INTRODUCING QUALITATIVE METHODS provides a series of volumes which introduce qualitative research to the student and beginning researcher. The approach is interdisciplinary and international. A distinctive feature of these volumes is the helpful student exercises.

One stream of the series provides texts on the key methodologies used in qualitative research. The other stream contains books on qualitative research for different disciplines or occupations. Both streams cover the basic literature in a clear and accessible style, but also cover the 'cutting edge' issues in the area.

Constructing Grounded Theory

A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis

Kathy Charmaz

Acknowledgements

1 An Invitation to Grounded Theory

A journey begins before the travellers depart. So, too, our grounded theory adventure begins as we seek information about what a grounded theory journey entails and what to expect along the way. We scope the terrain that grounded theory covers and that we expect to traverse. Before leaving we look back into the history of grounded theory in the twentieth century and look forward into its yet unrealized potential for the twenty-first century. Our last step before embarking is to lay out a map of the method and of this book.

In this book, I invite you to join a journey through a qualitative research project. You might ask, what does the journey entail? Where do I start? How do I proceed? Which obstacles might lie ahead? This book takes a short trip through data collection then follows a lengthy trail through analysis of qualitative data. Along the way, numerous guides ease your way through the analytic and writing processes. Throughout the journey we will climb up analytic levels and raise the theoretical import of your ideas while we keep a taut rope tied to your data on solid ground.

What might a path between collecting and analyzing data look like? For a moment, pretend that you have begun conducting interviews for a new research project exploring the sudden onset of a serious chronic illness. Imagine meeting Margie Arlen during her senior year in high school. Margie tells you about her troubles that accompanied a rapid onset of rheumatoid arthritis. You piece together the following sequence of events from her story:

At age 14, Margie was a star student and athlete. She was clearly slated for success in college and beyond. Her teachers saw the makings of a scholar, her coaches marveled at her athletic prowess, and her peers viewed her as in a class beyond them. Then her health rapidly deteriorated from arthritis. In a few months, she went from being lightning on the soccer field to hardly walking. The awe that other students had accorded her shifted to distance and disdain. Once, her talents and skills had set her apart from the crowd that clamored around her. Then her neck brace and belabored movements kept her apart as fellow students silently shunned her. Still, Margie learned deeper lessons. She said:

It's [her illness and disability] taught me that the important things—like, I used to be real introverted and scared to talk with other people in a way. But now it's like I feel I can take my talents, not the sports and things like that, but I can take my talents and I go out and talk to people and become their friend, like, encouraging people and things like that, and I found that that's, like, more important and that builds more self-esteem, just being able to do things for other people, like serving missions and things like that, than, you know, being able to go out and prove that you are a good athlete. So it's changed me in that I'm a lot more outgoing now, and it's changed me in that I've realized more what's important.

Then, like her interviewer, you gently inquired, 'So what's important?' to which Margie replied,

I think in a lot of ways it's instead of making myself look good, it's making others look good. I was always a perfectionist, and I wanted to do things fast. If I said I was going to do something, I was going to do it no matter how late I had to stay up at night … And those type of things take a toll on our body, and when I realized it's okay to say, I'm sorry I can't get this done in time or something, or I just can't do it—say 'no' in the first place—then I think that's important because otherwise you totally run yourself into the ground if you have a chronic disease, and you're going to make yourself worse. So that took a long time to learn. But I think it's really important, like setting your priorities. Concentrating on what's important and then doing that first and then letting go of whatever else. (Charmaz, 2002b: 39s)

Now think about how to study stories like Margie's. How do you make sense of the events that Margie Arlen describes? What might you see in her statements that you would like to explore further with her and others who have experienced physical losses? Imagine that you pursued these questions in a qualitative study and aimed to develop a conceptual analysis of the materials. How would you go about conducting your research and creating the analysis?

Grounded theory methods will help you get started, stay involved, and finish your project. The research process will bring surprises, spark ideas, and hone your analytic skills. Grounded theory methods foster seeing your data in fresh ways and exploring your ideas about the data through early analytic writing. By adopting grounded theory methods you can direct, manage, and streamline your data collection and, moreover, construct an original analysis of your data.

