



DEVELOPING GROUNDED THEORY

The Second Generation

JANICE M. MORSE
PHYLLIS NOERAGER STERN • JULIET CORBIN
BARBARA BOWERS • KATHY CHARMAZ
ADELE E. CLARKE

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3. Taking an Analytic Journey

Juliet Corbin

Over the last ten to fifteen years, many new ideas have emerged regarding qualitative research. These ideas have had a considerable impact on me as a professional. Although I was asked to write about Strauss's version of grounded theory, I find that I can no longer write about what is strictly Strauss's version. Too much time has elapsed since Anselm Strauss has died, and to write about his version implies that over time and with usage a methodology does not undergo change. It also implies that the people who write and talk about that method are not subject to change. Therefore, though in this chapter I have tried to be true to Strauss's version of the methodology, there remains the possibility that what I am about to write reflects as much my present interpretation as it does his original thoughts about method. In fact anyone who writes about a research method, other than the original author, is writing about his or her interpretation of that method because it is method as filtered through the eyes of that second person. That is why I felt it necessary to spend some time early in this chapter explaining how I've changed in response to contemporary thought in the field of qualitative research. Furthermore, in this chapter I wanted to do more than just talk about method, I wanted to illustrate how it is



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done using an example from *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edition (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I conclude the chapter with a discussion of what I believe Strauss's version of grounded theory has to offer researchers.

People Change and Methods Change

My first encounter with qualitative research began in what I call the “Age of the Dinosaurs.” In those days, I was a naive Master's student taking the required research course. I found the quantitative part of the class pretty dry. It didn't stimulate my interest for doing research. However, when the class presentation turned to a discussion of qualitative research methods, I said, “What is this? Tell me more.” There was something about qualitative research that I found very appealing, though at the time I couldn't have told you what that was. Looking back, I believe that qualitative research resonated with me then and continues to do so because it touches at the heart of what nursing is all about: reaching out to people, listening to what they have to say, and then using that knowledge to make a difference in their lives.

When it came time to do a Master's thesis, my advisors strongly suggested that I do a quantitative study because there was no one in the department sufficiently trained in qualitative methods to guide me through the process. Even before completing the Master's degree, I decided that I wanted to go on for a doctorate at the University of California in San Francisco (UCSF) and, once there, learn to do qualitative research. At UCSF, I discovered many able mentors. Among them were Ramona Mercer, Phyllis Stern, Leonard Schatzman, and Anselm Strauss. Little did I know when I began my doctoral program that I would end up doing research and writing books with Anselm Strauss, least of all a book about his research methodology.

Before discussing how I've changed over the years, I want to provide some background regarding the state of qualitative research at the time that I began my doctoral program in 1976. I want to review that history briefly because of the influence it had on the writing of earlier editions of *Basics* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) and the method presented in that text.

In the old days, it was not unusual to hear ideas such as:

1. Theory is embedded in the data. The idea was that if the researcher is sensitive and looks and hard enough at the data, theory will emerge, the key word being “emergence.”

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2. A researcher should remain “objective” at least to some degree when collecting and analyzing data.
3. At all cost, a researcher should avoid “going native” (adopting the stance of or getting too close to participants), because going native would make it difficult to maintain that objectivity.
4. Though it was acknowledged that there was no “one” truth, there was still the notion that a research could capture a semblance of “reality” in data and present that reality as a set of theoretical findings.

Today, these ideas seem outdated, but I mention them to make a point. As with any phenomena, they have to be located within the context of time and place. When the first edition of *Basics* was published, many of us (the collective us) adopted the then prevailing notions about qualitative research. But, methodology is a living thing in the sense that it has to be given credit for the possessing the possibility of change. Here, change doesn't mean that the philosophical underpinnings of Strauss's version of grounded theory have been abandoned. The method remains rooted in pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, with its emphasis on structure and process. What has changed is subtle and has to do with how I approach, think, and write about qualitative research. With time, some researchers have simply walked away from the more traditional approaches to doing qualitative research, some going so far as to blur the boundaries between fiction and research. Others, like me, have tried to hold on to what is good about the past while updating a method to bring it more in line with the present.

