophisticated and increasingly formalized.
5. The procedures of grounded theory will become more current grounded theory will be made by the use of grounded theory in a range of phenomena.

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7. a continued trend toward the use of computer programs to order and interpret data, perhaps with visual and oral accompaniments
8. in the world at large, probably a continued and even greater emphasis on individual and collective identity (nationalism, for instance), requiring improved methods for understanding the meanings and symbolization of actors

All of these trends should profoundly affect the use and evaluation of grounded theory. Think, if you will, of this general methodology as in early stages of the comparable development of survey research circa 1940. What researchers did with survey methodology, once aware of it, was to reject it for one reason or another, or over the years to use it in its original formulation, elaborate it, or adapt it in various ways, including combining it with other methodologies. The fate of grounded theory methodology should not be appreciably different.

So at least it can be safely predicted, keeping the previously noted social-intellectual conditions in mind, that the following *processes* will occur:

1. Researchers in additional substantive and professional areas and countries will experiment with and use or adapt the methodology.
2. Adaption will include combining it with other methodologies (hermeneutical, phenomenological, for instance). It will also be combined with quantitative methods on predominantly quantitative or predominantly qualitative projects, or on projects of equal emphasis.
3. Particular fields will combine the methodology with other methodologies rather than consider them to be competing. (For instance, researchers in nursing use various combinations of ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory; presumably psychologists will combine or are combining the latter with more traditional or emerging research methods.)
4. An increasing number of computer programs will include the possibility of utilizing the methodology, and these programs will become more sophisticated and will be used increasingly for this purpose.
5. The procedures suggested or used in the current grounded theory literature will become elaborated *and* specific adaptations will be made by researchers for a greater range of phenomena. This elaboration and

adaption will include also multisite studies in a variety of settings, including cross-cultural work.

6. Varieties of theory (or "interpretation") will be developed by different researchers and in different areas, all of whom will use one or another adapted/elaborated version of the methodology.

Recently, an astute sociologist asked us to say something about the outer limits of research that *we* would or could continue to call "grounded theory." The features of this methodology that we consider so central that their abandonment would signify a great departure are the grounding of theory upon data through data-theory interplay, the making of constant comparisons, the asking of theoretically oriented questions, theoretical coding, and the development of theory. Yet, no inventor has permanent possession of the invention—certainly not even of its name—and furthermore we would not wish to do so. No doubt we will always prefer the later versions of grounded theory that are closest to or elaborate our own, but a child once launched is very much subject to a combination of its origins and the evolving contingencies of life. Can it be otherwise with a methodology?

Appendix: A Sampling of Substantive Writings by UCSF Researchers

- Biernacki, P. (1986). *Pathways from heroin addiction*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (1987). Struggling for a self: Identity levels of the chronically ill. In P. Conrad & J. Roth (Eds.), *The experience of chronic illness*. Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1991). Comeback: Overcoming disability. In G. Albrecht & J. Levy (Eds.), *Advances in medical sociology* (Vol. 2). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Fagerhaugh, S., & Strauss, A. (1977). *The politics of pain management*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fagerhaugh, S., Strauss, A., Suczek, B., & Wiener, C. (1987). *Hazards in hospital care*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosenbaum, M. (1981). *Women on heroin*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Strauss, A., Fagerhaugh, S., Suczek, B., & Wiener, C. (1985). *The organization of medical work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Strauss, A., & Glaser, B. (1970). *Anguish: A case history of a dying trajectory*. San Francisco: Sociology Press.

Wiener, C., Strauss, A., Fagerhaugh, F., & Suczek, B. (1979). Trajectories, biographies, and the evolving medical scene: Labor and delivery and the intensive care nursery. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 1, 261-283.

Notes

1. Here is a nice illustration of tracing effects of conditions, or in the authors' (ex-students of Strauss's) words, "things, attributes, elements are *in the situation itself*. . . . For example, Fujimura (1987) noted that stockholders in biotechnology companies are very present elements in the laboratory (though rarely in person), and not merely contextual. Stockholders routinely constrained decision making in the construction of doable problems and what the next step in a project might be. The claims and other products that emerge from the situation embody all the elements within it, human and nonhuman alike. Therefore specifying the elements is a highly significant task" (Clarke & Fujimura, 1992, pp. 17-18).

2. "A coherent group of general propositions used [provisionally] as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena" (Stein & Urdang, 1981, p. 1471).

3. "To capture process analytically, one must show the evolving nature of events by noting why and how action/interaction—in the form of events, doings or happenings—will change, stay the same . . . ; why there is progression of events or what enables continuity of a line of action/interaction, in the face of changing conditions, and with what consequences" (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 144; but see discussion, pp. 143-157).

4. The pragmatists emphasized consequences and the antecedent conditions that precipitated them, and urged abandonment of the impossible quest for Truth. Grounded theory advocates follow this general position. Reading an earlier version of this chapter, one reviewer asked about our position on the relationships of ideology and power to truth. In brief: Power certainly affects the ability to convince audiences, including probably oneself, if one takes one's power seriously. Ideologies we all have—we all have political and other positions—but unquestioning allegiance to those, with little or no attempt to challenge or "test" them, leads sociologists like Irving Horowitz, quite correctly, we believe, into battle with sociological ideologues. Grounded theory has procedures that help one to challenge one's own ideologies and implicit positions. The feminist critique of the objective biases of traditional science seems to us correct insofar as some scientists may assume they are just human instruments reporting on nature (it used to be God's nature) "out there." Contemporary physical and biological scientists seem to understand quite well the naïveté of such a position, although they also, sometimes, individually display awesome hubris.

A related point, raised by another reviewer, is that "researchers often *write* as though order were implicit . . . and inherited in the data, when what they really meant was that order emerged from interaction between the researcher, his/her data, and some theoretical sensitivity suggested by the original research question." That is exactly the point!

5. A reviewer of an earlier version of this chapter suggested that our statement about theoretical sensitivity is an overstatement because naive researchers "may be even more likely to see things that don't make sense, and therefore asks questions why? or may be more likely to ask why don't you think about it (do it) this way?" He has a point, given that new perspectives can precipitate significant and even radical issues. Personal experiences are also immensely vital to theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1978).

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