What are grounded theory methods? Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves. The guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules (see also Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003). Thus, data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct. Grounded theorists collect data to develop theoretical analyses from the beginning of a project. We try to learn what occurs in the research settings we join and what our research participants' lives are like. We study how

they explain their statements and actions, and ask what analytic sense we can make of them.

We begin by being open to what is happening in the studied scenes and interview statements so that we might learn about our research participants' lives. We would attend to what we hear, see, and sense during Margie Arlen's interview. Grounded theorists start with data. We construct these data through our observations, interactions, and materials that we gather about the topic or setting. We study empirical events and experiences and pursue our hunches and potential analytic ideas about them. Most qualitative methods allow researchers to follow up on interesting data in whatever way they devise. Grounded theory methods have the additional advantage of containing explicit guidelines that show us *how* we may proceed.

Margie Arlen's intriguing remarks about learning to attend to other people and to limit her activities could serve as starting points for analysis as well as for further data collection. In subsequent interviews, we would listen to the stories of other young people who have suffered recent physical losses and explore how they handled their changed lives. If possible, we would add ethnographic data by joining our research participants while at school, physical therapy, a support group, or just hanging out with friends. How do young people respond to serious illness and disability? What contributes to their different responses? We raise questions that emanate from thinking about our collected data and shape those data we wish to obtain.

As grounded theorists, we study our early data and begin to separate, sort, and synthesize these data through qualitative coding. Coding means that we attach labels to segments of data that depict what each segment is about. Coding distills data, sorts them, and gives us a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data. Grounded theorists emphasize what is happening in the scene when they code data.

Several initial codes stood out to me in Margie's interview: 'being changed,' 'concentrating on what's important,' and 'learning limits.' Such codes and our ideas about them point to areas to explore during subsequent data collection. We would compare the events and views that Margie talks about—and our codes with the next person we talk with, and the next person, and the next.

By making and coding numerous comparisons, our analytic grasp of the data begins to take form. We write preliminary analytic notes called memos about our codes and comparisons and any other ideas about our data that occur to us. Through studying data, comparing them, and writing memos, we define ideas that best fit and interpret the data as tentative analytic categories. When inevitable questions arise and gaps in our categories appear, we seek data that answer these questions and may fill the gaps. We may return to Margie and other research participants to learn more and to strengthen our analytic categories. As we proceed, our categories not only coalesce as we interpret the collected data but also the categories become more theoretical because we engage in successive levels of analysis.

Our analytic categories and the relationships we draw between them provide a conceptual handle on the studied experience. Thus, we build levels of abstraction directly from the data and, subsequently, gather additional data to

check and refine our emerging analytic categories. Our work culminates in a 'grounded theory,' or an abstract theoretical understanding of the studied experience. Margie's remarks may start us on a research journey; doing comparative analysis and developing our categories advances our progress. In short, grounded theory methods demystify the conduct of qualitative inquiry—and expedite your research and enhance your excitement about it.

Emergence of Grounded Theory

The Historical Context

Grounded theory methods emerged from sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss's (1965, 1967) successful collaboration during their studies of dying in hospitals (see Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1968; Strauss & Glaser, 1970). In the early 1960s in the United States, hospital staff seldom talked about or even acknowledged dying and death with seriously ill patients. Glaser and Strauss's research team observed how dying occurred in a variety of hospital settings; they looked at how and when professionals and their terminal patients knew they were dying and how they handled the news. Glaser and Strauss gave their data explicit analytic treatment and produced theoretical analyses of the social organization and temporal order of dying. They explored analytic ideas in long conversations and exchanged preliminary notes analyzing observations in the field. As they constructed their analyses of dying, they developed systematic methodological strategies that social scientists could adopt for studying many other topics. Glaser and Strauss's book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) first articulated these strategies and advocated *developing* theories from research grounded in data rather than *deducing* testable hypotheses from existing theories.

Glaser and Strauss entered the methodological scene at a propitious time. Qualitative research in sociology was losing ground. By the mid-1960s, the long tradition of qualitative research in sociology had waned as sophisticated quantitative methods gained dominance in the United States and quantitative methodologists reigned over departments, journal editorial boards, and funding agencies. Despite the awe accorded to a few qualitative stars, the presence of several strong qualitative doctoral programs, and sharp critiques of quantification from critical theorists, the discipline marched toward defining research in quantitative terms.