In writing the third edition of *Basics of Grounded Theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I have chosen parts of both past and present and rejected others. I think I have retained what was best about Strauss's approach to doing analysis. One must remember that each research project is different, and that each person using a methodology, even with different projects, infuses the method with some aspect of the self and of the project and in doing so changes that methodology somewhat to make it more relevant. If Anselm Strauss were alive today, it is more than likely he would have changed also for he never stood still. I admire the works of Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2006) and how they've applied postmodernist and constructivist paradigms to grounded theory methodology, taking up the challenge of Denzin (1994) to move interpretative methods more deeply into the regions of postmodern sensibility (p. 512).

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The first edition of *Basics* was written mostly as a text for us to use with our own students. Strauss and I never thought that it would become a popular text or that it would create any controversy. We simply wanted to provide our students with a handy guide that they could refer back to once they left the security of the classroom to go out on their own and work on their dissertations. Because the book retained its popularity over the years, despite the publication of other texts on qualitative analysis, Strauss and I were asked to write the second edition of *Basics*. Unfortunately, Anselm Strauss died before that edition was completed. In keeping with Anselm's memory and the popular nature of the book, I felt it best not to make too many changes at the time. Eventually, I was asked to write a third edition of *Basics*.

The challenge I faced when writing that third edition was how to hold on to what is best about Strauss's basic approach to doing analysis, while bringing his methodology more in line with contemporary thought and the changes that had taken place within myself. I had no simple term to classify the person I'd become methodologically over the years since Dr. Strauss's death. I realized that, like him, I was a mixture of many philosophical orientations. The pragmatist/interactionist perspective that influenced Strauss so deeply is also an essential part of who I am, and, therefore, the method I present in the third edition of *Basics*. But there is more. As Denzin (1998) says so well when talking about qualitative research today: "Clearly simplistic classifications do not work. Any given qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur can be more than one thing at the same time, can be fitted into both the tender-and the tough-minded categories" (p. 338). More specifically, below are some of the contemporary ideas about qualitative researcher that I've adopted and built into the third edition of *Basics* (2008).

There is not one reality; there are multiple "realities," and collecting and analyzing data require capturing and taking into account those multiple viewpoints. There may be external events, such as a full moon, a war, and an airplane crashing into a building, but these are not themselves as important as how persons experience these events and respond to them. As Schawndt (1998) states: "One can reasonably hold that concepts and ideas are invented (rather than discovered) yet maintain that these inventions correspond to something in the real world" (p. 237). Therefore, it is not events themselves that are the focus of our studies but the meanings given to events and the actions/interactions/emotions expressed in response, along with the context in which those responses and the events occur.

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Each person experiences, gives meaning to, and responds to events in light of his or her own biography or experiences, according to gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious, and professional backgrounds. To see the validity of this statement, one only has to turn on the television and listen to a group of people discussing an event, such as a political speech. There is much discourse and sometimes outright conflict about what was said, but there is rarely total agreement about the significance or even content of the event. What a viewer sees and hears are multiple viewpoints on the same topic (but this doesn't mean that there are no patterns of response). Add to this the notion that what is being seen and heard on the television is filtered through the viewer's interpretation of the event based on his or her personal history and biography and you get a very complicated picture, one that can never be fully understood or reconstructed by the researcher.

I agree with the constructionist viewpoint that concepts and theories are constructed (they don't emerge) by researchers out of stories that are told by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves. Out of these multiple constructions, analysts build something that they call knowledge. Schawndt (1998) says:

In a fairly unremarkable sense, we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive—a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind—but active; mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forms abstractions of concepts. In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience and further we continually test and modify these constructions in light of new experience. (p. 237)

Perhaps it is the nurse in me who is talking because, although I realize that knowledge is constantly evolving in light of new experience and findings are “constructions” and not exact replicas of reality, I believe that both doing “interpretive” work and conceptualizing data are necessary because it is necessary to have a language to talk about the phenomena and problems encountered by practitioners in any field. As Blumer (1969) states, without a conceptual language there is no basis for discussion, conflict, negotiation, or development of a knowledge-based

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practice. We can't have practitioners walking around doing things without having a body of theoretical knowledge, along with their experience, to guide their actions. Knowledge may not mirror reality, but it does help us understand human response.

I am practical in what I want to accomplish with my research. Like Anselm, I draw on pragmatists and interactionists such as Blumer (1969), Hughes (1971), Park (1967), Thomas (1966), and their vision of research as the foundation for bringing about change. I agree with the social justice aims of feminist research (Oleson, 1998). At the same time, I enjoy doing qualitative research for research's sake—the people I meet, the intellectual stimulation I receive, and the opportunity to make order out of disorder. I agree with the feminist notion that we don't separate who we are as persons from the research and analysis that we do. Therefore, we must be self-reflective about how we influence the research process and, in turn, how it influences us. Hamberg and Johansson (1999) explain what they did to be self-reflective, and I, too, try to carry this out in my research. They say:

For this reflexive analysis, we have reread the coded interviews to scrutinize parts featuring tension, contradictions, or conflicting codes—passages that had often been discussed when we were striving to find reasonable and legitimate interpretations. We have also read our memos to recall our instant reactions during, and after, the interviews and our discussions when we compared our coding. (p. 458)

Though readers of research construct their own interpretations of findings, the fact that these are constructions and reconstructions does not negate the relevance of the findings or the insights that can be gained from them. I believe that we share a common culture out of which common constructions or agreements about the meaning of concepts can be arrived at through discourse. Concepts give us a basis for discourse and arriving at shared understandings. Therefore, I will continue to believe in the power of concepts and advocate their use.

There is another point that I believe is important to make here because there have been some misunderstandings about how Strauss and I use techniques and procedures. Techniques and procedures are tools to be used by the researcher as he or she sees fit to solve methodological problems. They are not a set of directives to be rigidly adhered to. No researcher should become so obsessed with following a set of coding

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procedures that the fluid and dynamic nature of qualitative analysis is lost. The analytic process is first and foremost a thinking process. It requires stepping into the shoes of the other and trying to see the world from their perspective. Analysis should be relaxed, flexible, and driven by insight gained through interaction with data rather than being structured and based on procedures.

Following through on the Challenge

As I worked on the third edition of *Basics*, I struggled with how to put together the best of the past with what I believe about research in the present. All sorts of questions formed in my mind as I sat down to write: What are methods? Are they merely sets of procedures? Or are they philosophical approaches with few if any procedures? What role do methods play in research? Are they guides, or just a broad set of ideas? What and how much instructional structure is necessary to guide readers through the process? What is the role of the researcher? How do you acknowledge the researcher while still telling the story of participants? How much or how little interpretation should be involved?

In addition to the above questions, there were several other broad issues complicating the writing of the third edition of *Basics*. Since the original publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), many different approaches to doing grounded theory have emerged, leaving me to wonder *if there is* or *even should be* a method called “grounded theory.” Perhaps it would be better to think of grounded theory as a compendium of different methods that have as their purpose the construction of theory from data, with each version of grounded theory method having its own philosophical foundation and approach to data gathering and analysis, while sharing some common procedures. Then there is the even larger question: Is theory-constructing research still relevant today? If there is not one but multiple “realities” out there, is it possible or even practical to package findings into one theoretical explanatory scheme, while acknowledging that any theory is limited in its explanatory ability? Wouldn’t thick rich description, case analysis, change directed research, or telling stories provide more valid reasons for doing research?

I was rather daunted by the task in front of me in writing the third edition. I procrastinated, wrote, and rewrote as one does when trying on ideas. But once I got into the “groove” of writing I found myself enjoying

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the process. I discovered that I wasn't delineating a whole new method. I was modernizing the method I had grown up with, dropping a lot of the dogma, flexing up procedures, and even seeking ways to explain how computers might enhance the research process.

The Method

As I stated in the introduction of this chapter, what I'm getting at in this long discussion is that it is impossible for me, from the perspective of the person I've become, to talk about methodology in the way that I did ten or fifteen years ago. I can't say this is Strauss's version of grounded theory because how I talk about method in the present (and how I've written about it in the third edition of *Basics*) is a combination of:

- what I felt was best about Strauss's method;
- combined with what I've derived from contemporary thought;
- all seen through the perspective of the person I've become over the years based on readings, continued research and life experiences, and interactions with students both in teaching methods in various parts of the world and over the Internet.