What kinds of methodological assumptions supported the move toward quantification? Every way of knowing rests on a theory of how people develop knowledge. Beliefs in a unitary method of systematic observation, replicable experiments, operational definitions of concepts, logically deduced hypotheses, and confirmed evidence—often taken as *the* scientific method—formed the assumptions upholding quantitative methods. These assumptions supported positivism, the dominant paradigm of inquiry in routine natural science.

Mid-century positivist conceptions of scientific method and knowledge stressed objectivity, generality, replication of research, and falsification of competing hypotheses and theories. Social researchers who adopted the positivist paradigm aimed to discover causal explanations and to make predictions about an external,

knowable world. Their beliefs in scientific logic, a unitary method, objectivity, and truth legitimized reducing qualities of human experience to quantifiable variables. Thus, positivist methods assumed an unbiased and passive observer who collected facts but did not participate in creating them, the separation of facts from values, the existence of an external world separate from scientific observers and their methods, and the accumulation of generalizable knowledge about this world. Positivism led to a quest for valid instruments, technical procedures, replicable research designs, and verifiable quantitative knowledge.

Only narrowly scientific—that is, quantitative—ways of knowing held validity for positivists; they rejected other possible ways of knowing, such as through interpreting meanings or intuitive realizations. Thus, qualitative research that analyzed and interpreted research participants' meanings sparked disputes about its scientific value. Quantitative researchers of the 1960s saw qualitative research as impressionistic, anecdotal, unsystematic, and biased. The priority they gave to replication and verification resulted in ignoring human problems and research questions that did not fit positivistic research designs. If proponents of quantification acknowledged qualitative research at all, they treated it as a preliminary exercise for refining quantitative instruments. Thus, some quantitative researchers used interviews or observations to help them design more precise surveys or more effective experiments.

As positivism gained strength in mid-century, the division between theory and research simultaneously grew. Growing numbers of quantitative researchers concentrated on obtaining concrete information. Those quantitative researchers who connected theory and research tested logically deduced hypotheses from an existing theory. Although they refined extant theory, their research seldom led to new theory construction.

Glaser and Strauss's Challenge

In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss countered the ruling methodological assumptions of mid-century. Their book made a cutting-edge statement because it contested notions of methodological consensus *and* offered systematic strategies for qualitative research practice. Essentially, Glaser and Strauss joined epistemological critique with practical guidelines for action. They proposed that systematic qualitative analysis had its own logic and could generate theory. In particular, Glaser and Strauss intended to construct abstract theoretical explanations of social processes.

For Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987), the defining components of grounded theory practice include:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis

- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness
- Conducting the literature review *after* developing an independent analysis.

Engaging in these practices helps researchers to control their research process and to increase the analytic power of their work (see also Bigus, Hadden & Glaser, 1994; Charmaz, 1983, 1990, 1995b, 2003; Glaser, 1992, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Stern, 1994b; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). Glaser and Strauss aimed to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theoretical frameworks, thereby providing abstract, conceptual understandings of the studied phenomena. They urged novice grounded theorists to develop fresh theories and thus advocated delaying the literature review to avoid seeing the world through the lens of extant ideas. Glaser and Strauss's theorizing contrasted with armchair and logico-deductive theorizing because they began with data and systematically raised the conceptual level of their analyses while maintaining the strong foundation in data. Consistent with their reasoning, a completed grounded theory met the following criteria: a close fit with the data, usefulness, conceptual density, durability over time, modifiability, and explanatory power (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967) provided a powerful argument that legitimized qualitative research as a credible methodological approach in its own right rather than simply as a precursor for developing quantitative instruments. In the book, Glaser and Strauss (1967) challenged:

- Beliefs that qualitative methods were impressionistic and unsystematic
- Separation of data collection and analysis phases of research
- Prevailing views of qualitative research as a precursor to more 'rigorous' quantitative methods
- The arbitrary division between theory and research
- Assumptions that qualitative research could not generate theory.