Therefore, rather than going into an entire philosophical or methodological discussion about "Straussian" grounded theory, I want to present an example of how I would go about doing research today based on everything that I presented above. The example is taken from the third edition of *Basics*. What I hope to convey with this example is that though the essentials of Strauss's method remains, I have become much more fluid and open when doing analysis. I use all the procedures, but they remain in the background rather than looming in the foreground. Bear with me as I describe the most recent and most satisfying piece of research of my entire career: a study of participants in the Vietnam War. Now this topic doesn't sound much like nursing, but it does have implications for the delivery of nursing care to young soldiers who participate in wars and is especially relevant in light of present events.

After I completed the introductory chapters of the third edition of *Basics*, I thought about how to best demonstrate to students the fluid and dynamic nature of data collection and analysis. I wanted to emphasize the interaction that occurs between the researcher and the data and to demonstrate how it is a combination of the data and the researcher's

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interpretation of them that guides and stimulates the ongoing research process. The usual way that authors do this is to present excerpts from their previous studies. But I wanted to do a research project right in front of my readers, take them through the process from beginning to end. Furthermore, I wanted to study something that I had never studied before. I wanted readers to see the methodological problems that I encountered along the way, to see how I handled these, and to obtain some insight into what I was thinking while doing the research. I wanted to share my experience. Stated more plainly, I wanted to demonstrate how to blend the best of contemporary thought with what was good about past approaches to doing research.

At the time, I didn't realize how long it would take me to do a research project as part of a book about methodology. Or how involved I would become with the subject matter. Even though I had an idea of what I wanted to do methodologically, I didn't have a topic for the research. I began looking through my files and found an interview done by Dr. Strauss some years ago with one of my close friends about his experiences as a nurse during the Vietnam War. After perusing that interview, I knew that I had found the topic for my study—the Vietnam War. I had grown up during the Vietnam era yet knew little about that event. This was an opportunity to inform myself as well as to demonstrate to readers of my book how to analyze data. I want to make clear that it is very important for a researcher to be excited about the topic he or she is studying. It is difficult for a researcher to be creative, do the hard work required, and keep plodding along over time if she or he lacks a passion for what is being studied.

Note that I had no specific research question when I began the analysis. I wasn't sure where I was going with the research. I was just going to sit down with that first piece of data in front of me and let it flow, let the research take me where it wanted. To bring my readers along with me, I wrote my thoughts down in a series of memos, but these are too lengthy to replicate here so I'll describe the process and some of my findings.

Analytic Process

The way that I analyzed the data was to break them apart into pieces corresponding to natural breaks in the flow of conversation. Then I worked with that piece of data. I sought to identify what I thought participants were telling me. I tried out various interpretations and discarded those

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that were not supported by data. I used concepts to capture my interpretations. I compared various pieces of data within and between participants looking for similarities and differences. Once I had some concepts, I scrutinized the data for descriptors or qualifiers of those concepts. In other words, I looked for properties of concepts and how they varied dimensionally.

Let me give an example. Participant #1 began the interview by explaining something about himself before going to war. He went on to say a little about why he decided to volunteer as an army nurse. I conceptualized this description as the “prewar self.” Some of the properties of his prewar self were youth, idealism, a sense of patriotism, innocence about war, training as a nurse, and having a family that supported the war and his joining the military.

The significance of the concept “prewar self” meant little to me early in the analysis. It just seemed important at the time to write a memo describing the characteristics of the men and women before they went to Vietnam. I knew that each person would be different in the details but that each person I interviewed would have a prewar self.

One major point about qualitative research in this manner is that in the beginning of the analysis, the researcher doesn't know with any certainty the degree of significance of early concepts. The researcher just kind of knows intuitively that something is important and should be noted. For example, though I realized that it was important to know something about who a person was before going off to war, it was not until I got deeper into the analysis that I discovered that the concept the “prewar self” was part of higher level concept (or category) I termed the “changing self.” I made this discovery by noting that the manner in which women and men described themselves before *going* to war was considerably different from how they described themselves *during* their time in Vietnam and how they described themselves *after* leaving Vietnam.

I derived many concepts while coding this first interview. However, it wasn't until I was almost finished analyzing the first interview that two things struck me as especially noteworthy. I noticed that this man described his “experience” in Vietnam as being “not so bad.” In fact, he described it as a “very maturing” experience. This struck me as rather odd, because I came of age during the Vietnam era and everything I read or saw on TV at the time made me think that going to war was a “terrible” experience. (I later learned that an experience can be difficult or even terrible and still be maturing.)

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Drawing on my background knowledge, I asked myself how it could be that this man's experience was not so bad. In doing so, I was picking up the not-so-bad dimension of the experience. I thought about this descriptor for a while and came to suspect that participant #1's experience was not so bad because he was a nurse, a noncombatant. Although he flew in helicopters into war zones to pick the injured, he never had to engage in battle or kill enemy soldiers. The other thing that struck me about the interview was that although it was never overtly expressed, there seemed to be a lot of residual anger and ambivalence about the war experience and how the war was handled. And most revealing to me was that participant #1 said in the interview that he had *never* spoken to another person about his experiences in Vietnam. Although his two brothers and many of his friends had also served in Vietnam, his talking to Dr. Strauss was the first time he had ever revealed anything about his experience there. I later learned that "not talking about Vietnam" was a common theme among Vietnam veterans. They essentially wall off that part of their life.

I mulled those thoughts over for a while and came up with two questions that would guide the next steps of the research. The first question was: Would the war experience be different for "combatants," that is, persons who went to Vietnam and participated in combat? And, the second question: Why is there still the wall of silence and so much residual anger? These questions guided the next steps in my data collection and analysis. I was doing theoretical sampling or directing data collection on the basis of the concepts "combatant" and "noncombatant," "wall of silence," and "residual anger." In addition to specifically looking for data that would bring out these concepts, I would examine subsequent data in terms of the "prewar self" and other concepts derived from that first analysis of data.

At this early stage of the research, I couldn't be certain that I was going in the right direction with the research. I had to trust my instincts. I let my interpretation of what I perceived to be significant guide me to the next phase of research. I still didn't have a well-formulated overall research question. I didn't know exactly what I was looking for. Up to this point in my research career, I had never trusted my own intuitive responses to data to such an extent. Usually I had some vague research question in mind when I began a research project. This time, rather than a specific question directing the research from the onset, the questions that evolved during my interaction with the data shaped the direction the research would take.

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I was ready to move on with the study, following up on the concepts of “combatant” versus “noncombatant,” when I realized I didn’t have another participant to interview. I didn’t know anyone who had been a combatant in the Vietnam War. My next methodological problem was to figure out where I could find a group of Vietnam War combatants to interview. I turned to the Internet, where so many people go these days for help, and put out a request for participants. *Oh my, what a discovery that was!* After several days, I received a reply to my request. I mean just *one* response, whereas I had expected to be overloaded with willing participants. The responder, a Vietnam veteran stated that he would be happy to answer my questions about his time in Vietnam. He was willing to talk because he was interested in educating people about the Vietnam War. However, he wanted to warn me that I shouldn’t expect a response from other veterans because even though thirty years had passed since the war, many vets were still having difficulty coping with their experience in Vietnam. I was rather astounded that the Vietnam War was still causing so much suffering.

I did receive another e-mail from someone in the same chat group. It said, “If I can’t even tell my wife about the war, what makes you think I can talk to you.” Ouch. I thought at this point that maybe it was not such a good idea to do a study on Vietnam War veterans. Eventually, I did get another response and the third responder was willing to talk about his experience. I had two more participants for my study and felt that I could continue with the analysis begun months earlier.

I asked Participant #2 what it was like to be a combatant. I wanted to compare the first two interviews for similarities and differences. I still had no general question in mind or sense of where I was going with the study, but I was pushing forward. Participant #2 was not overly verbose but what he said was quite startling, at least to me. At first, I wasn’t certain that I should put his interview in my book. I was concerned that readers might be frightened by such graphic words about war. Participant #2 told me that war is about killing. You kill the enemy before he kills you. He also said that although a soldier goes into war with sense of idealism and patriotism, these virtues become lost at the time of the first battle. When you are in a war zone being shot at day after day, it all comes down to survival—your own and the survival of your marine brothers.