Glaser and Strauss built on earlier qualitative researchers' implicit analytic procedures and research strategies and made them explicit. During the first half of the twentieth century, qualitative researchers had taught generations of students through mentoring and lengthy immersion in field research (Rock, 1979). Previous guides for conducting field research primarily dealt with data collection methods and researchers' membership roles in field settings. Authors told their readers little about how to tackle analyzing the piles of collected data. Glaser and Strauss's written guidelines for conducting qualitative research changed the oral tradition and made analytic guidelines accessible.

Merging Divergent Disciplinary Traditions

Grounded theory marries two contrasting—and competing—traditions in sociology as represented by each of its originators: Columbia University positivism and Chicago school pragmatism and field research. The epistemological assumptions, logic, and systematic approach of grounded theory methods reflect Glaser's rigorous quantitative training at Columbia University with Paul Lazarsfeld. Glaser intended to codify qualitative research methods as Lazarsfeld had codified quantitative research (see, for example, Lazarsfeld & Rosenberg, 1955). Codifying qualitative research methods entailed specifying explicit strategies for conducting research and therefore demystified the research process.

Glaser also advocated building useful 'middle-range' theories, as the Columbia University theorist Robert K. Merton (1957) had proposed. Middle-range theories consisted of abstract renderings of specific social phenomena that were grounded in data. Such middle-range theories contrasted with the 'grand' theories of mid-century sociology that swept across societies but had no foundation in systematically analyzed data.

Glaser imbued grounded theory with dispassionate empiricism, rigorous codified methods, emphasis on emergent discoveries, and its somewhat ambiguous specialized language that echoes quantitative methods. Although *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* transformed methodological debates and inspired generations of qualitative researchers, Glaser's book *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) provided the most definitive early statement of the method.

Nonetheless, Strauss's Chicago school heritage also pervades the grounded theory method. Strauss viewed human beings as active agents in their lives and in their worlds rather than as passive recipients of larger social forces. He assumed that process, not structure, was fundamental to human existence; indeed, human beings created structures through engaging in processes. For Strauss, subjective and social meanings relied on our use of language and emerged through action. The construction of action was the central problem to address. In short, Strauss brought notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices, and the open-ended study of action to grounded theory.

All these ideas reflected the pragmatist philosophical tradition that Strauss embraced while in his doctoral program at the University of Chicago (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Pragmatism informed symbolic interactionism, a theoretical perspective that assumes society, reality, and self are constructed through interaction and thus rely on language and communication. This perspective assumes that interaction is inherently dynamic and *interpretive* and addresses how people create, enact, and change meanings and actions. Consider how Margie Arlen told of reinterpreting what had become important to her and of changing her actions accordingly. Symbolic interactionism assumes that people can and do think about their actions rather than respond mechanically to stimuli. Through the influence of Herbert Blumer and Robert Park, Strauss adopted both symbolic interactionism and the Chicago legacy of ethnographic research (Park & Burgess, 1921).

Glaser employed his analytic skills to codify qualitative analysis and thus constructed specific guidelines for doing it. Glaser and Strauss shared a keen interest in studying fundamental social or social psychological processes within a social setting or a particular experience such as having a chronic illness. Thus, for them, a finished grounded theory explains the studied process in new theoretical terms,

explicates the properties of the theoretical categories, and often demonstrates the causes and conditions under which the process emerges and varies, and delineates its consequences.

Most grounded theories are substantive theories because they address delimited problems in specific substantive areas such as a study of how newly disabled young people reconstruct their identities. The logic of grounded theory can reach across substantive areas and into the realm of formal theory, which means generating abstract concepts and specifying relationships between them to understand problems in multiple substantive areas (see Kearney, 1998). For example, if we developed a theory of identity loss and reconstruction among young people with new disabilities, we could examine our theoretical categories in other areas of life in which people have experienced a sudden major loss, such as occurs with a partner's sudden death, lay-off from work, or loss of place due to a natural disaster. Each exploration within a new substantive area can help us to refine the formal theory. Glaser and Strauss's logic led them to formal theorizing when they took the theoretical categories that they had developed about status passage during their studies of dying and examined it as a generic process that cut across varied substantive areas (see Glaser & Strauss, 1971).