Then I asked him about the anger. He said there were several things that made him angry. The first thing was that the Americans lost the war, the first war they had ever lost. He believed that the hands of those

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who actually did the fighting in the war were constrained by the many rules of engagement put on them by the policymakers in Washington. Second, he said that he was angry because 58,000 men lost their lives in a war that had no purpose. Third, he was angry because of the reception veterans received on their homecoming. The arguments about whether the Vietnam War was a just war didn't filter down to the combatants in the field. They believed they were fighting for their country. Moreover, combatants can't easily leave the war behind just because they leave the battlefield and return home. They bring the war home with them in the form of memories and nightmares.

After analyzing interview #2, I knew that I had to learn more about the "war experience" per se and about "survival," two new major concepts. I realized something occurred during combat that made the difference between how combatants versus noncombatants experienced the war.

At this point, the research project began to take on a life of its own outside of the book on methodology that I was writing. I had been touched by the stories that I heard and as a researcher I was emotionally invested in retelling that story. At the same time, I realized that I couldn't become too emotionally invested or I would not be able to complete the book. I also realized that this research would require a lot more investigative work because there were still so many unanswered questions. I was a little frightened because I still wasn't sure where I was going with this research. I would have to continue to trust in myself and in the research process.

I turned to the interview with Participant #3, the only other veteran who responded to my request for participants. I wanted to explore with him the concept of "anger" in greater depth. I wondered if he had a different explanation for why anger seemed so much a part of each of these interviews. Could he explain why, after all these years, so many vets have not let go of the anger and "healed."

Participant #3 told me that the anger begins in boot camp where the drill instructors demean you and wear you down. The purpose of their tactics, from his perspective, was to generate anger, and thereby turn raw recruits into a team that sticks together and that sees the outsider as an enemy. Then, once a soldier gets to war, the anger increases because a soldier realizes that he or she is simply being shot at because they are there: "You don't even know the people who are shooting at you." If you are lucky enough to survive the experience and return home, you then discover that those who remained at home were going on with their lives

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as usual. They went to college, got married, and had good jobs. The vets thought that family, friends, and non-vets just couldn't relate to what a combatant has been through, nor could they understand the nightmares and the difficulties of readjustment to civilian life.

With the analysis of three interviews behind me, I still had many more questions about the research than I had answered. I didn't know much about the actual experience of combat. Furthermore, I needed to put the war experience into a larger historical and political context to better understand it. I realized that I would have to know more about the rules of engagement and the policies that brought the United States and Vietnam into war. I also needed to know more about this enemy, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and why they fought so fiercely. I needed to examine combat situations and analyze them so that I could understand more about the process of surviving and why, although 58,000 men died (a large number), many more survived to return home.

Because I had no more participants, I wondered how I was going to acquire that data. I turned to the Internet once more, this time going to Amazon.com. Here I made interesting discovery. Though the Vietnam veterans in the chat room I connected with had difficulty talking about the war, apparently there were many other veterans who were willing to put their stories in print. I had found a fountain of data in the form of *memoirs*. I ordered as many books as I could from Amazon, some written by combatants, others written by nurses, helicopter, and fighter pilots, and some written by prisoners of war and journalists. I even found a couple of books written by Viet Cong soldiers, because in qualitative research it is important to get those multiple perspectives. I also ordered several historical books about the war and about Vietnam to find data about *contextual questions*, like the events that led up to this war; further, I read about the profiles of the men in Washington who directed the war from afar and set the rules of engagement. Their perspective was important, too.

I soon found myself overloaded with data. I learned more about war than I ever wanted to know. I had trouble sleeping. I became stressed every time I looked at the materials. I decided that I needed to distance myself from these war materials for a while so that I could return and do a proper analysis.

When I did return to the study, I analyzed the memoirs in the same way as I did the interviews. I built on the concepts and questions derived from each previous analysis continuing on with theoretical sampling. In

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the memoirs, I discovered that surviving in war is situational and proportional to the risks associated with those situations. I learned that the greatest death rates occurred in men inexperienced with war and that survival is enhanced when one becomes “a seasoned soldier.” However, with time and exposure to conflict, even seasoned soldiers tend to “wear down,” which, in turn, increases their chances of being killed or wounded. I discovered that the men fighting the war saw it as war that seemed to go nowhere. There was not attempt to gain or hold territory. Rather, success was based on body counts. The soldiers would fight the enemy and take over a piece of territory only to walk away after the battle, leaving the enemy free to retake that territory. When pushed, the enemy would retreat above 17th parallel, the division line between North and South Vietnam or go into Cambodia or Laos, also supposedly out of bounds according to the rules of engagement. There was a high mortality and morbidity rate on both sides, though the main concern for U.S. soldiers was for their own lost comrades. Then, especially relevant for the soldiers, was the lack of support for the war at home, which was demoralizing.

Most soldiers served their country with honor. But a few soldiers committed atrocities, and often it was the atrocities and not the good things that soldiers did that made the news. Some atrocities occurred because soldiers were worn down by the stress of continuously being in a war zone and not knowing who among the civilian population was enemy and who was friend. As a consequence, combatants sometimes fired at anyone who acted suspicious. This is understandable, as the enemy sometimes hid within civilian populations. I am not excusing soldiers' bad behavior because some were just bad people who happened to be in the military. Others were young, easily influenced, and lacking in adequate leadership, officers to monitor their behavior, and set moral standards. Sometimes soldiers were just plain angry about seeing a comrade die before their eyes and wanted to revenge their comrade's death by punishing the enemy or, worse, hurting civilians who got in the way. But anger also had a positive side in that it could also keep some soldiers alive, contributing to their survival even when they were fatigued and disillusioned with war. The problem was not being able to let go of that anger once soldiers returned home and to civilian life.

These findings led me to another question and more theoretical sampling. If the risks of wearing down were so high, I wondered why some men were able to physically survive and at the same time maintain their moral integrity. Why is it that despite the terrible things that occur in any

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war, there are also heroes and men and women who did very good deeds for civilian populations? I turned to the data to look at specific situations of risks and analyzed them. I looked at the personal and social psychological conditions that enable soldiers to survive and overcome the physical, psychological, and moral risks associated with war. Later I examined the data to determine why some individuals were able to heal after the war whereas others suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder. What I discovered was that to survive physically and psychologically, combatants had to be able to put aside their prewar civilian selves, adjust to the “realities of war,” then, when they returned home, readjust once again by constantly shifting their images of “self” and the “meanings of war.” I termed the ability to make these transitions “surviving: reconciling multiple realities,” and it became the core concept of my study. The study was more complicated than this, but this gives you some idea of how I proceeded with the study and why I went in the directions that I did.

I won't bore you with all of the details of that study. Anyone interested in learning more about this research can look at the third edition of *Basics*. I want to emphasize that although in methodology texts we talk about procedures, these analytic techniques are just broad guidelines that are used in a very dynamic and flexible ways to stimulate the analysis. Whenever a writer tries to put into words what he or she does when doing analytic work, it becomes rigidified and open to unintended uses. Yet, the actual research process is fluid, dynamic, and evolving. Notice that I had no idea in the study presented above of where I was going at the beginning of the study. I let my interpretations in the form of concepts and the questions I asked about those concepts guide each step of the research process. Throughout the analysis, I felt like a detective following up on one lead after another until I could piece together a whole story. I marveled at the information that a researcher can obtain from data if he or she asks the right questions and takes the time to write memos. In memos, it's not just the researcher and not just the data that are talking, but a combination of researcher and the data interacting together to come up with an explanation of what is going on. Memos are a reflection, the records of that interaction. There is no possibility of omitting the writing of memos as a way of shortcutting the research process. In the end, not having those memos to refer back to shows up in the quality of the product that is produced. The density and variation are missing from the final product because there is no way that a researcher can remember all the details of the analysis.