The *Discovery* book found receptive audiences and became a major force in igniting the 'qualitative revolution' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: ix) that gained momentum throughout the latter part of the twentieth century. Glaser and Strauss's explicit strategies and call for developing theories from qualitative data spread throughout disciplines and professions. Their book inspired new generations of social scientists and professionals, especially nurses, to pursue qualitative research. Many doctoral students in nursing at the University of California, San Francisco learned grounded theory methods from Glaser or Strauss and later became leaders in their profession and experts in qualitative inquiry (see Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Schreiber & Stern, 2001).

Developments in Grounded Theory

Since Glaser and Strauss's classic statements in 1967 (Glaser & Strauss) and 1978 (Glaser), they have taken grounded theory in somewhat divergent directions (Charmaz, 2000). For years, Glaser remained consistent with his earlier exegesis of the method and thus defined grounded theory as a method of discovery, treated categories as emergent from the data, relied on direct and, often, narrow empiricism, and analyzed a basic social process. Strauss (1987) moved the method toward verification and his co-authored works with Juliet M. Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) furthered this direction.

Strauss and Corbin's version of grounded theory also favors their new technical procedures rather than emphasizing the comparative methods that distinguished earlier grounded theory strategies. Glaser (1992) contends that Strauss and Corbin's procedures force data and analysis into preconceived categories and, thus, contradict fundamental tenets of grounded theory. Despite Glaser's numerous objections to Strauss and Corbin's version of grounded theory, their book serves as a powerful statement of the method and has instructed graduate students throughout the world.

In the 1960s, Glaser and Strauss fought the dominance of positivistic quantitative research. Ironically, by 1990 grounded theory not only became known for its rigor and usefulness, but also for *its* positivistic assumptions. It has gained acceptance from quantitative researchers who sometimes adopt it in projects that use mixed methods. The flexibility and legitimacy of grounded theory methods continues to appeal to qualitative researchers with varied theoretical and substantive interests.

Meanwhile, a growing number of scholars have moved grounded theory away from the positivism in both Glaser's and Strauss and Corbin's versions of the method (see Bryant, 2002, 2003; Charmaz, 2000, 2002a, 2006a; Clarke, 2003, 2005; Seale, 1999). Like any container into which different content can be poured, researchers can use basic grounded theory guidelines such as coding, memo-writing, and sampling for theory development, and comparative methods are, in many ways, neutral.

Grounded theory guidelines describe the steps of the research process and provide a path through it. Researchers can adopt and adapt them to conduct diverse studies. *How* researchers use these guidelines is not neutral; nor are the assumptions they bring to their research and enact during the process. Antony Bryant (2002) and Adele Clarke (2003, 2005) join me in contending that we can use basic grounded theory guidelines with twenty-first century methodological assumptions and approaches. This book takes on the challenge of how to do that.

Constructing Grounded Theory

In their original statement of the method, Glaser and Strauss (1967) invited their readers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in their own way. I accept their invitation and return to past grounded theory emphases on examining processes, making the study of action central, and creating abstract interpretive understandings of the data. This book provides *a* way of doing grounded theory that takes into account the theoretical and methodological developments of the past four decades.

I view grounded theory methods as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages. In the following chapters, I emphasize flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes, and requirements. During our journey through the research process, I aim to clarify what grounded theorists do and to show you how we do it. Hence, I discuss the guidelines throughout subsequent chapters with sufficient detail so that you can use them on your own and give them a sound appraisal.

Grounded theory methods can complement other approaches to qualitative data analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them. I occasionally draw on excellent examples from qualitative studies whose authors do not claim grounded theory allegiance or whose writing only acknowledges specific aspects of the approach. These authors bring an imaginative eye and an incisive voice to their studies—and inspire good work. Their works transcend their immediate circles.

The classic grounded theory texts of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978) provide an explicit method for analyzing processes. I have talked about

the research process and studying process, but what is a process?[1] A process consists of unfolding temporal sequences that may have identifiable markers with clear beginnings and endings and benchmarks in between. The temporal sequences are linked in a process and lead to change. Thus, single events become linked as part of a larger whole. Even the most regimented process may contain surprises because the present arises from the past but is never quite the same. The present emerges with new characteristics (Mead, 1932). Thus the experience and outcome of a specific process has some degree of indeterminacy, however small it might be.

Throughout the book, I build on my earlier discussions of the grounded theory method (see esp. Charmaz, 1990, 2000, 2002a, 2003, 2005) and on a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective. Grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them. In the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their position, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We *construct* our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices.

My approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it. (Charmaz, 1995b, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). Research participants' implicit meanings, experiential views—and researchers' finished grounded theories—are constructions of reality. In keeping with its Chicago school antecedents, I argue for building on the pragmatist underpinnings in grounded theory and advancing interpretive analyses that acknowledge these constructions.

Constructing Grounded Theory at a Glance

The organization of this book reproduces the logic of grounded theory in linear form. We start with gathering data and end by writing our analysis and reflecting on the entire process. In practice, however, the research process is not so linear. Grounded theorists stop and write whenever ideas occur to them. Some of our best ideas may occur to us late in the process and may lure us back to the field to gain a deeper view. Quite often, we discover that our work suggests pursuing more than one analytic direction. Thus, we may focus on certain ideas first and finish one paper or project about them but later return to our data and unfinished analysis in another area. Throughout this book, I treat grounded theory methods as constituting a craft that researchers practice. Like any craft, practitioners vary in their emphasis on one or another aspect but taken together share commonalities, which I address in the book (see Figure 1.1).

Chapter 2, 'Gathering Rich Data,' considers decisions about getting started and choosing approaches to data-gathering. Researchers can use grounded theory strategies with a variety of data collection methods. I treat these methods as tools to use rather than as recipes to follow. I advocate gathering
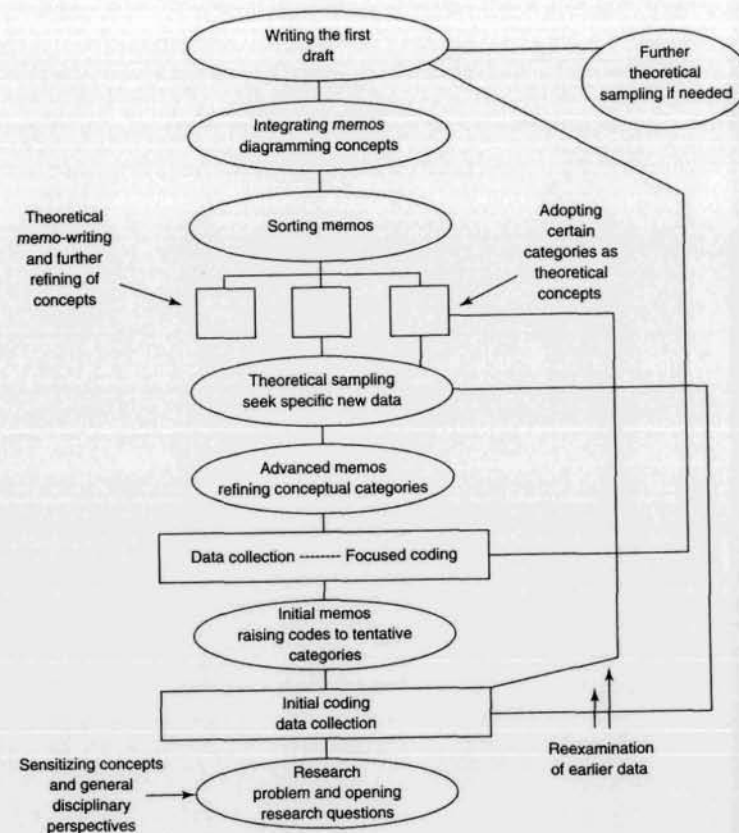

FIGURE 1.1 The grounded theory process

rich—detailed and full—data and placing them in their relevant situational and social contexts. This chapter introduces several major approaches to data-gathering and gives guidelines for using data to learn how people make sense of their situations and act on them.

As we learn how our research participants make sense of their experiences, we begin to make analytic sense of their meanings and actions. Chapter 3, 'Coding in Grounded Theory Practice,' shows how to do coding and thus label bits of data according to what they indicate. The chapter focuses on two main types of grounded theory coding: 1) initial line-by-line coding, a strategy which prompts you to study your data closely—line-by-line—and to begin conceptualizing your ideas, and 2) focused coding, which permits you to separate, sort, and synthesize large amounts of data.