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Concluding Remarks

I think that anyone picking up the third edition of *Basics* will find that in many ways it is a different book from the first and second editions, while at the same time it retains much of the essential elements of Anselm Strauss's approach to developing grounded theory. I think it takes the best of the past and puts it together with contemporary thought to present a method that can lead to the development of "quality" qualitative research. This approach to qualitative research analysis encourages researchers to enter the investigation with an open mind, ready to hear what participants are saying, and advocates letting the questions that emerge from analysis guide the next steps in data collection and analysis. It is a method that rejects a dogmatic and rigid approach to doing research and embraces taking the role of the other, giving voice to participants, all the while noting how the researcher him- or herself is responding and shaping the research.

The researcher formulates new questions as the research evolves, chooses among a variety of data sources and analytic strategies, and even changes the course of the research midway as the situation demands. As in other qualitative research, the self is the instrument of the research. It requires that a researcher trust his or her instincts about where to go, what kinds of data to collect, when to let go, and when to move on. Most importantly, the third edition of *Basics* offers suggestions on how to capture the complexity in life and the variety of different ways persons respond to events in their lives through ongoing forms of inter/action and emotion. Keeping with and emphasizing what was so dear to Anselm Strauss, the third edition stresses the importance of putting process together with structure. It places action/interaction/emotional responses to events in the center stage and locates them within the larger historical, social, economic, political, etc. context in which events occur. And for those who want to develop theory, the book has a chapter on integration though it does not discourage persons whose interest is in doing thick rich description or case analysis from using some of the research techniques suggested in the book. Most of all, the methodology presented in the third edition of *Basics* emphasizes the need for researchers to take the time to think, observe, talk to diverse groups, compare, ask questions, follow the leads in the data, and write those memos.

Although grounded theorists today come from different perspectives and have their own approaches to analyzing data, I think certain threads

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run through all our methods, for example, doing comparative analysis and asking questions of the data, theoretical sampling, and writing memos. Concepts remain the foundation of research, along with the development of concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions. Other common threads are saturation and theoretical sampling, two concepts often misunderstood and misused by novices to qualitative research. For me, the importance of method is not whose approach one chooses but the “quality” of the research findings produced by any approach. Each of the methods here in this book has the potential to produce quality findings. In fact, looking at the list of evaluative criteria provided by Charmaz in her recent book *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2006), I find that any of them could be applied to the method described in the third edition of *Basics*. Findings have a way of speaking for themselves. Findings either resonate, offer new insights, explore phenomena in depth, add to a knowledge base, and make you stand up and listen or they don’t. I personally don’t see the purpose of all this hoopla about method. One could argue and discuss methods all day. In the end, it doesn’t matter. People will choose the method that most speaks to them and they will use it in ways that make sense to them.

One last thought. I’m sure that if Anselm Strauss were alive today, he would say that his goal was to teach students how to think. He wanted to provide researchers with a methodology that would enable them to capture some of the complexity and variation in this world, qualities that add so much richness to life as we experience and live it as well as to our research findings. He wanted to give researchers the tools to produce findings that could be used to make the world a better place. He would be pleased to see the different methodological branches of grounded theory that have emerged from the second and third generation grounded theorists based upon the original work done by him and Barney Glaser (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Though each of the contemporary and descendant methodologies is somewhat different, all have the capacity, if carried out properly, to do just what was intended—develop useful theory that is grounded in data.

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Dialogue: On “Cleaning” Transcripts

Q: I have heard a lot about cleaning the transcripts. My question is, does this cleaning decrease the richness of your data because you lose the tone from your answer?

Barbara: I don't have a lot to say about this but I think there is something lost in that I've also started to use tapes of interviews as well as transcripts. I think listening to the tapes adds a lot, adds another dimension. It adds some richness to the analysis.

Kathy: I agree I listen to tapes over and over and again. I've been criticized for the rationality of the [interview] accounts in my book and the person saying, not that I doctored the statements, so what was going on? What I concluded was that both rationality and emotionality were there. I encouraged Annika Lilrank, who is in Finland, to pursue the difference between the rationality of the story and emotion of the interview. The emotion that comes out during the talks is lost in the transcribed interview accounts but that emotion is nonetheless there, and I think that's really something to take note of.

Julie: I try not to. I think that you lose something if you do.