Certain codes crystallize meanings and actions in the data. Writing extended notes called memos on telling codes helps you to develop your ideas. In Chapter 4, 'Memo-writing,' I show how grounded theorists take these codes apart and analyze them in memos. You write memos throughout your research.

Memos provide ways to compare data, to explore ideas about the codes, and to direct further data-gathering. As you work with your data and codes, you become progressively more analytic in how you treat them and thus you raise certain codes to conceptual categories.

Chapter 5, 'Theoretical Sampling, Saturation, and Sorting,' explains theoretical sampling, the grounded theory strategy of obtaining further selective data to refine and fill out your major categories. In this chapter, I also question the meaning of theoretical saturation as indicating that no new properties of the category emerge during data collection. I next discuss sorting memos to fit the theoretical categories and show relationships that integrate the work. I introduce diagramming because increasing numbers of grounded theorists use it as an alternative way to integrate their ideas and to establish the logic of their ordering.

Chapter 6, 'Reconstructing Theory in Grounded Theory Studies,' asks you to reassess what theory means. I explore meanings of theory in the social sciences and conceptions of theorizing in grounded theory. I juxtapose positivist and interpretive kinds of grounded theory to clarify how contrasting forms of analysis flow from different starting points. The chapter ends with a discussion of three examples of theorizing in grounded theory and a reconstruction of their respective theoretical logic. Each example differs in theoretical emphasis, scope, and reach but taken together they show the versatility and usefulness of grounded theory methods.

Chapter 7, 'Writing the Draft,' explains differences between writing to develop an analysis and writing for an audience. Grounded theory strategies lead you to concentrate on your analysis rather than on arguments about it, to delay the literature review, and to construct an original theory that interprets your data. These strategies contradict traditional requirements for reporting research. The chapter reconciles tensions between grounded theory methods and traditional forms of social scientific reportage by offering guidelines for constructing arguments, writing the literature review, and developing a theoretical framework. The chapter ends by addressing ways to render our ideas through writing.

Last, Chapter 8, 'Reflecting on the Process,' discusses criteria for assessing grounded theories as products of research and ends the book with questions about our quest for knowledge and a call for action.

And now our journey through the research process begins …

NOTE

1 My definition of process draws heavily on pragmatist conceptions of emergence and partly concurs with aspects of varied views expressed by Russell Kelley, Dan E. Miller, Dennis Waskul, Angus Vail, and Phillip Vannini during a listserv discussion on SSSITalk, January 25, 2005. (www.soci.niu.edu/~archives/SSSITALK)

2 Gathering Rich Data

Our grounded theory adventure starts as we enter the field where we gather data. We step forward from our disciplinary perspectives with a few tools and provisional concepts. A grounded theory journey may take several varied routes, depending on where we want to go and where our analysis takes us. Ethnographic methods, intensive interviewing, and textual analysis provide tools for gathering data as we traverse these routes. A brief excursion in this chapter explores the benefits each tool promises and the limits it imposes.

What do you want to study? Which research problem might you pursue? Which tools will help you proceed? How do you use methods to gather rich data? Rich data get beneath the surface of social and subjective life. An inquiring mind, persistence, and innovative data-gathering approaches can bring a researcher into new worlds and in touch with rich data. Consider how Patrick L. Biernacki (1986) began his grounded theory research for his book *Pathways from Heroin Addiction: Recovery without Treatment*:

The idea for this research originated several years ago during a study I was conducting of people who had stopped smoking marijuana (Biernacki & Davis, 1970). Although the reasons some people gave for finding it necessary to stop using marijuana might today seem insignificant, it was of interest at that time. Regardless of the relative importance of the research, it did bring me into contact with people who had been addicted to opiates along with marijuana, and who had stopped using the opiate drugs. This chance discovery of a few 'naturally' recovered addicts opened the door to a slew of questions about the ultimate fate of opiate addicts. Were the cases I found unusual? Were most addicts destined to remain addicted for their entire lives? Was some form of therapeutic intervention always necessary to break an opiate addiction? Or was it possible, at least for some people, to break the addiction and recover through their own resolve and effort? (p. 200)

The intriguing topic piqued Biernacki's curiosity. But how could he find data to study it? He states:

Locating and interviewing ex-addicts who had undergone some form of treatment would have presented few difficulties. … Ferreting out respondents